



## **STATEMENT - NOV. 5, 2021**

We informed our shelter staff today that at the end of this month, House of Friendship's Shelter will temporarily close for the first time in its 82-year history. The closure will happen November 30<sup>th</sup> because we will no longer have a location to provide our shelter services and ShelterCare. This will result in a temporary disruption of shelter services, including a temporary layoff of affected staff and our ability to serve up to 100 men with complex medical needs.

For Background:

House of Friendship's former shelter building, a 12-bedroom house on Charles Street, is unfortunately not large enough to care for the nearly 100 participants the program is now supporting, or provide the space for the on-site complex medical care that the shelter participants need.

Since the fire at the Inn of Waterloo in February 2021, House of Friendship has conducted an extensive, eight-month long search for a new location for its shelter program and our new model of support ShelterCare. This fall, a location was found, and House of Friendship started actively working with government funders to secure the capital needed. There is a lot of due diligence required to evaluate this important ask and unfortunately more time is needed that will result in the, hopefully temporary, closure.

Our entire team and government representatives have been working at this tirelessly and it is heartbreaking news for everyone. Frankly, it has been a difficult and demoralizing process to find a permanent home for a population that is unwell and unwanted.

With homelessness in Waterloo Region at an all-time high, this temporary loss of shelter space will be devastating for both our staff and our participants.

We are deeply concerned about the welfare of our shelter participants, and have worked with the Region to help find alternate arrangements for them during this time.

Shelter staff will also be provided with additional supports. House of Friendship has already applied for a Supplemental Unemployment Benefit plan for affected staff, will offer benefits continuation and provide continued access to our Employee and Family Assistance program and additional mental health supports.

Our shelter participants and staff have shown incredible resilience, enduring three moves in 12 months. They need and deserve the stability that comes from a permanent location. House of

Friendship will continue to work with government partners to work to secure the necessary funding to finalize the purchase of a new shelter location in January, with the intent of resuming shelter operations in February.

All of House of Friendship's other programs, in four service areas including food, addiction treatment, supportive housing and community resources in low-income neighbourhoods are not impacted, and will continue full operations.