Construct?s success story celebrated by Provincial leaders as program continues growth

The Aurora-based Construct, a social enterprise of Blue Door, was in the spotlight last week when area MPPs visited the program on Earl Stewart Drive to see how some much-needed Provincial dollars resulted in some significant dividends for the community.

On Thursday, Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy was joined by fellow MPP Caroline Mulroney to learn more about how two Provincial grants totalling $400,000 have had real community results.

?Blue Door plays a vital role in supporting some of the most vulnerable members of our community,? said MPP Gallagher Murphy. ?I'm proud that our government, through the Ontario Trillium Foundation, has invested $400,000 to help Blue Door strengthen its services and expand emergency housing for youth. These grants are helping ensure that people in York Region have access to safe shelter and the resources they need for their personal growth.?

With the grants, Blue Door was able to bring on a Human Resources Coordinator and a Resource Development Manager, roles which have allowed the organization to ?stabilize operations, support existing staff, and ensure Blue Door's sustainability.?

?While the pandemic was hard on us all, even more so on the nonprofit sector and the vulnerable people we serve,? said Michael Braithwaite, CEO, Blue Door. ?We are so grateful for the incredible support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation as it's allowed our organization to remain strong and resilient for the thousands of individuals that depend on Blue Door for housing, health and employment services across the region.?

The grant allowing them to bring on fundraising staff resulted in a return of more than $6.4 million raised for the organization, Braithwaite told The Auroran following the visit.

?Their Resilience fund was really built to help non-profits who do important work like Blue Door get through these tougher times after COVID and their investment did exactly that: not only did we get through it, but we are thriving ? and what that means, more importantly, is that people are getting the services they need in a time of great need. We're grateful for the partnership for that, the foresight, in helping to prop it up. With their capital fund, that $200,000 they gave for us to develop Kevin's Place, the new housing piece there, really helped kick-start that work to get rolling and get off the ground and get us some momentum.?

Thursday's visit was also a chance for Blue Door to highlight the Construct program, which helps clients who might be experiencing homelessness or other setbacks to be trained in the skilled trades and find jobs within various industries.

Just recently, Construct celebrated the graduation of its first eight-member all-female cohort, which Braithwaite says was one of the ?most successful cohorts we've ever had.?

Another success story coming out of Earl Stewart Drive is the expansion of the Construct program itself.

While Blue Door has also been operating Construct in Peel and Durham Regions, they have now expanded to the West Niagara Area and have worked with the YMCA to run Construct out of Halifax.

?It would be Construct and the core principle of getting people into the trades, but they will tweak it to meet their community's needs,? Braithwaite explains. ?It is neat to see Construct expanding, which started in our little spot in Aurora, now expanding to Niagara and all the way to Halifax.

?This has always been about having the greatest impact. It's not about Blue Door ? we have something that works, that's impactful, that stops poverty in its tracks, and actually gets people ahead. We want to share that and scale it. It's super-cool to see that across the country this model can work and it all started here in Aurora. It's a nice testament to our community getting behind something and now other communities can take and grow that impact across the country, not only with [addressing poverty] but to build a workforce to build more homes across Canada that we desperately need.?

By Brock Weir