

Family Transition Place proposing transitional housing addition to current building

By **Sam Odrowski**

Family Transition Place (FTP) is planning an expansion.

The organization is proposing an addition to its building on 20 Bredin Parkway that will feature 15 single apartments and four family units, along with group space, common areas, and potentially a space for community use. The apartments will go to the women and children fleeing domestic violence who FTP serves.

"We at family transition place, the board and the leadership and the staff have known for a really long time that in order to accomplish that vision, the women and children who come to us and depend on our services need a safe place to go after they've been in the shelter. They need a safe place to go if they're trying to leave home and keep their children safe," said Norah Kennedy, Executive Director of FTP, during an Orangeville Council meeting on Monday (Feb. 28).

Kennedy and Adrian Dingle from Raising the Roof, which is a homelessness awareness charity that's partnered with FTP for this project, shared their vision with Orangeville Council during the meeting. Adrian Dingle is Raising the Roof's director of housing development and said the project could be ready in 18 months at the soonest, if there aren't any delays.

The new apartments won't be permanent housing, Kennedy said they're going to be transitional/longer term housing, with people able to stay for four to five years.

With people staying that length of time, in a stable, safe, completely accessible living space, attached to FTP where they can access counselors and other supports the organization offers, Kennedy said she's confident they'll be successful. Especially with programs built around the individuals needs of those who move in to the new apartments, so when they move out their prepared to live independently.

"We know that supportive Transitional Housing works," Kennedy noted. "We know this because we've worked with those women who have been successful, we've worked with a woman and her four children who went from the shelter into second stage housing and into third stage housing, and now are enjoying their own independence.

"We know that a woman and daughter who stayed in the shelter were there because of extensive familial abuse, they moved into our second stage program, they only needed to stay there for six months before they were able to move out and get back on their feet and find permanent housing," Kennedy added.

FTP's presentation to Orangeville Council was in part, to announce their new plans, but more importantly, there is a deadline of May 31 for a grant application through the Canadian Housing and Mortgage Corporation (CMHC). CMHC announced federal housing dollars that are being specifically allocated to shelters and transitional housing.

The project could receive up to \$8 million of federal capital grants, which is the build's estimated cost, but technical drawings must be prepared and FTP has to go through the Town's variances process to proceed. However, the current zoning standards for the FTP building are already in compliance.

Town staff will be working with FTP and Raising the Roof on this project over the next couple of months so they can meet the grant application deadline and hopefully secure the millions in funding.

Mayor Sandy Brown said the Town is supportive of FTP and won't be putting up any barricades to the project.

Kennedy noted the importance securing temporary and eventually permanent housing for the people they serve at FTP.

?When we are talking about women and children who are leaving or who are living in violence situations at home, for them to be able to find a safe place to live is literally a matter of life and death sometimes. And for women who have to make that decision to leave home, they are making a decision to either stay with their children in a violent situation, or taking their children into uncertainty and poverty and homelessness,? she remarked.

Following Kennedy's presentation to Council, Coun. Lisa Post commended the work FTP is doing with the new apartment project.

?I love this vision. I appreciate all the work that's gone into the development of this idea. I know that this isn't a new problem. I know it's one that you and your team have been working on for a very long time,? she noted.

?I'm so grateful that your team has thought outside the box, and are working with Mr. [Adrian] Dingle to try and find this solution. I think it's really progressive. I think it's sustainable, and I think it will lead to so many more success stories as women can get their lives back on track with their children.?