



NEWS ARCHIVE:

## Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon

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# Diocese turns over ownership of Saskatoon Friendship Inn building

BY KIPLY LUKAN YAWORSKI

Saskatoon Friendship Inn now owns the building that it intends to renovate and expand, funded by a “Friends In Deed” capital campaign underway in the community.

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon has donated the \$650,000 building to the Friendship Inn, after years of renting the 20<sup>th</sup> Street West property to the soup kitchen for \$1 a year.

In a brief ceremony Dec. 15, Saskatoon Bishop Don Bolen handed over the key to Friendship Inn Executive Director Geselle Doell and Friends In Deed campaign co-chair Keith Martell.

“The donation of the building is an indication that the Friendship Inn is well established, and doing good work in the community in its own right,” said Bolen. He added that the transfer of ownership is timely, with the \$3 million capital campaign nearing completion, and plans in place for a renovation and expansion that will double the space available to provide meals and other services to those in need.

“It makes sense that the Friendship Inn would own the building, and continue to develop its own identity as a helping agency with broad community support,” said the bishop.

Established in 1969 with support from the diocese and from the Inner City Council of Churches, the Friendship Inn provides two meals a day, 365 days a year, to those who are in need, including families, seniors, the transient, and homeless.

“This is a place where people in the community are welcomed and can feel they belong. The name says it all,” said Doell, stressing the friendship offered to each person who walks through the door.



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Friendship Inn serves some 500 meals each day, totaling some 180,000 meals last year, with 40 per cent served to children. The planned expansion will add seating, food preparation and storage areas, and room for other services offered at Friendship Inn, such as free family hair cuts, an onsite Family Worker, a give-away table, job search help, and a weekly “Healthy Baby, Healthy Mother” program.

Martell said that in addition to this most recent donation of the building, the diocese’s support of Friendship Inn over the years has been significant. It has included ongoing funding through the Bishop’s Appeal and donation of fund-raising counsel from Don Gorsalitz of the diocesan Catholic Foundation office.

“This does fit with the message of the Church to care for the poor and to feed those who are hungry,” said Martell, CEO and chair of the First Nations Bank of Canada and a parishioner at St. Philip Neri in Saskatoon. “That message also spreads to the rest of the community, and we have seen others step forward to help.”

The work of Friendship Inn is vital in providing a compassionate response to immediate needs, said the bishop. “ This is complemented by other outreach and initiatives in the area, including the plans to build the Good Food Junction cooperative grocery store at Station 20 West as a source of nutritious, affordable food in an area without a full service grocery store.”

The CWL Clothing Depot that operates on the lower level of the building will not be affected by the transfer of ownership, but will continue to lease space from the Friendship Inn.