

**Presentation at the**



## **New Facility Dedication**

**273 Victoria Street, Pembroke**

**Jerry Novack, Executive Director**

**2021 November 19**

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Thank you for joining us this afternoon to celebrate the successful transfer of The Grind Pembroke's operations from our original location in downtown Pembroke to this new facility.

Converting what was once the City of Pembroke's original fire hall into appropriate space to house a variety of human services has proven to be a complicated, time consuming and certainly an expensive proposition. As we quickly found once we gained access to the building and began intensive planning, the project became a mammoth task requiring the work to be divided, for operational and financial reasons, into four renovation phases. These work phases have been staged to ensure that services with the highest priority and benefit to our clients are available as soon as practicable. More about our progress in completing the project in a moment.

This afternoon we are dedicating this building as a signal that The Grind Pembroke intends to continue, given adequate resourcing and community support, its ministry of providing help, in partnership with the health and social service sector, to those in our community who are marginalized, homeless and facing often complex issues requiring coordinated solutions.

Taking on this project has been a giant leap of faith. Our move from the downtown location prior to our ability to move into new quarters put tremendous stresses on the organization because it occurred as you are aware during the beginning stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. But we persevered for the sake of those that needed our help.

First, our deepest gratitude goes out to Deacon Adrien Chaput on behalf of St. Columbskille Cathedral and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul for the use of the church

kitchen and adjacent space in the interim to enable us to continue providing nutritious lunches to hungry community members and as a temporary platform for a modified client services operation.

Secondly, while most of us – specifically those of us working and volunteering in the administrative area - were able to work largely from home, our cook, Leann Rollins and her wonderful kitchen volunteers, and our food security staff – Adrienne Campbell and Tanner Barnes – didn't have that luxury. They continued their hard work from this temporary church location to meet an increased demand for food on a take-out and delivery basis, as well as providing system navigation assistance and wellness checks of, at times, up to seventeen homeless individuals who preferred street living to emergency shelter in motels. Thank you for your dedication and efforts to maintain services during a time of increased risk to your own health and wellbeing.

Special thanks goes out to the United Way East Ontario, United Way Simcoe Muskoka and the County of Renfrew for their support in providing The Grind with Federal and Provincial Relief Funding during 2020 and 2021 to assist us in meeting increased demand for food from a large client base during this most difficult COVID-19 pandemic period. Local food retailers and individual community members also contributed food to ensure that our cupboards were never bare.

Many of you are aware of the struggle our community-based search committee went through, under the leadership of Rev. Bruce Thompson, to find a more suitable location that could provide appropriate space for a suitable-sized commercial kitchen but also provide sufficient room for The Grind's other operations. We thank this committee for their hard work and staying the course. After months of searching for the right location, the City of Pembroke came to the rescue with the offer of a five-year lease on its decommissioned fire hall. We thank members of Council and the Mayor for making this possible.

Converting a fire hall into useable space has required on-going careful planning and project management. Guiding the project has been the responsibility of a board of director's sub-committee comprised of Garth Marquardt, Wes Thomson, Deacon Adrien Chaput and myself. On behalf of everyone associated with the organization, I would like to extend thanks for your hard and time-consuming work. The successful completion of Phase 1 of the renovations project is testament to the care and attention this committee has and continues to make toward completion of the project.

As I indicated earlier, the magnitude of the renovations project has necessitated staging the work to facilitate the search for the required financial and human resources. It was evident from the start that The Grind had to reach out beyond its already generous community donor base – a source of funds that has been tapped to help keep the doors open from an operational perspective. Thus an ambitious government grant application process was undertaken, with some successes and a couple of failures. However, to date, the successes have allowed us to complete Phase 1 and to begin Phase 2.

Phase 1 completion has allowed The Grind to: (1) develop and open its new Community Kitchen operation to provide prepared meals on a take-out and limited delivery basis; (2) resume full services to clients in need through the creation of a Client Services Office consisting of reception/client-intake/and consultation space; (3) temporary space for Administrative Services that will ultimately become additional client consultation space; (4) updated heat / cooling / ventilation / safety and communications systems; and (5) staff washrooms. A generous Resilient Community grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation financed the bulk of Phase 1 renovations, while significant grants from the Grey Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in Pembroke covered the purchase of kitchen equipment, and funds from Mental Health Services of Renfrew County covered the furnishings and computers for the Client Services Office. A number of smaller community donations and fundraising covered the remaining costs.

Phase 2 of the renovations work started a couple of weeks ago with confirmation of two large grants from Employment and Social Development Canada - one from the Enabling Accessibility Fund and a second from the Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy (Ontario's Rural and Remote Homelessness) Capital Fund through the United Way Simcoe Muskoka. These grants will enable the development of an accessible single occupant washroom, as well as two other regular washrooms for male and female clients, accessible internal and external doors, a janitor's closet, a shower/change room and a client lounge that will serve the Client Services Office to provide a warm-up/rest/waiting room for homeless and other clients waiting for service. This phase should be completed by 2022 January.

A funding application is being prepared for Phase 3 that will see development of The Grind's signature Coffee House. This space will provide the principal meeting, social engagement and dining space for Grind food services and planned community outreach programming. Given the availability of required financial resources and continued improvement in COVID-19 pandemic conditions, we anticipate that the Coffee House will be operational by the Fall of 2022.

Phase 4 will consist of the development of our planned Food Security space, including food rescue, sorting and storage at the back end of the available space and the Grind Market at the front end where clients can secure, depending on what is available through donations and targeted purchases, emergency rations when local food banks aren't open for service. Funding sources have not as yet been identified to cover the costs.

Completion of the renovations project will provide the staging area required for the delivery of Grind services. But the hard work will continue in order to keep the doors open. This will require on-going fundraising efforts to pay for heat, light, maintenance, insurance and numerous other costs including staffing of key operations and supervisory positions that cannot be filled by volunteers. For this we will continue to reach out to generous community members and organizations, including the faith community, and to government sources.

To all those individuals and entities who have provided and continue to provide support to The Grind, we owe you a debt of gratitude. On behalf of all of us and our clients who benefit, thank you.

Before I hand the podium over to my board colleagues to lead us in formally dedicating this new facility, I invite those who haven't had an opportunity to tour the building to do so after the ceremony. Once renovations are completed for the entire project, we will invite you and the community to join us at an official opening ceremony.

Thank you. And now, please let me introduce our pastor and board secretary, Rev. John Vaudry, and board director, Deacon Adrien Chaput, who will lead us in officially dedicating this facility.

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Note: Following the facility dedication, Jerry will take the podium again to introduce staff members who will assist with the tour conducted by Dave Studham. Staff members will be assigned specific stations throughout the facility and will provide brief commentary describing their assigned operational function.