



For Immediate Release:

**Raising the Roof launches \$1.2 million *Youth Works* to combat youth homelessness
*Funding announced for three youth agencies across Canada***

January 11, 2006 (Toronto) – **Raising the Roof** today announced ***Youth Works***, a \$1.2 million three-year program to combat youth homelessness across Canada. The national charity has raised \$540,000 to date to study and support three community agencies in Calgary, Toronto and St. John's that will provide innovative education, training and employment programs for more than 500 high risk young people aged 16 to 24.

At the completion of the program, *Youth Works* will make recommendations on what more is needed to fill gaps in the lives of homeless youth, how to best provide support and what level of funding is needed to keep youth off the streets.

Youth Works' lead sponsor is **Direct Energy**, North America's largest competitive energy and related services provider, which has made a three-year commitment of \$330,000. Scotiabank, BMO Financial Group, TD Securities, Franklin Templeton Investments and Molson Canada have also made financial commitments.

Youth homelessness is reaching alarming proportions, with people aged 16 to 24 representing up to one third of Canada's homeless population. In Toronto alone roughly 10,000 different youth are homeless at one point in any given year - and between 1,500 and 2,000 are homeless on any given night.

"*Youth Works* puts our words and concerns into action. We invite corporations and foundations to join with us in showing youth they are not alone and that we believe in a better future for them and our country," said Sean Goetz-Gadon, president, Raising the Roof.

The three agencies selected will each get \$100,000 per year for three years to enhance the programs they are offering. They are **Eva's Phoenix** in Toronto, **The Back Door** in Calgary and **Choices for Youth** in St. John's. They have demonstrated success in offering programs that build self-sufficiency and enable homeless youth to move from the street and hostels to independent living as contributing members of society.

Youth Works will monitor the results and effectiveness of these programs, to share with other agencies and to better engage the corporate and government sectors in policies and programs that make a difference in the lives of young homeless Canadians.

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"As a supporter of Raising the Roof since 2003, Direct Energy is thrilled to be the lead sponsor of *Youth Works* because we believe that finding solutions for youth in crisis and

providing them with training, tools and support will help them to realize their full potential," said Janice Thomson, SVP, Human Resources, Marketing & Communications, Direct Energy. "We are proud to support the initiative and we look forward to working with these organizations whose successful models have transformed the lives of so many young people."

"A year ago I thought I might end up in jail, or worse. I had no future, no hope," said Darnell. "I knew there had to be help somewhere and that if I put the effort into getting something out of life, instead of destroying my life, I could change. After my program at Eva's Phoenix I found a job and can now support my family."

Eva's Phoenix in Toronto, Ontario is a transitional housing and training facility offering innovative education, employment and mentorship programs to help homeless youth achieve sustainable employment and housing.

The Back Door in Calgary, Alberta is an innovative program for street youth where participants work with community volunteers to develop step-by-step personal contracts to improve their lives, get off the street and become self-sufficient members of society.

Choices for Youth in St. John's, Newfoundland is a community agency providing supportive housing and related services for homeless youth in downtown St. John's. The facility includes a shelter for young men and a supportive housing programme for 45 youth.

About Raising the Roof:

Founded in 1997 in response to Canada's homelessness crisis, Raising the Roof is Canada's only national charity dedicated to long-term solutions to homelessness.

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