

**For Immediate Release**

## **Church Street Affordable Housing Project Breaks Ground on National Housing Day**

**St. Catharines, ON, November 22, 2017** – Construction officially began on a new affordable housing building for Niagara Region families with the ground breaking at 111 Church Street today.

The project is being built through a partnership between for-profit developer Penn Terra Group Ltd., co-operative financier FirstOntario Credit Union and non-profit housing provider Bethlehem Housing and Support Services to help respond to the region's need for affordable housing.

“Because of this unique partnership and the support of our municipal and regional governments we are able to provide a solution to the affordable housing crisis in our community. We believe that everyone deserves a home,” said Lori Beech, Executive Director of Bethlehem Housing and Support Services.

“This development offers a made-in-Niagara solution to provide affordable rental housing and support services for families and individuals facing homelessness, physical disabilities, mental health challenges, domestic violence and family breakdown.”

More than 235,000 people face homelessness across Canada each year. In the Niagara Region there are more than 5,500 families (11,000 people including children) on the affordable housing wait list.

“It is the responsibility of FirstOntario to invest our profits in the needs of the communities our members live and work in – that is what credit unions do,” said Lloyd Smith, FirstOntario Credit Union Divisional COO, Corporate Investments.

“We are proud to be partners with Bethlehem Housing and Penn Terra to help Niagara Region families find good, family friendly and supportive housing here in St. Catharines.”

Taking part in the project's kick-off were Jim Bradley, Member of Provincial Parliament, Henry D'Angelo, Niagara Regional Councillor and Chair of Niagara Regional Housing, and Mayor Walter Sendzik of the City of St. Catharines.

“Penn Terra is committed to working with our partners to help tackle the affordable housing crisis in the Niagara Region – specifically St. Catharines,” said John Kingston of Penn Terra Group Limited.

“Our business is in this community, the stronger the community the stronger our business, that is why we welcome the opportunity to be part of this development. We are excited to have the kind of support we have from the city, municipality and the province to make this a reality.”

Following a successful development the partnership seeks additional opportunities in the Niagara Region to help respond to the need for affordable housing. Families will begin moving into their new home following completion of the development tentatively scheduled for Spring 2019.

**For more information please contact:**

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**About FirstOntario Credit Union**

FirstOntario has been serving Members in the Golden Horseshoe, including Hamilton, Halton, the Niagara Region and Southwestern regions of Ontario since 1939. FirstOntario is the province's second largest credit union with 32 locations, more than 115,000 Members and \$5 billion in assets under management. Everyone is welcome to be part of FirstOntario for financial services including daily transactions, mortgages, lines of credit, loans and investments. FirstOntario profits are invested into the communities we serve through support for entrepreneurs, competitive rates and charitable pursuits including our award winning student nutrition program. Learn more about us today at [FirstOntario.com](http://FirstOntario.com).

**About Penn Terra Group Limited**

Penn Terra is one of Niagara's premiere developers offering luxury condos, student residences, and modern apartments. Penn Terra prides itself on developing affordable quality buildings and was the first developer in over thirty years to build multi-unit residential buildings within the downtown core of the City of St. Catharines. Penn Terra is an active participant within the Niagara Region and has a keen desire to work together with FirstOntario Credit Union and Bethlehem Housing and Support Services towards addressing a solution to the need for affordable housing in the Niagara Region. Learn more about us today at [www.pennterragroup.com](http://www.pennterragroup.com)

**About Bethlehem Housing and Support Services**

Bethlehem Housing and Support Services is a multi-service organization serving the diversified needs of Niagara residents by offering support for individual growth through housing and other focused services. Bethlehem's vision is to provide stable affordable housing and support services to contribute to a vibrant, caring and inclusive Niagara where everyone has a home. Learn more about us today at [www.bethlehemhousing.ca](http://www.bethlehemhousing.ca)