



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **“There *are* solutions” to youth homelessness, concludes Raising the Roof report; Sir Richard Branson calls on Canadians to support the Toque Campaign**

*NATIONAL - November 19, 2009:* Today, at 10:00 a.m. at Toronto’s Yonge- Dundas Square, Raising the Roof will publicly release a groundbreaking report – **Youth Homelessness in Canada: The Road to Solutions** – that echoes the voices of some **700** homeless youth and spells out what must be done to solve the national issue of youth homelessness . The event also marks the launch of Raising the Roof’s annual **National Toque Campaign**. Toque proceeds from this year’s campaign will directly fund solutions to youth homelessness across Canada.

On any given night, across Canada, 65,000 youth are without a place to call home. Every day, every night, thousands of homeless youth struggle to survive life without a place to live, a family to be with, or the resources to develop independence – and with little hope for the future.

“Canada desperately needs a national strategy to truly support our country’s homeless and disenfranchised young people,” says Sean Gadon, President of Raising the Roof. “Our young people have told us they want and expect to be part of the solution in working with government, community and private sector partners. We all have a responsibility and a part to play in implementing solutions.”

“Investing in our youth is one of the most important things we can do,” agrees Janice Thomson, Executive VP, HR and Communications, Direct Energy, Lead Partner in Raising the Roof’s Youthworks initiative and development of the research report. “The report describes the vital role that the private sector can play in education, skills training, employment opportunities and mentoring to support at-risk youth to become confident, self-sustaining and productive members of our society.” Thomson will issue two calls to action. The first will ask Canadians to sign up and show their support for the report’s recommendations. The second will encourage Canada’s private sector to get involved in solutions.

“It’s outrageous that youth homelessness is such an issue in a country like Canada. The government, private sector and individuals need to come together and take action to get kids off the streets,” said Sir Richard Branson, Founder of the Virgin Group. “Virgin Mobile and its RE\*Generation program is working with partners across Canada to help make a

difference – one of those great partners is Raising the Roof. We're thrilled to be a part of their Toque Campaign this year and today we're calling on all Canadians to buy a toque and help put a cap on youth homelessness! Just one toque adds up to four bus tokens and two hot meals for a young person – so just think of the difference that can be made with the campaign as a whole. We are also appealing to Canadians to sign up to support the proclamation of a National Youth Homelessness Awareness Day.”

**VIPs at today's event will include:**

**Emily**, a previously homeless youth from St. John's

**Laurel Broten, MPP**, Minister of Children and Youth Services

**Sir Richard Branson**, founder, Virgin Group, this year's Lead Partner in the Toque Campaign

**Janice Thomson**, Executive VP, HR and Communications, Direct Energy, Lead Partner for Raising the Roof's Youthworks initiative

**Cory Monteith**, Toque Campaign Supporter – a Canadian actor and singer best known for his role as Finn Hudson in *Glee* on Fox

**Councillor Janet Davis**, Chair, Community Development & Recreation Committee, City of Toronto

**Charles Hain**, Ontario Trillium Foundation (a major partner of Raising the Roof)

The Toque Campaign runs Nov. 19 to the end of Feb. 2010. Toques are available for a donation of \$10. Get yours:  
on-line at [www.raisingtheroof.org](http://www.raisingtheroof.org).  
at any Virgin Mobile store or on-line at [www.VirginMobile.ca/toques](http://www.VirginMobile.ca/toques)

Raising the Roof thanks Youthworks Lead Partner, Director Energy; Youthworks Major Partner, The Ontario Trillium Foundation; 2010 Toque Campaign Lead Partner, Virgin Mobile Canada; National Toque Campaign Partners, Canadian Traffic Network (CTN), JJM Manufacturing, and ecentricarts. This is the 13<sup>th</sup> Toque Campaign for Raising the Roof, Canada's only national charity dedicated to long-term solutions to homelessness. This year, LET'S ALL PUT A CAP ON YOUTH HOMELESSNESS!

Raising the Roof is Canada's only national charity dedicated to long-term solutions to homelessness. We fund local agencies working to alleviate homelessness in their communities; build public awareness about the true nature of homelessness; and build partnerships by giving individuals, corporations and organizations the opportunity to participate in solutions. For more information, go to [www.raisingtheroof.org](http://www.raisingtheroof.org).

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*For more information or to arrange an interview contact:*

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**MEDIA NOTES:**

**Photo opportunities:** Platform party members collectively “don” a toque to symbolize start of Toque Campaign.

**Available for interview at Nov. 19 event :** All of the above

**LOCAL AGENCY SPOKESPERSONS are available** in Calgary, Montreal, St. John's NL, Toronto, Vancouver and Winnipeg (contact Susanna Smith, as above, for details)

**For fresh video footage** of youth relating their experience of homelessness, go to [www.raisingtheroof.org](http://www.raisingtheroof.org)