



NEWS RELEASE: GNWT to establish temporary Yellowknife day shelter under Emergency Management Act

YELLOWNIFE (November 6, 2020) – Paulie Chinna, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, announced today that she is taking action under the *Emergency Management Act* (EMA) to address the urgent need for a temporary day shelter in Yellowknife. The decision was made following continued discussions with the City of Yellowknife and several attempts to identify a suitable location to provide this critical service to the city’s vulnerable residents.

Under s. 14 of the EMA, the Minister has declared a state of local emergency in Yellowknife from November 6, 2020 to November 19, 2020. Using the powers available to her under the Act to acquire public or private property to alleviate the emergency, the Minister will acquire the former Mine Safety (Side Door) building to establish a temporary day shelter.

The need for additional shelter space is a result of ongoing capacity limitations at the current day shelter location due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has displaced approximately 40 clients. With the return of winter weather creating an urgent need, and ongoing challenges in locating suitable space following exhaustive efforts by the Department of Health and Social Services in collaboration with the City, the decision will ensure that vulnerable Yellowknife residents have a place to seek shelter during the day.

This solution means that alternate options to secure a temporary day shelter are no longer being considered. The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) will not pursue the federal Public Works warehouse on 44th Street at Franklin Avenue, and the City will withdraw its RFP for a temporary structure to be located on City-owned lands.

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) will operate the temporary day shelter at the new location so long as the Minister considers it necessary to maintain a state of local emergency and has agreed to withdraw its application for development approval to use the government warehouse on 44th Street. The GNWT has committed to implementing additional security measures at the temporary day shelter to mitigate potential concerns from neighbouring businesses.



Quotes

“As leaders, we cannot stand by when people need our help, and the GNWT and City of Yellowknife have been working hard to find a location for a temporary day shelter as winter approached. We believe this approach is the best available under the current circumstances and appreciate the support and cooperation of the City in helping us find a relatively quick solution to our search for a temporary day shelter. While I recognize that this is not a long-term solution, this is one small step towards creating a better territory for all residents, and I truly believe that working together we can make a significant impact.”

-Paulie Chinna, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs

“COVID-19 has changed the capacity of shelters, just as it has affected the capacity of businesses and other public facilities, putting vulnerable Yellowknife residents at risk as winter arrives. I am pleased that Minister Chinna and the City of Yellowknife have been able to identify a solution to the emerging crisis and designate a location for a temporary day shelter.”

-Julie Green, Minister of Health and Social Services

“I am pleased that, together with the GNWT, we have been able to find an interim path forward that protects our most vulnerable residents. Using the emergency management path is not an option that’s taken lightly, but given the extraordinary pandemic times we are in, it provides an immediate solution and I believe that the proposed mitigation measures will make this workable for everyone. In the longer term, the City looks forward to working with the GNWT on their plans to establish a permanent day shelter and sobering centre.”

-Rebecca Alty, Mayor of Yellowknife

Quick Facts

- This state of emergency applies to Yellowknife only, in recognition of the unique and extraordinary circumstances currently affecting the city’s vulnerable residents as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Under the Emergency Management Act, the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs may declare a state of emergency for a period of 14 days.



- A state of emergency may be renewed, if the Minister determines that an emergency still exists.
- The GNWT recently confirmed plans to establish a permanent Yellowknife day shelter in 2023.
- DHSS will work with neighbours in the area to develop a regular forum for communication, a Good Neighbour Agreement and the implementation of a number of measures to address concerns raised during the first application for use of the location (e.g. installation of privacy fencing, appropriate security measures).

Media inquiries

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