



PRESS RELEASE

November 8, 2019

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Overnight Warming Centre Ramping Up

The Fort Frances Homelessness Committee and the Rainy River District Social Services Administration Board have been hard at work on opening an overnight warming centre this winter in Fort Frances. This winter will mark the second year Fort Frances has seen such a centre, which aids individuals experiencing homelessness during the coldest months.

The Fort Frances Homelessness Committee approached a number of agencies to staff the centre and in October, the Rainy River District Social Services Administration Board agreed to once again staff the centre for the winter months. The RRDSSAB has begun seeking qualified staff to oversee the centre and work with clients to help them attain stable housing.

The committee is finalizing a location and is hoping to open the warming centre doors in early December. They are seeking funds to allow the centre to run for fourteen weeks, or longer if needed.

"I think the community is starting to see homelessness more, and some of the impacts it can have on the community. What we are trying to do is offer those who are experiencing homelessness a safe, warm place to be at night where they do not have to worry about their survival and safety. While they are with us, we will work with them in a non-judgmental way to develop a plan for their goals and hopefully get them on their way to stable housing," noted Sandra Weir, Integrated Services Manager for the Rainy River District Social Services Administration Board.

The group has a series of fundraising efforts underway in a campaign they have dubbed, "Baby It's Cold Outside," marked with a blue circle.

Fundraising efforts include photos with Santa during the Winter Vendorland at the Couchiching Multi-Use Centre on November 16th from 11-2 pm. Photos with Mr. and Mrs. Claus will be \$10 and all proceeds will go toward the operating of the centre. Additionally, there are four change donation boxes located around Fort Frances at: Green's BrandSource, Northwood Gallery & Gifts, McTaggart's and the Fort Frances Times.

There is also a sponsored-walk being planned for February culminating in a hot meal and a viewing of a 2016 Canadian documentary on the realities of homelessness called "Us & Them."

Donations \$20 and over are eligible to receive tax receipts from Community Living Fort Frances & District. Donations for these amounts can be made at Green's BrandSource, Community Living Fort Frances & District or by mailing a cheque with a note including your name and address to Community Living at: 340 Scott St, Box 147, Fort Frances, ON, P9A 3M5.

For non-financial donations, the committee is seeking warm winter outdoor clothing, new undergarments and socks, and non-perishables such as granola bars. These can be dropped off at Green's BrandSource. The committee is not currently accepting donations of used bedding or used non-winter clothing at this time.

In the meantime, the Homelessness Committee continues to simultaneously work toward permanent housing solutions geared toward individuals experiencing homelessness using community partnerships. "We recognize that no one agency or program alone can end the realities faced by individuals experiencing homelessness," added Homelessness Committee chair, Jamie Petrin. "For this reason, our committee is focused on advocating for and working toward housing solutions that that meets the diverse needs of this population that extend beyond just the shelter that a home provides. This includes supports for trauma, mental and physical health, addictions, income and employment."

To be kept informed of updates, please visit "Out of the Cold Fort Frances" on Facebook.

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Thank you for providing the opportunity to address the issue of homelessness in Fort Frances. For information on the Out of the Cold Warming Centre, please contact Sandra Weir at sandraw@rrdssab.on.ca or 807-274-5349 x 230.

