



# HOUSE OF REFUGE MISSION

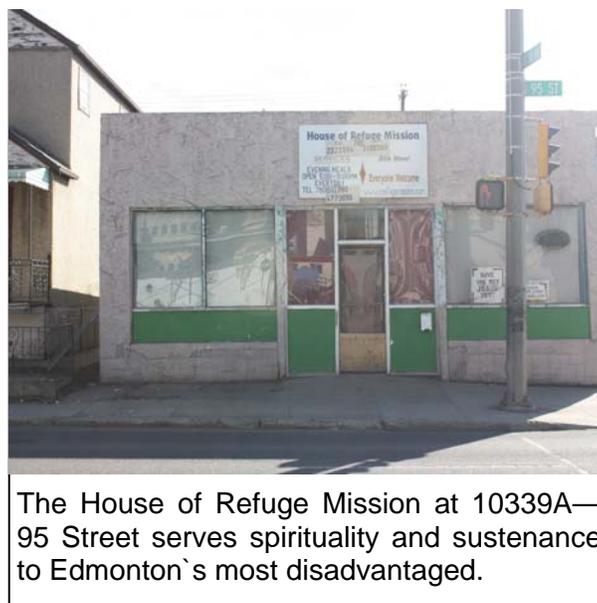
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT



PETER GOLDRING

When life seems hopeless and it feels like you are living your darkest hours with nowhere left to turn, there is a beacon of light that shines bright in the city of Edmonton. This beacon, of course, is the House of Refuge Mission located downtown Edmonton. The House of Refuge has had its doors open to Edmonton's homeless and poor for over 25 years.

The House of Refuge Mission does not discriminate against, or screen those, who use their facilities. The Mission offers a judgement-free space for those in need within Edmonton to have a meal and a place to warm up and be with those who care. No one is turned away from the House of Refuge for being intoxicated, under the influence of drugs, or for mental illness. They realize that all homeless are in need of a hand, and as such they do not discriminate on who they offer their services to.



The House of Refuge Mission at 10339A—95 Street serves spirituality and sustenance to Edmonton's most disadvantaged.

The Mission is of the utmost importance all year round, as having access to a meal is not a luxury every Canadian has. However, as is to be expected, the House of Refuge is of even greater importance during the fall and winter seasons, as Canadian weather can be unforgiving when the temperature drops. It is not uncommon for many homeless people to lose their lives in the winter, succumbing to pneumonia or even freezing to death. In Edmonton, many homeless people have the House of Refuge Mission

to thank for saving their lives, as it offers a 'warm, accepting atmosphere for those who too often face rejection and closed doors.'

The Mission opens its doors at 5pm every evening, at which time it offers coffee and snacks to the people who depend on its services. The 5pm opening is necessary and convenient, as it provides a warm drop in at a

time when other inner city agencies are closed. Following snacks and coffee, and



evening meal is served promptly at 8pm each and every evening. The meal generally consists of soup and sandwiches. What is more, the Mission even offers care packages of food, which are freely given out to those who request them.

It is important to note that the House of Refuge does not solely offer a warm place to stay and a bite of food. The Mission goes beyond that, and offers the homeless people of Edmonton something much more precious – Faith. The House of Refuge Mission statement is: “To preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to minister to those in need of physical, emotional, and spiritual support” (1 Corinthians 9:16).

With the Mission offering spiritual support and guidance to the needy in Edmonton, they hold a gospel service every day from 7pm to 8pm. The service is presided over by different volunteer ministers and musicians each and every evening. This diversity makes it easier to meet the different spiritual needs of the homeless and the poor. These gospel services are a necessity to many of these people, as they otherwise do not feel comfortable attending a regular church service.

Having the House of Refuge Mission provide

food, shelter, and the teachings of faith seems like a hugely impressive feat for a shelter which operates off of donations and volunteers. However, the Mission goes above and beyond that by offering other necessary and vital services to Edmonton’s needy. The first of these services is clothing. This is something that is taken for granted by many people, but when you stop to think about it, clothes are as necessary

as food when it comes to survival. The Mission offers a ‘clothing room’, which is open every day. The clothing room functions fully on clothing donations to the House of Refuge from the general public. All of the clothing that is donated to the mission is given out for free to those who need it. Since many of the people who use the Mission are homeless,

items such as blankets and sleeping bags are in just as high demand, as anything that can shield them from the elements is extremely important to their well-being.

A final service that the House of Refuge offers its users is foot care. This may seem unusual at first glance, but it is a very necessary service to the homeless. Many of the people who use the Mission have frost bite on their feet in the winter months, and many



Edmontonians who are in need of the House of Refuge Mission’s services line-up prior to the doors opening for the evening.



have open sores and blisters that need medical attention year round. Accordingly, foot care is offered every Friday evening at the Mission.

The House of Refuge and its patrons faced a big scare in October 2009 as the Mission was temporarily banned from serving cooked food in the facility. The ban came down from Alberta Health Services, as an inspection revealed numerous safety and sanitary violations, including structural problems and the lack of a valid food permit. A spokesperson for the mission said he was not surprised at the findings from the inspection. He said that conditions in the kitchen had been less than ideal for a long time, but was concerned about the ramifications the Mission's kitchen closure would have on the patrons. With 100-150 people depending on a meal from the House of Refuge every day, not being able to offer that service could be very detrimental to the people who depend on it.

Being a resident of Edmonton myself, I am no stranger to the House of Refuge Mission, and how important it is to the homeless people of the city. I have visited and made modest contributions of food to the Mission on many occasions and have seen firsthand

how crucial the services which the Mission provides are to its patrons. The people who turn to the Mission for food and shelter are the truly abject homeless with severe addictions and mental health issues with nowhere else to turn.

As soon as I heard of the closure to the House of Refuge's kitchen, I raised the issue within government and strummed up media attention on the issue so awareness could be raised. I believe it is of great importance that this Mission, along with many others like it across the country, should be receiving federal funding. Shelters such as the House of Refuge are necessary for many homeless people across the country to stay alive. I do believe that it is commendable that life-and-death situations such as this are funded by donations made by the public, even without municipal, provincial, or federal aid.

Thankfully, good news came to the shelter in February 2010, as their Capital Health food services certificate was restored, allowing them to resume serving hot meals to Edmonton's homeless and poor.

The House of Refuge Mission has been faithfully serving the Inner City of Edmonton



After his usual cooking and delivering of a full turkey and large ham dinner to the shelter, Peter is meeting with the shelter management.

for over 25 years. The success of the Mission is thanks to those who have been selflessly volunteering their time to run it, as well as the countless Edmontonian's who have donated food, clothing, and money to ensure the shelter is able to continually meet their \$2,500/month cost of operations. I would like to commend each and every person who has had a hand in helping the House of Refuge, as it truly is the last hope of survival for many fellow Edmontonians.



Leftover cake that Peter delivered to the House of Refuge following the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal Ceremony.

**UPDATE:** On October 13, Peter once again delivered to the House of Refuge fruit drinks and approximately 20 pounds of cake which was leftover from the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal Awards Ceremony, which was held in conjunction with Queen Elizabeth High School.

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*This brochure series is intended to highlight special issues that Member of Parliament, Peter Goldring, has been involved in. If you wish to comment, please take a moment to fill out the survey below, write or call to the address above.*

**Your Opinion Matters...**

**Question #1** Have you ever made a donation or volunteered your time to the House of Refuge or other homeless shelters or kitchens?

Yes  No

**Question #2** Why do you believe that it is necessary for society to maintain Missions such as this one?

Yes  No

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
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