

MEDIA RELEASE

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Wigwamen to Develop New Affordable Housing Project

Wigwamen Incorporated, Ontario's oldest and largest urban Native housing provider, has begun planning the development of a new 92-unit affordable housing project. When completed, the 0.6-hectare site at 20 Sewells Road in Scarborough will provide housing for almost a hundred Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal families and individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Earlier this year, Wigwamen was one of five groups who submitted proposals to the City of Toronto to develop an affordable housing project on the Sewells Road site. After many months of interviews, discussions and deliberations, Wigwamen's proposal was selected.

Approximately one third of the new units will be transitional housing and targeted to persons who are currently homeless. The remainder will be targeted to households that are facing homelessness. The project will include 8 bachelor units, 34 one-bedroom units, 28 two-bedroom units, 17 three-bedroom units and 5 four-bedroom units. Community rooms will be built for tenants to use for such things as informal recreation and community programming. There will also be a multi-denominational worship space and a rooftop terrace.

Funding for the project is being contributed by all three levels of government. The City of Toronto is contributing \$2.2 million in capital funding and is providing exemptions from development and related charges through its Let's Build Program. The Government of Ontario is providing \$579,000 in rent supplements for at least the first five years to help make the 92 units more affordable. The Federal Government is contributing \$2 million through the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative under the National Homelessness Initiative.

Finally, the land, which is currently owned by the governments of Canada and Ontario but will be transferred to the City of Toronto, will be leased to Wigwamen at no charge for 50 years.

Wigwamen Incorporated has also committed to contributing \$460,000 of its own funds to help make the project a reality.

Councillor Olivia Chow, Chair of the Community Services Committee for the City of Toronto, had this to say about the new housing project: "Transitional and affordable housing are desperately needed in the City of Toronto and this project will provide housing that will be welcomed by families, adults and youth. This housing initiative, which will be undertaken with the partnership of all levels of government and a well respected community housing provider, is an important step in addressing homelessness in the City of Toronto."

Wigwamen already owns and manages over 300 units for Aboriginal individuals and families in the City of Toronto including Wigwamen Terrace, an apartment complex for seniors and 215 family homes scattered throughout Toronto. This latest project is expected to be completed in 2004.

For more information, contact:

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