



St. James
Community Service Society

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News Release

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St. James Community Service Society Transfers Ownership of Hotel to BC Housing

Today St. James Community Service Society completed the sale of Tamura House, a 110 room single room occupancy (SRO) hotel at 398 Powell Street in the Downtown Eastside, to the Province of BC.

"We are extremely pleased to have been able to work with the Minister responsible for Housing, Rich Coleman, and the staff at BC Housing, to ensure Tamura House remains as affordable housing for those most at need in the community," said Jonathan Oldman, Executive Director of St. James.

St. James bought the 100 year-old heritage building from private ownership in 2001 and has been managing it independently since then. "Unfortunately, last year, it became clear that the long-term renovations to the building were going to be considerably more expensive than originally realized," said Jonathan Oldman. It was at this point that St. James approached BC Housing to see if they would support the Society by taking ownership of the building as part of the Provincial Homelessness Initiative.

"We are very proud that in 2001 St. James was in the forefront of efforts to transform privately owned SROs into supportive housing for the most vulnerable. While it's unfortunate that the Society cannot afford to renovate the building ourselves, the most important thing for us was to ensure our vision for Tamura House was preserved," said Jonathan Oldman.

The property was sold to the Province for \$2.4M, an amount equal to balance of the mortgage on the building. BC Housing will begin building upgrades immediately, with extensive long-term renovations to follow. "This purchase, along with other financial supports that BC Housing provides the Society, helps preserve the long-term stability of St. James," said Jonathan Oldman. "We are confident that this sale balances the needs of the Society, the Province, and the tenants of Tamura House itself."

Lookout Emergency Society, who already provides support services to 1/3 of current residents, will take over the management of the whole building. "Lookout is another local not-for-profit that St. James has a long history of partnership with," said Jonathan Oldman. "With their staff and resources already present in Tamura House, it made most sense for them to extend this role, both for the residents and to allow St. James to focus our efforts on other projects."

St. James will continue to manage several other services for BC Housing, including other supportive housing buildings and two emergency shelters. St. James will also be an operator for one of the 12 new sites owned by the City of Vancouver currently in pre-development with the Province.

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