

September 26, 2021

Dear Mayor Brown and Council,

My name is Pastor Kerry Duffield, former director of the Lighthouse and currently Orangeville Community Director for Youth Unlimited/Highlands Youth for Christ.

During my 12 years of serving as the director of the Lighthouse I experienced first hand the needs of the homeless and less fortunate in our community. I particularly would like to share my experiences regarding men's homelessness.

The stories of these men are as varied and unique as the individual telling it. No two stories are alike and no two needs are necessarily alike. I have heard it said that Orangeville does not have a homeless problem. I beg to differ. Because something is not seen, does not mean it does not exist. Homelessness comes in different forms. It can include those sleeping in a tented community in the woods within the town boundaries. It can include those sleeping on the rooftops of buildings downtown. It can include those couch surfing from place to place with no permanent place to go. It can include someone sleeping in a sleeping bag behind the Lighthouse or in the parking lot at the Door Youth Centre. It can include someone who is asked to leave the home during a divorce or dispute who has a job but nowhere to stay and needs temporary housing in order to keep his job. Men's homelessness is here and it is real.

At times, I was able to refer some of the homeless men who were given a couple of night's stay in a local motel providing only temporary relief for those who need something longer term. As someone who was on the frontlines and encountered the homeless on a daily basis it was discouraging to say "I'm sorry. I can't help you. We have no place else for you to go."

A homeless shelter not only provides a roof over someone's head and meals but it should provide counselling, mental health support, addictions support and life skills support. As a community we should be working together to provide them with a hand up not just a hand out.

Several years ago, I was part of a committee that was looking into starting a men's shelter. This is not a new problem. I was so pleased to hear that this could become a reality for our town. This is a new chance to address an old problem that is not going to go away.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my thought and experiences.

Regards,

Pastor Kerry Duffield

Orangeville Community Director,
Youth Unlimited/Highlands Youth for Christ