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National Defence announces new military housing complex in B.C.



National Defence Minister Bill Blair delivers a keynote address at the Canadian Association of Defence and Security Industries annual defence industry trade show CANSEC in Ottawa on Wednesday, May 29, 2024. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Sean Kilpatrick



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The Department of National Defence has awarded a contract to design a new, 480-unit military housing complex at Canadian Forces Base Esquimalt, near Victoria, as part of a nationwide effort to build and upgrade thousands of housing units for the Canadian Armed Forces.

The new highrise will replace the heritage Nelles Block dormitory, which was built in the early 1950s and will be demolished once construction is complete in the early 2030s.

Defence Minister Bill Blair announced the construction plan in Esquimalt on Wednesday, saying military members should not have to worry about finding suitable housing, regardless of where they are posted.

The 32,000-square-metre facility will house junior non-commissioned members of the Royal Canadian Navy in single-occupancy rooms, and will incorporate administrative services, a kitchen and a dining hall into a single building.

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Construction services firm EllisDon was awarded the \$10-million design contract, while National Defence estimates the total cost to complete the facility at \$165 million.

"This new housing facility at CFB Esquimalt will provide state-of-the-art accommodations for 480 Armed Forces members, giving them a modern place to live while training," Blair said, noting the project is expected to create or sustain up to 900 jobs during construction.

"Many people are finding it challenging to serve because of the access of affordable housing close to where they work, and so we've got to answer that requirement."

The new facility, which is slated to break ground in 2026, is part of a military housing strategy that aims to build up to 1,400 new housing units and renovate an additional 2,500 units on bases across the country.

The Department of National Defence says building more on-base housing will not only help military personnel but will also alleviate housing shortages in surrounding communities where military members would otherwise require market rentals.

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