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CEO Sleepout raises \$210K, awareness for homeless plight

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Posted: 09/19/2014 8:09 AM | Comments: 0 | Last Modified: 09/19/2014 8:19 AM | Updates



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Over 160 CEOs and community leaders joined by about 50 homeless through out the night took part in the 4th Annual CEO Sleepout at Portage Avenue and Main Street. (WAYNE GLOWACKI / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS)  [Photo Store](#)

About 160 of the city's movers and shakers caught a break from Mother Nature on Thursday night as they slept under the stars to raise cash and awareness for Winnipeg's homeless.

It was windy but unseasonably warm as the community and business leaders, including four mayoral candidates — Judy Wasylycia-Leis, Brian Bowman, Paula Havixbeck and Robert-Falcon Ouellette — took part in the Downtown Winnipeg BIZ's fourth annual CEO Sleepout, which supports employment programs for the homeless.

The participants' hearts were warmed even more when they rolled out of their sleeping bags to discover they'd helped raise \$192,000 to employ people who are homeless. The BIZ's original fundraising goal was \$200,000 but has been boosted now to \$210,000 as of 8 a.m.

While the sleepout is over, donations can still be made at www.changeforthebetter.org or at the roughly 100 Change for the Better collection boxes scattered throughout the downtown, which officials say is also home to an estimated 3,000 chronically homeless people.

Stefano Grande, Downtown BIZ executive director, was thrilled by the generosity of Winnipeggers and the determination showed by the sleepout participants.

"It's another successful event," Grande, who stayed up all night chatting with participants and homeless Winnipeggers who dropped by the event in front of 201 Portage Avenue for a cup of

coffee and a bite to eat.

"It's always touching to see community and business leaders come out and learn a bit more about this issue and spend an evening away from their families and friends," he said. "I feel we really have to get going on this issue. There's a lot more to do."

Along with huddling together in their sleeping bags at the historic corner, the CEOs and politicians were treated to ribs and gumbo from a local food truck, then toured downtown agencies serving the homeless.

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