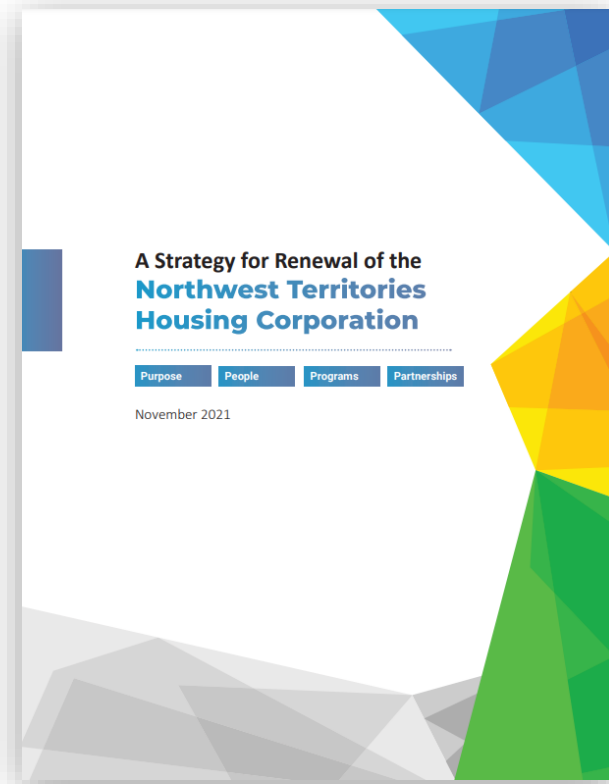


Housing NWT Renewal – Policy & Program Review Action Update

June 1, 2023



INTRODUCTION

Housing NWT’s program and policy review is part of the strategic renewal of Housing NWT set out in [A Strategy for Renewal of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation](#). The review arose from a political commitment from Premier Cochrane and Minister Chinna made to the NWT Council of Leaders (COL) on June 11, 2021 to conduct a joint review of Housing NWT programs and policies with a COL Housing Working Group (‘Working Group’) established for that purpose.

In Fall 2021, the review began with input from staff and the Working Group on changes to Housing NWT’s mandate, guided in part by a March 2021 motion of the Legislative Assembly entitled “[Actions for Improved Housing Outcomes](#)” and the Northwest Territories [Ombud Special Report 01-2021](#) “Fairness in Homeowner Assistance Programs”. In January 2022, the resulting new [Housing NWT mandate](#), consisting of a Mission, Values, and Vision, was issued.

Forty-one proposed changes to Housing NWT’s programs, policies, and approaches were identified based on discussion with the Working Group, Local Housing Organizations, evaluation of past reports including [Voices on Housing](#), and other sources including the [Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls calls for Justice and the 2022 Anti-Poverty Roundtable What We Heard Report](#). The proposed changes were evaluated through the lens of the new mandate and its animating values of client focus, collaboration, accountability, innovation, reconciliation, and sustainability.

The forty-one proposed changes were approved as actions in November 2022. Further engagement with the Standing Committee on Social Development led to the addition of a forty-second action (#18 below), a ban on smoking in Housing NWT owned or administered residential rental units.

As of June 1, 2023, all of the actions arising from the program and policy review are well underway. Five of the forty-two actions have been subject to moderate delay. While this update reflects a point-in-time status of policy and programming changes resulting from this review, it does not reflect the many further changes, small and large, that continue at Housing NWT. Housing NWT’s new mandate includes a commitment to continue to improve and innovate. These demonstrate a beginning to that commitment.

GENERAL

	Action	Mandate Values	Original Timeline	Current Status
1.	Re-establish appeal path for Housing NWT decisions, with independent appeal committee as final step	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability • Fairness 	April 1, 2023	<p>Complete</p> <p>Appeal process has been re-established and heard its first appeal on November 4, 2022</p> <p>Further consideration is being given to the possibility of a legislated appeals process (see action 4 below).</p>
2.	Establish on-going venue for collaboration between Housing NWT & Indigenous Governments on housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability • Collaboration • Reconciliation 	Depended on option selected	<p>Complete</p> <p>NWT Housing Forum Terms of Reference agreed upon April 17, 2023, inaugural meeting scheduled for June 9, 2023.</p> <p>NWT Housing Forum is Co-Chaired by an Indigenous Government and Housing NWT, will meet four times a year with an in-person Housing Symposium hosted every two years.</p>
3.	Change name of corporation from Northwest Territories Housing Corporation to Housing Northwest Territories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All values 	April 1, 2023	<p>Complete</p> <p>Amendment to Housing Northwest Territories Act in effect April 1, 2023.</p>

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4.	Substantive Amendments to <i>Housing Northwest Territories Act</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All values 	20 th Legislative Assembly	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>List of possible changes collected during renewal process, further input will be reviewed and augmented with NWT Housing Forum and stakeholder input and developed into a Legislative Proposal early in the life of the 20th Legislative Assembly.</p>
5.	Changes to Housing NWT's STEP (Solutions to Educate People) courses on home ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Client Focus 	April 1, 2023	<p>Delayed – Ongoing</p> <p>More comprehensive changes underway to re-name program, reconsider exceptions/equivalencies, and make program more broadly available. Use of interactive digital format being considered. Revised target April 2024.</p>
6.	Share potential opportunities to provide market housing at a profit with Indigenous Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration Reconciliation 	April 1, 2023 and ongoing	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Letter of invitation from Minister to Indigenous Governments, with community fact sheets, issued May 4, 2023</p>
7.	Facilitate transition from appointed housing authority boards to community-established housing associations for interested communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration Reconciliation Accountability 	April 1, 2023 and ongoing	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Housing NWT has invited discussions and has received interest from more than one community.</p>

	Action	Mandate Values	Original Timeline	Current Status
8.	Increase engagement with Indigenous Governments and LHOs on the design and location of housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration • Reconciliation 	Fall 2022	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Housing NWT will continue to take steps to consistently and systematically engage communities on the design and location of units, in collaboration with Indigenous Governments. Several design charettes were held in 2022-23 and planned for 23-24.</p>
9.	Providing more systematic, universal training and instruction for Local Housing Organization staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration • Accountability 	In progress	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Further consideration is being given to possible online/in-person programs for LHO Managers, Tenant Relations Officers and Maintenance Managers. Orientation checklists are being developed. The LHO Manager training plan is being updated and the Tenant Relations Officer and Maintenance Manager plans are being developed.</p>
10.	Review of adequacy of funding formula for Local Housing Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability • Collaboration 	In progress	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>In 2022-23 & 2023-24, LHOs are receiving funding adjustments totalling more than \$1.3 million. Housing NWT is committed to an ongoing annual assessment of LHO funding requirements in conjunction with the GNWT's annual business planning process.</p>

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11.	Improve communication between Local Housing Organizations and all levels of Housing NWT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconciliation • Client Focus 	TBD	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Initiated during Renewal process consultations in 2022. Once-a-year face-to-face meetings between all 24 LHO board Chairs, Managers, Minister, and Housing NWT senior management reinstated in 2022 after a pause attributable to COVID-19. More systematic communication between District Offices and LHOs established. An internal communication plan to facilitate the flow of information between the different branches of Housing NWT (Headquarters, District Offices and LHOs) has been developed and is in the initial stages of implementation.</p>
12.	Begin collection of data on Indigenous self-identification of Housing NWT clients to better understand impacts of programing and promote collaboration with federal and Indigenous Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconciliation • Client Focus 	April 1, 2023	<p>Delayed - Ongoing</p> <p>Work initiated. General support from Indigenous Governments but cautions have been expressed regarding protection of personal information.</p> <p>Federal government has expressed an interest in this data in aggregated form. Implementation of this action will continue to be a subject matter for discussion at the NWT Housing Forum.</p>

	Action	Mandate Values	Original Timeline	Current Status
13.	Determining and supporting Indigenous Government preference on Community Housing Planning approach rather than requiring the completion of a Community Housing Plan for every NWT community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration • Reconciliation 	Upon Approval	<p>Complete and Ongoing</p> <p>A revised, more flexible Housing NWT approach has been implemented. Community Housing Plan Policy</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>Supporting Gwich'in Tribal Council development of Community Development Plans</p> <p>Supporting Tłıchǫ Government consideration of an integrated regional approach to Community Housing Planning</p>
14.	Prioritize formal and informal partnership with Indigenous Governments on housing, facilitate progress toward self-government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration • Reconciliation 	On-going	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>Tłıchǫ Government MOU May 2022 Sahtu Secretariat Inc. MOA August 2022 Délıne Got'ine Government MOU February 2023</p> <p>Inaugural meeting of NWT Housing Forum June 2023</p> <p>Other formal and informal arrangements under development.</p>

	Action	Mandate Values	Original Timeline	Current Status
15.	Transition to an integrated asset management approach to improve maintenance responsiveness and to extend useable life of assets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability • Accountability 	Develop Plan 2023-24 Implement Plan 2024-25	Ongoing Housing NWT continues to enhance the Asset Management framework. This work includes review and modernization of current practices, evaluation of maintenance management systems, adoption of digital platforms for building assessments, and enhanced training, support, and capacity building for LHOs.
16.	Develop and implement an Environmental Management Program (EMP), to help Housing NWT effectively manage environmental liabilities to ensure safe housing and regulatory compliance at all stages of asset life ending with disposal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability • Accountability 	Develop EMP 2023-24 Implement EMP 2024-25	Ongoing Housing NWT has completed spill response training for frontline technical staff, provided spill kits for all LHOs in the NWT and is replacing up to 400 aged fuel tanks over the term of the 19th Legislative Assembly. Housing NWT's EMP will form part of the Asset Management framework enhancements outlined in Action #15.

	Action	Mandate Values	Original Timeline	Current Status
17.	Develop systematic approach to energy management, with a Housing NWT-specific Energy Management Strategy and Action Plan that aligns with the GNWT's overall Climate Change Strategic Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability • Collaboration • Innovation 	Underway, target date March 2023	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Draft Housing NWT Energy Management Strategy released for public input in January 2023.</p> <p>Feedback from Indigenous Government and public engagement will inform the finalization of the <i>Energy Management Strategy</i> and draft the <i>Energy Management Blueprint (3-year Action Plan)</i>.</p> <p>A <i>What We Heard Report</i> will be released with the Strategy and Blueprint and the package is expected to be publicly released in June 2023.</p> <p>Housing NWT is supporting actions outlined in the blueprint with planned investments of up to \$2.5 million in energy projects in 2023-2024.</p>
18.	Establish ban on smoking in Housing NWT owned or operating residential rental accommodations (New Action added after consultation with MLAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client Focus • Fairness 	<p>New Action</p> <p>Commitment to make substantial progress during remaining term of 19th Assembly</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Housing NWT is developing a joint approach with the Department of Health & Social Services.</p> <p>Input will be sought from the NWT Housing Forum.</p>

PUBLIC HOUSING

	Action	Mandate Values	Original Timeline	Current Status
19.	Policy change to require that both members of an adult couple be listed as tenants in a public housing unit to reduce pattern of female caregiving tenant being left with responsibility for rental arrears	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairness • Accountability • Client Focus • Sustainability 	April 1, 2023	<p>Complete</p> <p>LHOs are empowered to provide exemption from the requirement in exceptional situations.</p>
20.	Maintain community-based residency requirements established by LHOs, subject to conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconciliation • Accountability 	Upon Approval	<p>Complete</p> <p>Maximum residency requirement of one year for <i>Charter</i> consistency.</p> <p>LHOs required to seek input from community Indigenous Governments on future changes to a residency requirement.</p> <p>LHO community residency requirement must contain an exception to allow access to treatment for a documented medical issue or disability, or family violence issue.</p>
21.	Eliminate “rent acceleration” policy (reverting to charging unsubsidized or full rent) for the period of time a person remains in public housing after a Tenancy Agreement has been terminated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairness • Accountability • Client Focus 	Upon Approval	<p>Complete</p>

	Action	Mandate Values	Original Timeline	Current Status
22.	Establish “Tenant Success Plan” approach to replace unsuccessful “Last Chance Agreement” approach to maintaining tenancies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client Focus • Fairness • Accountability 	April 1, 2023	<p>Complete</p> <p>LHOs will not apply for termination of a tenancy until all steps in a Tenant Success Plan have been completed, subject to need for expedited evictions as provided for in the Residential Tenancies Act.</p>
23.	Revise Termination & Eviction Policy with focus on educating tenants on their rights and obligations, offering supports and referrals aimed at maintaining tenancy, and empowering LHOs with eviction follow-through in those cases where efforts are not successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairness • Accountability • Client Focus 	April 1, 2023	<p>Complete</p> <p>Revised Termination and Eviction Policy in effect.</p>
24.	Establish opt-in pilot program to build credit rating of public housing tenants based on reporting successful rent payments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client Focus • Accountability • Innovation 	April 1, 2023	<p>Delayed - Ongoing</p> <p>Pilot program under development with third-party vendor Front Lobby. Fort Resolution and Inuvik have been selected as pilot communities. Program anticipated to launch Summer 2023.</p>
25.	Updated Public Housing Rent Scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting those most in need • Fairness • Client Focus • Accountability • Sustainability 	20 th Assembly	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>This work will align with the homeownership income thresholds (Action #40).</p> <p>Housing NWT approach will be a subject for further discussion at the NWT Housing Forum.</p> <p>Data is being collected from Bureau of Statistics and CMHC to determine housing affordability.</p>

	Action	Mandate Values	Original Timeline	Current Status
26.	Update income thresholds that determine who qualifies for public housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting those most in need Fairness Client Focus Accountability Reconciliation 	April 1, 2023	<p>Delayed - Ongoing</p> <p>Work will align public housing core income thresholds with the home ownership core income thresholds (Action #40).</p> <p>Strong interest in this discussion from Indigenous Governments, specifically, in ensuring that thresholds accurately reflect community cost of living differentials. Interest in a single unified core income threshold for Housing NWT programming. Housing NWT approach will be a subject for further discussion at the NWT Housing Forum.</p> <p>Data is being collected from Bureau of Statistics and CMHC to determine housing affordability.</p>
27.	Update and modernize point rating system (determines allocation priority on housing wait list) to better reflect Housing NWT mandate and GNWT priorities including addressing chronic homelessness and prioritizing victims of violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting those most in need Fairness Client Focus Accountability Reconciliation 	April 1, 2023	<p>Complete</p> <p>New point rating system implemented beginning April 1, 2023.</p> <p>Framework for Assessing if an Applicant is Eligible for Social Factor Points</p>
28.	Work with Department of Education, Culture & Employment to find an alternative to existing requirement to be on public housing waitlist to access income assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Client Focus Accountability 	In progress	<p>In Progress</p> <p>Interdepartmental discussions are underway and linked with discussions on harmonizing GNWT housing-related supports.</p>

	Action	Mandate Values	Original Timeline	Current Status
29.	Increase focus on promoting tenant readiness for public housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accountability Client Focus Sustainability Innovation 	<p>April 1, 2023 (Eligibility Policy)</p> <p>On Approval (Transitional Programs)</p>	<p>Complete - new Tenant Eligibility Policy replaced the previous “Unacceptable Tenant Policy”.</p> <p>In Progress - Work is underway to develop a housing readiness and tenant education program, using an online interactive platform.</p> <p>Consideration being given to a transitional home design, using a collaborative design approach, with features including greater resiliency to tenant damage.</p>
30.	Develop a pilot program to allow licensed childcare in public housing units, in collaboration with Education, Culture & Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accountability Client Focus Fairness 	April 1, 2023	<p>Complete</p> <p>Licensed Child Care Facility in Public Housing two-year pilot project came into effect in 9 non-market NWT communities and will be evaluated at the end of its term.</p>
31.	Develop plain language Tenant Orientation Handbook describing tenant rights, obligations, basic information in relation to their units, and numbers to call for assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Client Focus Reconciliation 	In progress	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Working in collaboration with the NWT Literacy Council, a draft handbook is being finalized and expected to be released later in 2023. Indigenous language supports will be considered as necessary.</p>

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32.	Develop new Community Housing Service Agreement template in collaboration with Local Housing Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration • Accountability 	20 th Assembly	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Information collected during Housing NWT’s engagement with LHOs during the renewal process will form the foundation for additional engagement and collaborative development of a template beginning in 2024</p>
33.	Increase Housing NWT presence in communities without Local Housing Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client Focus • Collaboration 	April 1, 2023	<p>Delayed - Ongoing</p> <p>Housing NWT continues monitoring to ensure that communities without LHOs receive a reasonably comparable level of public housing services.</p> <p>A review of Housing NWT’s existing organizational structure to align with renewal-related changes will inform a longer term response to this action.</p> <p>The program division met with the Government Service Officers (GSOs) during their annual training to present on Housing NWT programs. GSOs continue to be a source of information for residents in small communities, especially where there isn’t a Housing NWT LHO office.</p>

	Action	Mandate Values	Original Timeline	Current Status
34.	Review and consider changes to Housing NWT's template Tenancy Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client Focus • Fairness 	April 1, 2023	<p>Complete</p> <p>A fairness review of Housing NWT's template tenancy agreement by the NWT Ombud in 2022-23 did not result in any suggested changes.</p> <p>In collaboration with the NWT Literacy Council, Housing NWT has revised the template Tenancy Agreement to plain language format, and a legal review was completed.</p>

HOMEOWNERSHIP PROGRAMS

	Action	Mandate Values	Original Timeline	Current Status
35.	Establish a single application intake period for home repair programs except the emergency repair and fuel tank replacement programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairness • Client Focus 	April 1, 2023	<p>Complete</p> <p>2022-23 was a transition from rolling to fixed application intake period.</p> <p>From 2023-24 forward, non-emergency repair program application period is April 1-October 31 for work beginning on April 1 of following year to promote fair resource allocation and lead time for procurement and to maximize the short construction season.</p>
36.	Establish one annual application form and process for all homeownership programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client Focus • Innovation 	April 1, 2023	<p>Complete</p>
37.	Make homeownership program changes to increase funding amounts for maintenance programs and to place more focus on emergencies and smaller maintenance issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting those most in need • Accountability • Sustainability • Innovation 	April 1, 2023	<p>Complete</p> <p>Program changes in effect:</p> <p>Emergency Repair maximum increased to \$15,000</p> <p>Preventative Maintenance maximum increased to \$5,000</p> <p>Fuel Tank Replacement maximum increased to \$15,000</p> <p>Seniors Aging in Place maximum increased to \$15,000</p>

	Action	Mandate Values	Original Timeline	Current Status
38.	<p>Change Major Home Repair program into a seniors-only program; maintain existing funding level.</p> <p>Maintain Mobility Modifications Program at existing funding level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting those most in need Accountability Sustainability 	April 1, 2023	<p>Complete</p> <p>Senior Home Repair Program – maximum retained at \$50,000</p> <p>Mobility Modifications Program – maximum retained at \$50,000</p>
39.	Eliminate requirement for co-payment based on income for emergency repair program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting those most in need Client focus 	Fall 2022	<p>Complete</p> <p>Emergency Repair co-payment eliminated.</p>
40.	Update income thresholds that determine who qualifies for homeownership programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting those most in need Fairness Client focus Accountability 	April 1, 2023	<p>Delayed - Ongoing</p> <p>Work will align home ownership core income thresholds with the public housing income thresholds (Action #26).</p>
41.	Explore a pilot program that will rebate a percentage of the cost of shipping building materials for individual private home builders in Zone C (rural and remote) communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accountability Innovation 	Upon approval	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Pilot program under development.</p>
42.	Explore a pilot program aimed at ensuring common minor repair materials (such as heating and plumbing parts) are more readily available for purchase in select communities on demand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration Innovation Accountability Fairness 	Upon approval	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Pilot program under development. Materials being shipped to three pilot communities.</p>