

City provides location for Emergency Winter Shelter

(Penticton, BC – December 1, 2023) – Following a request from 100 More Homes, the City of Penticton has agreed to provide an emergency winter shelter space and will work with BC Housing on a long-term agreement for future shelter and housing needs.

“100 More Homes has been working diligently to try and come to a resolution that would ensure those experiencing homelessness are provided proper care when the temperatures drop to dangerous levels,” says Mayor Julius Bloomfield. “With temperatures dropping, Council felt it appropriate to make sure these members of our community will have a place to stay on the coldest nights and provide space for this year while future arrangements are explored.”

Under the partnership, the City of Penticton has leased space for a 30-bed Extreme Weather Response (EWR) shelter that will operate on nights when an extreme weather alert is issued; BC Housing will cover the cost of operations and the EWR shelter will be operated by Penticton and Area Overdose Prevention Society, an experienced and locally-based provider. Space has been leased at 1704 Government Street at a total cost of approximately \$20,000 and will operate from December to March 31, 2024.

100 More Homes wrote letters to Council and BC Housing with specific asks to ensure an emergency winter shelter is available this year. The letters also asked the City and BC Housing to continue to work together in collaboration on housing needs for those experiencing homelessness.

“We want to thank the City Council for taking this step this year to provide a space that will provide people a warm space during the coldest nights of the year,” says Linda Sankey, co-chair of 100 More Homes. “We have exhausted all the options currently available and the City’s willingness to recognize the human need to provide care and to facilitate a long-term plan with BC Housing are key strides as we seek to deal with the crisis on our streets.”

A key component of Council’s decision is working towards the future signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with BC Housing that ensures a proper plan is in place before the next winter, including:

1. establishing regular meetings to identify short and long-term goals;
2. create a sustainable winter plan for the 2024-25 season, and;
3. formalize data coordination and sharing.

“One of Council’s priorities is building strong community partnerships, so an agreement with BC Housing that provides clarity for all the partners involved – including from 100 More Homes – is very much needed,” says Bloomfield. “We all have the same objectives and by working together we can make them reality. The goal is to avoid scrambling for space next year and have a solid plan in place for emergency and longer-term housing needs.”

The Emergency Winter Shelter is one part of the plan 100 More Homes has in place for this winter with partners to support those unhoused. Other items include: daytime warming centres within city facilities and extra funds for assertive outreach gear.

The 73-bed shelter at Compass Court funded by BC Housing continues to operate.

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