

York Region Youth Shelter celebrates 'new look' with an Open House

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On August 14th, representatives from United Way York Region joined community partners, and staff of York Region Youth Shelter as they collectively celebrated International Youth Day by unveiling the shelter's newly renovated space.

"York Region Youth Shelter is located in a building that is around 100 years old," states Alex Cheng, Shelter Manager, York Region Youth Shelter, Blue Door Shelters. "Our kitchen desperately needed some updates when it came to flooring, and for the convenience of our residents, the common room needed a sink and pantry area where clients could wash up, and easily access utensils and other items."

York Region Youth Shelter is one of three shelters that are operated by **Blue Door Shelters**, a not-for-profit registered charity supported by United Way York Region, which has been an integral part of providing emergency shelter for the homeless population of York Region since 1982. An emergency shelter for males between the ages of 16 and 26, York Region Youth Shelter provides residents with: support to find and maintain affordable housing, accommodation and food, supportive counselling, referrals to appropriate community services, job search assistance, and life skill learning opportunities. As one client of the shelter states, "When I was released from custody from the Newmarket Court System at the age of 17, I was lost and really had nowhere to go. The staff at York Region Youth Shelter really helped connect me to the resources I needed to get back on my feet."

As York Region has grown and continues to grow, so does the complexity of issues and needs that face the youth in our community. Unemployment is on the rise, with a 20% unemployment rate for residents between the ages 15 and 24, compared to 16% in Toronto.

"We currently have a capacity of 12 beds. As an emergency shelter, York Region Youth Shelter offers short-term solutions to housing (up to four months), but also provides those who come to us with resources that can create a long-term solution for them when it comes to employment and sustainability," adds Mr. Cheng. "However, with the increase in infrastructure growth, last year Blue Door Shelters had to turn away approximately 5,845 people in total from all three of our shelters."

In addition to the York Region Youth Shelter, Blue Door also operates Leeder Place Family Shelter (targeted for families), and Porter's Place Men's Shelter (for adult males). With the holiday season around the corner, the need for donated non-perishable food items, gift cards, clothing (especial undergarments, socks and outerwear), as well as toiletry and personal hygiene items are always appreciated. For more information, visit the Blue Door Shelters [website](#), or LIKE them on [Facebook](#).