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Furniture Bank leverages AI technology to avoid “poverty porn” in ground-breaking Giving Tuesday campaign

In an innovative pivot, this Toronto-based charity is rewriting the narrative of charitable giving.

Toronto, Ont. – As Giving Tuesday approaches, Canadian inboxes will be flooded with charities leaning on “hard-hitting” photos used to shock donors into giving. Today, Furniture Bank announced a ground-breaking annual campaign that rewrites the narrative of charitable campaigns.

Instead of relying on “poverty porn”—images that exploit, objectify and dehumanize people who are at their most vulnerable—to increase donations, Furniture Bank will be leveraging innovative technology to create these visuals. “We are living in a highly visual reality where photographs are imperative for charities to access support, but how, ethically, can we take pictures of people’s lowest moments?” says Furniture Bank Executive Director, Dan Kershaw. “We can’t and we won’t, and this is why Furniture Bank is turning to Artificial Intelligence.”

Instead of trying to capture the realities of furniture poverty through a traditional camera, Furniture Bank is disrupting the fundraising campaign model by engaging with Artificial Intelligence (AI) to create these images. Though AI-generated art is spawning fierce debate in art circles, it allows Furniture Bank to communicate the dire situations its clients are living in with its donors ethically, and responsibly.

By using AI tools, Furniture Bank was able to save up to \$60,000 in production costs, using the realities experienced by its clients to describe furniture poverty—sleeping on stained mattresses, children doing their homework on the floor in an empty living room, a kitchen that has nothing but a sink and some cupboards—to generate images that capture the desolation and isolation without compromise clients’ dignity.

Furniture Bank’s 2022 AI-generated campaign can be found [here](#).

About Furniture Bank:

Founded in 1998, Furniture Bank is a Toronto-based charity and social enterprise with a mission to break the cycle of furniture poverty. Furniture Bank works in partnership with over 200 community agencies to provide people who are economically vulnerable with furniture and home furnishings, a service that enhances both psychological and financial stability. Furniture Bank collects 70,000 furniture items and serves over 3,600 families annually. For further details, visit furniturebank.org.

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MEDIA CONTACT:

Colleen McCourt
colleen@strategyplus.ca
705-358-2006

