

# IS MICRO HOUSING JUST A FAD, **OR IS IT THE FUTURE?**

OSHAWA - We are living in real sad times when our downtown and parks are being turned into make shift dormitories for those homeless. In a nation like Canada that cares about foreign affairs to the extend that gives millions and times billions to foreign countries. One has to wonder where the priorities lie. People are loosing their homes, drug abuse has hit an all time high. Mental health has become big business and those that need it the most can't afford. Our streets have been turned into zombie like states. You don't have to walk far to see the affects of substance abuse and neglect. Canadian standards have been lowered in the name of assisting foreign refugees and neglected Canadians.

People in Canada are going hungry every day and homeless. What is the solution? Some have called for the overhaul of our welfare system. Others are calling for the fast passing of laws against drug use. Unfortunately the current government is more interested in passing laws protecting the sale and distribution of cannabis the first step to drug addiction then it to safeguard against the by product of drug use. Homeless shelters are being over filled. Now governments are looking at "Micro Housing", as the answer. According to the National Association of Home Builders, in 2009 the size of the average North American home was two thousand seven hundred square feet. That means for a family of four there would be, on aver-

age, six hundred seventy-five square feet of living space per person. Based on these numbers, a single person living in just five hundred square feet (the size of several micro homes) sounds perfectly reasonable, in fact, it sounds like what many people are already accustomed to. Oh yeah, I forgot to mention the part about not being able to have a swimming pool, back yard, barbecue, tree house, tool shed, garage or anything else you would have outside of your home. Since most micro housing is being located in densely populated areas, the people that would live in them have already decided they don't need any of these things, or have found an acceptable alternative. However, if you look at the bigger picture it sounds like we are choosing to be packed like sardines into a can. Sociologist for the last decade have been warning us that humanity is about to face it's biggest challenge. That being over population. With over population you have the consideration of food, water and shelter to take into account. Sociologist have also been warning us that close proximity living will have serious impact on quality of life in general. The psychological aspects to living in such a small space could easily be found, just go to your local prison. A modern cell is just one hundred square feet and houses two inmates. In contrast, an NCO on a modern army base gets to share two hundred square feet with a bunk mate. Would people choose to live in these micro homes as the result of some deep seeded throwback to our caveman ancestors? Do they feel safer in a confined space from the saber tooth tiger that's lurking around outside? In NYC, approximately sixty thousand people applied to live in just eleven available units that are under construction on East 27th St. in Kips Bay, Manhattan. In the movie The Fifth Element, (released in 1997), the 23rd century New York City apartment that Bruce Willis's character occupied couldn't have been more than three hundred square feet. It had a bed that retracted into the wall, a shower that stacked on top of a full sized refrigerator and plenty of shelf space. Is that the direction we are heading, hundred story buildings packed to the gills



with people? The answer lies in a simple place, where the money is. If there is a profit to be made there will be funds available to grow the industry from eager investors looking for a percentage. Weather it takes off or not, only time will tell. Locally in Durham - The Regional Municipality of Durham will partner with Lakeridge Health, Ontario Tech University and Durham College on the Oshawa Micro-Housing Pilot Project. The Oshawa Micro-Housing Pilot Project is a 10-unit micro-home community in central Oshawa that will offer temporary transitional housing with various supports, including financial assistance, employment services, mental health and addictions supports, life skills teaching and more. Occupancy is projected for fall 2021. Lakeridge Health will contribute to the success of this pilot by ensuring program participants have access to community-based mental health and addiction supports. They will serve as health sector leaders on the planning working group to develop the support model for residents and will partner with Ontario Tech University and Durham College to create the evaluation plan of the pilot. The evaluation plan will be led by Dr. Tyler Frederick, associate professor at Ontario Tech University, who is partnering with the Region in-kind to develop this plan and apply for research funding. Dr. Frederick will be collaborating with Lorraine Closs, a professor in the School of Health and Community Services at Durham College, on the evaluation. Beyond the evaluation, the project also aims to explore best practices for stakeholder engagement and co-design as it relates to supportive housing in the Region. The Oshawa Micro-Housing Pilot Project is aligned with At Home In Durham, the Durham Housing Plan (2014-2024), which aims to end chronic homelessness in Durham.

Housing Pilot Project will help us move towards our goal of ending chronic homelessness in our community. This innovative, transitional housing will provide residents with the support they need to end their homelessness and obtain permanent housing, thanks in part to the partnerships with Lakeridge Health, Ontario Tech University and Durham College. Everyone deserves a place to call home." - Stella Danos-Papaconstantinou, Commissioner of Social Services. "Lakeridge Health is pleased to be part of this innovative pilot project. Through this partnership, we are helping address some of the social determinants of health including housing and access to critical mental health and addictions supports. By working collaboratively, we are helping to improve population health and fostering a healthier community." - Cynthia Davis, President and CEO, Lakeridge Health

"Housing stability plays a key role in enabling the growth of healthy, equitable and resilient communities and the well-being of individuals. Ontario Tech University is excited to collaborate with the Region of Durham and other community partners on the Oshawa Micro-Housing Pilot Project, which will offer life-changing support to some of the most vulnerable members of our community. Dr. Tyler Frederick's research expertise in the area of homelessness, combined with Lorraine Closs' experience, will provide important ideas and insights to move this project forward, while our students will receive hands-on learning opportunities that will prepare them to make a positive impact in the future." Dr. Les Jacobs, Vice-President, Research and Innovation, Ontario Tech University. Another pie in the sky project or will this be the magic bullet that will take care of the homeless needs. Time will tell.

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"The partnership between the Region and Lakeridge Health, Ontario Tech University and Durham College will support the success of the Oshawa Micro-Housing Pilot Project by ensuring participants have access to the supports and services they may need. No one should get left behind or fall through the cracks and, by working collaboratively with our community partners, we can end chronic homelessness in Durham Region." - John Henry, Regional Chair and Chief Executive Officer, Region of Durham "There is an urgent need for housing in Durham Region and the Oshawa Micro-