



THE UNITED CHURCH DOWNTOWN MISSION OF WINDSOR INC.  
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Registered Canadian Charitable Organization No. 11926 0420 RR0001

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## MEDIA RELEASE

### Increasing Homeless Population Pushing Demand for Downtown Mission Services

December 6, 2021

Windsor ON - The City of Windsor's recent release of its March 2021 **Point in Time Report** of homelessness confirms what organizations on the front line have been experiencing on a daily basis; that the number of people who are chronically homeless has increased and their reasons for being homeless are complex. In addition, food banks across the Province (including the Downtown Mission) are reporting increased use by individuals and families who do not have access to a secure food source.

The Downtown Mission is the community's largest shelter and its only low-barrier one, providing 80 beds for hurting men, women and youth who have no safe place to sleep at night. This is a reduction in the Mission's capacity from 103 beds due to COVID safety requirements. When someone comes to the Mission's Shelter seeking safety and warmth, other alternatives are always explored and if none are available, the individual is admitted to the Mission's Sanctuary Program for the night. It's a vital component of the city's shelter system.

The Mission relies on donations from individuals, corporations, trade unions, faith communities, foundations, and civic organizations to fund its programs and services. A small percentage of its operating funds come from a handful of funders which ensures the continuation of specific programs like the Mission's Enterprise Program (City of Windsor) and the Phoenix Recovery Program (Erie St. Clair LHIN). The Federal Government's COVID-Relief funds for Shelters have also helped provide the additional space and staffing required to run a second floor in the Mission's Shelter. These funds will come to an end on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022 which could cause a gap in service and leave approximately 40 individuals with no place to go.

The Downtown Mission's Shelter has been at capacity every night over the past few weeks. Individuals seeking a bed for the night begin lining up at 5:00 PM, even though intake begins at 8:00 PM. This year alone, our Service Support team members have responded to 115 drug overdose emergencies and have not lost a single soul because of their training, skills and commitment to the belief that every life is worth another chance. The Housing First Program has helped 83 people find a new place to live. The Food Bank has helped feed 13,484 individuals and 6,831 households. The Mission also delivers a substance recovery program for men, women, and youth in addition to health care navigation and spiritual counselling.

*The Downtown Mission exists as a Place of Sanctuary. In response to the mandate of the Gospel, through outreach we provide: **food** for the body, **nurture** for the spirit, **shelter** for the homeless, **advocacy** for the impoverished and **opportunity** for human growth.*

The Mission's Board of Directors have committed to undertaking a review of the organization's current programs and services to align these increasing demands with needs of people experiencing homelessness, as the community emerges from the COVID pandemic. It's expected this review will begin in June Of 2022.

"We are very concerned with these alarming trends," explained the Mission's Board Chair Michele MacGregor. "The need and demand for our services is at an all-time high, but unfortunately our community donations are not keeping pace with the increased needs that the Mission has been facing this year. For the past 10 years, we have been the proverbial canary in the coal mine, going forward and responding to the needs of hurting people without reservation. Despite our current financial situation, and if not for the trust of our generous Donors over the years, our community's homeless situation would be disastrous."

The Downtown Mission is asking for the support of our community and to consider making a monetary donation in support of their vital programs and services. Donations can be made online through the Downtown Mission's website at [www.downtownmission.com](http://www.downtownmission.com), click on the Donate Today icon, by mail or in person at their 664 Victoria Avenue location.

"The Christmas Season is traditionally a time when many in our community make a charitable contribution to a cause that touches them, and they believe in. The Downtown Mission is helping hurting people who have no other means of support. A gift to the Mission can literally save a life," said Rukshini Ponniah-Goulin, Interim Executive Director.

### **PHOTO & INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE**

**For more information, please contact:**

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