

# The Bridges

## Cambridge Shelter Corporation

Spring 2024

### IOB CREW ATTENDS LANDSCAPE ONTARIO CONGRESS

Cambridge Shelter Corporation's social enterprise, In Our Backyard, took full advantage of its membership in Landscape Ontario at the organization's annual Congress on January 10 and 11. Crew members Monsuru Makinde, Bryan Andrews, Kevin Sobey, Umang Patel, Rafeal Marias, and Navdeep Singh attended the Congress with program coordinator, Brenda Walsh.

Landscape Ontario Congress is Canada's largest and longest running trade show and conference for landscape professionals. With over 400 exhibitors covering more than 8 acres, Congress is a one-stop-shop for the latest equipment, tools, materials, and supplies. While at the Congress, the IOB team was able to view hands-on demonstrations of the landscape industry's newest tools and machines. As we enter our second year of operation, In Our Backyard is reviewing our current equipment inventory and researching what is needed so that we work more effectively and efficiently in the coming season. Interacting with the leading manufacturers afforded the team an opportunity to compare product lines, pricing, and tool effectiveness, allowing them to make informed decisions as they prepare their needs list for 2024.

A unique feature of the Congress is the Hiring Party. Waterloo Region Landscape Ontario members were on hand to accept resumes from our IOB crew members. As crew members gain experience and new skills these connections may help them move into permanent employment.

Visit [inourbackyard.ca](http://inourbackyard.ca) or contact [Brenda@cambridgesheltercorp.ca](mailto:Brenda@cambridgesheltercorp.ca) to book your spring project.



# MINISTRY AS A REVERSE-THREAD BOLTS ENDEAVOUR

JEFF HESSELINK, SHELTER CHAPLAIN

Recently I read an article where the writer compared the work of ministry to reverse-thread bolts. He began the piece, “You know which direction to turn a bolt: clockwise to tighten, counter-clockwise to loosen. Unless, of course, you’re working with a reverse-thread bolt. Then you have to do what’s opposite to the way you think. Ministry is a reverse-thread endeavour”.

In the work of spiritual care here at the shelter and in the community more broadly, I recognize this very much to be the case. Here things so often move in a counter-intuitive or seemingly counter-productive manner. And sometimes I find myself completely stuck and at a loss. I think that’s because I live – we all live – in this world where slogans like ‘*Got it all together*’, ‘*Going somewhere*’, ‘*Nailin’ it*’, and ‘*Reaching my goals*’ are the credos that hold all the sway. Success in life is about moving forward and upward – as individual persons, in our relationships, and in the lives of our family. Success in work means achieving results that are measurable, tangible and firm.



▷ The reverse-thread of ‘*Got it all together*’ is slowing your pace, lingering in a moment of silence with someone trying to compose their thoughts in an inner storm or to find the right word from a jumbled mess of words and phrases. There is a dignity acknowledged in taking time with someone and waiting with them, listening to them.

▷ The reverse-thread of ‘*Going somewhere*’ is that here, people are often in a time in their lives where they find themselves to be in a personal wilderness; many feel bewildered and thrown off-balance and alone. I find my role to “bring the presence of Christ where is it not expected” to be especially apt with these travellers.

▷ The reverse-thread of ‘*Nailin’ it*’ is someone who feels they haven’t done anything particularly well in a very long time. To be with this person in their sense of defeat, not needing to force a brighter mood with empty platitudes or happy-talk, but really listening and empathizing with them where they are at this moment – this is the first and critical posture to take. From here it is sometimes possible to sow hope and the possibility of a genuinely better tomorrow.

▷ The reverse-thread of ‘*Reaching my goals*’ is people for whom even modest goals can feel like an impossibly steep climb, far out of reach. My role here again can be to listen with lots of time, not in a hurry.

Care in this environment is rarely about big wins or delivering solid measurables. It’s like tending to a crop. You bring water, you prune a little, you fertilize, you pick a few weeds. Lots of silence and serving and work. Any progress at all is indiscernible at first, but over time you do begin to see growth. And once in a while you catch a glimpse of the fruit that is growing too in the lives of others – most of the time out of sight under all the scruff of foliage.

We all need something outside ourselves. No man is an island. So reach out, realize that no group of people, no act of service, is beneath you. Do small things with great love, as Mother Teresa used to say.

**Keep the candle burning.**



## A Message From Our Executive Director

As spring pokes its head around the corner and the end of snow and colder temperatures is in sight, we look ahead to warmer times and happier thoughts.

Challenges encountered by shelter participants and those experiencing homelessness in our community are increased during winter. Despite best efforts, each winter we lose people through the vagaries of life. At The Bridges, we are all impacted by these deaths.

The staff at Bridges are a resilient bunch. As professionals, they maintain a high level of empathy and caring for those they serve despite these setbacks.

While spring brings thoughts of new beginnings, we always stop to remember those that have gone before us. Understanding the needs that our community must address to put an end to chronic homelessness is inextricably associated with these losses.

To our donors, partners, and supporters and on behalf of everyone here at The Bridges, I send a sincere "Thank You". You have made the winter months bearable and provided hope for those who continue to struggle.

### BY THE NUMBERS

**1700:** The number of people Waterloo Region reported as experiencing homelessness.

**579:** The number of people chronically homeless.

**28:** Percentage chronic homelessness has increased annually since 2020.

**850+** unique individuals supported by Cambridge Shelter Corporation in 2023.



Cambridge Shelter Corporation is an accredited non-profit agency by **Imagine Canada**. CSC was the first emergency shelter in Canada to be accredited under the Imagine Canada's standards program, and one of only a handful of agencies to be accredited unconditionally.

Imagine Canada's Standards Program, launched in 2012, is among the first of its kind at a national level, offering accreditation to charities and non-profits that demonstrate excellence in the following five key areas:

- Board governance
- Financial accountability & transparency
- Fundraising
- Staff management and
- Volunteer involvement.

**CSC receives  
re-accreditation annually.**

## GET INVOLVED

### Challenge yourself.

During April, join us as we Walk to Change the Conversation about homelessness. This virtual event highlights the importance of getting involved in a cause you care about. It's completely free to register but we encourage you to raise \$100 to earn a \$10 gift card as a thank you.

Team up with your friends, family, pets or neighbours to take this walk anywhere, on your own time, and at your own pace.

All funds raised by our walkers will directly support the services offered at The Bridges, Waterloo Region's only permanent emergency shelter for adult men experiencing homelessness.

Your help is critical as we work to address the many issues confronting individuals experiencing homelessness in our community. Visit <https://cambridgesheltercorp.ca/events>.

## SCATTERED SITE SUPPORTIVE LIAISON

Adhering to the Housing First model, Cambridge Shelter Corporation believes people are better able to manage life's challenges if they are housed. Our goal is to rapidly move individuals experiencing homelessness from our shelter to stable and long-term housing. To ensure those we have helped are able to remain housed, we have Scattered Site Housing Liaison staff who are charged with seeking out landlords, new or currently involved with CSC, to acquire new units specifically for individuals who will require ongoing support. The SSHL staff work with individuals and landlords from the initial enquiry through viewing the proffered accommodation, to facilitating rent subsidies as needed, and collaborating with partnering agencies to ensure the relationship between tenant and landlord begins and continues on a positive footing. CSC is a person-centred agency, dedicated to assisting individuals in moving forward with their lives. The Scattered Site Housing Liaison is integral to meeting our mission.

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

**Recruiting Board Members:** CSC is looking to our community for board volunteers to enhance the impact our charity makes for individuals experiencing homelessness. Board members provide critical support to strengthen our organization. Serving on the CSC volunteer board offers opportunities to connect with community leaders while sharing your own area of expertise in a meaningful way. If you have a background in financial management, communications, or DEI we would like to hear from you. To learn more about belonging to the CSC board or to submit your application, please contact [boardsecretary@cambridgesheltercorp.ca](mailto:boardsecretary@cambridgesheltercorp.ca)

**Bingo Volunteers Needed:** Only two hours of your volunteer time will raise more than \$1000 for Cambridge Shelter Corporation. We are looking for volunteers who can work different shifts to cover our bingo commitments. If you can help us to help others, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator at [pcorkery@cambridgesheltercorp.ca](mailto:pcorkery@cambridgesheltercorp.ca) or complete a volunteer application online at <https://cambridgesheltercorp.ca/get-involved>. Join a growing number of adult volunteers who give two hours once a month to raise funds for The Bridges.



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