

Roehampton Resident, Edward's Story

Written by Edward, a resident of the Roehampton Shelter on Dec. 3, 2020.

I would like to take this time to thank the amazing citizens of Toronto and the city of Toronto, especially its housing/shelter department and the entire staff that work at the Roehampton shelter on Mt Pleasant Rd for all their hard work , their generosity, dedication, and most of all for their compassion. It takes a special kind of person with a lot of patience and people skills and most importantly they must have an open mind.to work in a place like this. You must have an open ear and show compassion, and I mean heartfelt compassion, which each and every employee shows sincerely on a daily basis. from the kitchen help to security to the office personal to house cleaning and managers. Just amazing!

I want to send out a special word of gratitude to the nursing staff - fabulous job ladies! and last but not least the two counsellors that work day in and day out, meeting with clients from all over the world, from every race, that hear endless stories of despair and sorrow and hardship, drug addiction, abandonment and abuse. They have a difficult job but they do their job with integrity and devotion and I applaud them both. If it weren't for counsellors Leroy Miller and his assistant Jason, I can honestly say without a doubt and a tear in my eye I wouldn't be alive today. The Roehampton shelter literally has saved my life. Leroy and Jason along with other staff members go above and beyond working with multiple clients on a daily basis desperately fighting trying to get their lives back on the right track, in some cases saving lives, as they saved mine.

My story of how I ended up at the Roehampton homeless shelter is complicated but I'll make it as short as possible. I ended up here deported from the USA after residing there for 22 and a half years. I owned my own business for almost 20 years, a very successful business. I employed over a hundred American citizens, paid my taxes, had a family, a 6 year-old son. I was a law-abiding upstanding citizen and a successful legit business owner. The community looked up to me and I was highly respected. and I devoted my blood, sweat, and tears to the USA, only to be to be deported by the US government / ICE for not renewing my Visa for 17 years. This happened in the middle of a nasty divorce and custody battle. That's another story.

I was dropped off in a major city that I had never been to, a huge city at that. I was lost and scared. With nothing but the clothes on my back and not a penny to my name, not knowing a single person, not knowing where to go or what to do next. I had just spent 6 months in Trump's Federal illegal alien immigration prison system in Eloy, AZ. Inhumane and that's keeping it modest. So ICE flew me to Buffalo, NY from Arizona, then drove me across the border at Niagara Falls. I was detained once again and ordered to quarantine but with nowhere near the conditions I was used to living. I thought about ending my life while in quarantine. But I couldn't as I kept thinking of my son. After 14 days in quarantine I was transferred to the Roehampton hotel where I was contemplating suicide for the first 2 weeks till I met Leroy and his staff. That was the game changer.

Ending up at the Roehampton was eye opener for me as I've never been homeless. Slowly talking with Leroy other staff members including some security staff that I hold



very close to my heart, I realized my life was not over just yet. This homeless shelter actually saved my life as crazy as that sounds! I've been there since August. I've met hundreds of people in this beautiful city of Toronto and many of them shelter residents. I just have to say from the bottom of my heart I am so pleased and grateful to be home! I will never take my Homeland birth place namely Canada for granted again. Toronto is so friendly, generous, and welcoming. I so forgot how great our country really is. I smile when I walk down the street and notice people from every ethnicity, every race. Police are so friendly and respectful. No outrageous noticeable political diversity or rhetoric. I had forgotten how great our nation was. And I have to admit I am somewhat ashamed and embarrassed for the fact I was absent so long. I will never abandon my amazing country again and I would like to apologize to each and every one of my fellow citizens for being absent so long. I've only been back a little over 3 months but in that time the city and its people have found a place in my heart. I love Toronto and its people. God bless my country. People, I'm home and I'm here to stay.

(Edward now has housing, thanks to help from RH shelter staff, and was the recipient of one of our first Toronto Cluster Welcome Baskets.)