

GOOD WORK NEWS

The Working Centre, 58 Queen St. S. Kitchener, ON N2G 1V6

Issue 163

December 2025

Subscription: A Donation Towards our Work

Inside This Issue:

- St. John's Kitchen: A 40 Year Journey
- Welcoming Community at the 97 Victoria Open House
- Finding Heart and Humility at St. John's Kitchen
- The Work at 87 Victoria
- Building Community: By the Numbers
- Queen St. Commons Cafe is Re-opening
- Annual Fundraising Letter



St. John's Kitchen: A 40 Year Journey

By Stephanie Mancini

It has been a long journey since Wednesday October 31, 1984. That was the day, during a late afternoon meeting held by the Core Area Ministry Committee, when a decision was made to develop a downtown community meal service. The discussions that resulted in St. John's Kitchen had been going on for more than a year. Churches and social services were recognizing that many people living in the downtown struggled to access a daily meal.

The momentum for this idea meant the project came together quickly. A plan was formed based on The Working Centre's experience of operating the Unemployed Worker's Centre that we had run out of the St. John's Anglican Church's gymnasium since January 1983. Rev. Cy Ladds and the wardens at St. John's Anglican Church agreed to continue renting to The Working Centre. The next step was preparing the kitchen to meet fire and health codes. In the meantime, we visited Sr. Christine's meal service in Guelph to learn more about serving a daily meal with donated food.

During these early years, The Working Centre was also running a small drop-in centre at 94A Queen Street South, above the offices of Global Community Centre. When we started there was a focus on unemployed auto workers who were being laid off from major auto parts

St. John's Kitchen opened officially in January of 1985 and is now a 40+ year tradition of offering meals and a place of welcome in downtown Kitchener. What started as a community collaboration, continues as place of radical inclusion.

companies like Budd Automotive and Lear Siegler, but soon we met people living in downtown rooming houses, youth needing work, people struggling with job searching and significant health issues, frustrated unemployed workers whose families were falling apart. Soon Maria George, who was part of the original Working Centre group started bringing sandwiches to the centre to share. We were learning that the economy with 19% interest rates was leaving people at the margins with few options for work and even less money for basic food. By the end of the summer of 1982, Maria George had advocated with the downtown churches about the importance of a place to offer free meals in downtown Kitchener.

This was the context for the October 31st meeting of the downtown churches where they agreed to support The Working Centre in opening St. John's

continued on page 4

Welcoming Community at the 97 Victoria Open House

From September 25th to 27th The Working Centre welcomed the community to walk through and tour the 97 Victoria Making Home project. 900 people came over the three days with 700 people taking tours of the facility through the new St. John's Kitchen, the public washrooms, showers, laundry area, the new medical clinic and the dorm units on the second floor. Tour guides from The Working Centre described how all these interconnected projects fit together to create a place of belonging and service. The wide interest in 97 Victoria demonstrated how this project harnessed government, business and community commitment to create an outstanding facility that will provide basic services to those most left out.

See more photos on Page 3

DONATE TO SUPPORT OUR WORK



Read our fundraising letter on Page 8. Your generous support helps us build community.

If you would like to make a contribution, please visit: donate.theworkingcentre.org

Celebrating Community Building Work

In this issue of Good Work News, we invite you into a visual reflection of the journey of the past few months. We celebrated the completion of the 97 Victoria Making Home project, and hosted the wider community into the space. We celebrated St. John's Kitchen at St. John's Church during our Thanksgiving dinner, and then dove into the work of moving to 97 Victoria. We celebrated the opening of St. John's Kitchen in its new home. Thanks to Doug MacLellan who spent time documenting this journey and the people and places that make St. John's Kitchen a place of belonging and supports.

Forty-First Year

Issue 163

December 2025

Good Work News

Good Work News was first produced in September 1984. It is published four times a year by The Working Centre and St. John's Kitchen as a forum of opinions and ideas on work and unemployment. Four issues of Good Work News constitutes our annual report. There is a circulation of 13,000 copies. Subscription: a donation towards our work.

Editors: Joe Mancini, Stephanie Mancini

Contributors: Douglas MacLellan, JP Smola, Joanna Miller, AJ Mbohi, Liam Epps, Isaiah Ritzmann, Ayman Eldesouky, Rebecca Mancini, Christina Mancini

Editorial comments, changes of address and new subscriptions should be directed to:

The Working Centre
58 Queen St. S., Kitchener, Ontario, N2G 1V6
Phone: (519) 743-1151 • Fax: (519) 743-3840
Email: donations@theworkingcentre.org
Web: www.theworkingcentre.org
Canada Post Bulk #05306256
Charitable Registration #13092 9607 RR0001



37th Annual Mayors' Dinner

The Working Centre is pleased to announce the 37th Mayors' Dinner

Places of Inclusion – The Heart of Belonging

Saturday, April 11th, 2026

The Mayors' Dinner draws together an interesting and diverse group of friends and community members to celebrate outstanding community contributions and reflect on important social issues

We invite you to become involved by purchasing tickets, sponsorships, a community table for your group, company or church

For more details, please contact us at:
519.743.1151 x119 | mayorsdinner@theworkingcentre.org



Hockey Helps the Homeless
Raises Over \$352,000

On Friday, October 24th, 2025, Waterloo Region celebrated their 12th year of Hockey Helps the Homeless. The tournament was a huge success and we are thrilled to announce that we will be granting \$352,000+ to our local beneficiaries!

Beneficiaries include: Cambridge Shelter, YW Kitchener-Waterloo, oneROOF Youth Services, Starling Community Services, House of Friendship, and The Working Centre

The Working Centre thanks everyone who played such an important part in the event. Whether you were a player, a sponsor, a donor, or a volunteer, we could not have achieved what we did without you.



Below are photos of the Waterloo Region HHtH organizing committee holding a meeting at Fresh Ground. The committee is led by Rob Way. It is involved with securing sponsorships, developing a media campaign, collecting donations for the on-line auction and organizing the October tournament. This year the tournament's 18 teams had 277 participating players who raise money for their team with the Pillar's team raising the most at \$46,435, the Power Workers Union team at \$45,000 and the WalterFedy team at \$18,741. Thank you to everyone who works hard to make this tournament so successful.



What A Night at The Odd Duck

The Odd Duck fundraiser was a wonderful success. Thank you to all who attended. The energy in the room — the laughter, the stories, the care — reminded us that community begins in simple acts of sharing. The generosity of the night helped shine a light on what makes The Working Centre unique: the everyday, hands-on work of hospitality, resourcefulness, and dignity. We had so many conversations on the depth and scope of the work — Housing and Shelter, St. John's Kitchen and Outreach, Work and Livelihood, and Community Tools and Enterprise — and how they weave together to form a network of belonging and purpose.



We're especially grateful to our friends at Odd Duck, whose thoughtful approach to food and hospitality elevated the evening in beautiful, intentional ways. Their care in crafting the experience reflected the same values that guide the work we do each day.

The Diploma in Local Democracy



Begins January 7th, 2026

“Democratic relationships in everyday life form the roots of a democratic society.”

Together we reflect on our own experiences of democracy and think about what it means to include people in the decisions that affect their lives, what practicing reciprocity looks like, and why everyday equality is necessary for a democratic future.

Come participate in a dynamic and diverse discussion with engaged community members.

We welcome you to join us!

The class runs Wednesdays 7pm - 9pm
from January until the end of April.

Contact us at: waterlooschool@theworkingcentre.org

Welcoming Community at the 97 Victoria Open House



Our first Open House on September recognized and thanked the 300 donors who contributed to Making Home. Craig Beattie, CEO, of Perimeter Development hosted the event. We recognized how Perimeter Development shepherded this project in on-time and on-budget, joining with us every step of the way.

The Honourable Bardish Chagger, MP recognized the many Federal Housing and Green Infrastructure grants that supported the project. Karen Redman, Regional Chair spoke of the Region of Waterloo's contribution through the Rapid Housing Initiative. Mayor Berry Vrbancovic recognized how 97 Victoria and St. John's Kitchen will continue to be important services in downtown Kitchener. Carol Taylor, President of Working Centre Board, acknowledged our gratitude for the many donors to Making Home. Jim Hallman of Lyle S. Hallman Foundation spoke on behalf of the donors who made this project possible.



At the September 25th Open House Andy Macpherson led a jazz ensemble. The Fresh Ground catering team provided samples of the new Fresh Ground catering menu as part of the donor Open House. For the Saturday Open House, Carol Taylor was joined by members of Acoustic Steel as they filled the space with cheer.

Thank You for Your Support!



Terry and Donna Cousineau have long been making a generous donation to St. John's Kitchen. Last year to celebrate their joint 80th birthday, they made a donation to St. John's Kitchen as a positive way to respond to the reality of growing homelessness. It was special when they came to the 97 Victoria Open House and made another donation to our work.



Just before the Open House at 97 Victoria, Paul and Colleen Bulla with Elsie and Nathan dropped by to see the new space and to drop off a \$6000 cheque for St. John's Kitchen. In this photo Joe Mancini is with Paul, Colleen and Nathan in front of the new kitchen and serving area. We are appreciative of our long connection with Bullafest. This donation is from the proceeds of the 22nd annual Bullafest fundraiser they host in their backyard!



We were so pleased that Fitwi and Terhas, owners of the Fairway Road Swiss Chalet franchise came to the 97 Victoria Open House to see the new St. John's Kitchen. Fitwi and Terhas have been organizing with the other Swiss Chalet's in town to donate 500 Swiss Chalet chicken dinners on Christmas Eve for many years. This holiday gift is always appreciated by the St. John's Kitchen community.

MAKING HOME CAMPAIGN DONORS AND CONTRIBUTORS

\$12 MILLION IN GRANTS

- | | |
|---|--|
| Rapid Housing Initiative 3
- Government of Canada & Region of Waterloo | Ontario Trillium Foundation |
| Green and Inclusive Community Buildings
- Government of Canada | Enabling Accessibility Fund
- Government of Canada |
| | Federation of Canadian Municipalities - Green Municipal Fund |

\$10 MILLION IN COMMUNITY DONATIONS

- | | |
|--|---|
| Lyle S. Hallman Foundation | Audi - Crosby Volkswagen |
| Diocese of Hamilton | Joseph Balan & Associates at Co-operators |
| Perimeter Development | Doon Presbyterian Church |
| The Savvas Chamberlain Family Foundation | Paul & Janet Dullaert |
| Auburn Developments | Marlene Epp & Paul Born |
| Cowan | Randall Howard & Judy McMullen |
| Fairmount Foundation | Libro Credit Union |
| Definity Insurance Foundation | Debbie Lowes |
| Mike & Kelly Peasgood | Margaret Motz |
| Strassburger Windows and Doors | Ontario Realtors Care Foundation |
| Vive Development & Woodhouse Group | Anne & Grant Roberts |
| Bob & Judy Astley | Unifor Social Justice Fund |
| BNKC Architects | Wells Resolutions |
| Janzen Foundation | Peter Woolstencroft |
| Krug Furniture | 255 donors who together contributed \$100,000 |
| Midtown Counselling & Midtown Rehab | |
| MTE | |

CONTRIBUTING PROJECT PARTNERS

- BNKC Architects | Delta Elevator | Govan Brown | MTE
Perimeter Development | Strassburger Windows and Doors



On October 9th, we celebrated our time together with St. John's Church with a special homemade Thanksgiving meal, welcoming 400 people. The meal was made at Maurita's Kitchen with the help of many volunteers and included 900 pounds of turkey, mashed potatoes, gravy, and pies! It was reminiscent of St. John's Kitchen in its early years. The photos above show the huge effort from staff and volunteers to prepare, serve and clean up the meal. It is a beautiful tradition that takes the bounty of our community and serves it generously.



At the end of the day on October 30th the end-of-day cleanup of the daily meal at St. John's Church began, and the move to the new space started. We have been grateful for the way St. John's Church welcomed us over the past 2 years, adapting around the complexities that have arisen, and joining us in offering hospitality and welcome to the people of St. John's Kitchen. We cannot thank St. John's Anglican Church enough for offering St. John's Kitchen a place for serving our daily meal while our new location was under construction.



Friday October 31st marked the first day in our new building. It was 41 years to the day that the idea of St. John's Kitchen became a project. On the first day before the doors opened the SJK team got together in a circle to reflect on the work. Over 300 people came, and they stayed and chatted together in the open and bright space. It was special to see the new space become like home in such a short span of time. Everyone worked hard to get oriented to the new space and to be a welcoming presence. October 31st was Halloween and dressing up added to this special day. Within a week, St. John's Kitchen had fully moved into the new space like it had been there for years!

St. John's Kitchen: A 40 Year Journey

continued from page 1

Kitchen, with each of the churches making a commitment of funds to get us started. St. John's Kitchen opened officially in January of 1985 and is now a 40+ year tradition of offering meals and a place of welcome in downtown Kitchener. What started as a community collaboration, continues as place of radical inclusion.

Now, fast-forward 41 years to October 31, 2025. This is the day we opened the newly built space for St. John's Kitchen at 97 Victoria. There was the mad scramble of preparedness that came before the doors opened, but when opening day arrived, it was a beautiful site to see. Some 300 people walked through the doors that day. Some moved directly to orient themselves and access resources or food or washrooms. Many people sat down and stayed to talk, to eat, to just relax. The story of St. John's Kitchen has led us through the years as we have watched the increasing dislocation created by loss of work, and now the deep devastation of the loss of housing and shelter in the midst of a drug epidemic. St. John's Kitchen has played its role as a place-keeper, holding space for people who are often those most left behind in our changing times. St. John's Church has stood with us in this place-keeping tradition – first, hosting us for 20 years in their church gym, and then welcoming us back during the construction of the new home for St. John's Kitchen at 97 Victoria.

Earlier in October, we celebrated the opening of 97 Victoria in a series of open houses with all the people who contributed to make it happen, and the people who support us in the work of The Working Centre. What joy as we marked together the work of so many people who helped to make this space possible, and learned of all the good work that happens in and through St. John's Kitchen. We marked this as a place of hope in the midst of much hardship.

One week in the new space, we are finding our balance, continuing to provide welcome to up to 400 people a day. One day we were on the hunt for people to help us load beds into the 97 Victoria housing units as we got ready to open this space. One person arrived to help who had a strong body. Two days earlier he had been experiencing an episode that left him so outside himself, we had involved police in helping to reduce the harm to himself and others. This day, he was helping us to move beds into our building and expressing gratitude to be included – he used to be a mover and he had good experience to share. He was included. We were as grateful for the reminder to do this work together, as we were by the work of moving heavy bed frames.

Another tale we heard of this

It is this kindness, practiced daily that is the magic of St. John's Kitchen. Focusing on moral beauty is a choice, a practice of daily living.

moving journey was from the day before we moved to 97 Victoria. We were moving supplies from St. John's Church to 97 Victoria. This would be on the last day before people accessed their monthly social assistance cheque, a day when all the money has run out and people are most anxious to receive supports. The kindness of St. John's Kitchen was noticed by the team helping with the move – every request stopped the progress of the move, was received kindly, and people were helped.

It is this kindness, practiced daily that is the magic of St. John's Kitchen. Focusing on moral beauty is a choice, a practice of daily living. A group of us recently listened together to a podcast by Christiana Figueres on Outrage and Optimism, where Kate Raworth encourages us to be part of "creating the conditions conducive to life". As a community we have the ability to welcome people into warm spaces, to provide enough shelter, to create new housing, to create the conditions conducive to life.

We are walking into a winter where we will continue to stand witness to the harsh realities of people experiencing homelessness, people living unsheltered through the harsh winter months. Recently we responded to a fire in an encampment, supporting the people whose fragile shelter was rapidly destroyed, as we outfitted them with new equipment, treated burn wounds, but also mourned the loss and walked through the trauma of this disruption. As colder weather comes and people work to stay warm, these tragedies increase in number.

Every beautiful act of kindness in our work is also underlined by the grief that knows we have the power needed to create the conditions conducive to life, the capacity to recognize people as full members of our community – and yet people remain in inhumane living conditions.

One of our team members reflected that we are witness to many acts of moral beauty in our work, helping a person at a time, but also being embedded in the wider web of the Working Centre community, a growing group of people acting in to make good work possible.

We recognize at this time of year all the people who contribute to this community – the people who work daily to stand in hope, the volunteers who make the many small and big acts of daily caring possible, the many donors who share resources to make this frugal and abundant work possible. We stand together in witness, in determination, in hope.

Finding Heart and Humility at St. John's Kitchen

By Joanna Miller

One might say that my placement at St. John's Kitchen began by wonderful happenstance, while others might attribute a more Divine intervention to it. As a pastor in Waterloo Region, I had been asked by TWC to help lead memorial services and I was grateful to be able to be able to help them in that way. Somehow, we made the jump from memorials to my upcoming need to find a placement...

You see, in the height of the Covid-19 pandemic I decided to go back to school. My job wasn't necessarily at risk, but I had an inkling that the pandemic would hasten the changes that were already occurring in both church and society. So, I decided to learn how to be a therapist to compliment the work I was already doing. And thus began four years of part-time, post-graduate studies.

As a result, in May of 2024, I began a year-long clinical placement at The Working Centre. A practicum placement is a requirement for the master's degree with a specialty in spiritual care and psychotherapy from Martin Luther University College (or "Luther" as we call it, affiliated with Wilfrid Laurier). Most of my peers became intern therapists at agencies around southwestern Ontario, where they had scheduled, standard length appointments with clients who had sought out therapy. My placement was different.

Thanks to the willingness of TWC to try something new, professors who saw the potential, and my clinical supervisor who was game for outside-the-box learning opportunities, this placement unfolded before me. We were all excited about the possibility of bringing access to psychotherapeutic care within closer reach of our community members.

In the beginning, I spent all my time at St. John's Kitchen; first, serving coffee to get to know the community and later, milling about the dining room as I sat with folks and engaged them in conversation. As my placement progressed, I also spent time working within one of TWC's housing projects.

At first, my job was to be present, to get to know folks, to become a face they recognized. In time, as people began to trust me, I developed relationships with community members who would seek me out to give me updates, to check in, to continue conversations we had begun previously. Some of those conversations developed into scheduled appointments where we met as therapist and client.

I can hardly express the richness of this experience for me. It was the most profound honour to hear people's stories; to be trusted to listen as they recounted their pain and joy, their trials and

I am profoundly grateful for the opportunity to have done my practicum placement in this way. First, to be able to provide this service to folks for whom access to therapy is difficult is meaningful and important... Even more, I was grateful for the learning I did, for the relationships I found there, and for the ways my heart was touched.

achievements. I heard stories of heartache and frustration, stories of hope and resilience. Time and time again, I reflected back to people their strength and resilience. It is inspiring that people can be so strong and heartbreaking that they have need to be.

One of the unexpected gifts of my time with TWC was the relationships I built with staff members. The staff who serve at St. John's Kitchen are among the most wonderful humans I have encountered. They have the most beautiful hearts. They model so many traits I aspire to – compassion, humility, gentleness, grace. They are courageous, often running toward situations that most of us would run from. Perhaps most of all, they are deeply committed; they understand their work to be a gift and a privilege. I cannot fully articulate the respect and admiration I have for these folk – they taught me so much when they had no idea I was watching.

I am profoundly grateful for the opportunity to have done my practicum placement in this way. First, to be able to provide this service to folks for whom access to therapy is difficult is meaningful and important. Making an appointment with a therapist can be a daunting process for those of us with all kinds of privilege and supports, it is even harder for those with extra barriers and challenges. Even more, I was grateful for the learning I did, for the relationships I found there, and for the ways my heart was touched.

While there is not currently another Luther practicum student at TWC, I hope that my placement is the beginning of something bigger and better. I hope that through this process we all learned something about what is possible; that my school learned about the value of creative placements that serve the community in meaningful ways and that TWC found affirmation in their willingness to try a new thing.

I offer my deepest and most heartfelt thanks to everyone who made my placement possible, but mostly... to the folks who sat down with me, who shared pieces of themselves and their stories with me. I will be forever grateful for your courage and trust. Know that I continue to carry you all in my heart.

The Work at 87 Victoria




Perhaps the hardest issues we faced as we started construction for the 97 Victoria Making Home project was finding a new place to host St. John's Kitchen. It was a complete blessing when St. John's Anglican Church readily agreed to welcome St. John's Kitchen back to their space at 23 Water Street.

We also knew how important it was to continue a presence for the 100 Vic encampment just across the street. First, the residents at the 87V Hospitality House moved to our Water Street House to get away from disruption of construction. Next, we renovated and rearranged the 87 Victoria house to provide washrooms, showers, laundry, harm reduction, a drop-in area and a small servery for serving food and drinks.

Throughout the two years of construction, we called 87 Victoria – Little John (as opposed to Big John at St. John's Church). This created an accessible warming centre as we split the St. John's Kitchen team between both locations, offering this place of refuge. At one point we even stayed open all night to help people endure the coldest nights of the year. 87 Victoria was a small haven offering kind and compassionate support – a true mission of generosity.

The photos reflect the small servery area, a group photo of volunteers and staff, volunteers doing dishes and mopping the floor. The middle photos show the work that was done in September to remove the front access ramp and return the building back into the Hospitality House as the new St. John's Kitchen opened. Presently the house is being renovated to add 8 bedrooms to continue its work as a Hospitality House. We will soon have updates on how this house will contribute to the Making Home campus of supports.

Here at SJK we practice:

- Deep hospitality, kindness and generosity
- Working together to share resources and make the space work for everyone
- Enabling everyone to feel safe and accepted

Text
519-577-2179

to volunteer or email us @
Volunteer@theworkingcentre.org

ST. JOHN'S KITCHEN

Volunteers Needed


We have recently moved into our newly renovated space and are looking for volunteers to help us in our new space

Volunteering activities include:

- Dishwashing
- Servicing food
- Prepping meals and desserts
- Dining room care

We're open Monday to Friday, 9:00 AM – 4:30 PM.
Stay for an hour or the whole day—every minute helps!

Located at 97 Victoria, Kitchener



BUILDING COMMUNITY: BY THE NUMBERS



The Working Centre is an integral part of the social service fabric of Kitchener-Waterloo. Our integrated projects create access to tools for those without work, those without housing and the most vulnerable - a web of community building. We build hospitable and welcoming places where community forms and people find belonging, practical supports and ways to contribute.

- 13,000 Receive Good Work News
- 3,000 Donors
- 400 Volunteers
- 150 Employed at TWC
- 100+ Community Partners
- 30 Projects
- 16 Properties

ST. JOHN'S KITCHEN & OUTREACH



The heart of this web is the 40 years of serving a daily meal at St. John's Kitchen. We provide an integrated web of supports for people experiencing homelessness, addiction, and mental health challenges, who are living on a very limited income. We work to build relationships of trust and support access to services.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 100,000 Meals served | 800 People supported by street outreach services |
| 5,300 Wellness check-ins | 203 People served at community dental |
| 3,197 Legal and court service supports | 11 Volunteer dentists |
| 2,000 Wound care treatments | |
| 1,000 Mobile crisis supports | |

HOUSING & SHELTER



We work to build and create new affordable and supportive housing opportunities, to preserve existing affordable housing, and to support low-barrier shelter options. Housing and Shelter are an important basic need.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 375 People served in shelter | 44 Units of transitional housing |
| 75 People who found housing from shelter | 12 People in dry house |
| 70 Total housing units | 11 People in health-based transitional housing |
| 118 People in twc housing | 8 New units of health based housing |
| 50 People in shelter cabins | 7 People in refugee house |
| 34 Women/children in QSA housing | |

WORK & LIVELIHOOD



The Job Search Resource Centre at 58 Queen is a hub for work, financial problem-solving and livelihood related issues. Our Money Matters Hub connects people with a Financial Inclusion Outreach Worker for assistance with income tax, budgeting, community resources, government support programs, and problem solving.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 18,000 Visitors to the Job Search Resource Centre (JSRC) | 17 Languages spoken by our JSRC team |
| 50 Volunteers at JSRC | 5,054 Income tax returns filed |
| 4,000 People supported in searching for work | \$19,081,807 Income secured through income tax support |
| 49 Job Café workers shared \$75,000 in earnings | 1,864 Total benefit applications filed |

COMMUNITY TOOLS & ENTERPRISE



Community Tools projects are practical and productive examples of enterprise that seek to make daily living more affordable and cooperative. We serve the common good through skill building and to provide access to tools for those not able to participate in the larger economy. The main work of regeneration happens through re-use, repurposing and creating goods and services.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1,000 Plants at Fresh Ground events & catering space | 3,100 Volunteer hours at Recycle Cycles |
| 150 Delicious plant-based recipes | 600 Bikes donated |
| 3,515 Kilograms of electronic waste recycled | 650 Bikes refurbished and recycled |
| 505 Computers refurbished | 160+ Volunteers at our Community Tools Projects |
| 4,225 Items sold at Worth A Second Look | |

Queen Street Commons Cafe is Re-opening in January



We are so excited to announce the return of the Queen Street Commons Café. 2026 will mark the 20th anniversary of when QSC first opened its doors and we look forward to a year of celebrations to mark this moment.

The Queen St Commons has been a cornerstone of downtown Kitchener, offering delicious food, warming drinks

and an inclusive meeting place where people from all walks of life can gather. We intentionally keep our pricing as affordable and our menu diverse to ensure that all are welcome. As people, we understand one another more when we know each other and build on ways to engage and be together. We enjoy good food, good conversation and come together for community events, celebrations, discussions and more.

Queen Street Commons has been closed since the pandemic began in 2020, and when The Working Centre shifted focus to the growing reality of homelessness in our community. Our efforts resulted in the establishment of 230 shelter beds offered at three 24/7 shelters and adding almost 100 units of deeply affordable housing. As we started the process of reopening the QSC, we were confronted with significant building code issues related to washrooms and fire ratings. We have taken time to ensure that the space is well built and ready to be a place of welcome for many people. At long last, we are ready to re-open!

These renovations mean that the Queen Street Commons is going to look very different, but it will still be the place that many of us have known and loved. We invite everyone to come and help us to rebuild the spirit of the QSC. It is the people that make the place come alive and we hope that you will join us!

The QSC is supported by volunteers, who come together to ensure that this community spot flourishes. Along the way, people learn work skills, practice English, meet others and build community together. We welcome people to sign up for shifts, no experience is necessary.

Keep watch on our website and social media for updates! We look forward to seeing you.



We want to wholeheartedly thank Trinity United Church that has made a \$50,000 contribution towards start up costs for opening Queen Street Commons Cafe. This donation is in recognition of the Queen Street Commons long history of providing an inclusive community space. We appreciate this investment into community. In the photo Dave Rutherford is presenting the cheque to Stephanie and Joe Mancini.



Fresh Ground Events & Catering

Catering

Fresh Ground is offering a catering menu of plant based and vegetarian offerings, including many of our classic favourites from Queen Street Commons. Made in our Fresh Ground Kitchen, each meal is made with the help of many from the hands of volunteers, people who are learning kitchen skills, practicing English, and celebrating the joy of preparing food together. Please email us at freshground@theworkingcentre.org for more information.

Event Space Rental

Our Fresh Ground Café offers a multi-use space that is ideal for hosting gatherings of people, including meetings, small parties, concerts, workshops, retreat days, book readings, and community gatherings.



A plant filled oasis in downtown Kitchener, the space can be set up to suit your event and includes a range of audiovisual equipment, including projectors, screens, online conferencing, and sound.

Catering is also available and can be customized to offer a delicious selection that complements your event. Options are included in our catering menu and we encourage you to reach out to explore.



The space is available for bookings and is offered at a sliding scale rate. Please email us at freshground@theworkingcentre.org to explore options.

Fresh Ground is located at 256 King St. E in Kitchener, steps from the Kitchener Market.



Worth A Second Look Holiday Event at 37 Market Lane

On Saturday November 15th Worth A Second Look held a holiday event curated by 11 volunteers who used their skills and creativity to set up displays both inside the store and outside around the store. The event was held on the same day as the Santa Claus parade. Even though it was rainy and cold, over 700 people visited the store. Over 800 items were sold including 100 larger items such as furniture, musical instruments, bed frames and mattresses. Many visitors found us on our social media and we asked everyone to follow us for updates. The atmosphere was filled with holiday joy, and warm hearts. It was helped along by the team spirit of the volunteers who were ready to help the community of people who visited the store.



37 Market Lane in Kitchener
Tuesday – Friday: 9am – 5pm
Saturday: 9am – 4pm

www.theworkingcentre.org/projects/worth-a-second-look



Dilexi Te

Pope Leo's call to reflect on the Preferential Option for those most marginalized.

91. Charity has the power to change reality; it is a genuine force for change in history. It is the source that must inspire and guide every effort to "resolve the structural causes of poverty," [91] and to do so with urgency.

87. "Today, furthermore, given the worldwide dimension which the social question has assumed, this love of preference for the poor, and the decisions which it inspires in us, cannot but embrace the immense multitudes of the hungry, the needy, the homeless, those without medical care and, above all, those without hope of a better future. It is impossible not to take account of the existence of these realities. To ignore them would mean becoming like the 'rich man' who pretended not to know the beggar Lazarus lying at his gate (cf. Lk 16:19-31)."

120. Christian love breaks down every barrier, brings close those who were distant, unites strangers, and reconciles enemies. It spans chasms that are humanly impossible to bridge, and it penetrates to the most hidden crevices of society. By its very nature, Christian love is prophetic: it works miracles and knows no limits. It makes what was apparently impossible happen. Love is above all a way of looking at life and a way of living it. A Church that sets no limits to love, that knows no enemies to fight but only men and women to love, is the Church that the world needs today.

Building Community with Your Support

This year, with your support, we continue to stand with people in important ways:



44 new transitional housing units built and developed at 97 Victoria



1,200+ people accessed meals at St. John's Kitchen each week



1500+ individuals received Work & Livelihood supports



75 people moved from shelter into more stable housing



The Working Centre's Free Income Tax Clinic helped 3887 individuals and families secure \$15,957,090 in benefits



Countless daily moments of safety, support, and human connection

Dear Friends,

It was heartening to welcome 800 people to the 97 Victoria Open Houses. While we celebrated the completion of construction, the stark realities of the struggles people face continue to weigh on us. Our community has so much to give, but the many challenges people face are ever present.

How do we respond when a couple at an encampment finds they are expecting a baby? What support can be found for their baby in the midst of such an emergency? Outreach work on the street is jarring. Our health workers provided wound care 1288 times last year to those without housing. This is service at its most basic need.

How do we support the many new Canadians who are struggling to find work now that the labour market is producing fewer jobs? How do we ensure workers can find the jobs they need, when the conditions for employment at every factory are tighter?


The Working Centre's housing projects are vital to our community. 375 different people were provided a bed in shelter last year. A further 120 people are living in 79 different housing units owned by The Working Centre.

97 Victoria will offer new dimensions of support. The addition of 44 units of purpose-built housing will support those most affected by homelessness. The work of housing stability is centred on helping people move past dislocation, addiction and complex health issues. Located in the heart of the St John's Kitchen hub of supports/ services, these 44 units of housing offer a chance to build and maintain housing and personal stability. The goal is working together to engage strengths and reinforce each person's ability to strive for stability.

The Job Search Resource Centre has become increasingly important for newcomers and refugees. Many face unique barriers to employment, such as, language hurdles, recognition of qualifications and delays in accessing income support. The practical job search supports are important to help build bridges toward stability and participation in community life.

For over 40 years, The Working Centre has been creating access to tools for those without work, those without housing and the most vulnerable—a web of community building. We have always welcomed those left out, offering belonging, practical supports, and ways to contribute. We all can feel the social fabric changing, and we are called to respond with renewed clarity and openness to engage the community further in this important work.

- Looking ahead, these are the paths we choose:
- Deepening our housing supports so that more people can move from being unsheltered/living in shelter to home.
 - Expanding the Work & Livelihood programs so that those we serve have tools and opportunities to contribute, grow, and regain dignity.
 - Strengthening opportunities for community connections: more shared spaces, more volunteers, more ways for people to feel part of this web of community building.
- Your donations help us support people with creative projects that respond to growing poverty and housing instability. Supporters of The Working Centre have proven, year after year, that community donations are a vital to response to local issues. We are grateful for your ongoing support in building our community of support.

Sincerely,


Joe Mancini,
Director

P.S. We share our quarterly newspaper Good Work News with our contributors. Learn more about our community-based initiatives by visiting our website at www.theworkingcentre.org

Donate to support The Working Centre

We now have more options for donating through our website. Please choose the donation method that works for you.

Donate online: theworkingcentre.org/donate

Your Gift Information:

- ☐ One-time donation
- ☐ Monthly donation
- ☐ \$50
- ☐ \$100
- ☐ \$250
- ☐ Other: _____

Payment Method:

- ☐ I donated online (thank you!)
- ☐ Cheque (payable to The Working Centre)
- ☐ E-transfer (call us at 519-743-1151 x111)
- ☐ Other: _____

Your Information:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Province: _____ Postal Code: _____

Email: _____

Phone (optional): _____

☐ I would like to receive email updates from The Working Centre, including Good Work News