

Furniture bank seeks new home

The correlation between a comfy couch and good mental health may seem like a stretch.

Then again, maybe not.

Heck, we've all come home from a tough day and looked forward to kicking back in that favourite recliner or sprawling out on that sofa. Maybe it even has a rip or two or a gravy stain that you never really tried to remove. That other people in the house kid you about. No matter. It's your place of comfort and refuge. A security blanket of sorts. And it's yours.

We at the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) understand and appreciate this furniture-to-person relationship and the impact it has on good mental health. It's why we launched our furniture bank a few years back. And why we're hoping we won't lose it.

We witnessed, first-hand, this improvement in a person's mental health when these individuals in need - people who were recently released from institutions, for example - visited our bank and left with a couch, a chair, a table or even a lamp.

It meant they could transform their sparse and unwelcoming



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OF SOUND MIND

apartment or bare room into a home. For free.

Consider that the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) provides less than \$800 to furnish an individual's new residence. That's less than \$800 for everything, not just living room furniture. So, less than \$800 for everything from the stove and refrigerator to sheets and towels. Without the furniture bank, many of these individuals would have ended up getting locked into contracts with rental stores, thus exhausting an already strained budget.

And it's certainly not that there's a shortage of good stuff out there we'll accept as a deposit to this unique bank.

Indeed, it seemed we only had to whisper the need in the wind and there was always some kind CKL resident more than happy and willing to part with that sofa bed or ottoman or computer desk or TV - which we'd grateful-

ly arrange to pick up.

Yes, our furniture bank had a good run. And it'd be a shame if, from here on in, we only refer to it in the past tense.

Because this much-needed service has been suspended - indefinitely, unfortunately, until we can find a new home for it.

We're thankful to the people at the Provincial Court House, who provided us with the space for the past few years until their expansion meant they needed it back. But here's hoping someone comes forward with the same good spiritedness - and even a basic, simple vacant space. It certainly doesn't have to be an exotic storefront location, either. We're not picky. An empty garage. A storage locker. A shed. Or even a corner of that barn. It may just seem like four simple walls and a roof from the outside. But from the inside, it could be a storage facility for a whole lot of good mental health.

Dan Cooper is a case manager with the local branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association. If you have a space to donate - and it doesn't have to be large - call him at 328-2704 ext 225.