



News Announcement

2021 November 17

The Grind Pembroke to Dedicate New Facility Major government grants lead to completion of Phase 1 and start of Phase 2 Renovations

The Grind Pembroke will be dedicating its newly-acquired operations facility at 273 Victoria Street, Pembroke, on Friday, 2021 November 19, to celebrate its ability to continue providing needed support services to the area's marginalized and at-risk population. This facility, once the home of the City of Pembroke's original fire hall, has been undergoing extensive renovations since the beginning of 2021. The celebration will mark the completion of Phase 1 of a multi-phase renovations project and the start of Phase 2. The third and fourth renovations phases, expected to be completed sometime in 2022, are pending receipt of additional financial support.

Phase 1 renovations were made possible by a Resilient Community Fund grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, and donations from generous community individuals, groups and businesses. With Phase 1 now completed, The Grind has been able to resume three key services.

First, a newly created and opened Community Kitchen now supports the preparation of on-site meals (currently, due to health restrictions, lunches are only available on a take-out basis or delivered to a small number of community members who are infirm or who have compromised immune systems). Secondly, space for a Client Services Office that is now fully functional to assist community members who face a variety of complex issues in navigating the health and social service system. This office is assisted by professionals from the Crisis Team of Mental Health Services of Renfrew County and second-year social service worker students from Algonquin College in the Ottawa Valley. Thirdly, The Grind's administrative and financial services operation is now functioning temporarily within space that will eventually house community outreach programming to assist clients with their information needs and life-skills development.

Phase 2 renovations recently got underway with the confirmation of two large government grants – an Enabling Accessibility grant and a Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy – Ontario Rural and Remote Homelessness capital grant through the federal Department of Employment & Social Development via the United Way of Simcoe Muskoka. These grants will enable the development of three public washrooms, including an accessible single occupant washroom, accessible internal and external doors, a janitor's closet, a shower/change room and a client lounge that will serve the Client Services Office and provide a warm-up, rest area for homeless clients who are waiting for service.

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Phase 3, once financial support is secured and renovations are completed, will allow The Grind to re-open its signature Coffee House that will serve as safe, non-judgemental dining and social interaction space for community members who have nowhere else to go. Phase 4 renovations will include space for The Grind's food security operations, including food inspection and safe storage, as well as a market area where clients can obtain emergency food supplies that they select themselves depending on available supplies of donated and/or purchased food. A second-level administrative area will also be re-furnished allowing this function to vacate space allocated for client outreach operations.

Securing larger and more appropriate space for its operation has been critical for The Grind, especially since taking over the soup kitchen operation from the Salvation Army in March, 2019. "These grants from the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the federal government," explained Grind executive director, Jerry Novack, "have come at a most opportune time. Along with generous community donations and other grants, we are now able to advance the renovations project considerably to ensure that our priority services, including our Community Kitchen, can continue uninterrupted."

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Backgrounder

The Grind Pembroke is a not-for-profit charitable organization established in October, 2015. It serves low- to no-income community members who are at-risk of succumbing to the challenges of social and economic marginalization, and, in many cases, to issues beyond their control, including mental and physical health and addiction issues. The Grind fulfills its mission through: (1) the operation of a **Coffee House** that provides a safe, non-judgement environment within which patrons can relax and socialize. The Coffee House also provides a platform for the delivery of other programs and services; (2) **Outreach Programs** to provide clients with tools (e.g. information about available community services and programs) they will need to stabilize their lives and become more self-sufficient; (3) the provision of **Shelter Services** to facilitate via a monitored Crisis Line emergency sheltering of the homeless in area motels, and the operation of a transitional housing facility (Transition House) that provides a temporary, assisted independent living option for up to four homeless men who are working with a health or social service agency on a life-stabilization plan; a **Client Services Office** that provides, with the help of embedded professionals from health and social service agencies, needs assessment and outreach navigation assistance to connect with appropriate community supports; a **Community Kitchen** to provide nutritious meals to homeless and other at-risk community members; and **Youth Service** programs to provide recreational opportunities for children faced with the challenges of autism and other developmental issues. While the COVID-19 pandemic has severely restricted operations, The Grind currently maintains its shelter services program, continues to provide clients with system navigation assistance while respecting distancing and other health precautions, and operates on a take-out / delivery basis only from a commercial-style community kitchen.

The Grind's need for a larger space was exacerbated when, in March of 2019, it stepped up to the plate to take over the food service operations of the Salvation Army the day following the closure of its operations in Pembroke after many decades of service to the area's poor and homeless. With a need to provide a viable facility within which to cook food in a way that met required health and fire safety regulations, The Grind took immediate steps to provide a temporary food service within its existing Coffee House in downtown Pembroke. But these steps were only meant as a stop-gap solution. The Grind's goal, in consultation with other community stakeholders, was to secure a larger space that was already equipped with a commercial kitchen. After nearly a year's unsuccessful search for such a location, The Grind agreed to take on responsibility for a "community kitchen" on a permanent basis. But the writing was on the wall since it was evident that continuing to operate a kitchen operation within The Grind's existing space downtown wasn't viable especially as the number of people requiring prepared food continued to increase over time. As well, the Coffee House, which was The Grind's main platform for delivery of other services, increasingly became unavailable.

Ultimately, the City of Pembroke came to the rescue and offered the use of its recently decommissioned fire hall. After examining the space and finding that it had great potential, The Grind signed an initial five-year lease of the property in June, 2020. Over the intervening months, The Grind took a number of preliminary steps leading to the issue of a building permit in early 2021, including environmental assessments, developing a plan for use of the available space, commissioning required engineering/architectural drawings, and fundraising to cover the cost of renovations.

The project ultimately will house The Grind's existing operations, including a commercial kitchen, coffee house with expanded dining space, space for a client services office including a confidential client consultation room, staff kitchenette, and administrative office space. Given adequate funding, new

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services are envisioned to occupy the remaining available space, including outreach information programming/client activity space, food rescue/food bank operations, and a space to house a virtual consultation service using existing video technology to connect clients with off-site health and social service professionals.

The project's renovations committee prioritized work to focus initially on three key areas (Phase 1) – a functioning commercial kitchen to ensure that The Grind's essential food service continues uninterrupted, while respecting on-going COVID-19 health restrictions, e.g on a food take-out basis at the front entrance of what will eventually become the new coffee house, a client services office with confidential client consultation space, and administrative office space to facilitate required management oversight of operations.

The completion schedule will depend on the availability of additional funding and a decision on when normal operations can resume in respect of the COVID-19 health threat.