



Our Campaign to
End Homelessness

Think homelessness isn't a problem in our community?

Ask the 36-year-old mother hiking across town with her life in a knapsack.
The man who spent the night in a tent before heading to his morning shift at a local retailer.
The recent college graduate anxiously scrolling the online job sites at the local library.
The senior filling her pockets with extras at the church potluck.
The carpenter surviving the off-season in his car and on a friend's couch.

The reality is homelessness *is* a serious problem in York Region.

On a recent night in York Region, 389 individuals just like these were counted as homeless and doing everything it takes to survive. The real number, though, is probably much higher.

That's because homelessness is nearly invisible. Despite the stereotypes, people who are struggling to keep a roof over their heads look just like everyone else. They are from every neighbourhood, class and culture. They are children, grandparents, college graduates, new immigrants, managers and community leaders. Some have steady or seasonal jobs. Some are homeless for only a short time and staying in emergency shelters; others are chronically homeless and living on the streets.

A few years ago, Mel had a great apartment and two jobs. Then she met the wrong guy. Within months, she was out of work and sleeping on a friend's couch until she was able to borrow enough money to buy a tent. When she landed a job, it was often temporary and hard to maintain without housing and regular access to meals, clothing and showers. "Surviving homelessness became my full-time job," she says.

Homeless people in York Region are just like you and me with one exception: something serious and unexpected happened to turn their lives upside down—a lost job, an abusive relationship, an accident, a health diagnosis, a caregiver death. Without a support network to turn to in their time of crisis, they fall between the cracks and end up on a couch, a park bench or the street, where they are at increased risk for violence, criminal activity, addiction, physical and mental illness, and death.

Homelessness is not a choice. It could happen to any of us or to the people we love. No one is immune.

So, what are we doing about it?

In 2004, after a concerned citizen called the Mayor of Newmarket to ask where a homeless person should stay when the emergency shelters are full, the town opened a winter warming centre they called

Inn From the Cold (IFTC). Seventeen years later, the grassroots organization has grown into a highly respected non-profit agency led by a board of independent community and business leaders, a staff of four and more than 200 dedicated volunteers.

Together, we offer:

- a 25-bed seasonal emergency shelter for men and women from November to April each year;
- a thrice weekly drop-in program offering caseworker and peer support, meals, clothing, showers, laundry, and access to computers, and mental health and addictions support;
- a weekly community meal program;
- The Getting Ahead in a Just Gettin' By World program funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation to help individuals in poverty strengthen their capacity for change;
- Stability Now, an apartment-style housing program with subsidized rent and wraparound support services to help chronically homeless men transition to stable housing; and
- the Inn Team, IFTC's social enterprise that provides work opportunities to people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

IFTC's unique approach to chronic homelessness.

IFTC fills a critical gap in York Region's housing stability system, which also includes three, year-round, Region-funded emergency shelters for men, women, families and youth. IFTC's approach is decidedly different:

The hardest to serve, the hardest to house

IFTC specializes in support for chronically homeless adults: men and women who have been unsheltered for six months or more and are less likely to be re-housed or on track to stable housing within 30 to 60 days of becoming homeless. Many of our clients are battling a complex array of factors impacting their housing situation, including poverty, family conflicts, job loss, illness, abuse, addiction and mental illness. Our commitment is to offer a safe haven for as many nights as they need and, for those who are ready, help navigating the complex system of housing, health and social service care.

Easing the transition to housing first

Nimble and efficient with a reputation for taking bold steps to tackle the root causes of homelessness with our community partners, IFTC launched the Region's first transitional housing program for men in 2018. Stability Now houses four men in an apartment-style unit and provides them with 24/7 case worker support, and programs and resources to help ease the transition to permanent housing.

Giving homeless people a voice

Recognizing that homelessness solutions are best conceived in partnership with those who are surviving life unsheltered, IFTC involves clients in brainstorming sessions, focus groups and planning sessions. Their first-hand input has impacted organizational changes, including our new shelter intake procedure, and larger, system-wide policies on topics such as extreme cold alerts, and helped to earn IFTC staff an important seat at the regional table on housing.

We need to do more and fast.

“Housing affordability has reached a crisis point in York Region and the pandemic has left even more people in dire need.” —*Newmarket Mayor John Taylor*

It's a start, but we also know that it's not nearly enough. In 2019-20, IFTC provided 5,850 shelter stays, 56% more than three years' previous, and the number of visits to our drop-in programs rocketed from 3,200 from 500. The demand for emergency shelter and support climbed further still over the last year when the COVID-19 pandemic left a growing number of community members out of work and struggling to make ends meet.

Every year, our emergency shelter turns away nearly 200 people because of a lack of available beds. When IFTC's doors close, community members in need of shelter often have nowhere else to turn.

“In my first year on the streets, I'd sometimes have to wander the streets cold or spend all night in a coffee shop because there were no beds anywhere.” —*Jamie*

Something has to change—and fast. As one of Canada's fastest growing communities and the third largest municipality in Ontario at 1.2 million people, York Region has a serious shortage of affordable housing options. More individuals than ever before are at serious risk of homelessness:

- The vacancy rate for rental accommodation dropped to 1% in January 2021, half the provincial average and well below the healthy rate of 3% recommended by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.
- More than half of York Region's renters spend 30% or more of their total income on housing, putting them at dramatically increased risk of homelessness.
- The wait list for social housing now tops 17,000 households—more than double that of a decade ago. Excluding seniors, the average wait time for a single person is 11.5 years.

More emergency shelters aren't the answer, say homelessness experts.

Emergency services are expensive—a recent study estimates \$53,000 per person a year to support a single person in an emergency shelter. It's also impractical to expect someone who has been unsheltered for months or even years to overcome the causes of their homelessness while they are still living on the street and in temporary shelters.

IFTC's bold and cost-effective solution.

In 2018, IFTC offered a bold and cost-effective solution. We launched the Stability Now pilot program, York Region's first transitional housing program for men, providing four subsidized units and 24/7 support services for men who have been homeless for six months or more in the last year. Compared to the cost of emergency shelters, transitional housing is cost-effective—\$24,000 per person per year—and results-oriented. In fact, **75% of those who completed Stability Now have successfully secured and maintained housing for six months or more.**

Peter was a busy local contractor until heart problems, back pain and alcoholism turned his life upside down. He lost his business, his equipment and, eventually his home. After joining Stability Now, he received medical treatment, landed a part-time job and, in April 2021, Peter successfully transitioned to his new permanent home. “It was only a room,” he says of the IFTC program, “but it gave me the incentive to get moving on with my life.”

Through Stability Now, IFTC is finding success at housing people who are notoriously difficult to house at less than half the annual cost of an emergency shelter bed.

This is just the beginning. IFTC’s Board-approved strategic plan includes expanding the Stability Now program from four men-only units to 19 transitional housing units for both men and women. Our goal is to help more of the Region’s chronically homeless transition to stable housing, reduce the reliance on emergency shelters, and save our community and housing and health care systems money.

To realize our goal, we will build a new and expanded home.

Recognizing the space limits of our 8,000-square-foot rental property at 510 Penrose Street, we partnered with the Town of Newmarket to create a new, larger, permanent home for Inn From the Cold. The Town donated a tract of surplus land on Yonge Street at Eagle Street and IFTC acquired the adjacent property in 2021.



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We are developing architectural drawings for a 17,000-square-foot housing hub featuring:

- 19 transitional housing beds in various apartment-style configurations for men and women, each unit with a shared kitchenette and a bathroom;
- a 120-seat dining hall with moveable partitions and direct access to a commercial-quality kitchen with a large service counter, storage area and loading dock;
- an entrance hall to receive emergency shelter clients and an adjacent registration/intake room with client storage lockers;
- a 25-bed dormitory-style emergency shelter with 16 beds for men and 5 beds for women plus two single-bed private rooms for ill, special needs or gender non-conforming clients and a private room with 2 beds
- each unit will have a shared bathroom to provide more privacy and dignity to our clients and to provide us with flexibility during pandemic-like situations
- three case work/interview rooms and two classrooms to support IFTC's Getting Ahead, the Inn Team, financial literacy, yoga and tenant education programs, along with volunteer training and meetings;
- a TV room and a quiet room with computers and library resources; and
- an outdoor garden, recreation space and smoking area.

We're on a rapid trajectory to begin construction in 2022 with construction planned to be complete by the end of 2023.

All Inn!: Our Campaign to End Homelessness.

IFTC's new home will cost approximately \$8.5 million to build and outfit. A proposal for federal government funding is currently under review and we have a high degree of confidence based on having recently received a CMHC seed funding grant for our proposal. To ensure the project's success, IFTC's Board of Directors has approved an alternative construction plan with financing that includes constructing the transitional housing and emergency shelter in two phases.

Both funding models count on our community to invest \$2.5 million to help construct, furnish and outfit our new housing hub.

To achieve our goal, Newmarket Mayor John Taylor and a volunteer team of community and business leaders launched *All Inn!: Our Campaign to end Homelessness*. At \$2.5 million, it represents the largest fundraising venture in Inn From the Cold's 17-year history. We are so proud that 100% of our Board of Directors and 91% of our volunteer Campaign Cabinet have already donated bring the total raised to just over \$1 million. Attracting the remaining funds is critical to keep the project on time and on budget.

Homelessness affects us all.

When our neighbours, family members and friends struggle to keep a roof over their heads, it impacts crime, safety and the availability of healthcare resources in our community. We all bear the rising costs of emergency shelters, which many agree is a short-sighted answer to a chronic societal problem.

“I walked into Inn From the Cold alone and lost and now, with love, compassion and direction, I have integrated back into society.” —Lynda

Inn From the Cold’s solution is strategic, sustainable, cost-effective and in keeping with the Region-wide efforts to reduce homelessness. Thanks to the support of the Town of Newmarket and a growing number of generous donors, we are well on our way to realizing our vision of a new, expanded transitional housing program and a new location for our emergency shelter in York Region.

In time, the costs associated with expanded operations will be offset by transitional housing rental income. As the need for emergency shelter declines with the success of our expanded transitional housing program, IFTC will open additional transitional housing apartments to move even more people in our community from crisis to stability.

With your investment in All Inn!: Our Campaign to end Homelessness, we will help more of our vulnerable community members transition to a better life and improve the quality of life in our community.

Thank you for giving generously today.

**Homelessness is a serious, growing crisis that affects us all.
We can change it together.**

For more information:

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