

## Join the fight against poverty Friday night

Committed residents across the region will try to make it through a cold winter night for the second annual Longest Night in support of United Way of Peel Region's homelessness strategy.

It will be tomorrow (Friday) night, running from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. Among those taking part will be Mayor Allan Thompson, along with Councillors Jennifer Innis and Annete Groves, who will be spending the night sleeping in vehicles.

With more than 200,000 residents living in poverty, the threat of homelessness is very real, according to a release issued by United Way. The loss of a job, an unexpected illness or family breakdown can be the catalyst for many losing their homes. Some families and individuals who lose their homes are turning to their cars for shelter.

"I hear many stories from people across the community and all walks of life about their experiences with homelessness due to job loss, separation, addiction and illness," commented United Way of Peel Region President and CEO Shelley White. "Most people never expected they would ever be homeless. Everyone has a story and they're just like you and me."

"Homelessness looks different here," she added. "You may not see people sleeping on the streets. Here, homelessness is more subtle. Last year, 14,520 people, including almost 4,000 children and youth, used homeless shelters and transitional housing. Over 450 kids were turned away from our one emergency youth shelter due to lack of space."

Longest Night Peel champions include community and political leaders, like Thompson, as well as Brampton Mayor Linda Jeffery and Mississauga Mayor Bonnie Crombie, along with family and youth volunteers participating in neighbourhoods across Caledon, Brampton and Mississauga. Participants will sleep in their cars and engage in a virtual conversation to raise both funds and awareness.

Join the virtual event Friday. Participants are encouraged to share their experiences on social media using #LongestNightPeel. Visit [www.unitedwaypeel.org/longestnightpeel](http://www.unitedwaypeel.org/longestnightpeel) for additional details.