



CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION

# PROJECT PROFILE

## Cameron House

Peterborough, Ontario



### Highlights

Cameron House, a women’s shelter in Peterborough since 1996, opened eight bachelor suites for transitional housing in an expanded building in 2010.

**Client group:** Women who are homeless

**Developer:** Brock Mission

**Number of units:** 8 bachelor suites, plus a 10-bed shelter

**Tenure:** Rental

**Who was involved?** Government of Canada (CMHC), Government of Ontario (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing), Peterborough Housing Corporation, City of Peterborough, volunteer and community support

Cameron House is an expanded women’s shelter owned by the Brock Mission in Peterborough, which now provides supported, semi-independent housing to former homeless or at-risk people who are ready to transition to more independent living.

“We found that the shelter was being used for housing despite the shelter limit,” said Bill McNabb, executive director of the Brock Mission. “We serve a very high-needs

group with concurrent issues such as addictions and mental illness. Each time people returned to the shelter, they were in a worse place—not eating properly or taking their medications. Our new transitional housing will help them step down from the shelter, with some supports.”

### The Affordable Housing Solution

Brock Mission acquired the 1850s homestead building in 1996 to use as

a 15-bed women’s shelter. The original single-family dwelling had been converted into a boarding house. While Cameron House was solidly constructed and already configured for multi-resident use, it suffered from years of neglect.

Recognizing the need for transitional housing, Brock Mission received funding from all three levels of government to add new bachelor suites that are suitable for longer-term housing. A dilapidated kitchen wing at the rear of the building

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was removed and replaced with the eight-suite addition, which effectively doubled the living space. Cameron House now has five bedrooms for shelter use (with one to three occupants per room), in addition to the eight semi-independent bachelor suites.

Peterborough Housing Corporation managed the construction process and provided temporary accommodations at Langdon House during the renovations.

“We don’t have a lot of staff resources at Brock Mission,” McNabb said, “so the partnership with Peterborough Housing and their building expertise were a real godsend to us.”

Peterborough Housing is the landlord for the eight bachelor units and will provide referrals for tenants ready to live independently.

A high-efficiency boiler, low-flow fixtures and electrical upgrades throughout the building have significantly reduced operating costs.

“Even though we have eight more units, our utility bills are much lower than before and our new heating system is much more efficient,” McNabb said.

In response to neighbourhood concerns, the two-storey addition was designed to match the architectural style of the heritage building, with high ceilings and large windows. The expansion included a large common kitchen and laundry facility. The original building has a common living room and an office that is staffed 24 hours.

“The new suites are large and bright,” said McNabb. “While they are about 420 square feet, they feel much larger because of the high ceilings.”

### CMHC Contact

Contact a representative of CMHC’s Affordable Housing Centre  
[www.cmhc.ca/contactahc](http://www.cmhc.ca/contactahc)

The total cost for the project was \$1.2 million. Cameron House received \$960,000 from the federal and provincial governments for the eight-suite addition through the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program Agreement. Additional building upgrades were made possible through strong community partnerships, a small mortgage, and support from both the Peterborough Housing Corporation and the City of Peterborough.

To encourage the creation of new affordable rental housing, the City of Peterborough charges developers the single-detached dwelling tax rate instead of the multi-residential rate—a savings of approximately 30 to 40 per cent.

While the funding covered the addition, an expanded parking area and a new roof, many important building upgrades were completed thanks to cost-sharing and community support. The new heating system, common kitchen and laundry area were cost-shared between the Mission and the government funding. The Mission obtained a mortgage for exterior painting and repairs, a new entry system, updated wiring and new washroom fixtures.

A local volunteer organization provided free labour and, with local businesses, helped offset the cost of building materials. Volunteers replaced the front porch and completely gutted and restored a large third-floor attic, which is now used for meetings and storage.

“Partnerships and collaboration were a huge part of our success,” McNabb said. “All three tiers of government helped us with this project. In addition to Peterborough Housing, city staff provided a lot of guidance.”

“We got a lot more work done on the building than we anticipated, and this project also helped generate strong community support. Creating transitional housing for our men’s shelter has now been identified as a priority,” McNabb said. “This project has been a great model for us.”