

Response from the Ministry of Public Works:

Much work has been done with the Salvation Army. In a Memorandum of Understanding, the Government of Bermuda, through the Bermuda Housing Corporation, engaged in a Public-Private Partnership with local philanthropists Mr. Jim Butterfield and Mr. Kirk Kitson to rehabilitate and refurbish the Shelter buildings located on North Street and managed by the Salvation Army.

To date, significant work, including replacement of roofs, repairs to walls and foundations, and extensive plumbing and electrical work have been completed. Two residential buildings housing the men and women of the Shelter have been remodelled and refurbished and the central building housing the Administration staff, common areas, and the kitchen were repaired, culminating with the recently renovated men's shelter on North Street this week.

The public should also be aware that in later 2019, the Minister of Public Works, Minister of Health, and Minister of Community Affairs and Sports, along with their respective Permanent Secretaries, met with Major Stokes and two visiting Colonels from Salvation Army Canada to discuss the state of the facility at the North Street.

During this meeting, it was agreed that the project was of utmost importance, and as such, quarterly meetings would be established between the Salvation Army Bermuda and the responsible Permanent Secretaries with the goal of ensuring all operational and building-related matters received the priority they deserved. It was also agreed that the Bermuda Housing Corporation would be the first point of contact since they have expertise in housing – and the technical staff to expedite the execution of any plans.

In the interim, the Public Works Engineers carried out a structural assessment of the site and agreed that only a few buildings needed to be demolished, while others required some upgrading.

Throughout this process, the Minister of Public Works has been liaising with Mr. Jim Butterfield who was keen to support, with funds and manpower and it was agreed that the government would match the funding to upgrade the facility. Mr. Kirk Kitson joined the effort and it was all hands on deck with a methodical approach undertaken to repair the salvageable buildings one at a time – while the buildings that were beyond repair were demolished.

Furthermore, to support efforts to upgrade facilities, the Government committed to one million dollars in capital funding in this year's budget. In addition to this sizable capital investment, the Government increased its annual grant to the Salvation Army by \$150,000 over last year to support additional services.

At the same time, building works were in progress consideration was given on the style of building that would be ideal for the site. Many transitional housing options were considered. The Salvation Army and BHC agreed on what will replace the demolished buildings.

As it stands now, the Salvation Army has made it clear that they no longer want Bishop Spencer, and instead of continuing the practice of allowing government buildings to sit vacantly, the Ministry of Public Works has looked to put them to use by issuing requests for Expressions of Interest. In doing so, the Government can potentially generate interest from individuals and organizations in the private sector to carry out work on these properties, rather than allowing them to remain vacant.

Ultimately, as it pertains to the needs of Bermuda's vulnerable and indigent community, the Government's primary objective is to ensure that the men and women in need of shelter and support have a safe place for refuge to live in peace and dignity.