

Hiawatha Temporary Facility (HTF): Status as of August 2015

by Rand W. Gould

1. In approximately 1990-91, HTF was opened as a “Temporary” prison, as part of the Michigan Department of Corrections’ (MDOC) vast prison building program, precipitated when its existing capacity was overwhelmed by an irrational “tough-on-crime” policy. The MDOC received a building code exemption so it would not have to install a fire suppressions system, i.e., sprinklers, by falsely claiming HTF was a temporary prison and would only be in operation for five years. Around 2006-2007, HTF was closed, stripped bare, and left to rot, when the state government finally realized it could not longer afford to lock people up no matter the cost.
2. Recently, the MDOC has decided to close Kinross Correctional Facility (KCF) and reopen HTF, sending the bulk of KCF prisoners to HTF, in a “cost-cutting” move. However, since it was abandoned, HTF has become infested with black mold. The MDOC’s initial solution to “slap a coat of paint on it” proved a failure as black mold is able to work its way through paint. We’ve heard the Health Department and/or Building Inspectors found this had occurred at HTF and advised the MDOC that all the black mold-infested sheetrock, studs, pipes, and cement must be replaced. Thus, this “cost-cutting” measure has turned into a money pit. Moreover, it seems several contractors have quit due to health and liability concerns created by the black mold infestation.
3. Furthermore, it seems the fire suppression system required by state building codes has not been installed at HTF.
4. Nevertheless, KCF warden Duncan MacLaren and the MDOC intend to start transferring prisoners from KCF to HTF as soon as September and no later than October 1st, 2015.
5. If true, the reason for this arbitrary deadline to reopen HTF, with a black mold infestation that places both prisoners’ and staff’s health at risk, is to keep the MDOC jobs concerned in the U.P. Otherwise, the MDOC would be reopening uninfested prisons downstate, such as Mound Correction Facility in Detroit, or reopening Ryan Correctional Facility in Detroit back up to general population.
6. The fact over 80% of KCF’s population is African American, with most residing downstate prior to imprisonment, coupled with Detroit having the highest

unemployment in the state, makes reopening Mound and/or Ryan the far wiser choice for state taxpayers.

7. To knowingly transfer prisoners to a black mold-infested prison like HTF, where contact with the spores can be fatal and will result in a litany of healthcare problems for those exposed, both prisoners and staff, is grossly negligent to say the least and will cost state taxpayers dearly. Moreover, where the inevitable fatalities are concerned, a case could be made for a conspiracy to murder prisoners and such a case concerning a prisoner population that is 80% African American would rise to the level of conspiracy to commit genocide.