



WEST KELOWNA WINTER SHELTER QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

December 10, 2019

The following Questions and Answers have been added to since the letter was distributed to the neighbours.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

What is happening?

BC Housing, with support from the City of West Kelowna, has been working to respond to an urgent need for shelter for people experiencing and at risk of homelessness in the community. BC Housing has submitted a Temporary Use Permit (TUP) application to the City for a temporary winter shelter to be located at **1160 Stevens Road**. The proposed temporary winter shelter would provide safe secure spaces for up to 40 people experiencing homelessness in West Kelowna.

Who will be managing the shelter?

The West Kelowna Shelter Society would operate this shelter. WKSS has been effectively managing shelter and housing at 3672 Brown Road since December 2018. Their vision is to minimize the impacts of homelessness in the community by providing temporary seasonal shelter and resources to people who are homeless and at risk. The goal is that the services offered should involve those in need of assistance, and be delivered with quality, dignity and respect.

What is the plan for the site?

There will be four trailers plus a storage container, including up to 40 beds plus a lounge/eating area and an OPS space as well as showers and toilets facilities. Meals would be brought in as there would be no cooking facilities on-site.

When would the temporary shelter open? What will the hours be?

Temporary winter shelters generally operate from November 1 through March 31. This temporary winter shelter for West Kelowna would open by early 2020 and close on March 31, 2020. For the winter shelter, staff would be on site 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Why temporary? Why isn't more permanent housing being considered?

BC Housing, with support from the City of West Kelowna, has been working to respond to an urgent need for shelter for people experiencing and at risk of homelessness in the community. A temporary winter shelter would provide a safe and warm space to bring people experiencing homelessness inside during the cold winter months. BC Housing is working with the City of West Kelowna and Westbank First Nation on plans for safe, secure housing for Westside residents.

Why was this location chosen?

The City of West Kelowna reviewed and suggested several available locations with BC Housing to determine the best possible fit for a temporary winter shelter, as there is not an extensive inventory of available lots.

Other than 1160 Stevens Road, the City looked at its future public works yard and another site on Bartley Road. Making sure the location of the emergency winter shelter wasn't close to residential areas, schools, has utility connections and other factors was reviewed between BC Housing and the City.



The review included the few lots that the city was aware of that may become available (whether for lease or for sale), that could accommodate what BC Housing described the appropriate temporary Britco-type trailers, site utilities, close to public transit, accessibility to existing community and social services and other neighbourhood factors.

The 1160 Stevens Road location is privately owned and was one of the few lots available where a temporary lease agreement could be completed by BC Housing. We will be working with the people who will stay at the shelter to make sure that their needs are accommodated. There is no perfect site. What we know is that this site will save lives this winter.

What happens to people experiencing homelessness after the shelter closes?

BC Housing is working with the City of West Kelowna and Westbank First Nation on plans for safe, secure housing for Westside residents.

Who is funding the shelter?

BC Housing would pay for the lease, construction and operations. The West Kelowna Shelter Society would manage the shelter.

ABOUT THE SHELTER GUESTS

Who will be staying at this shelter?

Only people who are experiencing homelessness would be eligible to stay at the temporary shelter. The intake process would prioritize West Kelowna residents. The 2018 Westside Point-In-Time Count Report found 72 people experiencing homelessness; 42% unsheltered; 61% identify as Indigenous; 72% chronically homeless (6 months+); and 55% have been homeless for <5 years.

For those who choose not to use the shelter from West Kelowna, will you open the beds to surrounding communities?

The intake process would prioritize Westside residents, and it is our understanding that there is enough need on the Westside to fill the beds at the temporary shelter. If there was an empty bed, people experiencing homelessness from the surrounding communities would be considered.

How will it be determined who gets a warm bed and who remains cold?

The goal of opening this temporary shelter is that no Westside residents remain in the cold. West Kelowna Shelter Society would manage the intake process at the temporary shelter. If the shelter is at capacity, they would work with local service providers on alternate shelter options.

Do children or families stay here?

People would need to be over the age of 19. Youth or families who are in need would be connected with the appropriate community resources.

ABOUT THE OPERATIONS

Is this 'wet' or 'dry' facility? Are people allowed to use drugs inside the shelter?

BC Housing does not use the terms 'wet facility' and 'dry facility.' These terms were initiated by members of the community and magnified by local media.



Communities across the province are in an overdose crisis. BC Housing, Interior Health, and the West Kelowna Shelter Society work from a Housing First principle. The goal is to provide stable shelter/housing, and then work with people to promote recovery and well-being. If we exclude people with substance use issues, they would remain on the street with deteriorating health. Harm reduction best practices, based on Interior Health's guidance, would be followed within the shelter in order to prevent overdoses. This means drug-use will be permitted on site however only in a designated area that would be monitored by staff and require safe-disposal of needles. Although we anticipate most drug-use will happen inside the shelter, the society would be sweeping the streets daily for garbage as a courtesy to neighbours.

How many staff will be onsite and at what hours? What training is required?

A minimum of two staff on site 24/7; a manager will also be on-site during the day. All staff will receive the necessary training, including overdose prevention training from Interior Health. All West Kelowna Shelter Staff have a diploma or certificate in a related field or an equivalent of education and experience.

What services will be available from Interior Health?

Referral to health care, mental health and addiction services based on individual needs

What in/out abilities would clients have?

Outside of some restricted overnight hours (to be determined) all people staying at the shelter would have in and out abilities. Staff would operate the shelter to ensure minimal disruptive impact on the neighbourhood. Having staff on site 24/7 ensures that in/out activity is constantly monitored.

Can anyone come to the shelter at any time of day or night for a bed? Or is there a set time for intake?

Intake hours are still being determined, however operations would be planned to avoid line ups outside of the building.

Could people staying at the shelter have guests?

No visitors would be allowed to the shelter (special arrangements would be made to connect with family through outreach workers).

What happens if the shelter is full and you need to turn someone away?

The shelter will have a capacity of 40 beds, however, we are hopeful that this number of beds will be sufficient to provide space for those experiencing homelessness in West Kelowna.

How is entry/exit of people managed/monitored?

Staff is aware of the entry and exit of people staying at the shelter through cameras and exterior door buzzers. Staff do intake and discharge guests through the BC Housing database.

How will people access this location?

There are bus stops located on Stevens Road near the Westlake intersection and near the Highway 97 and Westlake intersection area.

How will disruptive behaviours in the outdoor area be dealt with?

The West Kelowna Shelter Society has procedures for trained shelter staff to work with any disruptive behaviours in or out of the immediate shelter area. Disruptive behaviours would be addressed based on the individual circumstance of the shelter guest and the severity of the behaviours.



What sort of monitoring would staff do outside of the building?

Staff would monitor and move along any non-shelter guests. Staff would also sweep the streets daily for garbage as a courtesy to neighbours.

What does a typical day look like at a shelter?

Some general daily shelter operations are consistent (i.e., staffing, meals, programming, etc.). However, other activities of daily life are different for each person staying at a shelter. Some people have employment and a set routine, while others may be in transition and able to move into other types of housing in the community. Others require more stabilizing, relationship building, and community connections which can be a slower process.

Are pets allowed in the shelter?

We will ensure that the temporary shelter meets the RDCO requirements. Pets are welcome at this temporary shelter, as long as they are not causing a disturbance or putting people at risk of harm (as deemed by staff). They would need to follow pet policy and be people friendly.

Is there storage for people with carts?

BC Housing is planning to provide storage space onsite for personal belongings for guests staying at the shelter. Shopping carts will be returned to owners.

Do the local RCMP have the capacity to service this facility?

West Kelowna Shelter Society has spoken to local RCMP, and will as always, work with them to ensure safety in the area. Additionally, the City will be in close contact with the RCMP and enlist support from City Bylaw staff to provide assistance.

How will this shelter benefit the community?

People are living on the streets, in parks, in cars and precariously housed in our community. These new temporary winter shelter beds would bring people in from the cold weather and provide a gateway to services and housing options. Without access to shelter and housing options, people will continue to live on the street with deteriorating health.

How will homelessness be addressed longer term in the City of West Kelowna?

BC Housing is continuing to work with the City of West Kelowna and Westbank First Nation on plans for safe, secure housing for Westside residents.



ABOUT THE PROCESS

How was information about proposed temporary winter shelter communicated to the community?

BC Housing mailed a detailed letter to all neighbors within 100m radius on Nov 27; West Kelowna Shelter Society visited all identified businesses in the 100m radius in person on November 29 to answer questions and introduce themselves, and expanded contact to businesses outside of that radius. As per municipal requirements, the City installed an application sign and hand delivered and mailed Notices of application/hearing on November 29. We will continue to connect and meet with people in the area to address any concerns.

Why wasn't more done to consult the community?

There is an urgent need for a shelter this winter; our goal is to open the shelter by early 2020 and this proposal will be brought to City Council for consideration on December 10, 2019.

What are the next steps?

The Temporary Use Permit (TUP) application will be heard by West Kelowna City Council on December 10. In the meantime, due to the urgency to opening this important winter shelter resource, BC Housing is working on planning for construction including trailer installation and utilities, and with West Kelowna Shelter Society on planning for operations. If the TUP application is approved, work would begin on-site immediately with the goal of opening by early 2020.

Where do I go if I still have questions?

BC Housing welcomes any questions you may have at communityrelations@bchousing.org.