



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

More than just a building. It's a lifeline to a brighter future

\$500,000 needed to rebuild life-changing facility

Ottawa, September 7, 2010—For thousands of vulnerable youth every year, walking through the doors of the Downtown Drop-In Centre is the first time in their lives that they feel safe, feel a sense of belonging, and feel hope for a brighter future. But today, four youth walked into that very building with sledgehammers in their hands and hard hats on their heads to kick-off an ambitious reconstruction project that will see this life-changing facility become better able to meet the needs of the 1,500 at-risk youth per year who rely on it so desperately.

At 147 Besserer, the Youth Services Bureau's (YSB) flagship site is housed in a 60-year-old former fur storage facility that is falling apart and in desperate need of repair – and we are calling on the community to rally around these youth and support them at a time when they are in need.

These vulnerable young women and young men risk being tomorrow's homeless adults if we as a community don't open the door to a better future.

A recent study by the Yonge Street Mission and World Vision Canada found that youth who stay on the street for two years are less likely to leave and the most effective time to help them return to safe and stable housing is in the first three months. They also found that 40% of street-involved youth suffer from a mental health disorder.

The reason that the Downtown Drop-In Centre is so successful is because it is that one place in Ottawa where street-involved youth can easily get into the system, gets them to interact with youth workers and counselors, and makes them ready to begin to take steps in addressing the issues affecting their life.

"The Drop-In Centre is an essential lifeline that is about permanently moving street-involved youth off of the street and into safe and stable housing, sending them back to school, and helping them find jobs so that they have the opportunity to make their dreams a reality." said **YSB Executive Director Alex Munter**. "We need the community to get on board and open doors for vulnerable youth in our community."

Erica began her journey towards a better future the day she walked into the Drop-In Centre.

Living on the streets after running away from her adoptive parents at the age of 13, getting involved in drugs to numb the pain, and entering into relationships that worked counter to her personal growth, Erica finally felt at home when she walked through the front doors of the Drop-In Centre. She was able

to access an addictions counselor, use the health clinic, go back to school, and find an apartment that she could afford.

“Today, I’m in college to become an addictions counselor so that I can help others who have gone through similar situations,” said 18 year old Erica. “I still visit the Drop-In Centre regularly to access basic needs as well as the walk-in health clinic. They don’t judge me and I can be myself.”

But to rebuild this life-changing centre, we urgently need the community to get on board now.

The building is falling apart and in desperate need repair now. With the community’s financial support, we will be able change more lives. We’re asking the individuals, charitable foundations, and concerned citizens to give these vulnerable kids a chance at success and consider making a donation today.

Both the federal and provincial governments have committed \$533,000 to the reconstruction, the McKesson Foundation has generously donated \$25,000, and the community is starting to make donations.

\$500,000 is urgently needed and every little bit helps. We are asking people to visit our website at www.ysb.ca and make a donation. They can also contact the Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa Charitable Foundation at 613-729-1000.

Statistics

- Over 1,500 street-involved youth access the centre every year with over 18,000 visits
- There is an estimated 65,000 young women and young men who are living on the streets in Canada
- Services at the drop-in include: daily lunch, a food bank, laundry and shower facilities, mental health counselors, employment counselors, a walk-in health clinic, dental care, HIV/AIDS and HEP-C education, addictions counseling, and much more.
- The walk-in health clinic for street-involved youth is a one of a kind service in Ontario that brings together primary care, addictions counseling, and mental health counseling all in one place.

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