

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Charity's Campaign to Build Transition to Adulthood Suites for Homeless Youth Passes Final Hurdle

Surrey, British Columbia SOS Children's Village B.C. is thrilled to announce that after an unexpected delay, building permits have now been issued by the City of Surrey to begin construction on suites for homeless youth who are struggling in their transition to adulthood after ageing out of foster care. **After gathering several bids, the contract will be awarded and construction will begin on January 4, 2016.** SOS B.C. is proud to be taking concrete steps to help stop the recent flood of sad news concerning youth connected to the foster care system.

"The transition suites that we will build in our Village in Surrey are desperately needed and these five basement suites alone could reduce the number of homeless youth in our area by up to 8%, now and into the future," said Douglas Dunn, executive director of SOS B.C. "A special thank you to board member Robert Rasmus for his hard work over the last several months to clear the final hurdle in our important project."

SOS B.C. has been running a capital campaign – Say Yes to the Village, No to the Streets! - since June 2014 (launch covered by *Vancouver Sun* and *News 1130*) to raise the \$250,000 required to make the suites a reality. **With two anonymous donations of \$100,000 and \$60,000 received at the charity's annual Holiday Gala, just over \$210,000 has been raised to date, enough to begin construction on three out of the five suites.** Many other contributions have been made by the public as well, from those who see the value and need for these homes that will give youth the chance to turn their lives around.

The transition suites will provide a stable home where young adults or young mothers, who would otherwise be homeless, will live healthier lives with access to the extensive green space and facilities of the Village which include a sports court, art and music studio, one-on-one support from a youth worker, therapy programs, clothes from SOS B.C. thrift stores, and more.

Vancouver Foundation's Youth Homelessness Initiative has already funded the charity's youth workers for three years with a \$142,000 grant. And at this time SOS B.C. wishes to express its special thanks to Vancouver Foundation for their understanding and patience during this project. SOS B.C. is proud to be part of the Fostering Change team of organizations who are working in concert with Vancouver Foundation to support youth ageing out of foster care.

SOS B.C.'s transition suites capital campaign **has garnered interest and praise from around North America.** "I read with great enthusiasm about your effort to raise money to create homes for teens who must leave the foster care system at age 19," said Richard Klarberg, President & CEO of the Council on Accreditation in New York. **"Kids aging out of foster care is one of the**

most important initiatives in both Canada and the US. Programs like yours offer a concrete and cost-effective approach to reducing homelessness and poverty among this growing segment of society. Congratulations on having the foresight and courage to tackle this problem."

With so much in the news lately about foster care in this province, SOS B.C. acknowledges **the important work of both the Representative for Children & Youth and Bob Plecas**, with the former stressing the need for support for ageing out of care, and the latter stressing the need for more funding for the Ministry of Children & Family Development. SOS B.C. receives less than 6% of its funding from government contracts.

In 2016, SOS Children's Village B.C. will conduct its final push to raise the dollars required for the final two suites. As with most things in Vancouver, construction costs are rising and the final two units will likely need \$100,000 each, altering the original campaign goal. Information about giving to the Capital Campaign is available at www.sosbc.org/notothestreets.

About SOS Children's Village BC

SOS Children's Villages is the world's largest non-governmental, non-denominational child development organization for orphaned and abandoned children. It has existed for over 65 years with presence in 134 countries and 563 Villages. British Columbia is home to the only SOS Children's Village in Canada. SOS Children's Village BC provides stable homes, a supportive healing Village environment, and programs to help foster children and youth in need grow into caring, self-reliant adults.

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