



## **Question and Answer Document – Temporary Day Shelter** *Updated November 6, 2020*

### **1. Why was there a need for the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) to find a second temporary day shelter in Yellowknife?**

- Day Shelters are intended to be space for people to go during the day and are especially important when we start to get colder weather, as we are now.
- The number of residents that require access to this type of facility during the day exceeds the numbers currently permitted in the existing temporary day shelter. The GNWT has made several attempts to find a location that would accommodate the numbers required in one single location, but has been unsuccessful and a second location was deemed necessary.

### **2. Why didn't the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) start to identify a solution earlier, so it didn't have to take this step?**

- When we first entered the COVID-19 pandemic, the GNWT restricted numbers at the day shelter in an effort to address physical distancing requirements and ensure NWT residents were safe against the spread of COVID-19.
- A second temporary shelter was established at the Salvation Army to accommodate resident needs. The GNWT began the search for a new facility immediately upon notification that the Salvation Army required their space back and it was no longer an option. An extensive search has been ongoing since late June, and officials have tried over 25 locations.

### **3. Why did the GNWT need to declare an emergency under the Emergency Management Act? The capacity restrictions at the day shelter are because of the Chief Public Health Officer (CPHO), why wouldn't she take this step using her authority under the Public Health Act?**

- This is a public safety issue. The Emergency Management Act is the appropriate legislation to use to take decisive action to protect public safety.
- This is an all-of-government response – with departments carrying out specific roles. The Public Health Act, which Dr. Kandola indicated was not required at this time, is designed to address population health and deal with communicable disease. We need to be cautious when using such reserve powers, and in this case, there was a more appropriate tool.

### **4. Will the state of emergency order be managed by the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs or the COVID-19 Secretariat?**

- The Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Paulie Chinna under section 14 of the Emergency Management Act has declared the state of emergency and will be responsible for managing the order as it is written.



**5. Availability of housing is an issue in many communities across the Northwest Territories (NWT). Will the GNWT consider declaring a state of emergency to deal with critical housing needs in other NWT communities?**

- These are extra ordinary circumstances and the GNWT doesn't take declaring a state of emergency lightly. States of emergency are considered on a case-by-case basis to protect the health and safety of residents.
- The GNWT recognizes that other communities in the NWT may face similar situations now or in the future and will work with the communities to address these needs.
- If similar circumstances exist in other communities that cannot be addressed outside of a State of Emergency, it may be necessary for the GNWT to consider.

**6. How many homeless people are there in Yellowknife and what is the GNWT doing to address their needs and the needs of this population in our communities?**

- The Point-in-time count performed by the City of Yellowknife identified 338 people experiencing homelessness in Yellowknife.
- 2020-21 represents the highest level of capital investment in housing across the Northwest Territories in over a decade.
- This year will see over \$50 million spent on housing in the NWT. This unparalleled investment will make a significant difference in the housing situation for small communities, including 85 new units and major retrofits to 191 existing housing units.

**7. How is the Co-investment fund being used to address the need for housing in Yellowknife?**

- The GNWT is expecting an announcement of approximately \$55 million in housing investment under the National Housing Co-investment Fund comprising of 110 new units and 50 major retrofits.

**8. How long will the state of emergency last? Will it be extended?**

- As prescribed by the Emergency Management Act, the State of Emergency is in effect for 14 days. This state of emergency is for the City of Yellowknife only and will be in effect from November 6, 2020 to November 19, 2020.
- The Minister of Municipal and Community affairs has the power to renew the state of emergency as long as it is necessary to protect the health and safety of residents, but this will need to be reassessed on a bi-weekly basis.

**9. Will the GNWT declare a territorial emergency again?**

- This is a localized emergency and declaring another territorial emergency is not what is being contemplated at this time. However, a territorial State of Emergency can be considered at any time should circumstances require.



- Declaring this state of emergency allows the GNWT to address the direct threat to our vulnerable population in Yellowknife and to respect the Orders of the CPHO that limit the number of people inside a given facility.

**10. How does this differ from the earlier territorial emergency?**

- The previous territorial emergency was declared proactively to ensure that the GNWT was best positioned to respond to the pandemic in the immediate wake of the declaration of the public health emergency, when it was less clear what would be required to implement public health orders, and to provide for coordination of resources across multiple departments through the Emergency Management Organization. Since that time, the GNWT has put in place the COVID-19 Secretariat to provide for the ongoing management and coordination of the operational response to the pandemic and support the implementation of public health orders. This decision is specific to public safety concerns in the City of Yellowknife alone, and does not indicate a return to the conditions that required the first emergency declaration.

**11. Does acquiring the building under the EMA mean the GNWT is getting it for free?**

- The Government of the Northwest Territories will cover leasing and operation costs for the building.

**12. Why has the GNWT decided to take over this building as opposed to some of the other options that were discussed publically? Aren't there better options?**

- To date over 25 locations have been considered including government, municipal and private buildings. None of these locations has proven successful due to a few main factors that include not available, not suitable for the program, or owner unwilling to make the building available to the GNWT. At this stage and with weather getting colder, the GNWT had to take action and this location, which is owned by the City and is being acquired with their support, has been deemed as the best fit.

**13. If this is such a good location, why wasn't it approved when it was proposed the first time? Other people have to follow the rules set out in the Community Planning and Development Act and Zoning Bylaw, why should the GNWT get to bypass them?**

- The Department of Health and Social Services submitted a Development Permit application for this location in the summer. As per the City's Zoning Bylaw this is considered a conditionally permitted use which requires Council's approval. At the time, Council did not feel that options to mitigate concerns from the neighbourhood were adequately addressed and therefore did not approve the permit. As Summer evolved into Fall and now Winter, emergency conditions have emerged with the sub-zero temperatures which mean that extraordinary steps have to be taken - the Emergency Management Act has been invoked to ensure safety of Yellowknife's vulnerable population during the cold winter months in a COVID, physically distancing context.



**14. Is this the only building the GNWT will need? Will it have the capacity to accommodate all the people who have been displaced from the day shelter?**

- This facility will have the ability to accommodate the majority of the people who have been displaced for the day shelter. It will be able to accommodate approximately 20 individuals and the operating hours will be 7:30am to 6:30pm.

**15. What does this mean for the proposed 44<sup>th</sup> Street location?**

- The GNWT will officially withdraw its application for the use of the 44<sup>th</sup> street facility as a day shelter. The possibility for the facility to be used for another purpose during the pandemic has not been ruled out.

**16. Will the plan to put up tents on the tennis court still proceed?**

- The City of Yellowknife has indicated that the recently issued RFP will be cancelled immediately as to minimize the impact on companies who were planning on responding to the RFP.

**17. What kind of consultations were done with neighbouring businesses and residents? How will concerns raised by residents during previous consideration of this location by the City be addressed?**

- The GNWT has reached out to neighbouring businesses today. The GNWT would like to meet with them as soon as possible to understand their concerns and what mitigation measures can be used to address these concerns. Lessons learned from the good neighbour agreement with the current day shelter will be applied to the new neighbour agreement.

**18. What will the GNWT do to ensure public safety around this location and minimize any disruption to neighbouring businesses and residents?**

- The GNWT understands that neighbouring businesses will have concerns and fears associated with the use of the Side Door building as a temporary day shelter.
- Mitigation measures will be based on best practices learned from the current day shelter, operations at the Salvation Army day shelter and factors specific to this location, and will include:
  - Establishment of a Good Neighbour Agreement which outlines mitigation strategies and commitments from Government will also be established.



**19. Does the GNWT still have plans to find a permanent day shelter? If so, where will this be located? Has it been approved? When will construction begin?**

- The Funding for the permanent day shelter was approved and announced by the Federal Government in August 2019 as part of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Plan (ICIP) fund with the funding beginning April, 2020. The project is currently in the planning stage.
- Site selection will occur in accordance with the City of Yellowknife Development permitting process and has not been finalized. Progress on the project has been affected by COVID-19 which has impacted plans to engage local groups in the facility programming.
- Any site will be subject to the City of Yellowknife permitting process and neighbour engagement process. We are aiming for a site that can perform functions currently met by the Sobering Center / Day Shelter as well as a Temporary Shelter, Cultural Programming, Outreach and Cultural Wellness programming and the option for onsite primary care delivery.

**20. Who will staff and operate this new temporary day shelter location?**

- The GNWT will operate this temporary day shelter. The contract for operations will be administered by the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority.