

The Friends of Berwyn Autumn Lodge have compiled a list of questions that need to be considered regarding the closure of the Berwyn Autumn Lodge. These questions come from the Friends and from questions posed at the Public Meeting held July 27 in Berwyn.

### Questions about the Autumn Lodge Closure

1. How much money will be saved each month by closing the lodge?

*Closing the Autumn Lodge and relocating the residents to other lodges with vacant rooms will result in a significant overall reduction in the annual deficit. Complete financial reports for all lodges within the Foundation are available on our website for your review. Anyone interested can view financial records for the years 2011-2016 by visiting:*

*<http://www.northpeacehousing.ca/minutes.php>*

*The Foundation operates according to the Alberta Housing Act and is subject to all of the legislation applying to management bodies which includes annual (audited) financial reviews and operational compliance and standards reviews as scheduled by the ministry.*

- Wages (still have to pay staff)
- *Wages for positions that would no longer be payable at the Autumn Lodge for the period January to June 2017 Foundation were \$253,837. Benefit costs for the same period were \$44,178. Annualized, this represents a significant Foundation-wide reduction in wages and benefits.*

*All (16) regular staff members transferring to either Harvest Lodge in Fairview or Heritage Tower in Peace River will fill existing vacancies that are now being covered by casual staff. There may be a slight increase to costs in those centres simply because regular staff are higher on the wage grid than casuals, and casuals do not participate in the group health and pension plans.*

- Food (still have to feed the residents)

*Food cost-savings will be negligible because the same number of people will be eating meals; however, there should be some efficiencies because of the economies of scale.*

- Utilities (will they be left on after residents leave?)

*Yes, heat and lights will be maintained at a minimum level to prevent damage due to freezing. This will continue until a decision is made on the future of the building.*

2. How many of the lodges make money or break even?

*At the present time, all five lodges within the North Peace Housing Foundation operate with annual deficits.*

3. How are the costs per month for the new office space at the Rotary House covered?

*The Rotary Club jointly with North Peace Housing constructed the new building in Peace River (similar to a duplex). Each organization is responsible for their portion of the construction and operating expenses.*

*NPHF Foundation is currently renting office space from a private-sector landlord at a rate of \$2,500 per month; 46% of this amount is recovered from the province as part of their contribution toward ongoing administrative/program costs.*

*Based on projected actual costs in the new office space, there will be a reduction from our current expense. It makes sense, being that we are in the business of property management, that the Foundation would elect to direct those savings/contributions from government into our own asset/property rather than paying rent to another property owner.*

4. Were the recent renovations done to the Autumn Lodge counted in the Lodge's deficit?

*The costs of the recent renovations at the Autumn Lodge are included in the expenses; however, there is an off-setting amount of grant revenue so there is no effect on the deficit because of any renovations.*

5. Have perspective residents inquired in the last six months about rooms at the Autumn Lodge and have been declined a room or told it is closing?

*All approved applicants for the Autumn Lodge in the past six months have moved in. There was one applicant after July 6<sup>th</sup> who, when advised that the lodge would be closing, chose to move into one of our self-contained apartments. There was a comment made by the Town of Grimshaw that two (unidentified) individuals were turned away because of the closure; however, we have not had any applications for Autumn Lodge that were declined due to the impending closure nor are we aware of these individuals.*

6. Is there room for all the Autumn Lodge residents in other lodges? What happens to those people from the communities those lodges are in when there lodges are filled because of autumn Lodge residents?

*Yes, there are enough vacancies in other Foundation lodges to house all of the residents of Autumn Lodge. History shows that there is an average level of turnover (two per month in Peace River and one per month in Fairview). We are confident that by the end of the notice-of-closure period, all residents will be settled in the lodge of their first choice.*

*As it has always been, approved applicants are placed on a waiting list with accommodation offered to the highest priority at the time a room becomes vacant. Having said that, in recent years and because of increased vacancies, we have not had waiting lists.*

*Because our needs assessment studies indicate there will be a future need in the Fairview and Peace River areas, NPHF business plan contains a proposal for a 35-suite expansion in Fairview and a new facility in Peace River, which if approved, will provide significant new supply.*

7. What happens if residents refuse to leave?

*It is hoped that all residents will have made the decision to relocate well before the actual closure date of April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018. All Autumn Lodge residents were given an opportunity to secure or move to their preferred room in other lodges; those rooms will be held until October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017.*

*Should they choose to remain in a NPHF lodge, those residents who have not relocated from the Autumn Lodge by October 15<sup>th</sup> will have to apply, and wait their turn, for an internal transfer.*

*As the closure date draws nearer, all remaining residents will be served with a “notice of closure” according to the terms and conditions of the residency agreement/legislation. At that point, residents and families will be required to make their own arrangements.*

8. Why weren't residents & families of residents provided with more notice of closure?

*The closure of Autumn Lodge has been talked about in the business planning process since 2009 when the property assessment condition report was released. Due to the age of the building and the recommendations of the consultants in that report, the 2015 business plan actually included a detailed strategy for the lodge closure in conjunction with the opening of a new facility in Peace River. At the time that business plan was written, our lodges had much higher occupancy rates; residents were able to stay in our lodges (their homes) longer with the help of 24-hour home care. Since then, things have changed with the reduction of home care support and the impact the private long-term care providers have had on our operation, vacancies increased substantially.*

*So, at the Board of Directors retreat in April 2017 and after reviewing all of the information (increased vacancies, declining revenues, people choosing to stay in their own homes longer, etc.) relevant to the operation of the organization, all those present acknowledged that the Autumn Lodge should close sooner rather than later. They realized that circumstances had changed since the 2015 business plan was written and that the closure date should be moved forward, so they asked Administration to put together a*

*timeline for the transition/closure to take place this year. That timeline ensured vacant rooms in other lodges would be held for almost three months so that residents could comfortably relocate to their preferred suite. The actual closure date that has now been established is April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018...almost nine months from the date of the first announcement. This compares very favorably to the (often one to nine-day) notice given to residents when they are required to move from the lodge to a facility with a higher level of care.*

*Foundation staff made every effort to ensure that all affected parties were notified in priority and as close to the same time as possible. The management of the Foundation believed we were acting in the best interests of all parties, making sure everyone heard the same message at the same time.*

*In hindsight, we probably could have done things better and we are sorry for any oversight there may have been. However, communicating it differently would not have changed the final outcome of the lodge closing.*

9. Immediately following the July 7<sup>th</sup> meeting why weren't residents provided with trained counsellors to help them deal emotionally with the trauma? (Autumn Lodge staff are not trained to counsel)

*Following the announcement, we were approached by a family member of one resident who shared her concerns regarding the mental health of the residents. To our knowledge, no resident approached the lodge manager directly. Alberta Health Services (mental health, seniors' consultation team, senior social worker), private counsellors, and victim services were contacted to see what would be available to support residents. We were advised that requests for mental health services or counselling are voluntary and must be initiated by the person themselves. Management approached every resident individually and privately; only two of the 33 residents said they could use counselling so information was provided to them on how they could seek that help out. As well, we were assured by Home Care that they were checking on residents constantly.*

10. Was NPHF expecting health problems to arise from the closure? Eg. blood pressure & depression issues? Was there a plan in place to deal with the negative health effects of the announcement and the transition? If so, was that plan put into action?

*We had anticipated there would be some residents that might be upset with the announcement. As always and with any other issues (financial, family, illness, death and grief, etc.), there are trained staff, a manager and/or Home Care to help and deal with those events.*

*Not all residents were initially negatively-affected by the announcement and it certainly has been our experience that the anxiety and confusion over the announcement escalated with all the social media comments and community furor. Many residents were affected by the negative and outwardly-hostile comments; one resident expressed concern that boundaries were being crossed by the statements being made by community advocates and that there were more tactful ways to deal with situations like these.*

*Our plan was to make their transition as smooth as possible by offering the residents an opportunity to select their new room, guaranteed rate freezes, financial assistance with phone, mail and cable moves, help to pack and move, etc. As a matter of fact, several residents have taken the Foundation up on their offer and have already settled in their new homes.*

*Contrary to some of the comments that have been made, couples are not being forced to split up. As often happens with couples as they age in the lodge and as their needs can no longer be met by our staff and home care, they are faced with the decision of one having to move to a facility that provides a higher level of care.*

11. How much asbestos was actually found in the lodge? Could it be easily removed & how much would it cost? How many other lodges have asbestos?

*The complete report on the asbestos situation in Autumn Lodge is available on our website. For details, go to:*  
<http://www.northpeacehousing.ca/board/Hazardous%20Materials%20Assessment%20Report%20Autumn%20Lodge.pdf>

12. Are the issues with the age of the Autumn Lodge safety issues or industry standards issues? Is there a difference between the two?

*The issues with the Autumn Lodge are both safety and industry-standard. Some of the safety issues are the lack of a fire suppression system, emergency exit ramps, etc.; and industry standard for room size has increased substantially since 1960. In those days, rooms and bathrooms were not designed to accommodate walkers, wheelchairs and scooters. Those considerations, along with the age/state of the building, the declining population of the area and increasing vacancies, all contributed to the decision.*

13. Should we be comparing rural lodges to urban lodges? Shouldn't we be more concerned about what residents actually want than what an industry standard says they want?

*As far as residents go, their needs are the same whether they are living in a rural or urban lodge. The fact remains that urban areas have a wider population base from which to draw. In many cases, those larger lodges which have few vacancies operate with a surplus.*

14. Were all NPHF board members aware that the vote to close the Autumn Lodge was taking place at the meeting? Could we ask for the vote to be redone?

*Yes, the item was on the Board agenda for the meeting, a copy of which is circulated to all members.*

*At a special meeting held August 8<sup>th</sup>, Board members reviewed the motion of July 5<sup>th</sup> and then passed another motion by a vote of nine to three to alter the original date to October 15<sup>th</sup> from September 30<sup>th</sup> for residents to select and relocate to their preferred room, and change the winding-down of operations wording to an actual closure date of April 30, 2018.*

15. Would the board like to meet with the lodge residents?

*Board Members are all elected officials from their respective municipalities and, as such, can meet with their constituents as they see fit. Many members often visit the lodges in their area to chat with residents.*

*As you know, as elected officials, some board members chose to meet with the Friends of the Autumn Lodge at their meeting on July 27<sup>th</sup> to hear the concerns of those present.*

*Having said that, their role as a member of the Board of Directors of the Foundation is different from their role as an elected official from their municipality. The appointees represent an autonomous Board and must come unencumbered from their role as a municipal counsellor when making decisions on behalf of, and in the best interests of, the Housing Management Body.*

*The North Peace Housing Foundation was created by ministerial order in 1994 according to the Alberta Housing Act to manage affordable housing for modest and low-income Albertans. That ministerial order gives management bodies the right to requisition the ratepayers of contributing municipalities to cover the operating deficits of all lodges in the region; the responsibility of the municipalities is to appoint a representative to the Board of Directors, and to collect and forward the requisition requested by the North Peace Housing Foundation. The 12 contributing municipalities within North Peace Housing Foundation boundaries are:*

- *Clear Hills County*
- *M.D. of Fairview*
- *County of Northern Lights*
- *M. D. of Peace*
- *Town of Peace River*
- *Town of Fairview*
- *Village of Hines Creek*
- *Village of Berwyn*
- *Town of Grimshaw*
- *Village of Nampa*
- *Town of Manning*
- *Northern Sunrise County*

*Although Board members are appointed from each of their municipalities, their obligation as a “regional” board member is to act in the best interests of the Foundation. Their duty according to the Act is to:*

- 1) Ensure that the management body it governs efficiently operates and administers the housing accommodation under its authority and provide accommodation for those persons in greatest need of that type of housing accommodation,*
- 2) Develop and evaluate the policies and programs of the management body, and*
- 3) Carry out the powers, duties and functions expressly given to it under the Act.*

16. Could this lodge stay open until a new one is built so residents can move together as a group?

*That was the original plan. However, due to the ongoing decline in resident population, decreasing revenues and increasing costs, we had to look at alternative interim options. Due to circumstances, the decision to wind down the operations sooner than anticipated was made. It would be fiscally irresponsible to burden taxpayers with millions of dollars of deficit, when the closure and relocation was something that was going to happen anyway, and those funds could be used for other purposes like funding new construction, reducing the requisition, or providing more affordable rates.*

17. Can we stop this process or slow it down? Is there a deadline?

*The decision to close the Autumn Lodge has been made and notifications have been served according to our guidelines. Residents have until October 15<sup>th</sup> to relocate to their preferred option and the lodge will close its doors on April 30, 2018.*

*We understand that individuals or groups may be interested in presenting alternative options to the Foundation; however, to date we have not received any proposals or presentations.*

18. Is the mandate of the NPHF to balance budgets or house seniors?

*It is both. Our mandate is to provide affordable housing to those who need it. Legislation says that we must leave a resident with \$315 disposable income per month, no matter what their income is. Because revenues can vary, the Foundation relies on government grants and the local taxpayer to pick up the difference between revenues and expenses. This funding maintains affordability for our residents, something area seniors, elected officials and people in the community should be aware of.*

*The move to privatize senior care through taxpayer funding of private developments like Stonebrook and Points West Living may seriously affect the ability of the seniors from this region to afford the supportive living accommodation and care that they need. After a required initial 20 year commitment to maintain rates below the long-term care accommodation rate, private providers who received significant provincial government funding to build and operate their facilities will be free to charge whatever the market will bear. If public housing providers, like North Peace Housing Foundation do not continue and expand their options in the seniors supportive housing continuum, private providers will have the power to raise rates without restraint, something that they cannot do with a strong public supportive housing presence.*

*In 2016, the taxpayers supporting the five lodges in our region were requisitioned \$2.52M towards the cost of housing seniors, and to build a capital reserve for new construction. This level of funding will ensure we continue to build and operate new seniors housing options that will be affordable for the long run, not just the next 20 years (actually much less than 20 years now).*

*I would encourage you to check with ASLS who manages Stonebrook, and Points West Living to see when the sunset clauses for these grant funding agreements kick in. This will give seniors and their families the date to prepare for, when the private providers will be allowed to charge seniors in your area market rates for their senior supportive living option.*

*The ratepayers in your area should be aware that the municipal governments provided letters of support for this to happen, effectively setting aside the*

*North Peace Housing Foundation's plan to build a new facility in Grimshaw "in and around the year 2016" to replace the aging Autumn Lodge. Stonebrook opened in February of 2014. I would suggest the municipalities could have supported our plan, waited the additional two years, and by doing so, they would have ensured affordability for senior supportive living for the area for the long run. This is what has been so upsetting from our perspective. We are now being vilified by these same people.*

*It is also our mandate to house seniors in rooms that are suitable for their needs and that includes their ability to navigate within their suite using their walkers and wheelchairs, to be able to use their bathroom comfortably and have enough room to visit with family. The rooms in Autumn Lodge vary from 135 to 225 square feet and most rooms only include a two piece bathroom; compared to today's industry standard for square footage (~340 sq. ft.), accessibility, bathroom and storage requirements, they are no longer conducive to housing current residents whose needs have changed and to those seniors whose expectations are different from seniors of the past and who will be looking for housing in the future.*

*So, the bottom line is that we are here to do both....house seniors according to all the standards and legislation that apply to our business but to do that with the taxpayer in mind. Two years ago, the Foundation was publically challenged and chastised by several municipalities on the amount of the requisition. We were given strict direction "to get our financial house in order." We have an obligation to the residents to provide the care they need and deserve, but we also have an obligation to the taxpayers of the region to be fiscally responsible.*