



**A WAY HOME:**  
A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY TO  
ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS IN THE  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

**UN CHEMIN VERS CHEZ SOI :**  
UNE STRATÉGIE GLOBALE POUR LUTTER  
CONTRE L'ITINÉRANCE AUX TERRITOIRES  
DU NORD-OUEST

Le présent document contient la traduction  
française du résumé et du message du la Premier.

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# A Way Home: A Comprehensive Strategy to Address Homelessness in the Northwest Territories

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## **PREMIER'S MESSAGE**

The experience of homelessness is an issue of great importance to all Northwest Territories (NWT) communities. I would like to thank the people of the NWT, my colleagues, fellow leaders, and community partners for ensuring that the development of a Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) strategy to address homelessness remained a high priority for this Legislative Assembly. I also want to acknowledge the Standing Committee on Social Development's recently released report focused on homelessness prevention which will assist in the finalization of this strategy.

Homelessness is a complex challenge, with several factors that impact each person differently, and requires multiple solutions to properly address it. Many people, governments, and organizations provide supports to those at risk of experiencing homelessness, or who are chronically without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing or the immediate means of acquiring it. Working together effectively can help us to maximize the supports in communities and identify ways to better meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness.

I believe that solutions exist. They must be identified, developed, and implemented by the community at large, housing advocates, NGOs, private industry, all orders of government, and other stakeholders. In addressing factors that have resulted in an individual or family experiencing homelessness, we can help more northerners avoid the experience of homelessness. The GNWT is committed to demonstrating leadership on addressing homelessness by helping to coordinate our multiple perspectives and approaches.

This draft strategy sets out key areas of action to help NWT residents find and maintain housing stability. We look forward to receiving further input on this draft and finalizing a strategy that reflects shared solutions to address homelessness for the people of the Northwest Territories.

The Honourable Caroline Cochrane

Premier

## MESSAGE DE LA PREMIER

L'expérience de l'itinérance est une question d'une grande importance pour toutes les collectivités des Territoires du Nord Ouest (TNO). J'aimerais remercier la population des TNO, mes collègues et autres dirigeants, ainsi que nos partenaires communautaires d'avoir veillé à ce que l'élaboration d'une stratégie du gouvernement des Territoires du Nord-Ouest (GTNO) pour lutter contre l'itinérance demeure une priorité de premier plan pour cette Assemblée législative. J'aimerais également saluer le rapport sur la prévention de l'itinérance du Comité permanent des affaires sociales. Tout juste publié, ce rapport contribuera à la mise en œuvre de la stratégie.

L'itinérance est un problème complexe et multifactoriel qui touche chaque personne différemment, et qui nécessite des solutions multiples pour y répondre adéquatement. De nombreuses administrations, personnes et organisations apportent un soutien aux personnes qui risquent de devenir itinérantes ou qui sont chroniquement privées d'un logement stable, sûr, permanent et approprié, ou des moyens immédiats d'en obtenir un. Collaborer efficacement peut nous aider à maximiser les mesures de soutien dans nos collectivités et à déterminer les changements qui s'imposent pour mieux répondre aux besoins des personnes itinérantes.

Je pense qu'il existe des solutions. Elles doivent être développées et mises en œuvre par la collectivité dans son ensemble, les défenseurs du droit au logement, les organisations non gouvernementales, le secteur privé, tous les niveaux de gouvernement, ainsi que les autres intervenants. En nous attaquant aux facteurs qui conduisent les personnes et les familles à devenir itinérantes, nous pouvons aider un plus grand nombre de Ténois à éviter de se retrouver dans cette situation, et le GTNO s'engage à faire preuve de leadership dans la lutte contre l'itinérance en travaillant à coordonner ses multiples perspectives et approches.

Ce plan stratégique définit les principaux domaines d'action pour aider les Ténois à trouver un logement stable. Nous espérons recevoir d'autres commentaires sur ce projet afin de mettre en œuvre une stratégie pour lutter contre l'itinérance aux TNO qui tient compte des solutions communes.

L'honorable Caroline Cochrane

Première ministre

## Executive Summary

In Canada, homelessness is defined as the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing or the immediate prospect means and ability of acquiring it. (Gaetz et al.) The scope of this Strategy is mainly focused on individuals and families who are chronically homeless. Chronic homelessness is defined as an individual or family who has experienced homelessness for an extended period or multiple times over the course of a year. It is often characterized by frequent or long-term stays in shelters, on the streets, or in other places not meant for human habitation. This definition includes those who are chronically couch-surfing or sleeping rough, as homelessness often presents itself in the Northwest Territories (NWT). Indigenous people are overrepresented among Canadians and NWT residents experiencing homelessness. This Strategy was developed with sensitivity toward the definition of Indigenous homelessness; an experience more fully described through a composite lens of Indigenous worldviews to include individuals, families and even communities who are isolated from their relationships to the land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages, and identities.

Measures to prevent individuals and families from becoming homeless are woven throughout the objectives, recognizing that many individuals and families who would not identify as homeless are in precarious living situations and would benefit from the solutions described in this Strategy.

In the NWT significant root causes of homelessness include the impacts of colonialism, trauma, the lack of affordable housing, addictions and substance abuse, poverty, inequality, unemployment, and lack of access to education and healthcare. Multifaceted, person-centred approaches, sustained effort, and collaboration among governments, non-profits, and the private sector are all required to make meaningful progress in addressing the root causes of individuals or families being without a stable, safe, or appropriate place to call home.

This draft Strategy proposes nine areas of action: establishing functional zero homelessness goals for all communities; supporting community partnerships to use resources efficiently and implement evidence-based practices; improving access and use of mental health and addictions services for those experiencing homelessness, with immediate priority on chronic homelessness to match resources with greatest needs; ensuring shelter services have appropriate resources that accurately reflect the program and service needs of their users; increasing transitional housing and supportive housing placement options; establishing a whole of government approach with a unit focused on integrated service delivery and addressing homelessness; addressing policies that create barriers to housing and strengthening policy efforts to address and prevent homelessness; increasing the stock of accessible housing; and improving methods of collecting, sharing and analyzing client information and data.

This Strategy document should be considered a draft. Over the coming weeks, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) will seek input and suggestions from Indigenous governments, community partners, community governments, internal and external stakeholders and the general public.

## SOMMAIRE

Au Canada, l'itinérance est définie comme la situation d'une personne, d'une famille ou d'une communauté qui ne dispose pas d'un logement stable, sûr, permanent et approprié, ou qui n'a pas les moyens immédiats et la capacité d'en obtenir un (Gaetz et coll.) La présente stratégie est principalement axée sur les personnes et les familles qui sont en itinérance chronique, soit qui ont connu l'itinérance pendant une période prolongée ou plusieurs fois au cours d'une année. Elle se caractérise souvent par des séjours fréquents ou de longue durée dans des centres d'hébergement, dans la rue ou dans d'autres lieux impropres à l'habitation humaine. Les personnes qui dorment de façon chronique sur un canapé chez une connaissance ou dans la rue, comme c'est souvent le cas dans les TNO, sont incluses dans la définition de l'itinérance chronique. Parmi les Canadiens et les habitants des TNO en situation d'itinérance, les populations autochtones sont surreprésentées. Par conséquent, cette stratégie a été élaborée en tenant compte de la définition de l'itinérance autochtone, une expérience mieux décrite par une vision globale du monde autochtone qui inclut les personnes, les familles et même les collectivités qui sont coupées de leurs relations avec la terre, l'eau, le lieu, la famille, les proches, les autres, les animaux, les cultures, les langues et les identités.

Les mesures visant à empêcher les personnes et les familles de devenir itinérantes sont omniprésentes dans les objectifs, étant donné que de nombreuses personnes et familles qui ne s'identifieraient pas comme itinérantes se trouvent dans des situations de vie précaires et bénéficieraient des solutions décrites dans la présente stratégie.

Aux TNO, les causes profondes de l'itinérance comprennent notamment les conséquences du colonialisme, les traumatismes, le manque de logements abordables, les dépendances et la toxicomanie, la pauvreté, l'inégalité, le chômage et le manque d'accès à l'éducation et aux soins de santé. Des approches multidimensionnelles et centrées sur la personne, des efforts soutenus et une collaboration entre les gouvernements, les organisations à but non lucratif et le secteur privé sont tous nécessaires pour réaliser des progrès significatifs dans la lutte contre les causes profondes de l'itinérance, et pour aider les personnes ou les familles qui n'ont pas d'endroit stable, sûr ou adapté où se sentir chez elles.

Ce projet de stratégie propose neuf champs d'action : établir des objectifs fonctionnels qui visent « l'itinérance zéro » pour toutes les collectivités; soutenir les partenariats communautaires pour utiliser efficacement les ressources et mettre en œuvre des pratiques fondées sur des preuves; améliorer l'accès et l'utilisation des services de santé mentale et de lutte contre les dépendances pour les personnes en situation d'itinérance, avec une priorité immédiate sur l'itinérance chronique afin de faire correspondre les ressources aux besoins les plus importants; veiller à ce que les services d'hébergement disposent de ressources appropriées qui reflètent fidèlement les besoins de leurs utilisateurs en matière de programmes et de services; augmenter les possibilités de logement de transition et de logement supervisé; établir une approche pangouvernementale dotée d'une unité axée sur la prestation de services intégrés et la lutte contre l'itinérance; s'attaquer aux politiques qui créent des obstacles au logement et renforcer les efforts politiques visant à lutter contre l'itinérance et à la prévenir; augmenter le nombre de logements accessibles; et améliorer les méthodes de collecte, de partage et d'analyse des informations et des données relatives aux clients.

Ce document de stratégie doit être considéré comme un projet. Au cours des prochaines semaines, le GTNO sollicitera les commentaires et les suggestions des gouvernements autochtones, des partenaires communautaires, des administrations communautaires, des intervenants internes et externes et du grand public.

## INTRODUCTION

In Canada, homelessness is defined as the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing or the immediate prospect means and ability of acquiring it. (Gaetz et al.) The scope of this Strategy is **mainly** focused on individuals and families who are **chronically homeless**. Chronic homelessness is defined as an individual or family who has experienced homelessness for an extended period or multiple times over the course of a year. It is often characterized by frequent or long-term stays in shelters, on the streets, or in other places not meant for human habitation. This definition includes those who are chronically couch-surfing or sleeping rough, as homelessness often presents itself in the Northwest Territories (NWT). Chronic homelessness may be a result of a person's experience of societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual or family's financial, mental, cognitive, behaviour or physical challenges and/or racism and discrimination. This Strategy was developed with sensitivity toward the definition of Indigenous homelessness. Indigenous homelessness is not simply when an Indigenous person lacks a structure to live in, but homelessness is more fully described through a composite lens of Indigenous worldviews to include individuals, families and even communities who are isolated from their relationships to the land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages, and identities. Indigenous people are overrepresented among Canadians and NWT residents experiencing homelessness.

There are four main categories of homelessness: unsheltered, emergency sheltered, provisionally accommodated and at risk of homelessness. Homelessness is a growing challenge in the NWT and across Canada. Data is limited on the number of precariously housed and unhoused people, but rates of homelessness in Canada have risen since the 1980's. As of December 2020, at least 25,000 people nationwide experienced homelessness in a shelter or outdoors on any given night across 61 measured Canadian communities, marking a 14 percent increase over a count conducted in 2016. (Flynn et al). In the NWT significant root causes of homelessness include the impacts of colonialism, trauma, the lack of affordable housing, addictions and substance abuse, poverty, inequality, unemployment, and lack of access to education and healthcare. Social programs and services intended to address these issues are often fragmented across GNWT departments. In communities without emergency shelters, individuals frequently resort to couch-surfing and overcrowding is common. Across the NWT, housing, even for those with the means of acquiring it, is limited.

In many instances of chronic homelessness, individuals and families not only need a place to live, but a suite of wraparound services that ultimately help them stabilize their living situation. Measures to prevent individuals and families from becoming homeless are woven throughout the objectives, recognizing that many individuals and families who would not identify as "homeless" are in precarious living situations and would benefit from the solutions described in this Strategy. Housing Northwest Territories' current renewal initiatives, for example, involve policy changes intended to prevent homelessness and are highlighted under the broader objective of increasing affordable housing. Improving access to and use of mental health and addictions supports; transitional and supported living facilities may also help individuals and families at risk of losing their homes to avoid becoming homeless if appropriate interventions occur.

It is important to recognize that the supports and interventions identified in this strategy alone are not sufficient to end homelessness and that homelessness will never be eradicated completely. Multifaceted, person-centred approaches, sustained effort, and collaboration among governments,

non-profits, and the private sector are all required to make meaningful progress in addressing the root causes of individuals or families being without a stable, safe, or appropriate place to call home.

This Strategy document should be considered a draft and is meant to inform further discussion and planning particularly with those who currently support, or have supported, efforts to address homelessness. Over the coming weeks, the GNWT will further engage community governments, non-profits, Indigenous governments, researchers and academics, and the broader public seeking their input and suggestions. The actions identified in the Strategy should be tracked and results evaluated as we move forward. Similarly, engagement should also be ongoing. This Strategy will be subject to periodic review, starting three years after its implementation.

### **Current Homelessness Programs and Resources**

The following list of programs and services are currently available to help address homelessness. This list is not exhaustive and may not reflect all services or may include services that are not specific to homelessness. The GNWT allocated approximately \$9.5 million toward shelter services in 2022-23. This funding included:

- Homelessness Assistance Fund: provides one-time emergency financial assistance to clients who are homeless, or at risk of experiencing homelessness or have an opportunity to access stable housing.
- Funding to NGOs for the following Homelessness Programs:
  - 4 **Northern Pathways to Housing Program** in Behchokò, Aklavik, Fort Simpson, and Fort Good Hope
  - 2 Rapid Rehousing –Yellowknife
  - 7 Emergency Overnight Shelters
- **Northern Pathways to Housing** continues as a pilot project that provides supports for emergency housing and transitional housing.
- The **Shelter Enhancement Fund** provides financing to organizations administering shelter projects, for the purpose of supporting capital repairs or equipment purchases. The fund provides organizations up to \$100,000 per year, in the form of a forgivable loan.
- **Small Community Homelessness Fund** is intended to provide NGOs, Community Governments and Indigenous Governments outside of Yellowknife with funding for projects that address shelter and support needs for individuals who are experiencing homelessness.
- **Transitional Housing Supports for Wellness Court Clients:** The Department of Justice administers a contract for two beds at the Bailey House in Yellowknife for male clients and a contract is being finalized with the Yellowknife Women’s Society for one bed for female clients. A second contract is in place for two beds at the Bailey House in Yellowknife to provide transitional housing supports for male therapeutic community clients, offender temporary absences from correctional facilities and/or the provision of short-term support while longer-term solutions are finalized.
- **Yellowknife Integrated Service Delivery Demonstration Site:** The Department of Justice provides Integrated Case Management to approximately 370 clients in Yellowknife, of which 199 (or 54 percent) have experienced or are experiencing homelessness.
- **Annual Support for Yellowknife, Hay River and Inuvik Shelters:** the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority (NTHSSA) and Hay River Health and Social Services Authority provide \$75,000 in funding to each shelter.



- **Home Base Emergency Youth Shelter, Home Base Youth Housing, Home Base Specialized Support:** NTHSSA provides separate funding to community partners operating each of these programs.
- **Salvation Army Transitional Housing (Bailey House):** the NTHSSA provides funding to the Salvation Army to supplement the continued operation of this facility and program.
- **YWCA Lynn's Place:** provides stability and services for women and children in Yellowknife. NTHSSA provides funding to the YWCA to supplement the continued operation of this facility and program.
- **Funding for the Managed Alcohol Program:** The Department of Health and Social Services provides funding to support managed alcohol at Spruce Bough in Yellowknife.

The 2019 Northways Consulting and Impact Economics Review of GNWT Homelessness Resources Report identifies four categories of programs and services:

- Emergency and warming (referred to throughout the Strategy as “shelters”).
- Transitional housing, supported and independent living programs.
- Addictions programs.
- Day Programs.

### **Emergency Shelters**

Yellowknife Day Shelter

Yellowknife Sobering Centre

Home Base Yellowknife

Men's Emergency Shelter/Productive Choice Program, Yellowknife Salvation Army, Yellowknife Emergency Housing for Families, YWCA NWT, Yellowknife

Yellowknife Women's Society, Centre for Northern Families, Yellowknife

Inuvik Emergency Homeless Shelters, Housing Northwest Territories, Inuvik

Aimayunga Women and Emergency Foster Care Shelter, Tuktoyaktuk

Hay River Day/Overnight Shelter, Hay River Committee for Person's with Disabilities

Dehcho Warming Shelter, Dehcho Society for Wellness and Sustainable Development, Fort Simpson

### **Family Violence Shelters**

Alison McAteer Family Violence Shelter, YWCA NWT, Yellowknife

Hay River Family Support Centre Family Violence Shelter, Hay River Family Support Centre, Hay River

Sutherland House Family Violence Shelter, Fort Smith YWCA, Fort Smith

Transition House Society, Family Violence Shelter, Transition House Society, Inuvik

### **Transitional Housing**

Northern Pathways to Housing

Tłı̄chọ Łeàgı̄ł Ts'ı̄lı̄ Kọ - Tłı̄chọ Friendship Centre, Behchokò

K'asho Got'ine Housing Society, Fort Good Hope

Aklavik Indian Band, Aklavik

Home Base Transitional Home, Side Door Youth Ministries, Yellowknife

Bailey House Transitional Housing, Yellowknife Salvation Army, Yellowknife

Housing First Program, Centre for Northern Families, Yellowknife

Lynn's Place, Transitional Housing, YWCA NWT, Yellowknife

Community Transitional Housing for Families, YWCA NWT, Yellowknife

### **Supported Living Programs**

Home Base Dorms, Home Base Yellowknife

Independent Living Support Program, Yellowknife Salvation Army, Yellowknife

Supported Living Program, Yellowknife Association for Community Living (for persons with disabilities), Yellowknife

Spruce Bough, Yellowknife Women's Society, Yellowknife

### **Addictions Programs**

Addictions Treatment Withdrawal Management Program (WMS), Yellowknife Salvation Army, Yellowknife

WMS Extension Program, Yellowknife Salvation Army, Yellowknife

Addictions Services, Tree of Peace Friendship Centre, Yellowknife

### **Day Programs**

Tłı̄chọ Łeàgı̄ł Ts'ı̄lı̄ Kọ - Tłı̄chọ Friendship Centre, Behchokò

Adult Education and Pre-Employment, Native Women's Association, Yellowknife

Case Management, Yellowknife Women's Society, Yellowknife

Yellowknife Food Bank, Yellowknife

Food Rescue, Yellowknife

Community Services, Yellowknife Salvation Army, Yellowknife

Adult Education, Tree of Peace Friendship Centre, Yellowknife

Employment/Cultural Program, Tree of Peace Friendship Centre, Yellowknife

Community Wellness Program, Tree of Peace, Yellowknife

Dehcho Friendship Centre Drop-in Centre, Dehcho Friendship Centre, Fort Simpson

Soup Kitchen and Homelessness Support, Łı́ı̄dlı̄ Kúé First Nation, Fort Simpson

Hamlet of Fort MacPherson Food Program, Hamlet of Fort MacPherson, Fort MacPherson  
Hamlet of Paulatuk Food Program, Hamlet of Paulatuk, Paulatuk  
Ingamo Hall Friendship Centre Day Shelter, Ingamo Hall Friendship Centre, Inuvik  
Inuvik Food Bank, Inuvik  
Arctic Food Bank, Inuvik  
Quyallidauyuot Emergency Food Bank, Tuktoyaktuk  
Living in Balance, Tree of Peace Friendship Centre, Yellowknife  
Matrix, Tree of Peace Friendship Centre, Yellowknife  
New Day Program, Tree of Peace Friendship Centre, Yellowknife  
Resource Centre, Side Door Youth Ministries, Yellowknife  
Resource Centres, Yellowknife Salvation Army, Yellowknife  
Victim Services, Native Women's Association, Yellowknife  
Arctic Indigenous Wellness Foundation Camp, Yellowknife  
Employment Assistance Services, CDÉTNO (Conseil de développement économique des Territoires du Nord-Ouest), Yellowknife  
Norman Wells Food Pantry, Town of Norman Wells, Norman Wells  
The Soup Kitchen, Hay River  
Fort Smith Food Bank, Fort Smith

## Current Context and Finding a Way Home

The current system for accessing public housing, social and mental health supports is complex. For example, an individual needs to provide ID to get income assistance, which may involve applying for a General Identification Card (GIC), a process that can take up to six weeks, or a birth certificate if they cannot provide one to apply for a GIC. Once ID is provided, individuals need to provide tax information to demonstrate their level of income and need; open a bank account, provide a bank statement, and cover the \$5 printing fee. During this time, individuals and families may not be able to meet their basic food and shelter needs independently. When an individual has received income assistance and is ready for housing, they encounter waitlists, unwillingness on the part of private rental agencies to take on tenants on income assistance, repayment plans if they have previous arrears, and co-signer requirements. Along the way, they may suffer from pre-existing or worsening physical or mental health problems, use substances to cope, and experience instability or violence in key relationships. Individuals and families in regional centres and small communities also face barriers and a highly variable range of options depending on the services available in their community or region at the time.

Once housed, individuals and families may be challenged to maintain tenancy: private market rental rates are high; overcrowding in rental units, failing to pay utilities, or rent, and power cut off notices are examples of factors that impact individuals' and families' ability to remain housed. People rely on Pathfinders and Adult Services Case Managers to access government services in addition to their own personal agency and willingness to seek care. Where governments do not provide services directly, community partners continue to make a huge contribution by providing emergency shelter and other similar services with minimal funding and limited staff.

### *A Way Home*

Government often uses a fairness measure in the development of policies and programs; however, treating all people the same way assumes that they start from the same place. Responding effectively to homelessness and its root causes requires us to acknowledge the realities of the people accessing services. Shifting to person-centered service delivery requires us to recognize the role that equity has in ensuring everyone has equal access to services. To ensure *equal* access to services, we must consider equity in the design of our approach to service delivery. GNWT Departments are already trying to do this work, but doing business differently means making an organizational cultural shift. Through the actions in this Strategy and sustained effort with community partners the GNWT would like to achieve:

***Equitable access to services:*** person-centered service delivery that meets individuals and families where they are.

***Timely and coordinated services:*** services can be offered immediately and with the right coordination among service providers. Individuals and families can tell their story once, and have a full system response coordinated to address needs they identify at the earliest possible opportunity for people, and focuses on prevention wherever possible.

***Measurable outcomes and increased self-sufficiency:*** person-centered supports are linked with increased self-sufficiency.

***Efficient and effective use of resources:*** a team approach to identifying service solutions for the individual in effort to prevent more serious, emergency outcomes, thereby alleviating time and effort of frontline service providers. Complex cases for one service provider become more manageable when all appropriate service providers fulfill their role in supporting individuals and families.

***Enhanced relationships among service providers:*** over time, the team approach allows service providers to focus more on what they can do as a team with one main objective, rather than the limitations of the silos in which they exist. This can lead to ***increased job satisfaction and collaboration among service providers.*** In turn, individuals and families receive higher quality care.

## GNWT Goals for Addressing Homelessness

### **Establish Functional Zero Homelessness goals for all communities.**

**Functional zero** means that the number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness is reduced to a level that can be effectively managed through permanent housing and services available in each of our communities. Completely ending acute homelessness is not a realistic goal. There will always be a need for emergency shelter options. The goal for ending chronic homelessness, also called “functional zero,” is that homelessness is prevented whenever possible, and when homelessness does occur, it is rare, brief, and non-recurring (Turner, A. et al, 2017). The goal of ending homelessness is to ensure housing stability, which means that individuals have a fixed address and housing that is appropriate and that they have the required income, services and supports to enhance their well-being and reduce their risk of experiencing homelessness. (Gaetz et al.)

While housing availability is a challenge, the goal should be that the number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness is low enough that the community is able to provide social, mental health and housing supports for individuals and families who need them, and the number of new individuals and families experiencing homelessness does not outpace the number of people that can be supported through social, mental health and housing resources.

Achieving functional zero will look different across communities in the NWT based on communities’ diverse needs and the level of formally established services. Reaching functional zero levels for each community in the NWT should be the ultimate goal of the homelessness strategy. It requires a coordinated, well-functioning system that can quickly find, assess, and support people experiencing homelessness and provide integrated services to prevent homelessness from reoccurring. It requires sustained effort and continuity of effective programs and services.

While it may take some time to fully implement, NWT communities – particularly regional centres - would benefit from introducing integrated case management and, potentially, assertive community treatment. Integrated Case Management (ICM) is a team-based approach that can help individuals and families maintain their housing and improve their quality of life. The teams offer services in a strengths-based and person-centered manner that works with participants with complex needs to access and navigate service systems that they would otherwise struggle to access. Equity, flexibility and person-centered services are foundational to effectively supporting clients.

Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) is a mental health program that focuses on individual clients and their recovery. The program facilitates community living, psychosocial rehabilitation, and recovery for persons who have serious mental illnesses and who have significant functional impairments. ACT services are delivered by a mobile team; tailored to the needs of each client and provided in the community rather than at an established site or office. Services may vary depending on the community, but can include program and service coordination, crisis assessment and intervention, treatment and supports, prescription management; services or supports for concurrent substance use disorders, work-related services, life skills, social and relationship skills. Both ICM and ACT approaches actively work with individuals and families to address the root causes of acute and chronic homelessness and offer them the opportunity to move toward more stable living conditions.

Working toward functional zero homelessness starts with a Coordinated Access System, a community-wide system that streamlines the process for people experiencing homelessness to access housing and supports. Training is required on its effective implementation. The City of Yellowknife recently launched a Coordinated Access System as a pilot project, which could help inform the GNWT’s implementation of this approach across the NWT.

Following the Coordinated Access System is the development of a “by-name list”, a comprehensive list of every individual in a community experiencing homelessness, updated in real time. Using information collected and shared with individuals’ consent, each person on the list has a file that includes their name, housing history, health history and specific needs. By maintaining a by-name list, communities can track their homeless population, particularly in regional centres. A by-name list offers detailed information on each individual and contributes to a better understanding of the individual as a community member who needs help.

*Solutions*

- Set a “functional zero” goal where each community in the NWT has adequate services so that when homelessness occurs, it is rare, brief, and non-recurring.
- Implement rapid re-housing:
  - Focus efforts on moving individuals and families experiencing homelessness out of shelters and into housing as quickly and sustainably as possible, either into housing units with supports provided as needed or communal housing where general supports are available for all residents.
  - Provide rent supplements and appropriate social support services.
  - Increase stock of affordable housing.
- Implement a Coordinated Access System
- Develop a “By person list” to match individuals with needs
- Develop a data-driven approach to track, assess effectiveness of interventions, and identify areas of need quickly.
- Continual engagement and collaboration with partners and private sector to develop and implement strategies to address homelessness.

Goal	Objectives	Inputs	Activities	Outcomes 0-6 months	6-24 months	>2 years
<b>Establish Functional Zero Goals for all Communities</b>	Goals set for all communities	System capacity measured ; gaps identified	Communities and service providers engaged	Meetings held and inventory of needs for each community established  Communities and partners engaged to set manageable number of homeless	Goals set for each community to reduce homelessness  Coordinated Entry System begins to be implemented	Homelessness is rare and brief in each community  Resources for shelters are moved to other supports

## **Support community partnerships to use resources efficiently and implement evidence-based practices**

Homelessness cannot be solved by one single entity acting alone. The GNWT relies on community partners, including Indigenous governments, community governments and non-governmental organizations, to address homelessness in the NWT through critical work, often under urgent circumstances. With high demand and limited resources there is little opportunity to do more than offer basic programming and services. Community partners who deliver programs and services for individuals and families experiencing homelessness are under strain to address the increased demand to support program and service users who have complex needs. The funding the GNWT provides to community partners to deliver social, mental health and housing programs and services is often distributed on an annual basis and does not cover all program and service needs. The salaries, benefits, and working conditions offered by community partners are often uncompetitive, leading to recruitment and retention challenges.

Part of the solution to this issue is implementing regular, solutions-oriented discussions with partners aimed at improving supports, strengthening collaboration, and implementing proven approaches like integrated case management. Regional centres, like Yellowknife, present an option to people from remote communities who want to find housing, social support, or mental health services, especially in combination with escaping difficult or dangerous situations in their home communities. We've heard that people need more supports closer to home. All communities need support in implementing unique solutions that they identify to address homelessness in their local population. The small population and limited number of service providers inherently lends itself to service integration and person-centred approaches in smaller NWT communities. Depending on a community's needs, capacity could be built through mentoring, peer support, advising the development of grant applications. The GNWT and community partners could consider offering regular training to frontline service providers, culminating in the eventual development of a northern training program. Community partners and the GNWT could consider potential partnerships with Aurora College to offer professional development courses in case management, personal support, and viable options for career laddering.

### *Solutions*

- Set up quarterly partnership meetings that align with existing collaborative approaches, like the Anti-Poverty Round Table, and NWT Council of Leaders, for solutions-oriented conversations to help foster open communication and build an understanding organizations' needs and capacity.
- Establish Integrated Service Delivery sites in each region, including interprofessional teams from the GNWT, Indigenous governments, community governments and non-government organizations involved in addressing homelessness.
- Work with communities to identify and prioritize housing and shelter needs.
- Explore core or annual funding and program delivery options with community partners, including the potential for expanded service delivery, multi-year funding and forced growth.
- Increase the flexibility of GNWT funding to support community partners in developing solutions that are directed toward community needs.
- Use government resources to help coordinate consistent information gathering and improve program evaluation with reduced burden on partners.



- Invite academics with an interest in northern housing issues to help inform key policy decisions.
- Develop policies around individuals’ and families’ needs that are guided by UNDRIP, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Create greater equity between the GNWT and community partners.

Goal	Objectives	Inputs	Activities	Outcomes 0-6 months	6-24 months`	>2 years
<b>Support Community Partnerships</b>	Regular partnership meetings	Partners availability	Partners engaged to establish meeting schedules	Meetings set with available partners	Regular meetings occurring with coordination of efforts occurring	Meetings among ISD Regional Sites; create a Community of Practice.
	Contracted support services available and aligned with needs	Program inventory  Engagement with partners	Inventory of programs reviewed including offerings from current operators	Current programming identified	Changes to programs identified as required to match needs	Changes to programs implemented as required to match needs
	Program evaluation improved	Program goals and objectives, program documentation and stakeholder engagement	Create evaluation team to undertake planning, data collection and partner engagement	Team established and initial plans complete	Data collected, engagement conducted, and periodic recommendations related to programs provided	Programs regularly evaluated and adjusted to optimize services and improve results
	Housing and shelter needs and program gaps in capacity identified	Program inventory  Engagement with partners	Partner meetings and collaboration with dedicated team  Reports on existing capacity and gaps in each community	Meetings and inventory of shelter needs conducted	Business plans and budgets adjusted to better meet identified needs  Standing Committee engagement on strategies to address and prevent homelessness	Housing and shelter needs in each community quickly identified and addressed

## **Improve access and use of mental health and addictions services for those experiencing homelessness, with immediate priority on Chronic Homelessness to match resources with greatest needs.**

Individuals experiencing chronic homelessness often require added support to address mental health and addictions or other serious needs. Unknown in number, but a visible part of the homeless population, these people have complex needs requiring greater interventions and active coordination of services. Currently it is difficult to track individuals experiencing homelessness and connect them to specific interventions to address their unique mental health and addictions challenges. The public health challenges related to the use of illicit and non-illicit drugs and addiction among the homeless population need to be addressed in a collaborative, culturally sensitive way to reduce disease transmission and promote positive health outcomes for all individuals.

The Territorial Alcohol Strategy and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action call for governments to identify and close the gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities on several health indicators, including addictions. To close these gaps effectively the GNWT needs to recognize, at all levels, the value of cultural knowledge and Indigenous healing practices and ensure that services are delivered in ways that are Indigenous-led and developed, with cultural competency considered at all levels of service planning and provision.

People who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness may be reluctant to access health, mental health, and addictions services or are unaware of the range of supports and services available to them. Their hesitance could be due to negative past experiences that have created a justifiable lack of trust in health care providers or other people in positions of authority; a lack of trust or belief in western approaches to treatment, or frustration with expressing their concerns to new service providers every time they seek assistance. There is an important role for outreach workers and this reluctance could be addressed by ensuring that people who need services have access to supportive service navigators, continuity in service providers, and healing and wellness services that reflect their culture.

### *Solutions*

- Explore ways to add additional navigator positions, particularly outside of Yellowknife where Integrated Case Management services are not presently available. These positions should be centred around lived experience and ability to relate well with, and advocate for individuals experiencing homelessness and multiple other challenges, as much as formal qualifications.
- Create peer support roles for service users who would benefit from community links and mentoring but do not need the intensive support a navigator may provide.
- Explore having dedicated service providers that consistently provide care to shelter-based and at-risk individuals where they are most comfortable, providing continuity of care and facilitating access to wraparound care.
- Provide training in trauma informed, culturally safe and anti-racist care to all frontline service providers to ensure that service providers are equipped to provide care to individuals that avoids re-traumatizing, stereotyping or alienating service users.
- Develop integrated care:
  - Actively coordinate GNWT services
  - Develop and implement centralized referral and intake,

- Offer joint training for service providers emphasizing person-centered approaches to service and care.
- Develop shared service management,
- Offer regular individual or family contact and ongoing support.

Goal	Objectives	Inputs	Activities	Outcomes 0-6 months	6-24 months	>2 years
<p><b>Improve access and use of mental health and addictions services</b></p>	<p>Services are provided in a culturally safe, trauma informed manner</p> <p>Individuals and families are quickly matched to social, mental health, and housing services</p> <p>Services are coordinated to integrate care among providers</p>	<p>Employee availability</p> <p>Centralized intake and referrals</p> <p>Information from departments, agencies and partner organizations</p>	<p>Training for staff within GNWT and partner organizations</p> <p>Develop shared service and information sharing agreements</p> <p>Increased outreach services, regular individual or family contact, and ongoing support</p>	<p>Training needs identified</p> <p>Barriers removed to information sharing</p> <p>Required resources to improve outreach and supports identified</p> <p>Information sharing agreements finalized</p>	<p>Training rolled out to employees in GNWT and partner organizations</p> <p>Centralized intake and referral processes established</p> <p>Resources added to increase outreach, provide regular contact and ongoing support</p>	<p>All employees trained with training available as new employees hired</p> <p>By person lists used to ensure services are matched with needs</p> <p>All individuals experiencing homelessness are quickly identified and connected with services</p>

## **Ensure shelter services have appropriate resources that accurately reflect the program and service needs of their users.**

The homeless population appears to be increasing, and shelter service providers reflect that the population is changing, presenting with more complex needs. Organizations' ability and willingness to operate shelters is diminishing. While immediate and longer-term efforts are underway to address the social determinants of health that contribute to homelessness, shelter space is required throughout the NWT including shelter options outside of regional centres. Shelter capacity challenges and a lack of qualified staff are longstanding sources of concern. Recent requests for proposals to operate shelters in Yellowknife and Inuvik have gone unanswered.

Yellowknife is often seen as a collecting point. Overall attendance at Yellowknife day shelters has increased:

- August 2020: 110 unique shelter users
- February 2021: 130 unique shelter users
- January 2023: 165 unique shelter users

Between September 2022 and January 2023 there was an average of 95 unique visits per day, meaning 95 different people accessed the day shelter per day. Over the same period, there was an average of 33 daily users at the sobering centre, with the highest being 45 in January 2023 and lowest being 12 in September 2022. Two outreach nurses have a case load of 166 clients from all Yellowknife shelters, included Spruce Bough, the Women's Shelter and the day shelter and sobering centre.

Attendance at the Inuvik Homeless Shelter averaged 17 nightly users in August 2020; 12 users in February 2021 and 9 users in January 2023. There were higher numbers of individuals accessing the Inuvik Warming Shelter with an average of 28 nightly users in August 2020; 35 nightly users in February 2021 and 16 in January 2023. The Hay River Shelter was closed from January to August 2020, and both the Hay River Shelter and the Inuvik Warming Shelter were closed from May to August 2021. The Hay River Shelter was also closed in July and August 2022. The Hay River Shelter saw an average of 6 nightly users in the last quarter of 2020; an average of 6 nightly users during the eight months that it was open in 2021; 8 nightly users during the ten months it was open in 2022 and an average of 8 nightly users in January 2023.

Youth homelessness is an increasingly visible issue across Canada and the NWT. Home Base Yellowknife has a waitlist of youth in need of housing and many youth in precarious housing situations access their programs. According to *Without a Home: The National Youth Homelessness Survey*, many youth become homeless before they are 16 and youth who leave home at a younger age experience greater adversity on the streets. Limited data is available on the youth experiencing homelessness in the NWT, but youth homelessness often relates to the child welfare system, abusive family, and a history of housing instability (Gaetz et al.). Working with community partners, the GNWT may be able to help prevent chronic homelessness by developing targeted supports for youth involved with the criminal justice system and youth aging out of care.

Individuals who have experienced homelessness or who are experiencing homelessness can offer valuable insight into the programs and services they need. Similarly, remote communities know what homelessness looks like for their members, and are best positioned to help identify effective, culturally relevant solutions. Preliminary engagement with shelter providers highlighted the need to

help people across the NWT better understand the needs of community members experiencing homelessness and humanize individuals that they see in obvious need.

### *Solutions*

- Work closely with past and existing shelter operators to identify barriers and more sustainable approaches.
- Establish standards for shelters and ensure adequate funding to maintain standards with limited administrative burden on service providers.
- Provide training in person-centred approaches and integrated case management to frontline service personnel.
- Make training and support services available to shelter operators.
- Establish mechanisms for GNWT departments to collaborate in order to prioritize person-centred care when requesting social, mental health and housing support services.
- Facilitate the exchange of information on shelter mandates and demographics between community partners who operate shelters and GNWT departments to ensure that the GNWT best uses shelter resources to fill program and service gaps.
- Establish long-term funding options to improve operator sustainability starting with zero-based budgeting to help identify and address funding gaps and accurately determine the cost of addressing homelessness through shelter operation in the NWT.
- Examine solutions such as tiny homes, and other forms of low-cost housing to increase the availability of shelters by providing accessible options for individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Ensure individuals transitioning from correctional facilities are offered targeted programming in facilities and discharged into appropriate housing.
- Ensure targeted supports are available for youth, especially youth involved in the criminal justice system and youth aging out of care.
- Explore opportunities to humanize the experience of homelessness and address public concern around the creation and operation of shelters and improve community and neighbourhood acceptance of shelter location.

Goal	Objectives	Inputs	Activities	Outcomes 0-6 months	6-24 months`	>2 years
<p><b>Ensure Services have Appropriate resources</b></p>	<p>Improved capacity for community partners Consistent service standards</p>	<p>Engagement with partner organizations and communities</p>	<p>Meet with partners to review standards and identify barriers</p> <p>Make training available to partner organizations</p> <p>Share information to identify gaps and ensure best use of resources</p>	<p>Meetings held and barriers identified</p> <p>Training offered</p> <p>Gaps in services identified</p>	<p>Consistent standards developed</p> <p>Resources identified to address gaps</p>	<p>Standards applied recognizing unique needs of each community</p> <p>Greater suite of services available throughout NWT</p>

## Increase Transitional and Supportive Housing Placement options

Transitional housing provides a temporary, safe, and stable living environment for individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless. Transitional housing is designed to be a steppingstone to permanent housing, and should include supportive services, job training, and integrated case management. It helps individuals and families bridge the gap between an unsustainable living situation, such as returning from a correctional facility or addictions treatment and a stable, long term, more independent living situation. With increased availability of transitional housing longer term targets can be established to reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness.

Recently the YWCA NWT received \$17.5 million in federal funding for an expansion to Lynn's Place, now referred to as the YWCA NWT Family Housing Building, which provides transitional housing for women and children. The GNWT provided YWCA NWT a capital contribution for this project totalling \$504,000 in 2022-2023. Construction on the new, 21-unit building is underway and expected to be completed by July 2023.

The GNWT, in a joint effort between the Department of Health and Social Services and Housing NWT are planning to advance a pilot program that would see the construction of transitional housing facilities in three or four communities for clients returning from addictions treatment. As a result of an Expression of Interest issued in December 2021, Health and Social Services began working with four different communities from across the NWT on the development of transitional housing service delivery models. Three of the four service delivery models have been drafted and Health and Social Services is determining resource requirements and working to identify next steps in this process.

Transitional housing is intended to be short term, up to three years in the northern context, and does not provide any onsite medical support. Supportive housing, in contrast, is for higher acuity individuals with onsite medical support and full-time, round the clock staffing.

The Yellowknife Women's Society received \$6 million in federal funding for improvements to Spruce Bough, a 42-unit complex for at-risk men and women. Housing NWT also made a \$620,000 capital contribution to the Yellowknife Women's Society for Spruce Bough. The GNWT provides funding to Spruce Bough through supportive program elements. The goal of the programming offered at these facilities is to provide wraparound services that residents need to help rebuild their lives. Since Spruce Bough opened in April 2020, approximately 35 previous shelter users gradually transitioned from street homelessness to supported housing.

Many northern communities offer no market housing for individuals and families to potentially transition into. Some people prefer the communal and social aspects of transitional and supportive housing and feel lonely on their own. A long-term living arrangement that offers some ongoing social supports may be an appropriate resource for NWT residents who have experienced chronic homelessness and could improve their health outcomes and overall quality of life if they had a stable, semi-independent living situation.

### *Solutions*

- Determine the need and feasibility for group homes or supported living facilities in regional centres and small communities

- Increase GNWT funding available for transitional housing programs to improve community-driven solutions to address local needs.
- Improve programming in correctional facilities to develop life skills, opportunities for improved literacy, financial management and where appropriate, work experience or training.
  - Explore options for community partners to deliver targeted and culturally relevant programming in correctional facilities.
- Consider adapting current open custody space for supportive or group living for appropriate individuals.

Goal	Objectives	Inputs	Activities	Outcomes 0-6 months	6-24 months	>2 years
<b>Increase Supportive and Transitional Housing</b>	<p>More transitional and supportive housing options available</p> <p>Reduce time individuals and families wait for programs and supports</p>	Engagement with communities and partner organizations to determine need and options	<p>Meet with partners to identify funding opportunities under existing federal and territorial programs</p> <p>Encourage greater coordination and collaboration on projects</p> <p>Include new transitional housing facilities for clients returning from addictions treatment</p>	Meetings held to identify needs and options	Projects identified, funding obtained and construction of new facilities begun	Increased number of facilities created to meet functional zero goals



## **Establish Whole of Government Approach with unit focused on integrated service delivery and addressing homelessness**

The service system can be confusing and difficult to navigate, especially for residents who need to access multiple services across various departments. The way services are currently provided often does not reflect the actual needs NWT residents have. People in the NWT have been clear through years of engagement that they require culturally safe, person-centred, strengths-based, whole-person care and support from GNWT systems, and that GNWT services are not often experienced that way. Stigma, racism, and deficit-focused colonial attitudes continue to be reflected in a fragmented and confusing service experience. We have also heard that services have been created to address one *problem* at a time rather than support the whole person and healthy *outcomes* we know people want for themselves and their families.

Acknowledging these challenges, Integrated Service Delivery (ISD) aims to create a person-centered approach to service delivery in the NWT that ensures positive lifespan development, enhanced wellbeing, and thriving among individuals, families, and communities. Person-centered Service Delivery is based on the principle of equity and recognizes the person as the expert in what they need and puts them at the center of service delivery and decision making.

This Strategy envisions re-organizing existing resource to establish a unit responsible for coordinating efforts to guide a whole of government approach to changing service system. ISD is a process to fundamentally change the way the GNWT and our partners provide services by creating structures for programs to work together better to meet the needs of NWT residents. This change will require a cultural shift in service provision across the GNWT and a commitment to equity and flexibility when supporting NWT residents. We will start by integrating services to address homelessness with the objective to incorporate lessons learned and eventually branch out to further GNWT services.

ISD will create processes that will allow programs to work together better to meet the needs of community members, break down silos, reduce duplication of effort, and improve sharing of knowledge. In partnership, the GNWT, Indigenous governments, and community partners will establish integrated service delivery sites in each region where community members can access Integrated Case Management teams made up of staff from each of the partners. The teams will provide personalized case management based on the individuals self-identified needs and goals. The teams will identify barriers in the system that community members are experiencing and work to address those barriers.

### *Solutions*

- Establish integrated service delivery sites in each region, including interprofessional teams from the GNWT, Indigenous governments, community governments and non-government organizations involved in addressing homelessness.
- Establish a unit with senior management leadership and a clear mandate to lead homelessness work, integrate services across departments, identify and address policy barriers and provide a consistent contact point for partners.
  - Reprofile a portion of existing social envelope resources to help offset the incremental costs of establishing the unit.

- Advance the Integrated Service Delivery model within the GNWT with a focus on services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness as a priority population.
- Establish a support worker or pathfinder in every region to work with the new unit and other GNWT departments to help service users access appropriate social, mental health and housing supports and liaise with the unit to identify policy barriers.
- Improve complex case management to better coordinate and target services.

Goal	Objectives	Inputs	Activities	Outcomes 0-6 months	6-24 months	>2 years
<b>Establish Whole of Government Approach</b>	<p>Greater accountability for addressing homelessness established</p> <p>Integrated Service Delivery model within the GNWT implemented with initial focus on homelessness</p>	<p>Unit with a clear mandate to lead work</p> <p>Engagement across government and with partners</p>	<p>Unit established with senior management leadership</p> <p>Recruit and fill key positions with reprofiled resources where possible</p> <p>Co-locate Unit within Executive and Indigenous Affairs</p> <p>Establish regular meetings with partners and key supports within Departments and Agencies</p>	<p>Unit created with core team immediately working to advance strategy</p>	<p>Unit filled and regular reporting on strategy implementation provided</p>	<p>Lessons learned applied to broader integrated service delivery goals within the GNWT</p>

## **Address policies that create barriers to housing and strengthen policy efforts to address and prevent homelessness**

The focus of this Strategy is to address the needs of individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness, but people often face barriers related to policy and government silos when trying to access social, mental health and housing supports at any point of need. Actions to reduce policy barriers can help address chronic homelessness and prevent homelessness for individuals and families at risk.

A data-informed, coordinated suite of policies is required to make GNWT efforts to address homelessness effectively. Policy development, monitoring and evaluation are important to the mandate of a unit dedicated to advancing integrated service delivery and addressing homelessness. The unit would have a coordinating function in working to address policy barriers and shifting the siloed approach to social, mental health and housing programs and services.

The GNWT, represented by Housing NWT continues to work with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to highlight the need for an ongoing subsidy program for affordability in the private rental market. Housing NWT also has a number of supports for homeowners who need financial assistance with repairs and maintenance, and one-time emergency homelessness prevention measures.

Housing NWT is in the process of renewing several policies that are intended to improve relationships with clients and strengthen efforts to address and prevent homelessness. These include:

- Increasing the number of points allocated to people experiencing homelessness when determining the priority for housing allocation, which increases priority for allocation if a home is available. This change will become effective April 1, 2023.
- Changing the “Eligible Tenant” policy so that if a former tenant applies for public housing and can demonstrate they have made an effort to address the factors that led to their eviction they may still be eligible for public housing.
- Developing a new, plain language tenant handbook and tenancy agreement that more effectively communicate the obligations associated with being a public housing tenant and help avoid evictions.
- More support for housing stability programming to prevent homelessness, including a pilot program in several communities in 2023-2024 modeled on British Columbia’s “Rent Smart” program that helps individuals and families maintain their tenancy.
- Changing the approach to evictions to replace the “Last Chance Agreement” with a “Tenant Success Plan” so that even if a person is not currently suited to public housing, Housing NWT would take a more person-centered approach, making referrals to other programs or services.

The Income Assistance program, administered by the Department of Education, Culture, and Employment, is also undergoing program review. The Department is proposing to divide the program in two, to focus one aspect of the program on seniors and persons with disabilities and the other to focus on adults aged 19 to 59. Other changes include removing the requirement to participate in a productive choice, benefits to be aligned with the Northern Market Basket Measure, increasing earned and unearned income exemptions, increasing accessibility by removing barriers

and reducing administration for clients, service providers and staff. The goal of both Income Assistance programs will be to ensure residents can develop greater financial security. Both Housing NWT and Education, Culture and Employment based their proposed changes on community and stakeholder engagement.

*Solutions*

- Continue to advance and assess the effectiveness of Housing NWT renewal initiatives.
- Monitor the impact of the Income Assistance Review and related policy changes on access to housing.
- Schedule continued engagement with people who are clients of Housing NWT and Income Assistance to review the impact of policy changes on housing and homelessness.
- Identify common, persistent policy barriers and options to address them.
- Consider offering mobile Income Assistance services in youth shelters for eligible clients.
- Promote skill development in financial literacy and occupant responsibilities.
- Offer hands-on basic maintenance training for homeowners.

Goal	Objectives	Inputs	Activities	Outcomes 0-6 months	6-24 months	>2 years
<b>Address policies that create barriers to housing and strengthen policy efforts to address and prevent homelessness</b>	<p>Policy barriers to accessing social, mental health and housing supports addressed.</p> <p>Joint policies between departments established.</p>	<p>Unit with a clear mandate to lead work</p> <p>Engagement across government and with partners to identify most common policy barriers.</p>	<p>Advance and assess the effectiveness of Housing NWT renewal and policy changes associated with Income Assistance review.</p> <p>Policy barriers addressed at regular meetings at all levels and addressed by Child and Family Deputy Ministers' and Committee-of-Cabinet.</p>	<p>Unit created with policy development and coordination included in its mandate.</p>	<p>Policy barriers identified and options for revision advanced to Deputy Ministers' and Ministers' Committees.</p> <p>Joint policy-making between departments.</p>	<p>Implement policy changes and monitor their effectiveness.</p>

## Increase the stock of affordable housing

In Canada, housing is considered “affordable” if it costs less than 30% of a household’s before-tax income. “Affordable housing” includes housing provided by the private, public, and non-profit sectors, affordable, safe and accessible housing and all forms of tenure: rental, ownership and co-operative ownership, temporary and permanent housing. Lack of affordable housing adds to the challenge of moving people in supportive or transitional housing into affordable housing and puts low-income individuals and families at risk of homelessness. The lack of affordable housing is a complex issue that is influenced by a variety of factors such as income, employment, and housing market conditions.

Development and construction costs as well as costs to maintain a home in the NWT have always been above the national average. Statistics Canada’s Residential Building Construction Price Index shows a national average increase of approximately 50 percent in the cost of residential construction 2019 to current driven initially by COVID-19 impacts and continuing due to supply-chain disruptions, labour shortages and geopolitical pressures. These impacts have significantly increased the cost of construction in the NWT.

Housing NWT estimates that an additional \$300 million in capital investments and \$18 million in ongoing annual costs, properly invested, is needed to support NWT households in core need. Additionally, an investment of more than \$1 billion over the next 20 years is required to fully maintain Housing NWT’s capital investment in public housing; an additional \$38 million is needed to address current priority repairs and \$172 million to replace aging infrastructure. Housing NWT is committed to working toward a clearer picture to demonstrate to the federal government the level of investment required to adequately house all NWT residents. That represents a total of approximately \$1.5 billion in housing infrastructure needs.

Housing NWT has also identified the potential for some homeownership clients to take over older public housing units. Housing NWT could expand the total number of units available in a community if some current clients take tenure of older housing stock, and Housing NWT builds more public housing units in the community. Based on this idea, Housing NWT has implemented new programs to support homeownership. Both the Homeownership Initiative and Home Purchase Program have helped Housing NWT make progress on its commitment to transition 100 families or individuals into home ownership.

Housing NWT, with support from the federal government is currently delivering a hundred new public housing units which will be additions to the current asset base. These units are being delivered in communities outside of Yellowknife, increasing the number of affordable units in the communities.

Additionally, the current federal government is flowing funding directly to Indigenous governments to develop housing for their beneficiaries. The GNWT will continue to work with Indigenous governments and external organizations such as the federal government to increase affordable housing options.

### *Solutions*

- Adopt the Canadian definition of affordable housing, as stated above: housing that costs less than 30% of a household’s before-tax income.
- Make government owned land more readily available for public/affordable housing
- Create inventory of available land in communities.
- Incentivize more housing cooperatives
- Examine the potential for Community Land Trusts
- Engage developers to identify development barriers
- Promote jobs in the trades and address other labour market barriers to affordable housing.
- The GNWT is already increasing the availability of public housing and providing subsidies for low-income renters and homeowners. Work must continue with Indigenous governments and external organizations to increase affordable housing options.
- Continue to engage with CMHC and the federal government on long-term solutions to northern housing needs.

Goal	Objectives	Inputs	Activities	Outcomes 0-6 months	6-24 months`	>2 years
<b>Increase Stock of Affordable Housing</b>	Mitigate the risk of people becoming homeless with more affordable housing and make it easier for persons to find affordable housing options	Engagement across governments, the private sector, and partnership organizations	<p>Establish consistent Affordable Housing definition</p> <p>Increase points allocated to people experiencing homelessness to determine housing allocation priority</p> <p>Create inventory of land available in communities</p> <p>Make government owned land more readily available for affordable/public housing</p> <p>Incentivize more housing cooperatives</p>	Meetings held with governments and partners, and options identified	<p>More housing developments occurring with targets established throughout the territory</p> <p>Regular meetings occurring</p>	Housing affordability measurably improved in all communities

			Engage developers to identify barriers			
			Engage Indigenous Government partners to align housing initiatives			
			Engage CMHC and federal government on long term solutions			

## **Improve methods of collecting, sharing and analyzing client information and data**

Consistent data collection, sharing and use of health information are required to assess the scope and nature of homelessness in the NWT and effective of interventions. Policy makers need data that tells the story of individuals and families experiencing homelessness and informs how to effectively fill gaps, improve policies, and design programs and services, evaluate the long-term impact of interventions and identify areas for improvement. Service providers across all organizations need current, data-driven information on best practices and effective interventions. Service providers are often forced to choose between providing services to their clients and completing documentation necessary for data collection. Key areas have been identified where data is needed such as:

- Mental health needs among the NWT's homeless population.
- Trends in the homeless population over time and individuals and families with recurring homelessness and evictions.
- Where individuals go after they leave shelters or where individuals go when they have been restricted from shelters for violent behaviour or active substance use.
- How many people live in tents for part of the year because they have no other options.
- Community-level homelessness outside of Yellowknife.
- Youth homelessness.
- The concurrence of seasonal work, chronic health problems, addictions, family violence, involvement with child and family services and homelessness.
- Factors contributing to solutions and individuals' and families' success in obtaining stable, long-term housing.

This Strategy itself should also be subject to periodic review to ensure it reflects ever-evolving social realities, changes to programs and services and progress toward meeting objectives. This Strategy will be updated every three years from the year it is finalized.

### *Solutions*

- Establish robust, simplified, and standardized informed consent processes and controls for use of data and information sharing.
- Implement information sharing agreements between GNWT service providers for the sharing of client information to facilitate access to programs and services.
- Establish a process for people who opt out of this approach or do not provide consent.
- Develop a centralized "by person list" to track individuals and families and link them with available services.
- Prioritize gaps in information needed to design and evaluate programs.
- Monitor individuals' and families' progress in access to housing.
- Monitor the effectiveness of homelessness services and reallocate funds to programs with best outcomes.
- Regularly review and update the GNWT Homelessness Strategy.



Goal	Objectives	Inputs	Activities	Outcomes 0-6 months	6-24 months`	>2 years
<b>Improve Data Collection</b>	<p>Allow for greater coordination of services and increased program evaluation</p> <p>Trends and needs are monitored and addressed through program planning</p>	Engagement across government and partner organizations	<p>Establish data sharing agreements and consent processes for clients</p> <p>Monitor progress of individual's and families' access to housing</p> <p>Continually evaluate programs and services</p>	Data sharing and standardized informed consent processes set up.	System established to monitor client progress in access to services and housing	Functional zero goals supported with robust data availability

## Concluding Comments

Effectively addressing homelessness in the NWT requires a different approach. Shelter is a fundamental human need. Only once a person's basic needs for food, clothing and shelter are met can they begin to realize their potential in other essential aspects of life. Addressing the root causes of homelessness requires sustained collaboration, cooperation and the meaningful, inclusive participation of Indigenous Governments, NGO's, communities, and people who have or who are experiencing homelessness. It requires the GNWT to move away from program-centric thinking and behaviours to person-centred service delivery that considers the whole picture of individuals' and families' needs. It requires commitment to ongoing effort that may in some cases, only produce small, incremental positive change, especially at first. Nonetheless, it requires continuing to offer services that prove effective and continual engagement, learning and adaptation. The ambitious and worthy goal of functional zero homelessness in NWT communities and the actions presented in this Strategy are a step in this direction.

This draft Strategy is a living document. It will be subject to further review immediately after its release and ongoing review in the future. We gratefully acknowledge the organizations that provided input on the preliminary draft and who have been involved in recent related GNWT consultations, including the work undertaken by the Standing Committee on Social Development, and consultation on Integrated Service Delivery. We look forward to receiving further feedback from stakeholders and the general public prior to releasing a final Strategy.

## APPENDICES

### Summary of Existing Funding Sources Directly Attributable to Homelessness

The chart below demonstrates how multiple departments and agencies provide funding to various program and service areas intended to address homelessness.

Department/Division	Description	Notes
DOJ - Courts	Transitional housing supports for Wellness Court clients. A contract is in place for two beds at the Bailey House in Yellowknife for male clients and a contract is being finalized with the Yellowknife Women's Society for one bed for female clients.	Funding to be Identified
DOJ - Corrections	Transitional housing supports for Therapeutic Community clients, offender temporary absences from correctional facilities and/or the provision of short-term support while longer-term solutions are finalized. There is a contract in place for two beds at the Bailey House in Yellowknife.	Funding to be Identified
DOJ – Integrated Case Management Demonstration Site	Currently, 54% (199/370) of Integrated Case Management clients have experienced or are experiencing homelessness.	Funding to be Identified
NTHSSA	Budget for Day Shelter and Sobering Centre	<p>The combined budget of the Sobering Centre and Day Shelter is comprised of ongoing funding and funding ending March 2023.</p> <p>The NTHSSA is forecasting a budget shortfall for 2022-23.</p> <p>Temporary shelter required until opening of permanent Wellness</p>

		and Recovery Centre (estimated 2026).
NTHSSA & HRHSSA	Annual Support for Shelters in YK, HR, and Inuvik	Funding to be Identified
NTHSSA	Side Door Emergency Youth Shelter (ages 12-18)	Funding to be Identified
NTHSSA	Side Door Youth in Transition Housing	Transitional housing for youth experiencing homelessness
NTHSSA	Side Door Specialized Support	Specialized beds for youth with complex needs and experiencing homelessness
NTHSSA	Salvation Army (Transitional Housing - Bailey House)  YWCA-Lynn's Place- Providing Stability and Services for Families (YK)	Funding to be Identified
HSS	Funding for the Support of Managed Alcohol at Spruce Bough	Federal funding expiring 2024
Housing NWT	Emergency Shelters: Inuvik Salvation Army Hay River Shelter Village of Ft. Simpson YWCA YK Women's Society	Additional funding added in supp. Expected shortfall for 2023.  Fort Smith requested funding for shelter.
Housing NWT	Various Funds (non-shelter) Homelessness Assistance Housing First Northern Pathways to Housing Rapid Rehousing Shelter Enhancement Small Comm. Homelessness Fund	Not clear how much is federal flow through

## Homelessness and Integrated Service Delivery Unit

**Mandate:** Provide leadership, improve accountability, and offer a single point of contact for organizations outside the GNWT collaboration on homelessness.

**Role:** Collaborate with the GNWT social envelope departments, other GNWT departments and community partners as required.

Provide governance structure for implementing coordinated access, advancing integrated service delivery, addressing policy barriers with GNWT, and coordinating frontline services to the homeless.

**Functions:** Communication, interdepartmentally and externally.

Program design and evaluation, including research, training, analytics, and assessment.

Program delivery, including quality assurance and financial oversight.

**Description:**

The Homelessness Unit will be attached to the Department of the Executive and Indigenous Affairs and report to the Minister Responsible for Homelessness. This arrangement is like that which currently provides policy support to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women and is intended to avoid potential conflict that might exist between other GNWT departments and agencies with the Homelessness Unit Mandate.

The Homelessness Unit will be led by an Assistant Deputy Minister, who will report to the Minister Responsible for Homelessness, provide oversight and direction to the Unit, participate in relevant interdepartmental committees and working groups, and support the Minister and represent the GNWT in interprovincial and federal partnerships and initiatives.

Reporting to the Assistant Deputy Minister will be a total of 18 to 20 employees, working with two teams:

A program evaluation and design team will be tasked with, research, analysis and assessment of policy, programs, and services, as well as development of training materials for frontline service providers. Best practice incorporates program evaluation with program design. This team will also support quality assurance initiatives and change management efforts.

A person-centered services team will advance the integrated services delivery model and lead the coordination of frontline services to the homeless. This team will advocate and promote a multi-departmental approach that provides better

coordination of services for individuals and families experiencing homelessness and work with program evaluation and design to ensure practical solutions to existing policy and program barriers. The person-centered services team will also provide advocacy for individuals and families experiencing homelessness at the front line, by working directly with other front-line service providers to match services to needs.

Staffing: It is a priority to build the Homelessness Unit with minimal cost to the GNWT.

A scan of GNWT organizational charts and job descriptions reveals a number of existing divisions, units, and positions that describe the roles, responsibilities, and competencies required within the Homelessness Unit. The Integrated Case Management Team, including the Territorial Director for Integrated Service Delivery will be moved from the Department of Justice to the Homelessness Unit. It is possible other existing positions within social envelope departments and agencies may also be transferred.

Those Homelessness Unit positions that cannot be found through transfer of similar positions from elsewhere, may be developed through transfer and reprofiling of non-essential FTEs from across the entire GNWT that have either been vacant for a prolonged period or are chronically vacant.

### Homelessness Strategy Draft Logic Model

Goal	Objectives	Inputs	Activities	Outcomes		
				0-6 months	6-24 months`	>2 years
<b>Establish Functional Zero Goals for all Communities</b>	Goals set for all communities	System capacity measured; gaps identified	Communities and service providers engaged	Meetings held and inventory of needs for each community established  Communities and partners engaged to set manageable number of homeless	Goals set for each community to reduce homelessness  Coordinated Entry System begins to be implemented	Homelessness is rare and brief in each community  Resources for shelters are moved to other supports
<b>Support Community Partnerships</b>	Regular partnership meetings	Partners availability	Partners engaged to establish meeting schedules	Meetings set with available partners	Regular meetings occurring with coordination of efforts occurring	Meetings among ISD Regional Sites; create a Community of Practice
	Contracted support services available and aligned with needs	Program inventory  Engagement with partners	Inventory of programs reviewed including offerings from current operators	Current programming identified	Changes to programs identified as required to match needs	Changes to programs implemented as required to match needs
	Program evaluation improved	Program goals and objectives, program documentation and stakeholder engagement	Create evaluation team to undertake planning, data collection and partner engagement	Team established and initial plans complete	Data collected, engagement conducted and periodic recommendations related to programs provided	Programs regularly evaluated and adjusted to optimize services and improve results

	Housing and shelter needs and program gaps in capacity identified	Program inventory  Engagement with partners	Partner meetings and collaboration with dedicated team  Reports on existing capacity and gaps in each community	Meetings and inventory of shelter needs conducted	Business plans and budgets adjusted to better meet identified needs  Standing Committee engagement on strategies to address and prevent homelessness	Housing and shelter needs in each community quickly identified and addressed
<b>Improve access and use of mental health and addictions services</b>	Services are provided in a culturally safe, trauma informed manner	Employee availability	Training for staff within GNWT and partner organizations  Develop shared service and information sharing agreements	Training needs identified  Barriers removed to information sharing	Training rolling out to employees in GNWT and partner organizations  Centralized intake and referral processes established	All employees trained with training available as new employees hired
	Individuals and families are quickly matched to social, mental health, and housing services	Centralized intake and referrals	Increased outreach services, regular individual or family contact, and ongoing support	Required resources to improve outreach and supports identified	Resources added to increase outreach, provide regular contact and ongoing support	By person lists used to ensure services are matched with needs
	Services are coordinated to integrate care among providers	Information from departments, agencies and partner organizations		Information sharing agreements finalized		All individuals experiencing homelessness are quickly identified and connected with services
<b>Ensure Services have Appropriate resources</b>	Improved capacity for community partners	Engagement with partner organizations and communities	Meet with partners to review standards and identify barriers	Meetings held and barriers identified	Consistent standards developed	Standards applied recognizing unique needs of each community
	Consistent service standards		Make training available to partner organizations	Training offered  Gaps in services identified	Resources identified to address gaps	Greater suite of services available throughout NWT



			Share information to identify gaps and ensure best use of resources			
<b>Increase Supportive and Transitional Housing</b>	<p>More transitional and supportive housing options available</p> <p>Reduce time individuals and families wait for programs and supports</p>	Engagement with communities and partner organizations to determine need and options	<p>Meet with partners to identify funding opportunities under existing federal and territorial programs</p> <p>Encourage greater coordination and collaboration on projects</p> <p>Include new transitional housing facilities for clients returning from addictions treatment</p>	Meetings held to identify needs and options	Projects identified, funding obtained, and construction of new facilities begun	Increased number of facilities created to meet functional zero goals
<b>Establish Whole of Government Approach</b>	<p>Greater accountability for addressing homelessness established</p> <p>Integrated Service Delivery model within the GNWT implemented with initial focus on homelessness</p>	<p>Unit with a clear mandate to lead work</p> <p>Engagement across government and with partners</p>	<p>Unit established with senior management leadership</p> <p>Recruit and fill key positions with reprofiled resources where possible</p> <p>Co-locate Unit within Executive and Indigenous Affairs</p> <p>Establish regular meetings with partners and key supports</p>	Unit created with core team immediately working to advance strategy	Unit filled and regular reporting on strategy implementation provided	Lessons learned applied to broader integrated service delivery goals within the GNWT

			within Departments and Agencies			
<b>Address policies that create barriers to housing and strengthen policy efforts to address and prevent homelessness</b>	<p>Policy barriers to accessing social, mental health and housing supports addressed.</p> <p>Joint policies between departments established.</p>	<p>Unit with a clear mandate to lead work</p> <p>Engagement across government and with partners to identify most common policy barriers.</p>	<p>Advance and assess the effectiveness of Housing NWT renewal and policy changes associated with Income Assistance review.</p> <p>Policy barriers addressed at regular meetings at all levels and addressed by Child and Family Deputy Ministers' and Committee-of-Cabinet.</p>	<p>Unit created with policy development and coordination included in its mandate.</p>	<p>Policy barriers identified and options for revision advanced to Deputy Ministers' and Ministers' Committees.</p> <p>Joint policy-making between departments.</p>	<p>Implement policy changes and monitor their effectiveness.</p>
<b>Increase Stock of Affordable Housing</b>	<p>Mitigate the risk of people becoming homeless with more affordable housing and make it easier for persons to find affordable housing options</p>	<p>Engagement across governments, the private sector, and partnership organizations</p>	<p>Establish consistent Affordable Housing definition</p> <p>Increase points allocated to people experiencing homelessness to determine housing allocation priority</p> <p>Create inventory of land available in communities.</p> <p>Make government owned land more readily available for affordable/public housing</p> <p>Incentivize more housing cooperatives</p>	<p>Meetings held with governments and partners, and options identified</p>	<p>More housing developments occurring with targets established throughout the territory</p> <p>Regular meetings occurring</p>	<p>Housing affordability measurably improved in all communities</p>

			<p>Engage developers to identify barriers</p> <p>Engage Indigenous Government partners to align housing initiatives</p> <p>Engage CMHC and federal government on long term solutions</p>			
<p><b>Improve Data Collection</b></p>	<p>Allow for greater coordination of services and increased program evaluation</p> <p>Trends and needs are monitored and addressed through program planning</p>	<p>Engagement across government and partner organizations</p>	<p>Establish data sharing agreements and consent processes for clients</p> <p>Monitor progress of individual's and families access to housing</p> <p>Continually evaluate programs and services</p>	<p>Data sharing and standardized informed consent processes set up.</p>	<p>System established to monitor client progress in access to services and housing</p>	<p>Functional zero goals supported with robust data availability</p>

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