



*Community Rallies for Affordable Housing
Press Release: January 15, 2009*

The City of Vernon has taken a leadership role by providing property (4100 25th Ave) to a group of non profit societies to build affordable housing. An innovative and creative partnership entitled *Under One Roof* has been developed between the Vernon and District Community Land Trust, Habitat for Humanity and Kindale Developmental Association. The group plans to build a six-plex townhouse with a mix of ownership and rental opportunities for low income families and individuals with developmental disabilities. In addition, this development will be used as a model for future projects in the North Okanagan. In the case of Habitat for Humanity, the partnership with other community agencies will be a national "first" for the organization.

The *Under One Roof* initiative has already attracted huge support from local businesses and educational institutions. Students enrolled in the Okanagan College Residential Construction Program will provide free, supervised labour for up to 70% of the foundation and framing of the building. In order to meet the College's curriculum timeline, the project will begin in April 2009. Heartwood Homes Ltd and MQN Architects are providing corporate sponsorship and it is expected that companies representing other trades will also contribute. In addition, the Prestige Inn and Forsters have agreed to host a fundraising breakfast in support of the project.

The Vernon & District Community Land Trust is a non profit charitable organization. The Board's membership consists of persons from the real estate, financial, legal, and business community who are interested in furthering the affordable housing goals of the region. The purpose of the VDCLT is to solicit for donations of land and partner with non-profit housing societies to build and manage affordable housing units.

Habitat for Humanity is an independent housing program, building homes in partnership with working families in need since 1976. There are approximately 30,000 volunteers in Canada with over 1,000 homes built so far. The Vernon Chapter was formed in November 2007 with the Kelowna Affiliate acting as the independent parent and mentor. Kelowna's Habitat group is completing their 17th home this year.

Kindale Developmental Association has been providing services to people with developmental disabilities in the North Okanagan for 50 years. Increasingly, Kindale is involved in partnerships and initiatives that maximize independence and participation in community life for this population. Enabling access to safe, affordable and integrated housing is a key element in this.

This development is an important step towards addressing the housing needs for a variety of people with low or fixed incomes in Vernon. According to the fall 2008 Report from Canada Mortgage and Housing (CMHC), Vernon's vacancy rate remains amongst the lowest in the Province. Even with the economic downturn and stalling of the real estate market, Vernon still only has a 1% vacancy rate as of October 2008. Local non profit

housing agencies report long waiting lists for low income individuals and families in need of affordable housing. Housing developments that offer affordable rentals and/or ownership opportunities are a welcome addition to the community's housing stock.

The *Under One Roof* partners will be actively fundraising for donations of materials, labour and cash contributions. For more information on fundraising events and/or contributing to this project, please contact Cindy Masters at (250) 503-7974.

For more information on the Okanagan College Residential Construction Program please contact Rob Kjarsgaard (250) 503-2670. Space is still available for the program starting Feb. 2, 2009.

For more information about the partners contact:

Annette Sharkey, Social Planning Council for the North Okanagan, (250) 545-8572
Glory Westwell, Habitat for Humanity, (250) 558-0072
Randy Kolibaba, Vernon and District Community Land Trust Society, (250) 491-4313
Henry Sundquist, Kindale Developmental Association, 250-546-3005
Rob Kjarsgaard, Okanagan College Residential Construction Program (250) 503-2670
Leon Gous, City of Vernon, (250) 545-1361

Photo Participants (left to right)

Bob Marsh, Habitat for Humanity
Annette Sharkey, Social Planning Council
Cindy Masters, Kindale
Glory Westwell, Habitat for Humanity
Ted Treller, Land Trust Society
Rod Dudland, Heartwood Homes
Randy Kolibaba, Land Trust Society