

YWCA Toronto emergency homeless shelter for women to operate at site of former Days Inn Hotel in the Beach



The former Days Inn Hotel on Queen Street East in the Beach will be run by the YWCA Toronto as emergency shelter for homeless women age 16 and older for the next 12 months.

By ALAN SHACKLETON

The former Days Inn Hotel on Queen Street East in the Beach has been leased by the City of Toronto for one year and will be operated by the YWCA Toronto as an emergency shelter for homeless single women starting on Monday, May 4.

Due to the COVID-19 crisis, and the need for city shelters to be able to provide accommodations that stop the spread of the virus, a number of options for providing alternate homeless shelter space have and are being explored. As reported earlier in Beach Metro News, the hotel site was one being considered for lease by the city.

"The city is leasing it for us so we can move people out of our shelter in another part of the city," said Heather McGregor, Chief Executive Officer of the YWCA Toronto, in an interview.

The emergency homeless shelter at the hotel site (1684 Queen St. E. just west of Kingston Road) is for single women age 16 and over, and will have 35 beds available as of tonight.

The shelter it is replacing in the Davenport and Dupont area had dorm-style rooms and shared bathrooms. While social distancing space was being maintained between the beds in that shelter, the Days Inn site provides a much better and safer environment in which to stop the spread of COVID-19 as those there will have their own rooms and bathrooms.

“The city has to find appropriate and safe shelters for the homeless during this virus,” said McGregor. “For the women, this is a much better situation. In this one they will have their own separate rooms and it will be so much better.”

The YWCA Toronto runs four shelters in the city. Two of them are emergency homeless shelters for women ages 16 and over. The other two are for women escaping violence at home and provide shelter for the women and their children.



Those staying at the YWCA's Queen Street East site will be referred to it by the City of Toronto. “The city has a system, and it knows where free shelter beds are available,” said McGregor.

She said the YWCA has lots of experience running the shelters, and she does not anticipate any issues with residents in the area to its presence at the hotel site for the next 12 months.

“We have very good relations with our neighbours, and they are welcoming and understanding of what we do,” McGregor said. “I’m assuming that in that neighbourhood there will be welcoming people. We are always happy to answer questions from residents.”

Anyone with questions, can contact the YWCA Toronto by sending them an email at info@ywcatoronto.org

For now, McGregor said the shelter at the hotel will run with 35 beds available although there is the capacity for 50 maximum.

The Days Inn closed as a hotel on April 1 of this year, and the site is slated for development in the future. It had been empty since it was closed, and was expected to stay that way until demolished once rezoning and development approvals were given.

“This is a good use of this building, and we were lucky it was available,” said McGregor of the city being able to find an available hotel that had just recently closed and had not yet started demolition.

The zoning bylaw change for redevelopment of the site is being sought by Queen Kingston Holdings Inc. and Penny Lane Holdings Inc. to build a six-storey, 110-unit residential building at 1684-1702 Queen St. E.

That building site is on the north side of Queen between Orchard Park Boulevard and Penny Lane and includes land to the east of the hotel on which the Murphy's Law Pub and Brett's Ice Cream buildings are located.

The front of the Murphy's Law building appears to be included in the architectural plans submitted to the City of Toronto as part of the rezoning application.

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