

Nellie's new shelter update

For nearly a decade, we searched for a new building to call home – one that retained the charm and coziness of our current shelter while also offering us greater accessibility and privacy for residents. Last year, we found one in the same east end neighbourhood as our current shelter and an Ontario government investment helped us complete the sale.

But the new Nellie's wasn't move-in ready. Headed by former Executive Director Margarita Mendez, who agreed to stay on upon retirement to oversee this important project, construction and renovations have been underway.

"Since I came to Nellie's in 2006, it was my dream to find a new shelter to improve the living conditions for the women and children who need us, as well as improving the working conditions for staff" says Margarita.

The new shelter will improve privacy by significantly increasing the current number of bedrooms and bathrooms, and spaces designated for children's programming, and women's counselling rooms. And, the entire building will be fully accessible as well as pet friendly.

"We're improving our capacity to serve women with disabilities. Statistics show that women with disabilities are more likely to have violence in their life but the number of beds available in the system for women with disabilities is very low," says Margarita.

There are two parts to the building – a three-storey Victorian home and a newer annex. The exterior of the older building is designated as a heritage property, which means certain restoration conditions must be met and approved by the city.

"To keep the character and feel of the building, our restorers have to bring certain parts of the home back to their original condition," says Dylan Chrus, Construction Manager at Cooper-Gordon Ltd., who is overseeing and directing the project.



The renovations are being funded in part by our ongoing \$2.5 million capital campaign.

- ✓ **Historic brick restoration and roof repair.** Scaffolding currently surrounds the exterior of the building as crews restore the entire outside masonry, brick by brick.
- ✓ **Window restoration.** There are 56 windows on the older part of the building, some of which are stained glass. Each one is single paneled, offering poor insulation. Crews are carefully removing each one, restoring them to their original condition while also adding insulating properties before re-installing them.
- ✓ **Plumbing upgrades.** In order to have 20 washrooms in the sleeping area, 3 public/gender-neutral washrooms and 4 staff washrooms (compared to a total of just 5 toilets, 4 showers and 1 bathtub in the current Nellie's shelter) we must run new plumbing on the ground, second and third floor.
- ✓ **The exterior masonry facade, south porch, and original main entry porch all need repair and restoration.** Where possible, the ornate plaster ceilings will be preserved as well.
- ✓ **Waterproofing and underpinning.** A new elevator will be installed in the annex (which will allow access to all floors of both parts of the building), meaning certain sections of the basement need to be underpinned to accommodate the shaft.
- ✓ **New air ducts for HVAC system.** "Hopefully we'll never live through another pandemic, but the design of the air circulation will help us be better prepared to face a crisis like the one recently experienced in most community living facilities. The air will be circulated in a much more effective way," says Margarita.
- ✓ **Fire proofing.** As is common in old buildings, some areas of the interior need to be upgraded to comply with modern fire code.



The Pandemic and the Construction Schedule

The global pandemic has affected the overall construction schedule, says Dylan, explaining that while many construction projects were shut down by the provincial government in March and April in an effort to slow the spread of COVID-19, a women's shelter like Nellie's, was deemed an essential service by the government. Workers have proceeded through the pandemic while dealing with various obstacles, such as getting material and equipment to the site.

"Typically, you call your supplier and you'd get the material," says Dylan. "Now we're finding it's sometimes a week or more until we can get something. And, some of our mechanical equipment comes from the U.S. and we're finding there's longer delays for that as well. Those are what's been the biggest strain on maintaining the schedule."

Work, however, is still on target to be completed by May 2021.

For the families who live here, Nellie's is more than a shelter – it's their home. Because of your ongoing support, our residents will feel more comfortable and relaxed in their new surroundings, and Nellie's new shelter will be able to better meet their needs.

Our capital campaign continues and we still need to raise more money to complete Nellie's new shelter.

For more information on supporting the renovation of Nellie's new shelter, please contact Ingrid Graham, Director of Development, at Ingrid@nellies.org or at 416-830-7424.