

Blue Door giving a helping hand to senior men with assist from Trillium Foundation



Habib had been living a comfortable life in Canada for more than 40 years, perhaps even by his own admission, a little more comfortable than the average person.

But, after a financial crisis and family challenges, he suddenly found himself struggling to make rent on his bachelor apartment.

“After three-and-a-half months, I was tired of life,” he shared, noting he soon called Ontario Works where he was connected with Blue Door, which has been providing the York Region community with emergency and transitional housing, support programs, and more, for five decades.

Habib is now a grateful resident in transitional housing provided by Blue Door and shared his story in Aurora on Thursday afternoon as Blue Door celebrated the receipt of an \$87,300 capital grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

The grant benefited Blue Door's Forward program, which is dedicated to providing transitional housing to senior men in need.

Funds were used to renovate the program's residences to allow men to live in a “secure, dignified environment” with the services they need, focusing on regaining stability.

“For more than 40 years, Blue Door has been a pillar of support here in York Region,” said Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy at the February 5 recognition event held at Construct, a social enterprise of Blue Door, which provides skills training in the trades. “They provide emergency housing, as we all know, but they also provide innovative programs and that's what I'm talking about with the Construct program as well. It really helps rebuild stability, dignity and hope in people's lives.

“Forward is Blue Door's transitional housing program for senior men by supporting essential renovations that improve safety, accessibility and overall quality of life for the residents. Thanks to this funding, senior men who are at risk of homelessness will benefit from safer entryways, enhanced outdoor spaces and critical infrastructure upgrades that ensure Forward remains a secure, welcoming and supportive environment. These improvements will allow residents to focus on their health, regain stability, and successfully transition toward permanent housing and community reintegration.”

Forward, added MPP Gallagher Murphy, is about more than just housing. She described it as a “lifeline” that supports “senior men who are facing significant barriers, such as fixed incomes, mobility challenges, discrimination and rising housing costs, which we all know and all feel.”

?With nearly 28 per cent of senior-led households in Canada classified as being in core housing need, programs like Forward remain essential in creating pathways to safety and independence.?

Canadian seniors living on fixed incomes, particularly in York Region, are ?being disproportionately affected by rising household costs,? according to Julie Ralph, a member of Blue Door's Board of Directors and Governance Committee.

?This funding has allowed Blue Door to invest directly in our Forward program, our program for transitional housing designed to support senior men in accessing safe, dignified housing, but while addressing the real barriers related to mobility, health and accessibility,? said Ralph. ?With the support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation and work completed by MPS Property Services, we have been able to make important upgrades to the Forward property to improve both safety and quality of life for residents. We are deeply grateful to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for investing in solutions that promote stability, dignity and long-term housing outcomes.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter