

New, More Accessible, Housing-Focused Emergency Services for Homeless Montrealers

Montreal, December 16, 2020 – With the arrival of the cold weather and the sanitary measures in place due to the pandemic, the Old Brewery Mission has stepped up its efforts to keep every homeless Montrealer safe and healthy by emphasizing new, low-barrier services* and access to permanent housing.

“The pandemic has brought to light the precarious situation that homeless people are in. For them, it’s a crisis within a crisis,” explained **James Hughes**, President and CEO of the Old Brewery Mission and Co-Chair of the Canadian Shelter Transformation Network. “The ultimate goal of our winter emergency measures is to make sure that every person who walks through our doors in the next few months either has permanent housing or is in the process of finding it. Adequate housing protects people from the cold and from COVID-19. But more important than that, it’s essential to restoring their sense of dignity and making them feel like they’re valued members of our community who have something to contribute.”

New Housing Options at the Saint-Laurent Campus

Located just a few steps away from Old Montreal, the Mission’s Saint-Laurent Campus is the hub for its homelessness programs and services. It is made up of:

- **149 beds** for men at the Webster Pavilion (915 Clark), including **five beds** reserved for people in need of a low-barrier option. Residents can stay around the clock, making it the only resource of its kind in Quebec to offer 24/7 emergency services focused on rapid rehousing and psychosocial support.
- **35 beds** for men diagnosed with severe physical or mental health problems at the Webster Pavilion, in partnership with the CIUSSS du Centre-Sud-de-l’Île-de-Montréal.
- **14 beds** for men who have tested negative for COVID-19, but whose symptoms are being monitored and who must quarantine.
- **29 studio apartments** for men at the Marcelle and Jean Coutu Pavilion

Warming Centre and Overnight Respite Site

Since December 1, the Old Brewery Mission’s Café Mission Keurig (906 boul. Saint-Laurent) has been transformed into a warming centre and overnight respite site, providing homeless people with a new low-barrier option where they can safely stay.

- Open seven nights a week, it can take in up to 25 people at a time. To meet the growing need for this service, the Mission has also started using its adjacent cafeteria, bringing the total to 55 people.
- People have access to a shower and computers. Soup, sandwiches and coffee are served by the Mission’s front-line staff, who are also trained in crisis intervention.
- Pets are also welcome.

According to **Émilie Fortier**, Director of Services at the Mission’s Saint-Laurent Campus, the warming centre and low-barrier services are an important addition to the winter emergency measures. “The warming centre is designed to meet the needs of homeless people who tend to avoid shelters with very strict rules. Often, people with undiagnosed physical and mental health

* Services that relax the rules and procedures that would typically limit access by clients with more complex substance abuse and mental health issues. This generally means that there are few or no admission criteria, and that people can access these services while intoxicated.

problems fall through the cracks. However, by providing them with a safe, welcoming place with few barriers to service access, we create an opportunity to start a conversation, build trust, and introduce them to services that can help them get off the street.”

The warming centre at Café Mission Keurig is also where the Old Brewery Mission’s intervention workers will screen for potential candidates for the managed alcohol program at the former Royal Victoria Hospital, which will start in January; it will be run by intervention workers from the Mission and a team from the CIUSSS du Centre-Sud-de-l’île-de-Montréal.

200 Beds at Former Royal Victoria Hospital and COVID-19 Isolation Unit

To give homeless people a safe place to quarantine, the Old Brewery Mission has opened an isolation centre at the former Royal Victoria Hospital, in partnership with the City of Montreal, public health authorities, and other homeless-serving agencies. This centre minimizes the risk of the virus spreading among Montreal’s homeless population and to the community at large. Nearly 200 beds are available there for homeless men and women, including about 40 beds for those awaiting screening results or who have tested positive for COVID-19, and 160 for individuals participating in the Transition to Housing program.

Solidaribus: Shuttle Bus Service at the Heart of the Winter Protocol

This year, the STM generously agreed to loan the Mission a bus, which has been converted into the Solidaribus. Since late November, it has been providing regular shuttle services for homeless people to emergency shelters and the various intake services, including the overflow unit at Hôtel Place Dupuis, and after the metro stations close for the night. With a worker from the Mission on board, this bus provides safe transport for over 100 people each night who need a safe place to stay warm, rest and access support services. The Solidaribus is a welcome addition to the Mission’s regular shuttle, which has been operating for several years now.

Programs Focused on Rapid Rehousing

The Old Brewery Mission’s programs are designed to ensure that periods of homelessness are as brief as possible, to enable people to quickly stabilize their situation and find safe, affordable and permanent housing. The Mission is looking to expand its offering of 322 housing options and continues to work with its partners to transform winter emergency measures into sustainable housing solutions.

About the Old Brewery Mission

Founded in 1889, the Old Brewery Mission is the largest resource for homeless men in Quebec and for homeless women in Canada. It offers a wide range of progressive programs and services to fight chronic homelessness, including improved emergency services, housing and psychosocial support, and physical and mental health programs. The Mission also conducts research and outreach initiatives that contribute to a better understanding of homelessness as a societal problem that can be resolved. To know more: oldbrewerymission.ca

– 30 –

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