

## Women and children first

YWCA to build \$80M affordable housing complex in downtown core

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**The YWCA Toronto unveiled plans for a major new \$80M affordable and supportive housing development called the YWCA Elm Centre. The main 17 story tower will be named Irma Brydson Place in recognition of the \$5M gift in her memory.**

A new \$80-million affordable housing development exclusively for women and their children will be built in the city's downtown core, the YWCA announced, while conceding it will do little to ease the demand for subsidized housing.

The YWCA's new Elm Centre, which will be environmentally friendly with a geothermal heating and cooling system, green roofs, and energy efficient electric systems, will provide 300 permanent residences.

"There is a housing crisis in our city, with more than 70,000 names on the waiting list for homes," said Dr. Gail Robinson, president of the YWCA in Toronto, while noting the Elm Centre investment is an important first step to address the issue.

Yesterday, the YWCA announced the project with shovels expecting to hit the ground this spring.

It will offer 150 affordable apartments, 100 rent-geared-to-income apartments for women with mental health and/or addiction issues, and 50 affordable apartments for aboriginal women, 10 of which will be reserved for aboriginal women and their children fleeing violence.

Heather McGregor, chief executive officer of Toronto's YWCA, said all three levels of government have committed funding for the project to the tune of \$34 million collectively.

The YWCA, which is embarking on a fundraising campaign for the Elm Centre but will also mortgage some of the cost, has already raised just over \$10 million for the project, \$5 million of which came from the estates of Ken Thomson and his sister, Audrey Campbell.

The donation, which McGregor said is likely the largest gift of its kind, was made in memory of their sister Irma Brydson.

A single mother for nine years, Irma was a "strong and vivacious woman with a compassion for those less fortunate," said her daughter, Sherry Brydson.

"My mother would be proud that her brother and sister chose to preserve her memory by helping others in such a positive and meaningful way."

The Elm Centre will feature three towers -- one 17 storeys (named for Irma Brydson), one 10 storeys, and one five storeys -- and will offer one, two, and three bedroom apartments.

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