

ELLIOT LAKE WOMEN'S GROUP PRESENTS:

It Takes More Than A Community

Presenter: Allyson Gibson, Public Educator, Maplegate House for Women



Agenda

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We think that poverty is only being hungry, naked, and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for is the greatest poverty. We must start in our own homes to remedy this kind of poverty.

Mother Teresa



About Larry's Place

-Elliot Lake Women's Group opened Larry's Place, a six-bed emergency shelter, in June of 2018 to address the housing crisis that is ongoing in Algoma and support and serve men in distress.

-Larry's Place is the sole men's shelter within the district of Algoma, we support men spanning from Sudbury to Sault Ste. Marie.

-Currently, we have support staff on site as well as outreach services for men who experiencing housing insecurity, mental health challenges and addictions or domestic violence.



About Larry's Place

-In 2021, Larry's Place provided services to over 150 men within our district and have been at max capacity for much of the pandemic.

-Larry's Place is an unfunded shelter, meaning we receive no funding from the ministry, government, or social service board.

- In the past we have received funding from the social service board, small grants from the United Way, Algoma Public Health, The City of Elliot Lake and various community grants from Retirement Living.

- At this time our funding to feed, staff and run the shelter comes primarily from fundraising, small grants and donations from our partners such as the Food Bank and Grace Christian Church, who will often donate extra food items and meals.

Pandemic Impacts on Homelessness

- In the midst of the pandemic, our district experienced a surge of men who faced transitional homelessness, which is defined as individuals who experience homelessness due to a personal crisis or circumstances and are not chronically homeless. This is the most common form of homeless. We have been at full capacity in our shelter, plus their dependents for the majority of the pandemic.
- These last two years have pushed our organization to its limit due to the housing crisis that is prevalent in our district. Due to the lack of affordable housing available in our community, transitioning men out of shelter has taken determination, creativity, and collaboration with multiple community partners.
- Finding housing for vulnerable populations is not an overnight fix. Before the pandemic the average time it took to find men, secure housing was from 3 to 6 months. Post pandemic timelines have increased to 8 to 12 months, this is assuming the client has an adequate credit history and are working diligently with staff to meet their goals.

Point-in-time Homelessness Survey Algoma 2021



- To give you a snapshot as to what our districts homelessness situation is facing, we have taken data from ADSAB's 2021 Homeless Enumeration PIT (point in time) count, which strives to identify how many individuals in our district face homelessness on any given night. It should be noted that there was a lack of participation from our community, which led to low participation and difficulty obtaining responses in many communities throughout the service area.
- Surveys submitted came from Blind River, Bruce Mines and Elliot Lake and were completed by staff at ADSAB, Bruce Mines Food Bank, Larry's Place and Maplegate House for Women. This number does not reflect the actual number of people experiencing homeless, as many communities within our district did not submit survey's.
- The results of the survey disclosed that on an average night in our district there was 69 cases of observed homelessness within the Algoma district.
- In our experience, the issue of homelessness in our district is much more prevalent than what the current data suggests.

PIT Data Continued

- We can compare this number to the PIT number of Sudbury District's of 298 and Sault Ste. Marie's number of 244. These communities had the support of organizations such as the John Howard Society, Sault Area Hospital, CMHA, Aboriginal Housing Services, Indigenous Friendship Center, The Homeless Network community outreach team in Sudbury, Salvation Army, City of Greater Sudbury Social Services, Monarch Recovery Services and various homelessness and domestic violence shelters in the area.
- This highlights the need to come together as a community to solve the issue of homelessness in our community. Our organization can testify that we are facing a serious problem, and our numbers are not reflecting the gravity of the situation. We all need to step up, to take this situation seriously.



Our Philosophy: The Holistic Approach

THE HOLISTIC APPROACH STRIVES TO PROVIDE SUPPORT THAT LOOKS AT THE WHOLE PERSON, NOT JUST THEIR MENTAL HEALTH, OR PHYSICAL NEEDS. TO SUCCESSFULLY SUPPORT A CLIENT AND MAKE LASTING CHANGE IN A PERSON'S LIFE, WE FOCUS ON THE FOLLOWING AREAS OF OVERALL WELLBEING:

Emotional Support

Larry's Place staff are trained crisis support workers who provide emotional support, referrals to counseling services and conduct in-house programming.

Spiritual Support

Includes mindfulness and meditation-based programming, indigenous ceremonies, and referrals to local churches.

Social Support

Outreach services provide social support by making referrals to community agencies and clubs. Within the shelter we encourage group activities such as card game and meal preparation weekly.

Physical Support

We provide information and guidance on how to cook healthy meals, we encourage healthy sleep schedules by ensuring clients are awake and productive by ten a.m.

OFTEN OUR CLIENTS COME INTO SHELTER WITH MULTIPLE BARRIERS TO OBTAIN AND MAINTAIN HOUSING, THESE INCLUDE MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH CHALLENGES. BY UTILIZING THE HOLISTIC APPROACH, WE ARE ABLE TO PROVIDE SERVICES THAT ARE INTERSECTIONAL AND MEETS EACH CLIENT WHERE THEY ARE AT IN THEIR JOURNEY. BY FOCUSING ON MULTIPLE ASPECTS OF OVERALL HEALTH, WE STRIVE TO ALLOW MEN TO GROW AND BUILD THE SKILLS NEEDED TO MAINTAIN HOUSING.

Programs & Services offered at Larry's Place

-Larry's Place is more than a safe bed for men who experience homelessness. Staff work with men to create individualized goals and plans of actions to meet those goals.

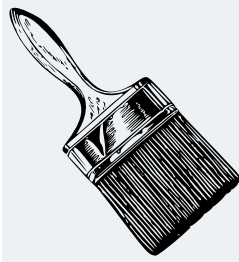
-Upon intake, we complete what is called an Outcome Star with men, in which we work with the men to rate their situation or stability in the following areas: Mental health and Addictions, Law and legal proceedings, Health, Housing, Children, Employment or volunteer work, Time management and Finances. Within each of sections we create SMART goals with the client, and rate each of these goals in order of importance.

-The first goal we always work on is housing, which includes filling out ADSAB housing applications which includes filing taxes, obtaining ID, and securing a stable income. This process can take several months due to backlogs exacerbated by the pandemic.

-During their stay at Larry's Place men are offered a variety of programs to suit their individual needs, as well as being asked to contribute to the overall wellness of the house, which includes ensuring their individual rooms are clean and hazard free, tidying living spaces and cooking some meals. These tasks teach life skills and responsibility.

Programs Offered

Healing Arts Through Nature



A 6-week course that incorporates arts through multimedia and nature materials. Clients focus on overall healing in areas such as self-esteem, goal building, self care, and emotional regulation.

Mindfulness-based Substance Abuse Treatment



A 12-week program that focuses teaching clients to respond rather than to react to situations. We teach introductory meditations, provide psycho-educational resources on drug-use, their physical effects . We focus on the intersectional effects of poverty, racism, violence, and addictions on an individual.

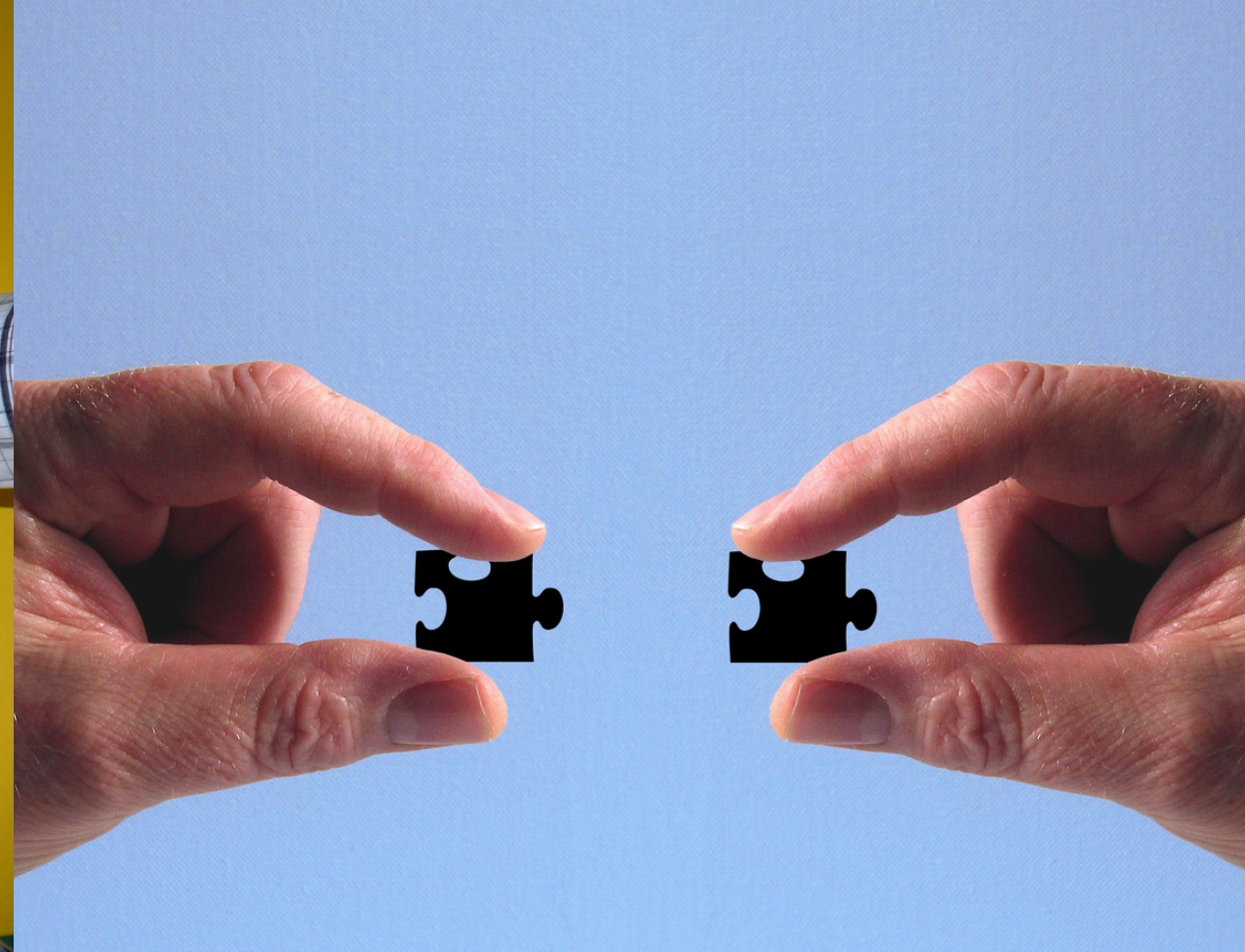
Life Skills Programming



a 7-week non-linear course to assist men with a series of psychoeducational workshops focusing on life skills, job preparedness, emotional needs, cultural awareness, and anger management. This program allows men to gain the skills needed to find housing, and maintain housing once found.

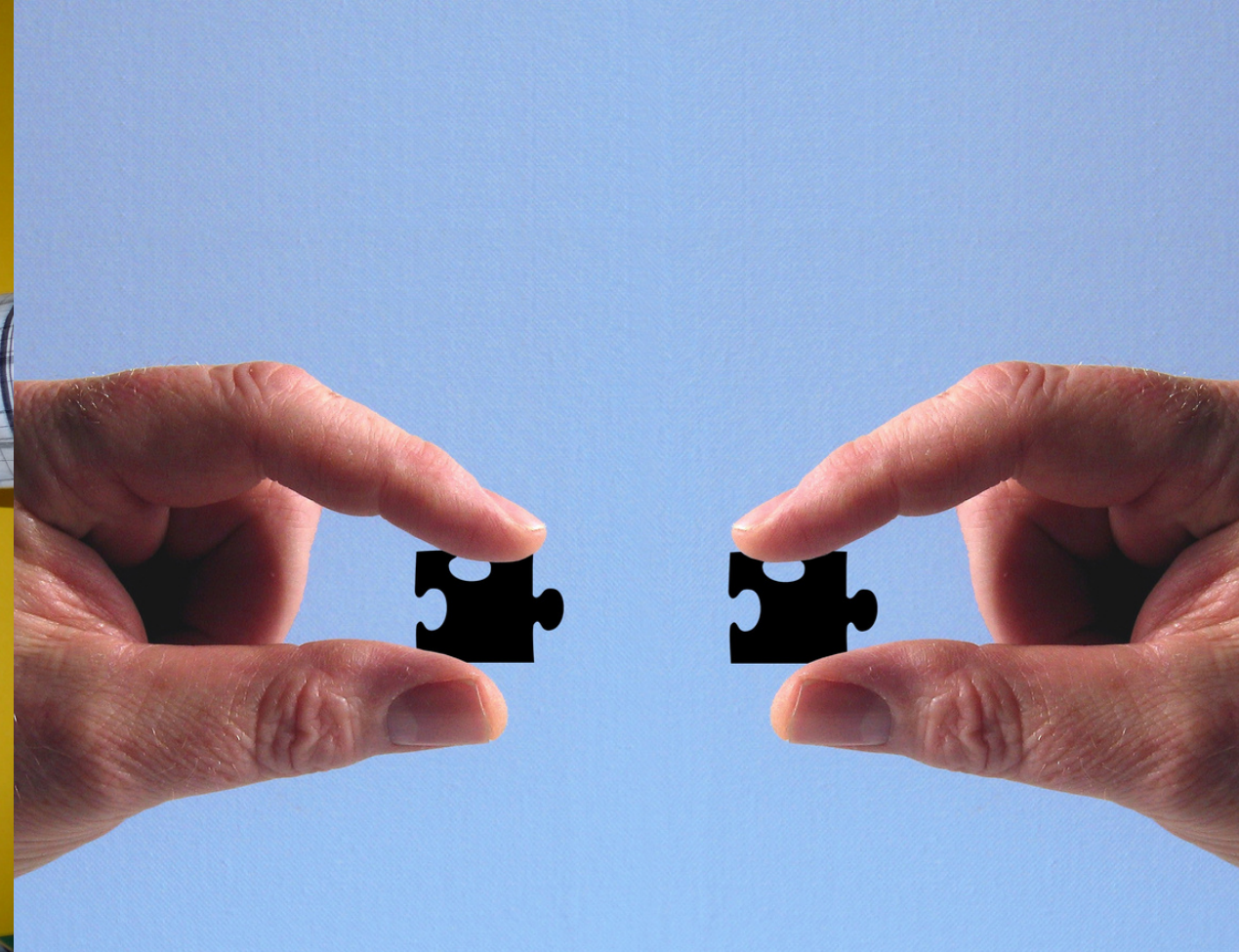
Services We Offer

- Trauma-informed Care
- Harm Reduction and Relapse Prevention Planning
- Housing Advocacy
- Outreach Services
- Cultural Services
- Court Support
- Nogdawindamin and CAS Advocacy
- Developmental Support Services
- Food Bank Support
- Social System Navigation
- Referrals to counseling, addiction programs and mental health services
- Connections to AA and NA support groups
- Resume building and employment support



OUR COMMUNITY IMPACTS

- At this time, we are faced with two options, continue to fundraise, and ask for financial support via donations keep our shelter open 24/7 hours a day, where we can continue to support our men and make lasting change in men's lives by providing programs, services, and referrals.
- Our second option is to convert Larry's Place into a warming shelter for men in which the shelter will be open only at night, they will receive a meal, a place to sleep and shower, but our services will be extremely limited and there is no guarantee that our organization will be able to maintain.



OUR COMMUNITY IMPACTS

- This change will affect our community in several ways.
- By not providing men services and safe housing, crime rates will continue to increase in areas such as petty theft, robbery and drug-related crimes. These crimes are already increasing in a post-pandemic atmosphere. Hours needed to deal with these crimes will put an increased toll on our police services.
- There are ramifications of having men vying for a bed on a first come first serve basis. There may be lineups around the residential neighborhood that the shelter is in of more transient, vulnerable men who are trying to get the first bed available
- Who is going to step up and support our citizens? Where will these men go? A holding cell? The hospital waiting room? The one detox safe bed? This is a community problem that we all need to have a hand in to solve. We are not asking for a handout, we are asking for support to make real, lasting change in our community, rather than a band aid solution that does not truly address the issue of homelessness in our community.

Organizations We Collaborate With



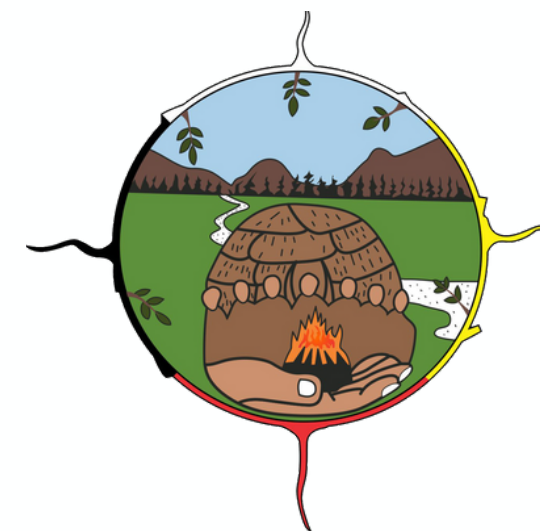
Algoma
PUBLIC HEALTH
Santé publique Algoma



United Way



Grace
CHRISTIAN CENTRE



NOGDAWINDAMIN
Family and Community Services

MANNY

- Manny is an elderly man who was experiencing chronic homelessness and significant mental health challenges. He was brought into our service by the OPP when they discovered him sleeping in his car in Spragge with a loaded rifle. He was a client at Larry's Place for several months, then successfully transitioned to our transition home. Throughout his tenancy staff supported him with his deteriorating mental and physical health. He was diagnosed with Alzheimer's and suffered multiple suicide attempts, in which staff were quick to respond to and able to work collaboratively with SJH to support him while maintaining his dignity and live independently. Manny has recently made the decision to move into long term care where he receive care and support for the rest of his life.



CHRISTOPHER

- Christopher came into shelter suffering from mental health issues, addictions and a criminal record. He was able to move into transitional housing. With the support of staff, he was able to secure a business loan to create his own moving company and move into permanent housing. Staff also worked with Christopher by providing advocacy with CAS to maintain access visits with his children which enabled him to maintain his relationship with his children and build parenting skills.



KEVIN

- Kevin is a men’s outreach client. When we first started working with Kevin, he was estranged from his children due to his children being in care with CAS. With support and advocacy from outreach staff he was able to obtain full custody of his children, and now runs successful roofing business in Elliot Lake.



VETERANS

- During the pandemic, Larry’s Place staff housed and supported 7 veteran men. We connected these men with to the legion advocate and were able to secure housing for five of the men, 2 secured housing in Blind River, 2 in BC and 1 in Elliot Lake. 2 of the men returned to their partners. Many of these men suffered from conditions such as PTSD from their work in the military, which directly impacted their housing situation, relationships with family and careers. Many of these men were self-medicating as a direct result of their PTSD diagnosis. Staff were able to support these men, utilizing our trauma-informed care approach.



COLBY

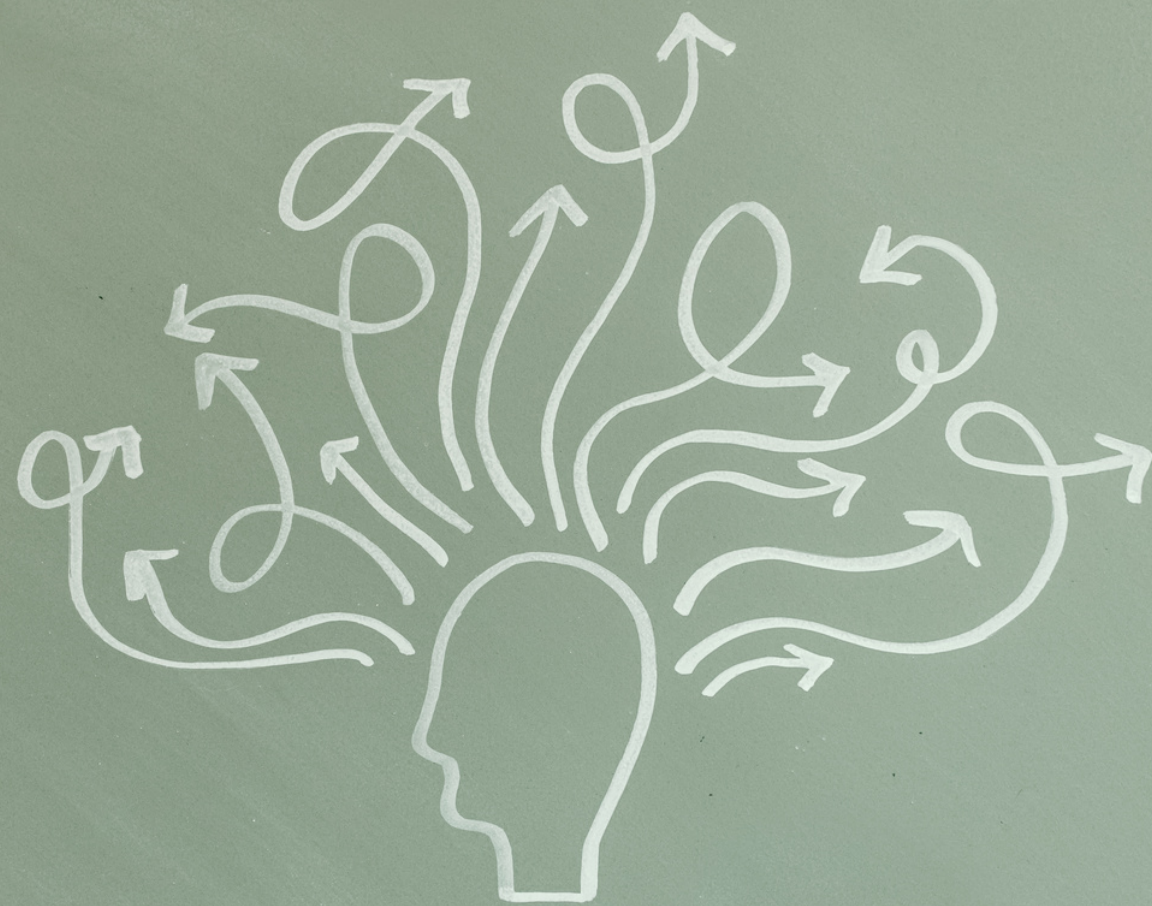
- Calvin came to our shelter suffering from homelessness and addiction. Staff were able to secure a land-based treatment program in Sudbury, which he successfully completed. Cody is now living a sober lifestyle, living in BC while working as a firefighter. He obtained his drivers licence and made the trip back to Elliot Lake to personally thank staff for the work they did on his behalf and to tell us that he is now attending college for reflexology and massage therapy.



JESSE

- Not every story has a happy ending and not all men can be helped. In 2020 we experienced a tragic loss when one of the residents at Larry’s Place lost his life to suicide. Staff was on site and attempted to resuscitate the man. Our organization felt this loss and has worked diligently in the past two years to create a space that is safe for men who experience trauma, addictions, and mental health crisis’s. We work diligently to create safety plans with clients, make referrals to mental health and addictions agencies. Each of our staff is trained in ASSIT suicide prevention training to ensure that the proper protocols are followed when a client is displaying suicidal tendencies.





-It is important to our organization that we remain transparent and open regarding the realities of mental health. Many of the men we serve have been without proper care or services for years, many have faced trauma, imprisonment, stigma in seeking help and violence. These factors can make it extremely difficult for men to reach out for help. It often takes time to build the trust needed to begin working on the issues that led men to experience homelessness. By offering 24/7 support we can build the connection needed to make lasting change for the men in our community.

-We do not choose our clients, our clients come to us out necessity we are often their last resource. The plethora of issues that we help address are often messy. No one should have to face these problems alone, with no roof, no food, no clothes, and no support.

-These men are not nameless or faceless. These men could be our son etc. Often homelessness is not a result of what the man has done, but rather what has happened to them. We at ELWG work to be the voices of these men, who often are nameless and faceless to our comm. *We hope to instill pride, ethics, the ability to hold their heads high and become part of our community.

- We are asking for ongoing commitment of funding to continue to provide this extremely integral part to support the vulnerable and homeless in Elliot Lake and Algoma District. Please help to address the problem proactively as a community with us. We have reached out to all municipal councils and mayors to take a proactive effort to address a gap that has been identified and substantiated to be larger since Covid19. With the rising costs of living and hopefully an end in sight to the pandemic we now need to step up and meet this challenge head on as a collaborative team.

- Again, it takes more than one community. That is why we have reached out across our district, but it can start with you. We know that Elliot Lake often champions and have supported many endeavors that we have approached. For that we thank you, and we hope that moving forward with new organizational leadership at the helm we can meet, put ideological differences aside and let's work, let's be proactive in the north, let us lead by example and serve our community in the way that it deserves.

Q&A