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FINAL REPORT ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS  
FROM THE  
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING



Northwest  
Territories Canada



FINAL REPORT ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS  
FROM THE  
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING





Northwest Territories Minister Responsible for Northwest Territories Housing Corporation

MAR 21 1988

MEMBERS OF THE  
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Re: Final Report on the Recommendations From the  
Special Committee on Housing

As the new Minister Responsible for the N.W.T. Housing Corporation, I am pleased to submit the final report detailing the progress of the Government since the Special Committee on Housing. The attached report reflects the specific action the Government has taken on the recommendations of the Special Committee, as well as some very essential changes in the way that housing is delivered to the communities of the N.W.T.

The hard work and commitment of the Special Committee Members, and the last two Housing Ministers, the Honourable Gordon Wray and the Honourable Michael Ballantyne, provided the appropriate catalyst that prompted many positive changes to the houses we build, the programs that we deliver, and the way that we approach the delivery of housing.

While this is the final report to a process that began with the Special Committee, it is not the end of that process. As Minister Responsible for the N.W.T. Housing Corporation I am committed to continuing this process so that all residents of the N.W.T. have access to decent housing. I believe there is still much that can, and is being done, to improve the delivery of housing services to the people of the N.W.T.

Stephen Kakfwi  
Minister

Attachment

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE #</u>
<b><u>INTRODUCTION</u></b> .....	1
<b>I. <u>RENTAL PROGRAMS</u></b> .....	3
<b>A. RENTAL SCALE</b> .....	3
RECOMMENDATION #3 AND 4 RESPONSE N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION/DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL	
<b>B. MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR</b> .....	4
RECOMMENDATION #24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30 AND 31 RESPONSE N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION	
<b>II. <u>HOMEOWNERSHIP</u></b> .....	7
<b>A. PROGRAM EVALUATION</b> .....	7
RECOMMENDATION #19 RESPONSE N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION	
<b>B. PROGRAM INFORMATION</b> .....	8
RECOMMENDATION #17 AND 18 RESPONSE N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION	
<b>C. ACCESS</b> .....	9
RECOMMENDATION #10 AND 13 RESPONSE N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION	
<b>D. DESIGNS</b> .....	9
RECOMMENDATION #11 RESPONSE N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION	
<b>E. LABOUR FUNDING</b> .....	10
RECOMMENDATION #8 AND 9 RESPONSE N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION	
<b>F. NORTHERN TERRITORIAL RENTAL PURCHASE         PROGRAM</b> .....	11
RECOMMENDATION #14, 15, 16 AND 28 RESPONSE N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION	
<b>G. REPAIR</b> .....	12
RECOMMENDATION #36 AND 38 RESPONSE N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION	

H.	CONDOMINIUM LEGISLATION.....	13
	RECOMMENDATION #22	
	RESPONSE N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION	
III.	<u>HOUSING THE ELDERLY</u> .....	14
A.	HOUSING CONDITIONS.....	14
	RECOMMENDATION #35	
	RESPONSE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES	
IV.	<u>STAFF HOUSING</u> .....	15
A.	STAFF IN PUBLIC HOUSING.....	15
	RECOMMENDATION #40, 41 AND 42	
	RESPONSE DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL, N.W.T.	
	HOUSING CORPORATION	
B.	HOUSING SUBSIDY.....	15
	RECOMMENDATION #43 AND 44	
	RESPONSE DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL	
V.	<u>CANADA MORTGAGE &amp; HOUSING CORPORATION PROGRAMS</u> .....	17
A.	CO-OP HOUSING.....	17
	RECOMMENDATION #20 AND 21	
	RESPONSE N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION	
B.	RESIDENTIAL REHABILITATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.....	17
	RECOMMENDATION #32, 33, 34 AND 39	
	RESPONSE N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION	
VI.	<u>SOCIAL ASSISTANCE</u> .....	19
A.	REPORT ON POVERTY.....	19
	RECOMMENDATION #2	
	RESPONSE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES	
B.	SHELTER ALLOWANCE.....	19
	RECOMMENDATION #45	
	RESPONSE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES	

**VII. ENERGY CONSERVATION.....21**

**A. ENERGY CONSERVATION PROGRAM.....21**  
RECOMMENDATION #5, 6, 7 AND 23  
RESPONSE N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION/DEPARTMENT OF  
PUBLIC WORKS AND HIGHWAYS

**VIII. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT.....23**

**A. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION.....23**

**1. Community and Regional Involvement.....23**  
RECOMMENDATION #79 AND 80  
RESPONSE N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION

**2. Block Funding.....24**  
RECOMMENDATION #12 AND 37  
RESPONSE N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION

**B. TRAINING.....25**  
RECOMMENDATION #59, 62 AND 63  
RESPONSE N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION/DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION

**D. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.....26**

**1. Local Hire.....26**  
RECOMMENDATION #64, 65 AND 67  
RESPONSE N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION/DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION

**2. Business Incentive.....27**  
RECOMMENDATION #66, 68, 69 AND 70  
RESPONSE N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION/DEPARTMENT OF  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

**3. Separate Supply and Labour Contracts.....28**  
RECOMMENDATION #71 AND 72  
RESPONSE N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION

**4. Special Training.....29**  
RECOMMENDATION #60, 61, 73 AND 77  
RESPONSE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
& TOURISM/DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

5.	<u>Economic Development Agreement</u> .....	30
	RECOMMENDATION #74, 75 AND 76	
	RESPONSE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM	
E.	<u>COMMUNITY PLANNING</u> .....	31
1.	<u>Land</u> .....	31
	RECOMMENDATION #46, 47, 48, 50 AND 51	
	RESPONSE DEPARTMENT OF MUNICIPAL & COMMUNITY AFFAIRS	
2.	<u>Needs Assessment</u> .....	33
	RECOMMENDATION #52, 53, 54 AND 55	
	RESPONSE N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION	
3.	<u>Five Year Capital Plan</u> .....	34
	RECOMMENDATION #49, 56 AND 57	
	RESPONSE N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION	
IX.	<u>THE CORPORATION</u> .....	35
A.	<u>THE BOARD</u> .....	35
	RECOMMENDATION #78	
	RESPONSE N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION	
B.	<u>GLOBAL AGREEMENT</u> .....	36
	RECOMMENDATION #58 AND 81	
	RESPONSE N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION	
C.	<u>COMPREHENSIVE AUDIT</u> .....	37
	RECOMMENDATION #82	
	RESPONSE N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION	
	<u>CONCLUSION</u> .....	38
	<u>APPENDIX</u> .....	39

## INTRODUCTION

### **BACKGROUND:**

The Special Committee on Housing was formed by the Legislative Assembly in February, 1984, to inquire into housing problems and concerns in the N.W.T.

During the summer and fall of 1984, the Committee travelled to over 40 communities gathering suggestions for improving housing in the N.W.T. The Committee spoke to and received briefs from tenants, housing associations/authorities, community groups, and staff of the N.W.T. Housing Corporation.

In 1985, the Committee reported back to the Legislative Assembly with their findings. The report was the most comprehensive review of housing issues ever completed in the N.W.T. The Committee's Final Report recommended many changes, 82 in all, effecting many different aspects of housing policy and operation.

The Final Report made it very clear that the way housing is delivered to the communities of the N.W.T. was as important as the houses themselves. The Committee emphasized the need to deliver housing in a way which fosters community development, economic development, and accountability between the Housing Corporation and the communities.

The Committee identified the need for major changes to the way the Housing Corporation delivers housing and also called upon other Departments of the Government of the N.W.T. for their support and co-operation. In its first recommendation the Committee asked that an Implementation Review Committee be established to report to the Legislative Assembly on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Final Report.

The Minister Responsible for the N.W.T. Housing Corporation undertook the co-ordination of this task with the production of "A New Era in Housing" in the fall of 1985. "A New Era in Housing" and the update in 1986, "A New Era in Housing-Status Report" outlined the action that the GNWT would take on the recommendations outlined in the Committee's Final Report. Many of the specific recommendation could not be considered independently. The Housing Corporation was charged with developing a Corporate Plan and Strategy which would integrate many of these specific recommendations into an overall approach to housing in the N.W.T.

Early in 1986, the Housing Corporation conducted an internal review of its operations. The Corporation examined its organization and the way it dealt with the people, businesses and communities of the Northwest Territories. In order to promote community development, economic development and accountability, the review concluded that the Corporation had to work in partnership with the communities to meet community needs. This meant making major changes to the Corporation's operation and management systems.



These changes are reflected in the Corporate Plan and Strategy, and in the significant progress that the Corporation has made, with the co-operation of other Government Departments, to improve the delivery of housing services in the Northwest Territories.

## **FINAL REPORT ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING**

This report has been written to provide the members of the Legislative Assembly with a final update on the significant progress that has been made by the Government of the N.W.T. since the Special Committee on Housing presented its report in 1985.

The report is divided into the following major sections:

- I. Rental Housing
- II. Homeownership
- III. Housing the Elderly
- IV. Staff Housing
- V. CMHC Programs
- VI. Social Assistance
- VII. Energy Conservation
- VIII. Community Development
- IX. The Corporation

Each major section includes a brief summary of the concern expressed by the Committee, followed by a number of subsections that include the relevant recommendation(s) and then by the Government's responses.

"A new Era in Housing" and the 1986 Status Report outlined the action that the Government of the N.W.T. would take on the recommendations outlined in the Special Committee's Final Report. This report is organized to reflect not only action on the recommendations but also the essential changes that are taking place in the delivery of housing in the North. These changes in the delivery of housing, incorporate the concerns of the Special Committee and promote the principles of community development, economic development, and accountability to and by the communities.

## **I. RENTAL HOUSING**

The Special Committee on Housing in its Final Report expressed concern with the apparent confusion and lack of understanding experienced by the public with the current rent scale. The Committee also referred to the inequities between rents for public housing and staff housing. The Committee received "repeated testimony that the present rental scales discourage employment and encourage a dependency attitude." (Final Report, page 40)

The Committee was also very concerned with the inadequate standard of housing that many people in the N.W.T. live with. The Committee pointed out some of the problems associated with overcrowding, as well as poor health and safety conditions. Poor maintenance was one of the biggest complaints that the Committee heard in its travel to the communities.

However, the Committee members also recognized that the N.W.T. Housing Corporation's resources were seriously limited: "There is no money available for preventative maintenance, and even basic maintenance cannot always be performed." (Final Report, page 65)

Lastly, the Committee expressed concern with the duplication of maintenance services in the communities and the inequalities that seem to exist between Department of Public Works resources and those of the local Housing Associations/Authorities.

### **A. RENTAL SCALE**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING:**

3. "That the N.W.T. Housing Corporation complete its rental scales review as soon as possible incorporating the concerns voiced by the public and outlined by the Special Committee, and

That the Minister Responsible for the N.W.T. Housing Corporation report to the Legislative Assembly in the Fall, 1985, Session on the results of the review together with proposed changes to the rental scale, in accordance with the observations made by the Special Committee."

4. "That the Ministers' Responsible for the Department of Personnel and for the N.W.T. Housing Corporation establish an interdepartmental review of staff and public housing rents and allocations and that they report to the Legislative Assembly in the 1985 Fall Session with their findings and recommendations to correct the current program inequities."

## **RESPONSE - N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION/ DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL**

A discussion paper "Public Housing Rent Scale Review" was sent out to housing associations/authorities, community councils, and M.L.A.s for comment in September, 1987. The purpose of this paper was to solicit comments on the current rent assessment process for public housing. It was intended to encourage debate and establish a foundation from which a new or modified rent scale can be established.

This paper expresses the complexity of the task at hand: the importance of public housing in many communities; the variety of tenants affected by the rent scale; and the multiplicity of opinion on what is fair and equitable. Herein lies the challenge: to produce a revised rent scale that is fair, equitable and based on a set of principles and assumptions that have public understanding and support.

In order to accomplish this it is necessary to ensure that the revision of the rent scale has the full involvement of those affected by the changes. Full discussions about the main elements of a rent scale may develop a better understanding of the issues by all involved. As the basic features of the rent scale are discussed and refined, proposals for specific changes to the actual scale and the methods of their implementation and administration can be introduced as part of the consultation process.

A second discussion paper will be prepared reflecting the comments received on the first and distributed to interested groups by the end of March, 1988. The Housing Corporation is planning to have a new Rent Scale Paper completed by the end of 1988.

The Housing Corporation recognizes that inequities exist between staff housing and public housing rents. Through the rent scale review process the Corporation is endeavoring to work with the Department of Personnel to ensure that consistency is attained between the two rent structures. Meanwhile, letters have been sent out to all staff in Public Housing giving them the option of paying full economic rent and receiving the \$450.00 subsidy or paying subsidized economic rent with no additional subsidy.

### **B. MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING:**

24. "That the Treasury Board of Canada review the N.W.T. Housing Corporation's request for a base adjustment to the Government of the N.W.T. as soon as possible, so that increased funding can be made available to improve maintenance and administration of N.W.T. Housing Corporation rental units."
25. "That the Minister Responsible for the N.W.T. Housing Corporation and the Department of Public Works review the possibility of having maintenance resources shared in communities where both the Corporation and the Department of Public Works carry out maintenance functions."

26. "That the N.W.T. Housing Corporation and the Government of the N.W.T. enter into negotiations to contract the repair and maintenance of staff housing to local Housing Associations/Authorities where it is economically practical and advantageous to the community and increases the efficient use of government resources."
27. "That the N.W.T. Housing Corporation, upon approval of local Housing Associations, utilize the Rehab Program to convert 3 bedroom units into 2 bedroom units, which are required in many communities."
29. "That the N.W.T. Housing Corporation seek increased funding under the E.E.R.P. to provide very basic improvements in health and safety conditions of Northern Rental Units until such time that funding for major rehabilitation or replacement can be secured."
30. "That the N.W.T. Housing Corporation develop a strategy to bring all its rental units up to minimum health and safety standards within 5 years."
31. "That the N.W.T. Housing Corporation develop a policy whereby Housing Associations could grant rental credits to tenants who undertake maintenance work on their units."

#### RESPONSE - N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION

In response to the Special Committee and the long-standing problem with maintenance, the Government of the N.W.T. has added more than \$12 million to the Housing Corporation's maintenance budget. This money is now being used to bring houses up to an acceptable standard, to put a preventive maintenance program in place, to raise the salaries of Housing Association/Authority employees, and to hire additional employees.

The Housing Corporation initially reviewed the Department of Public Works Maintenance Management System in preparation for a shared maintenance system. It was later concluded, that this system of maintenance designed mainly for large public buildings was inappropriate for the housing stock managed by the Housing Associations/Authorities. It was suggested that a pilot project team should be set up in the Hay River District to develop a Maintenance Program using input from all the Housing Associations/Authorities. In this way, the resulting program would be appropriate and acceptable for the Housing Associations/Authorities and meet the Housing Corporation needs.

Implementation and testing of the "Maintenance Management Program" is ongoing in all 5 Hay River District communities and has been expanded to include 3 test communities of Chesterfield Inlet, Pond Inlet and Tuktoyaktuk.

At the same time as the maintenance system was being reviewed the Housing Corporation also participated in a committee with the Department of Public Works and Highways to discuss the contracting of the repair of staff housing to local Housing Associations/Authorities. This discussion has been put on hold with the development and testing of the Housing Corporation's new maintenance program.

With the further development of the maintenance program and the increase in funding to carry it out the Housing Corporation has developed a strategy to bring all of its rental units up to minimum health and safety standard within 5 years.

Improvements in maintenance has also removed the need for maintenance of units by tenants. Housing Associations/Authorities indicated to the Housing Corporation that tenants undertaking maintenance work on their units was not required and not desired. They felt that work by the tenant could jeopardize local maintenance plans and standards.

According to the Housing Corporation's latest survey information, many communities still require smaller units to accommodate the need that exists. This need is reflected in the number and size of Public Housing units allocated to a community. This year in the N.W.T. the Corporation is constructing under the Public Housing Program 90 one bedroom units and 30 two bedroom units, (total allocations 136 Public Housing units).

In the past in order to deal with this need the Corporation converted many of its larger Northern Rental units to 2 bedroom units under the Rehab Program. As the stock of Northern Rental gets older and in poorer condition it is no longer economical to rehab these units. In 1987, the Rehab Program was cancelled and the Corporation introduced a program called the Northern Rental Replacement Program. This program was designed to replace those units that have been written off with new Public Housing units. The size of the units allocated to the community under the Replacement Program is totally dependent on the communities current needs.

## II. HOMEOWNERSHIP

The Special Committee on Housing in its Final Report stated that: "The Homeownership Assistance Program is advantageous to N.W.T. residents' who desire to own their own homes built according to their design concepts of a modest scope and free of complex financial procedures and regulations which require substantial capital investment or savings." (Final Report, page 55)

At the same time the Committee also expressed concern with the "evident shortcomings and contradictions in the homeownership programs" (Final Report, page 56): a lack of development plans for the programs; confusion over program eligibility and labour funding; and a need for adequate program information.

The Northern Territorial Rental Purchase Program (N.T.R.P.P.) is intended to provide an opportunity for tenants of Northern Rentals (units built prior to 1975) the option of purchasing their homes. The Committee in its Final Report commented that there were many reasons why tenants were not buying the Northern Rentals, but the main reason was the poor condition of the majority of the remaining units. The Committee recommended a number of ways to improve access to, and the condition of those units.

The Committee also expressed concern with the "large number of privately owned homes, primarily in the Dene communities, that are in extremely poor condition. Essential services are not always provided. Even more disturbing is the fact that many elders are living under these conditions." (Final Report, page 69)

During the public meetings it was pointed out to the Special Committee that the lack of valid condominium legislation in the N.W.T. has prevented the construction of multi-unit complexes for sale as condominiums. Units of this type had proved quite popular in other parts of Canada and it was felt that in large centers they could provide a reasonable means of homeownership for low or modest income families.

### A. PROGRAM EVALUATION

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING:

19. "That the N.W.T. Housing Corporation review its existing homeownership programs, together with a review of the applications currently on hand, to determine the performance of the existing programs in meeting the needs of prospective homeowners."

## **RESPONSE - NWT HOUSING CORPORATION**

The N.W.T. Housing Corporation commissioned the first full-scale evaluation of the Homeownership Assistance Program in the summer of 1987.

The Housing Corporation commissioned the evaluation to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the program, and to provide direction for program changes.

In the "Overall Evaluation Findings" the consultant reported that: "The program has been generally successful in providing good quality housing to residents' of the N.W.T. at a very low cost to the Public Purse. There are signs that the program has succeeded in instilling the pride of ownership in citizens', and aiding them in their own community development by engendering responsibility for long-term operation and maintenance of their homes." ("Homeownership Assistance Program Evaluation" section 1.2, page 10)

The report also discusses some concerns for the program including: mandate of and market for the program; funding sources; the development of other related programs; the need for staff training; and the need for clear guidelines and directions for the program and its relationship to clients and the community.

### **B. PROGRAM INFORMATION**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING:**

17. "That the N.W.T. Housing Corporation develop an adequate information program to inform the public about its homeownership programs, in the official N.W.T. languages."
18. "That the N.W.T. Housing Corporation develop an information package for both prospective and approved homeownership clients to fully inform them of the program requirements and to ensure consistent program delivery."

#### **RESPONSE - N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION**

The Corporation recognizes the need for accessible and comprehensive information on its homeownership programs in the official languages of the N.W.T. The best method for providing this information, however, is not clear. In an effort to make the homeownership programs more accessible to the public the Corporation has carried out extensive revision and simplification of its plans and documents. The Corporation also provides information on its programs in a variety of ways, including:

- pamphlets describing the programs in both English and Inuktitut;
- a catalogue of house designs, available under the Homeownership Assistance Program;

- a H.A.P. Construction Video which details the construction of a H.A.P. unit from beginning to end, (this video is currently being transcribed for translation into all official languages).

In addition to these materials the position of the local Tenant Relations Officer (T.R.O.) has been created within the local Housing Associations/Authorities. These T.R.O.s are responsible for providing information on the Corporation's programs.

The Corporation is also working with communities to maximize their participation in program delivery through block funding arrangements and changes to their management agreements. This should increase the understanding and knowledge of the Corporation's programs.

### C. ACCESS

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING:

10. "That the N.W.T. Housing Corporation apply consistent eligibility criteria when considering applications for H.A.P."
13. "That the Homeownership Assistance Program be made available for prospective homeowners in all communities of the Northwest Territories, including Yellowknife."

#### RESPONSE - N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION

Through the Global Allocation Process communities are consulted on the mix of Homeownership Assistance Program (H.A.P.) and Public Housing (P.H.) units from the current allocation. Communities are further involved in the review of the H.A.P. applications prioritizing them according to broad guidelines provided by the Housing Corporation.

This system of community consultation enables the Housing Corporation to make informed decisions on the H.A.P. applications because community leaders often bring to light, factors which are not apparent on the client application. In the majority of cases, a consensus is reached at the community review stage.

The Housing Corporation currently delivers the H.A.P. to all communities with the exception of Yellowknife (H.A.P. is delivered in Block 500 Latham Island and Detah). H.A.P. is not delivered in Yellowknife in consideration of its "housing market".

### D. DESIGNS

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING:

11. "That the N.W.T. Housing Corporation give H.A.P. clients more flexibility in design options."



## **RESPONSE - N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION**

The Housing Corporation undertook a "Design Input Tour" to solicit design input and comments from the communities on Public Housing (P.H.) and Homeownership Assistance Program (H.A.P.) units. This tour took place between January and April, 1987 and covered twenty communities.

As a result of the meetings, the Housing Corporation re-designed Public Housing units to be built below the treeline. Although resources did not allow for a complete re-design of P.H. units above the treeline, a number of refinements, based on input from the communities have been incorporated in the 1988 Public Housing.

With regard to H.A.P., the Housing Corporation has responded with refinements and new designs which reflect input received from the tour. This includes the addition of a one bedroom design and a truss roof option. The H.A.P. designs which the Housing Corporation has developed also allow for a certain amount of flexibility to the individual homeowner when constructing the house. For example: interior partitions can be relocated, window locations changed; as well as other changes that homeowners have been making, addition of a basement; changes made to the height of the houses; and increases in the floor area.

It is Housing Corporation's intention to repeat the "Design Input Tour" every two to three years. Therefore, the Housing Corporation plans to produce new designs every two to three years in an effort to respond to the needs of the people.

### **E. LABOUR FUNDING**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING:**

8. "That the N.W.T. Housing Corporation include, in its H.A.P. client information package, full details on labour funding assistance programs and that N.W.T. Housing Corporation District staff ensure, through personal follow-up, that H.A.P. clients are kept informed of program changes as they occur."
9. "That the N.W.T. Housing Corporation and the C.E.I.C. formally coordinate the H.A.P. and labour assistance funding available under the Canada Works Program, so that field staff of both agencies can more efficiently serve H.A.P. clients."

## **RESPONSE - N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION**

Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (C.E.I.C.) is no longer providing labour funding. The Housing Corporation recognizes that the provision of labour funding to assist with specialized tasks is an important part of the H.A.P. program. In 1988, the Department of Education will administer the salary funding for H.A.P. and develop a structured training program to be provided to all participants in the program.

The provision of this level of funding provides training for the client or assists in paying for skilled jobs such as plumbing and heating system installation, and to hire help for "four hands" jobs, such as drywalling. It is not sufficient to allow the client to pay for the entire house construction. In this way the client still contributes some "sweat equity" towards the construction of their home while receiving some much needed support.

This contribution of equity by the homeowner is very important in order to maintain the funding support of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (C.M.H.C.). C.M.H.C. currently supports the specialized labour assistance that the N.W.T. Housing Corporation provides for electrical installations but does not agree with the provision of additional labour assistance. The N.W.T. Housing Corporation has been working on alternative ways to deliver the budgeted labour funding to clients without jeopardizing the obvious benefit of C.M.H.C. cost-sharing. Funding through the Department of Education may be an acceptable solution to this issue.

In addition to labour funding there is also assistance provided by the Housing Corporation with the H.A.P. Supervisor. The H.A.P. Supervision Program is designed to provide H.A.P. clients a construction supervisor to help them through the building process from foundation construction to completing the roof and installing all doors and windows.

#### **F. NORTHERN TERRITORIAL RENTAL PURCHASE PROGRAM**

##### **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING:**

14. "That the Minister Responsible for the N.W.T. Housing Corporation revise the Northern Rental Purchase Program such that the units can be sold to tenants for a nominal fee."
15. "That a "piggyback" repair package in the form of a forgivable loan be included in the sale of Northern Rental units in order to bring these units up to current health, safety and building standards."
16. "That the eligibility criteria for the Northern Rental Purchase Program be revised so that clients in arrears can have their outstanding debt added to the proposed nominal purchase price of the unit."
28. "That the N.W.T. Housing Corporation seek program changes to fund alternatives for the upgrading of Northern Rentals, so that repaired units could be sold to tenants."

## **RESPONSE - N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION**

Under the Northern Territorial Rental Purchase Program (N.T.R.P.P.), individuals are credited with a portion of the rent they have paid toward the purchase price of the unit they wish to buy. A change is also being introduced which allows individuals with arrears to have their outstanding debt added to the proposed nominal purchase price of the unit. This is possible only if additional security is available to secure the debt.

The sale price for the unit is determined on a case by case basis, taking into consideration the age, condition and size of the unit. Very few units have been sold in the last few years with the introduction of the Homeownership Assistance Program and the poor condition of the remaining Northern Rental units. These sales that have been made through the N.T.R.P.P. have been for the minimum fee of \$1,000.00.

For those conditions that have been purchased and are in need of repair the Housing Corporation is providing support for the homeowners to repair or renovate those units with the assistance of the Home Improvement Program (H.I.P.). This Program assists private households who own and occupy existing sub-standard housing, to repair, re-habilitate or improve their dwellings to a minimum level of health and safety. (for more information on H.I.P. see G. REPAIR).

### **G. REPAIR**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING:**

36. "That the NWT Housing Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services together develop a strategy to deliver an enriched version of the Senior Citizens' (Home) Repair Program to those in need of such assistance."
38. "That the Minister responsible for Housing initiate development of a repair program to upgrade privately owned homes to a minimum health and safety standards, in all N.W.T. communities, including Yellowknife."

## **RESPONSE - N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION**

There are a significant number of privately owned homes in the N.W.T., primarily in the Western Arctic, that are in very poor condition. Many of these units were built in the 1950's and 1960's under programs delivered by the Department of Indian Affairs. The housing standards and level of services available at that time were very different from today and most of these units cannot be considered adequate by today's standards. Many, however, can be renovated rather than replaced. There are also a number of Northern Rental units which have been sold to tenants which require major upgrading.

The N.W.T. offers assistance to homeowners through the following programs:

1. Emergency Repair Program (E.R.P.) - provides assistance to homeowners in need to undertake emergency repairs that are required for the continued safe occupancy of their units. Repairs are intended to be limited to items urgently required to render the units fit for habitation rather than to restore housing to minimum property standards. Assistance is in the form of a contribution of \$3,800.
2. Senior Citizens' Home Repair Program (S.C.H.R.P.) - provides assistance to Senior Citizens' (60 years of age or older) who live in their own homes, to perform repairs and to make improvements so that they can continue to live in their homes and do not need to move into rental housing. Assistance is in the form of only one grant per household, not exceeding \$5,000 for the purchase of materials and labour. Freight costs will be paid by the Corporation over and above the \$5,000 grant.
3. Home Improvement Program (H.I.P.) - provides assistance to private households who own and occupy existing sub-standard housing to repair, re-habilitate or improve their dwellings to a minimum level of health and safety. The assistance provided under this program is repayable depending on family income, amount of assistance provided and the basic shelter costs in the community. Maximum assistance to repair the home cannot exceed one-half the cost of a Homeownership Assistance Program unit in the same community in the current year.

The H.I.P. program can also be delivered in conjunction with the S.C.H.R.P., increasing the amount of assistance that Senior Citizens' may receive.

#### **H. CONDOMINIUM LEGISLATION**

##### **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING:**

22. "That the Executive Council of the Government of the N.W.T. make a request to the Government of Canada to submit a government sponsored bill to the House of Commons, as soon as possible, to validate condominium construction in the Northwest Territories."

##### **RESPONSE - N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION**

The required changes to federal legislation to enable the N.W.T. Condominium Act have been made. Condominiums may now be built in the N.W.T.

### **III. HOUSING THE ELDERLY**

The Special Committee on Housing considered the improvement of housing for seniors a priority. The Committee recommended that the repair program be improved, that there be better co-ordination at the community level and that a study be undertaken to determine the housing conditions of N.W.T. elders.

#### **A. HOUSING CONDITIONS**

##### **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING:**

- 35. "That the Minister of Health and Social Services establish a departmental inquiry into the housing conditions of N.W.T. elders and report back to the Legislative Assembly in the 1986 Winter Session."**

##### **RESPONSE - DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

The current assessment project undertaken jointly by the departments of Health and Social Services was completed during 1986 and was presented to the Legislative Assembly February, 1987.

#### **IV. STAFF HOUSING**

The Special Committee on Housing noted in their review of N.W.T. staff housing that there were disparities between the subsidies provided to staff and to employees living in Housing Association/Authority units. The Committee was also concerned with the number of federal and territorial staff living in public housing units and thus reducing the stock of housing available to people who were perhaps in greater need.

##### **A. STAFF IN PUBLIC HOUSING**

###### **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING:**

40. "That the Department of Personnel set a reasonable target date for moving Government of the N.W.T. employees out of N.W.T. Housing Corporation units, to be co-ordinated with invitations to the private sector to provide new staff housing on a guaranteed lease basis."
41. "That the Government of the N.W.T. urge the Government of Canada to provide staff housing for federal employees who now occupy N.W.T. Housing Corporation rental units."
42. "That the Government of the N.W.T. Department of Personnel and Federal Government Departments enter into lease agreements with the Housing Associations/Authorities, for units occupied by Government of the N.W.T. and Federal employees."

###### **RESPONSE - DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL/N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION**

The Housing Corporation and the Department of Personnel are continuing to work together to identify strategies to reduce the number of staff in Public Housing. With the increased delivery of H.A.P. more locally hired Government of the N.W.T. employees are moving out of public housing.

##### **B. HOUSING SUBSIDY**

###### **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING:**

43. "That all Territorial Government employees be treated with equality: and that employees living in Housing Association/Authority units receive the same allowances for housing as other employees."
44. "That the Executive Council complete its review of staff accommodation policy addressing and correcting the rates charged for leased accommodation in market communities; and that employees living in staff accommodation be allocated units that are adequate to their family size and entitlement."

**RESPONSE - DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL**

The Department of Personnel continues to offer resident Government of the N.W.T. employees in Public Housing the option of paying market rent and receiving the \$450 per month accommodation allowance or paying subsidized rent and receiving no accommodation allowance.

## **V. CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION PROGRAMS**

The Special Committee noted that there was public acceptance and support for co-operative housing and that among moderate income households this could be a viable means of housing. However, it was also noted that the Federal Government was reviewing the program and that there was no budget allocation for the N.W.T. for 1985.

The Committee members were very concerned with the large number of privately owned homes in very poor condition. The Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program which could provide that assistance was available but not actively promoted or supported by sufficient staffing.

### **A. CO-OP HOUSING**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING:**

20. "That the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation designate a budget allocation for co-operative housing for the Northwest Territories."
21. "That organizational and proposal development funds continue to be allocated to communities who request this type of assistance."

#### **RESPONSE - N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION**

These recommendations have been forwarded to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (C.M.H.C.) for response.

C.M.H.C. currently provides funding under the Co-operative Housing Program in the N.W.T. This assistance has undergone some changes in the last year after a comprehensive review of the program by C.M.H.C. As a result, revisions were made to the subsidy available under this program, making this program suitable only to "market" communities. The Co-op program has helped to provide affordable housing in three of the larger centres in the N.W.T.: Yellowknife, Fort Smith and Iqaluit.

### **B. RESIDENTIAL REHABILITATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (R.R.A.P.)**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING:**

32. "That C.M.H.C. retain a full-time R.R.A.P. Co-ordinator on staff in its Yellowknife office to promote and ensure delivery of the R.R.A.P. as required throughout the N.W.T."
33. "That residents of all N.W.T. communities, including Yellowknife, be eligible to apply for the R.R.A.P."
34. "That C.M.H.C. continue to seek suitable delivery agents in communities until such time as a R.R.A.P. co-ordinator is hired."



**RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING:**

45. "That the Minister of Health and Social Services review the housing allowances currently being paid on behalf of social assistance recipients and investigate the feasibility of establishing a Shelter Allowance and that the Minister report his findings and conclusions to the Legislative Assembly in the Fall, 1985 Session."

**RESPONSE - DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

The focus of this study was changed. It was originally incorporated as part of a total review of Social Assistance initially undertaken in 1985 which is currently being re-examined. The Department will be proposing changes to the delivery of Social Assistance early in the 1988/89 fiscal year. This will include recommendations regarding payment of allowances for shelter as well as other requirements of daily living.

## **VII. ENERGY CONSERVATION**

The Special Committee on Housing highlighted the need for a comprehensive energy conservation program. The Committee also considered that "any user-pay system for utilities should be integrated within a comprehensive energy conservation program." (Final Report, page 47)

### **A. ENERGY CONSERVATION PROGRAM**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING:**

5. "That the N.W.T. Housing Corporation develop an energy conservation program which would include:
  - a) the implementation of the Northern Building Standard for Energy Efficient Housing in new construction and rehabilitation projects;
  - b) the establishment of measures for conservation of fuel and electricity in rental housing; and
  - c) the introduction of incentives for the use of alternative, renewable fuels, such as wood."
6. "That the N.W.T. Housing Corporation develop a comprehensive energy conservation program for rental housing programs, such that tenants obtain rental credits or cash rebates for energy conserved, rather than pay a surcharge for energy consumed."
7. "That the Minister responsible for Housing report to the Legislative Assembly in the 1985 Fall session on the status of his '2 cents/3 cents' User-Pay program."
23. "That the Government of the Northwest Territories enter into negotiations with the Federal Government to develop a comprehensive energy conservation and subsidy program for fuel and power consumption that will be applied equitably across the Northwest Territories."

#### **RESPONSE - N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION/ DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND HIGHWAYS**

The Housing Corporation with the co-operation of the Department of Public Works and Highways and Energy Mines and Resources, Canada (E.M.R.) is currently working towards the development of a comprehensive energy conservation program. The Corporation is designing and building to the R2000 standard and has now the largest stock of this standard of buildings in Canada. Maintenance has also received more attention and the Housing Corporation continues to conduct research into measures to conserve energy.

The Corporation has completed initial discussions with the Department of Public Works and Highways and E.M.R. regarding the development of an occupant's Home Awareness Program, including an energy conservation education element. This project will be further developed in 1988/89.

Through E.M.R.'s Remote Community Demonstration Program (R.C.D.P.) the Housing Corporation and the Department of Public Works and Highways are participating in an energy conservation, education and incentive program in Grise Fiord. In Rae, the Housing Corporation through R.C.D.P. is also involved in examining the feasibility of using wood fuel, a local renewable energy source to heat rental units. Both of these projects will be evaluated to determine the feasibility for delivery in other communities.

The Housing Corporation has recently carried out a review of the User-Pay Program. This review determined that this program has contributed to energy conservation among tenants and the User-Pay Program has generated an estimated net cost benefit of approximately \$800,000 to the Housing Corporation. The study recommended that the program be continued.

The Housing Corporation supports the conservation of energy through the local Housing Associations/Authorities. If a Housing Association/Authority is able to save money through general energy conservation, the implementation of the User Pay Program, or more efficient operations, that funding may be spent on other operating expenses, provided it is expended in the current fiscal year and the budgeted net operating deficit is not exceeded. In this way the savings are returned to the community to the benefit of the Housing Association/Authority tenants.

The Department of Public Works and Highways has developed a proposal for a study to be undertaken of all current energy subsidies, with a view to determining total cost, and to consider the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of developing an alternative system of incentives. With the transfer of Northern Canada Power Commission to the Territories, funding/control of several former Federal energy subsidy programs will be transferred to the Government of the N.W.T. The Department will be pursuing this matter with the new N.W.T. Power Corporation.

## **VIII. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

In the Final Report the Special Committee on Housing stressed the fact that the way the Housing Corporation delivered housing services was as important as the actual houses. They emphasized the need to deliver houses in a way which fosters community development, economic development, and accountability between the Housing Corporation and the community.

Adequate training is required to support the development of local housing organizations. The Committee recognized this and expressed concern with the level of training available to Housing Association/Authority staff and boards. The Committee also noted that less than 10% of the Housing Corporation staff is made up of native northerners and recommended that more support be given to the employment of local people.

The Committee also recognized the role of housing in fostering economic development and in its Final Report concluded that "efforts to address the housing shortage must be co-ordinated with efforts to increase the employment opportunities in the communities." (Final Report, page 108) The Committee commented that the potential exists for the development of a northern community based construction industry but that efforts must be made to develop this potential including:

- increasing local participation in housing construction;
- providing support to northern builders;
- encouraging development of a building components industry; and
- co-ordinating employment development efforts with the private sector.

In its Final Report the Committee commented that "Sound planning for community development must be done on a community - specific basis, as each settlement has its own unique historical and geographic features which define and limit future growth and development." ( Final Report, page 80) The Committee also expressed its concern with the planning and development of land for housing as well as the important process of assessing need for housing and planning for that need.

### **A. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION**

#### **1) Community and Regional Involvement**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING:**

79. "That municipal and community councils be given the option of taking over administration of N.W.T. Housing Corporation programs."
80. "That Regional and/or Tribal Councils, (and municipalities which do not belong to Regional or Tribal Councils), establish Housing Committees to co-ordinate and develop housing concerns and initiatives."

The Entrepreneurial Training Pilot Program has been completed by the Department of Economic Development and was considered successful. The program has been transferred to and is currently managed by the Department of Education.

The present apprenticeship programs co-ordinated by the Department of Education are currently driven by demand; the need of the employer for apprentices and the ability of that employer to provide positions within their firm. No new trades have been opened up for apprenticeship programs as the Federal Government is presently reviewing their funding of these programs.

The Department of Education now offers a one year program in Business Administration at the Inuvik Campus of Arctic College and a two year program in Business Administration at the Iqaluit Campus. In addition, the Departments of Economic Development and Education are cost-sharing a program which provides one on one training to small businesses.

#### **5) Economic Development Agreement**

##### **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING:**

74. "That the Minister of Economic Development initiate negotiations with the Federal Government to select a portion of the remaining E.D.A. funds to the development of the northern housing industry in accordance with established Government of the N.W.T. priorities, and, furthermore;"
75. "That prior to such negotiations taking place, the Ministers of Economic Development and Tourism, Education and Housing initiate a study to identify how E.D.A. funds could be most effectively utilized to achieve the objective of the development of the northern housing industry."
76. "That immediate efforts be undertaken by the Department of Economic Development and Tourism to further publicize and promote at the community level not only the E.D.A., but also its other programs that could be of benefit in meeting the objective of developing the northern housing industry."

##### **RESPONSE - DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM**

The New Economic Development Agreement (E.D.A.) has no specific provisions for housing construction and/or training programs related to construction. Some opportunities may exist through indirect application of one or more of the sub-agreements. Through the previous agreement, the Construction Industry Association received approval to hire a professional to prepare a Construction Services Manual.

No E.D.A. programs under the current agreements have provisions to undertake the type of research required to produce a strategy paper to develop a northern construction industry. The study, in the context proposed in recommendation #75, has, therefore, not been undertaken by the Department.

The Department continuously promotes not only the E.D.A., but all of its other programs which support small business development. The Department is prepared to provide upon request, workshops which explain its programs and those cost-shared by the Federal and Territorial Government. Workshops of this nature have recently been held in Fort McPherson and Lac La Martre.

## **E. COMMUNITY PLANNING**

### **1) Land**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING:**

46. "That the Government of the N.W.T. review the feasibility and cost effectiveness of utilizing National Housing Act Section 42 funding for land assembly projects."
47. "That the policy governing the proposed Municipal Land Development Revolving Fund contain the following principles:
  - a) the fund should have sufficient funding to be able to meet the demands placed on it;
  - b) the interest charged on loans made from the Revolving Fund should be low enough to prevent interest charges from inflating the resale cost of unsold developed under the scheme;
  - c) the repayment of loans made from the Revolving Fund should be deferred until the land so developed is sold; and
  - d) the municipalities should be allowed some flexibility in the repayment of loans made from the Revolving Fund, in order to assist individuals to purchase land."
48. "That where a municipality has demonstrated administrative capability in the areas of community planning and land development, that the Government of the N.W.T., if requested, turn over all lands within the community's designated boundaries to the municipality."
50. "That the Minister Responsible for Local Government establish a timetable for co-ordination of land development activity to be agreed upon and adhered to by all participants, with responsibilities clearly outlined and delegated; accountability should be likewise assigned."
51. "That Housing Associations/Authorities be formally included with community councils in community planning, especially when land is sought for new N.W.T. Housing Corporation public housing construction projects."

## RESPONSE - DEPARTMENT OF MUNICIPAL & COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

The Department contacted C.M.H.C. in the summer of 1986. The issue of Section 42 funding became part of the overall negotiation on the C.M.H.C./N.W.T.H.C. Global Agreement on Social Housing Programs.

In the winter of 1986, the Department prepared an Option Paper on Land Development for the review of the Executive Council. In May, 1987 the Executive Council directed the Department to prepare: a Land Development Policy, Land Development Loan Fund Program, revised Land Valuation Policy and Homeownership Land Purchase Rebate Program. This represents a more comprehensive approach because it:

- deals with who may develop land;
- identifies appropriate land development standards;
- describes how land development projects will be funded; and
- relates the issue of cost of land development with affordability on the part of individual lot purchasers.

This approach is consistent with the recommendations of the Special Committee on Housing.

The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs is currently developing a Land Development Policy which will set out criteria as to when and how municipalities can undertake land development. It is the intention of the Government that where a municipality has administrative and financial capability to undertake land development that it will be given these responsibilities.

In November, 1985 the Department established a permanent joint co-ordinating committee to deal with community infrastructure development. Membership includes the Department of Public Works and Highways, the Housing Corporation and the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs.

In 1986 agreement was reached with the Housing Corporation on a standard land acquisition process which clearly outlines the Housing Corporation/Municipal and Community Affairs responsibilities and accountabilities for public housing site acquisition. Discussions have taken place with the Housing Corporation about a similar process for a land acquisition process for the Homeownership Assistance Program. Completion of this agreement is anticipated by May of 1988.

The standards and criteria for the Department's Land Development Capital Program have been reviewed and will be submitted to the Executive Council for approval by the end of March. The standards and criteria more clearly outline the responsibilities of land developer and home builder which will assist in the co-ordination of the land development activities.

The site acquisition process agreed to by the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs and the Housing Corporation has streamlined and clarified the responsibilities with respect to selection of lots for public housing units. The Department is preparing an options paper for the Executive on how the Government of the N.W.T. can assist community councils to become the prime public body at the community level. This work will result in better co-ordination between the local Housing Association/Authority and the community council in dealing with the local housing issues.

## **2) Needs Assessment**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING:**

- 52. "That the Needs Study Program be reviewed as soon as possible by consultants expert in the field; and that the Minister Responsible for Housing make a full report to the Legislative Assembly on any revisions consequently implemented by the 1985 Fall Session.**
- 53. "That the Needs Study and subsequent allocations should have documented rationale explaining how data is collected and analyzed and for what purpose housing units are allocated; for example, to alleviate overcrowding, to encourage economic development."**
- 54. "That communities must be given the opportunity to participate in defining their own housing need beyond the current Need Study process; and their agreement with the conclusions of the analysis should be a prerequisite to any allocation of new housing."**
- 55. "That the housing requirements of all N.W.T. communities should be determined."**

### **RESPONSE - N.W.T. HOUSING CORPORATION**

The concerns raised by the Special Committee on Housing prompted the Housing Corporation to review its system of allocating houses. The Housing Corporation undertook this review with a firm commitment to produce a new system that was fair and equitable as well as having maximum public participation. The new allocation system was introduced in 1986 for the 1987 allocations and has been adjusted for use on the 1988 building program.

The Housing Corporation's allocation system has two major components; (1) it is based on real housing needs; and (2) it requires the participation of the people in the communities to work successfully.

Community Housing Needs are determined through the Comprehensive Community Housing Assessment. In this needs survey, information is actively sought from the households and includes information on both public and private households in all communities of the N.W.T. (in 1988 this will also include staff housing). In most cases this work is done by community groups and the resulting data, which is public information, is more acceptable to the communities.



## CONCLUSION

As documented in this report the Government of the N.W.T. has taken great strides towards improving the housing, the housing programs, and the way that housing is delivered to the people of the N.W.T. While this is the final report of a process which began with the Special Committee on Housing, it is not the end of that process. There is still much that the Government can do by working with the communities to improve the delivery of housing services to the NWT.

## APPENDIX A

### RECOMMENDATIONS BY SECTION AND PAGE

<u>RECOMMENDATIONS</u>	<u>SECTION</u>	<u>PAGE #</u>
1. implementation	Introduction	1
2. cost of living	VI. A. REPORT ON POVERTY	19
3. rental scale	I. A. RENTAL SCALE	3
4. staff and P.H. rents	I. A. RENTAL SCALE	3
5. energy conservation program	VII. A. ENERGY CONSERVATION PROGRAM	21
6. energy credits	VII. A. ENERGY CONSERVATION PROGRAM	21
7. "2 cents/3 cents"	VII. A. ENERGY CONSERVATION PROGRAM	21
8. labour funding info.	II. E. LABOUR FUNDING	10
9. co-ord. labour funding	II. E. LABOUR FUNDING	10
10. consistent eligibility	II. C. ACCESS	9
11. flexibility design H.A.P.	II. D. DESIGN	9
12. block funding H.A.P.	VIII.A.2. <u>Block Funding</u>	24
13. H.A.P. all communities	II. C. ACCESS	9
14. N.T.R.P.P. nominal fee	II. F. N.T.R.P.P.	11
15. N.T.R.P.P. repair	II. F. N.T.R.P.P.	11
16. N.T.R.P.P. arrears	II. F. N.T.R.P.P.	11
17. homeownership info.	II. B. PROGRAM INFORMATION	8
18. homeownership info.	II. B. PROGRAM INFORMATION	8
19. homeownership review	II. A. PROGRAM EVALUATION	7
20. budget for co-op	V. A. CO-OP HOUSING	17

RECOMMENDATIONS	SECTION	PAGE #
21. funding for develop	V. A. CO-OP HOUSING	17
22. condominium leg.	II. H. CONDOMINIUM LEGISLATION	13
23. negotiation fed.gov.	VII. A. ENERGY CONSERVATION PROGRAM	21
24. treasury brd. increase	I. B. MAINTENANCE & REPAIR	4
25. share resources	I. B. MAINTENANCE & REPAIR	4
26. housing assoc./auth.	I. B. MAINTENANCE & REPAIR	5
27. rehab northern rentals	I. B. MAINTENANCE & REPAIR	5
28. N.T.R.P.P. program	II. F. N.T.R.P.P.	11
29. increased fund. E.E.R.P.	I. B. MAINTENANCE & REPAIR	5
30. rental units standard	I. B. MAINTENANCE & REPAIR	5
31. credits for maintenance	I. B. MAINTENANCE & REPAIR	5
32. full time R.R.A.P.co-ord	V. B. R.R.A.P.	17
33. all communities R.R.A.P.	V. B. R.R.A.P.	17
34. community delivery	V. B. R.R.A.P.	17
35. inquiry housing elders	III. A. HOUSING CONDITIONS	14
36. enriched seniors repair	II. G. REPAIR	12
37. seniors repair blk. fund.	VIII.B. 2. <u>Block Funding</u>	24
38. dev. home repair program	II. G. REPAIR	12
39. consolidate repair prgm.	V. B. R.R.A.P.	18
40. moving out of P.H.	IV. A. STAFF IN P.H.	15
41. housing for fed. staff	IV. A. STAFF IN P.H.	15
42. lease agreements	IV. A. STAFF IN P.H.	15
43. equal treatment	IV. B. HOUSING SUBSIDY	15
44. review of staff accom.	IV. B. HOUSING SUBSIDY	15

<u>RECOMMENDATIONS</u>	<u>SECTION</u>	<u>PAGE #</u>
45. shelter allowance	VI. A. REPORT ON POVERTY	20
46. N.H.A. fund land assemb.	VIII.E.1. <u>Land</u>	31
47. policy land revolving	VIII.E.1. <u>Land</u>	31
48. turn over land to comm.	VIII.E.1. <u>Land</u>	31
49. communities updated	VIII.E.3. <u>Five-Year Capital Plan</u>	34
50. timetable co-ord. dev.	VIII.E.1. <u>Land</u>	31
51. Housing Assoc./Auth. included in planning	VIII.E.1. <u>Land</u>	31
52. needs study review	VIII.E.2. <u>Needs Assessment</u>	33
53. documented rationale	VIII.E.2. <u>Needs Assessment</u>	33
54. communities define need	VIII.E.2. <u>Needs Assessment</u>	33
55. all communities	VIII.E.2. <u>Needs Assessment</u>	33
56. actual housing needs	VIII.E.3. <u>Five-Year Capital Plan</u>	34
57. available to communities	VIII.E.3. <u>Five-Year Capital Plan</u>	34
58. co-ordinated approach	IX. B. GLOBAL AGREEMENT	36
59. property management training	VIII.B. TRAINING	25
60. E.D.A. funds training	VIII.D.4. <u>Special Training</u>	29
61. apprenticeship program	VIII.D.4. <u>Special Training</u>	29
62. train H.A/A.	VIII.B. TRAINING	25
63. affirmative action	VIII.B. TRAINING	25
64. labour skill registry	VIII.D.1. <u>Local Hire</u>	26
65. info. labour assist.	VIII.D.1. <u>Local Hire</u>	26
66. bonding industry	VIII.D.2. <u>Business Incentive</u>	27

<u>RECOMMENDATIONS</u>	<u>SECTION</u>	<u>PAGE #</u>
67. incentives local hire	VIII.D.1. <u>Local Hire</u>	26
68. Business Incentive	VIII.D.2. <u>Business Incentive</u>	27
69. tenders to communities	VIII.D.2. <u>Business Incentive</u>	27
70. M.L.A.s on tender award	VIII.D.2. <u>Business Incentive</u>	27
71. report on supply/labour	VIII.D.3. <u>Separate Supply and Labour Contracts</u>	28
72. report to contain...	VIII.D.3. <u>Separate Supply and Labour Contracts</u>	28
73. entrepreneurial train	VIII.D.4. <u>Special Training</u>	29
74. E.D.A. dev. construction	VIII.D.5. <u>Economic Development Agreement</u>	30
75. study E.D.A.	VIII.D.5. <u>Economic Development Agreement</u>	30
76. publicize E.D.A.	VIII.D.5. <u>Economic Development Agreement</u>	30
77. business training	VIII.D.4. <u>Special Training</u>	29
78. membership board	IX. A. THE BOARD	35
79. communities take over housing	VIII.A. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION	23
80. regional committees	VIII.A. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION	23
81. global agreement	IX. B. GLOBAL AGREEMENT	36
82. comprehensive audit	IX. C. COMPREHENSIVE AUDIT	37