

## Oxford County Council confirms support in principle for concept of Rotary Pathways Community Transitional Shelter project

**Woodstock, Ontario – April 28, 2023:** Woodstock-Oxford Rotary presented an overview of their Pathways Community plan to Oxford County Council last week and a resolution was then passed stating “Oxford County Council supports the project concept in principle.”

“Ensuring our County government supports our project concept in principle was important to us,” says Jurgen van Dijken, spokesperson for this Rotary initiative.

This support represents a first step in launching the project to the public and soon a fundraising campaign to local businesses and the general community.

“The Pathways transitional shelter community is designed to be a first step on a path to a better life for those without shelter,” explains van Dijken. “We recognize that the issues that lead to being unhoused are complex and we know our project is only one small part of a long-term solution.”

Councillor Don MacKay, Mayor of East Zorra Tavistock, brought the resolution forward to County Council and then a number of councillors spoke in support of the concept in principle and a lively discussion followed.

During the discussions, a number of councillors acknowledged that a spectrum of options is needed to address overall issues related to homelessness. Councillor Marcus Ryan, Mayor of Zorra Township, commented “a group of people have come forward here with their own money, their own time and their own property and proposed a solution that is going to help some people in our community.”

Indicating we have to start somewhere, van Dijken says Rotary is stepping up as an organization to do their part through this project, alongside the many other groups and organizations working on other community housing initiatives and services.

The Rotary Pathways Community will provide up to 12 warm, secure, private shelters for individuals in Oxford who are currently unhoused. The project will also connect these people with existing resources to help them address other issues in their lives so they can improve overall wellbeing.

Each of the cabins will be fully insulated with electric heat and lights, a closet and a small porch. A bed, mattress, pillow and linens will be provided. The site will also include a portable communal building with a common room, washrooms, showers, kitchenette, laundry facilities and a secure office for social workers. The project will be fenced, secure and have onsite management as well as social services support.

The project has already received many letters in support of the concept from community businesses and others including Oxford County Community Health Centre, Canadian Mental Health Association, Operation Sharing, United Way Oxford, Sierra Construction, Pharmasave The Dispensary, Maglin™, as well as many other service groups, local churches and individuals.

Cliff Zaluski, President of Sierra Construction, commented in his letter that the company was “excited to hear of the Rotary..Shelter Project and we are very pleased to offer our support and assistance to the committee doing the tremendous work on this project.”

He added, "In my research this group has made the commitments to make this project a success and I confirm that our company is in support of the initiative."

After evaluating a number of potential locations, the planning committee is pleased to announce the Movement Church as the site for this project. "We would like to acknowledge and thank Movement Church for generously offering space on the southwest corner of their property," van Dijken says.

"Our church supports the Pathways Community Transition project and we are happy to be able to offer an area on our property for the cabins. We believe this project is one step in providing solutions to address the complex issues that lead to being without shelter in our community," comments Lead Pastor Jeff Price from Movement Church.

As an early step in bringing this concept to fruition, Woodstock-Oxford Rotary is asking residents and business owners to learn more about the project. The organizing committee, which includes members of the public as well as rotarians, is happy to answer any questions and provide more information to those interested. A website and other educational materials will be available soon. In the meantime, for more information about the Woodstock-Oxford Rotary Pathways Community, contact Jurgen van Dijken at [jurgen.vandijken.na@gmail.com](mailto:jurgen.vandijken.na@gmail.com).

"When we all step up together, we can make a difference," van Dijken adds.

For more information:

**Karen Sample**

Media Liaison on behalf of Rotary Pathways Committee

519-475-6378 Ext21

519-421-6438

[ksample@31stline.com](mailto:ksample@31stline.com)

**Jurgen van Dijken**

Woodstock -Oxford Rotary Pathways Organizing Committee

[Jurgen.vandijken.na@gmail.com](mailto:Jurgen.vandijken.na@gmail.com)

226-228-4008

**Jeff Price**

Lead Pastor

Movement Church

[jeffp791@gmail.com](mailto:jeffp791@gmail.com)

(519) 608-2811