

Halton Lighthouse Shelter opens

Lauded as a success, the fact that it's needed is a failure

By BERNADETTE WARD

Hailed as both a success and a failure, the Salvation Army unfurled its flag in lieu of ribbon cutting at the packed opening ceremony of the Halton Lighthouse Shelter in Oakville on March 7.

"Our goal has been achieved and our dream has begun to unfold," said Regional Chair Joyce Savoline.

The \$1.94 million project is a partnership between the federal government, who has contributed \$508,000, the Region of Halton who committed to purchase the land and the Salvation Army who has contributed \$380,000 and will run the facility.

The shelter, which is located at Redwood Square and serves the Region of Halton, has been in operation since January and is already running at 80 percent of its capacity.

It has space for 15 men and women and 10 youth in need of temporary emergency accommodations.

Both Savoline and Mayor Mulvale expressed pleasure at the opening, but dismay at the lack of affordable housing in Halton.

Such a shortage, said Savoline, is an issue that needs to be addressed and people at every level

need to be engaged.

"We are committed to the principle that people in Halton should be able to live in their own community," she said.

Homelessness is not uncommon in Halton with over 1,200 people homeless or at risk of homelessness each year and 46 percent of renters paying more than 30 percent of their income in rent.

Mulvale was emphatic about shelters, and although certainly satisfied that those in need will have such a service, she was most displeased that they are even required and would like to see an end to them.

Mulvale delivered a personal anecdote about a friend that spoke to the need to consider the personal aspect when dealing with the issue and the reality that homelessness can affect us all.

"When we look at homelessness, we need to see a face, not a statistic," she said.

She also drew attention to the other services available through the shelter such as counseling and job and accommodation seeking techniques and the value these services offer people in terms of personal success. "They will be given the tools to rebuild themselves," said Mulvale.



PHOTO BY BERNADETTE WARD

It was a full house on March 8 in Oakville at the new Salvation Army Lighthouse opening. On hand to take part in the celebrations were, from left to right: Catherine Kaye from the Government of Canada, Halton Regional Chair, Joyce Savoline, Commissioner Christine MacMillan of the Salvation Army and Oakville Mayor Ann Mulvale.

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