



**VETERANS' HOUSE**

A Multifaith Housing Initiative Project

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## Second World War veteran, 96, participates in cornerstone laying as Veterans' House construction begins

**Ottawa – September 16, 2019** | Second World War veteran and Squadron Leader (ret'd) Andy Carswell was the signature participant at the cornerstone laying ceremony today for a supportive housing facility for veterans named in his honour. The 96-year-old retired Royal Canadian Air Force pilot was in good spirits as he laid the cornerstone of Veterans' House: the Andy Carswell Building. "I'm quite happy and proud to be here," he said. "I think it's nice – there aren't very many buildings being named after me!"

Veterans' House: the Andy Carswell Building is scheduled to open in November 2020. The building will be a 40-unit, housing first community for homeless veterans at the former Canadian Forces Base, Rockcliffe, now named Canso Campus. Veterans' House: the Andy Carswell Building will offer mental health and addiction services, communal gathering spaces, an indoor gym, and a dog park for service dogs.

John Carswell, Andy's son, made the first lead gift to the Veterans' House project on behalf of the Carswell family several years ago, and wanted to name the building after his childhood hero – his dad. "It was wonderful," said John while reflecting on the cornerstone laying ceremony – which involved getting Sqn. Leader Carswell and his wife, Dorothy, age 98, to Ottawa from Toronto to join about 100 Veterans' House project stakeholders and other members of the Carswell family. "It was really quite magical."

Today's ceremony included a flypast of a PBY-5A Canso aircraft, the same type that Sqn. Leader Carswell flew during his time with the RCAF.

### **About Veterans' House: the Andy Carswell Building**

Veterans' House: the Andy Carswell Building will be the fifth affordable housing project of Multifaith Housing Initiative (MHI), an Ottawa-based charitable not-for-profit that provides affordable housing to those in need. It is MHI's first project exclusively serving veterans experiencing – or at risk of experiencing – homelessness.

The Veterans' House site, located at 745 Mikinak Rd, has been renamed the Canso Campus in recognition of a matching lead gift made to Veterans' House by Canso Investment Counsel. (John Carswell is the President of Canso Investment Counsel – a company he named after the airplane flown by his father.) To learn more about Sqn. Leader Carswell's experiences during the Second World War, we recommend reading his book: *Over the Wire: A Canadian Pilot's Memoir of War and Survival as a POW*.

Veterans' House is a pilot housing community. MHI has been documenting each step so it can be replicated across the country.

The Veterans' House project is supported by several partners, including Ottawa Salus, which will provide the support services; Royal Canadian Legion Ontario Command and District G; Soldiers Helping Soldiers; True Patriot Love; Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services; Support our Troops, and Veterans Affairs Canada. In addition, thanks to Helmets to Hardhats, a number of veterans will help in the construction.

Multifaith Housing will own and manage the new community.

### **About Multifaith Housing Initiative**

MHI is an Ottawa-based registered charity that provides and promotes safe, affordable, and well-maintained housing in inclusive communities and mobilizes resources for these purposes. MHI was established in 2002 after religious leaders in the broader Ottawa region realized that the city suffered from a significant shortage of affordable housing, and teamed up to try to address the problem. Today, MHI's membership consists of approximately 80 faith groups, including



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congregations from the Baha'i, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, and Unitarian communities. MHI currently has 139 rental units that house between 300 and 400 residents at any given time.

### Quotes from other speakers at the event:

**Suzanne Le, Executive Director of Multifaith Housing Initiative:** "A country asks – and thanks to many selfless souls and many soldiers – a country receives. And as I have said before and will say again and again and again – a country owes. But, unfortunately, some of our soldiers are not receiving the care they need; that they are owed. They have lost their family; they have no home, no community. 3000 - 5000 former Canadian soldiers are sleeping on our streets. This is unacceptable. Unacceptable, but not insurmountable."

**Heather Mason-Wood, Chief Strategy and Operating Officer, Canso Investment Counsel Ltd.:** "Homelessness is a condition no person in Canada should face, especially our veterans who served our country."

**Garry Pond, President, Ontario Provincial Command, Royal Canadian Legion:** "The Royal Canadian Legion Ontario Command is thrilled to partner with Multifaith Housing – an organization that shares the vision of the Legion 1) find homeless veterans 2) get them off the street 3) provide new hope to veterans."

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### **For more information:**

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