



**MEETING SD 27-20-24**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2024  
DET'ANCHOGH KÛÉ - EAGLE ROOM / ZOOM  
1:30 PM**

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**AGENDA**

1. Call to Order
2. Prayer
3. Review and Adoption of Agenda
4. Declarations of Conflict of Interest
5. Public Matters:
  - a. Public Briefing on Government Response to Encampments with Honourable Premier
6. In Camera Matters:
  - a. Debrief
  - b. Workplan
7. New Business
  - a.
8. Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday, September 25, 2024 at 9:00 a.m.
9. Adjournment

**Standing Committee on Social Development  
Opening Remarks for a Public Ministerial Briefing on the  
Government Response to Encampments**

**September 6, 2024  
Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs**

Madame Chair, thank you for inviting me today to speak about the Government response to tent encampments, and more broadly, unsheltered homelessness, in the NWT.

With me I have:

- John MacDonald, Deputy Minister/Secretary to Cabinet;
- Robert Tordiff, Assistant Deputy Minister, Government and Service Integration; and
- Katie-Sue Derejko, Territorial Director, Integrated Service Delivery, Government and Service Integration.

Today's presentation will provide Members with information on the encampment situation in Yellowknife at present, as well as how this work is situated within the broader Mandate priority to address housing needs in the Northwest Territories.

Executive and Indigenous Affairs is leading a whole of government approach to service integration. Service integration will be a new way of thinking about and working within the public service using a person-centred approach, where individual experience and service access are prioritized over bureaucratic convenience and policy barriers.

It was determined that the best approach to service integration was to focus on a specific issue. Homelessness, and the implementation of *A Way Home: A Comprehensive Strategy to Address Homelessness in the Northwest Territories* was selected as a complex and pressing issue and is where we are starting our service integration work.

The pillars of the homelessness strategy are community-driven solutions, needs based services, shelter and housing, and planning. Through our work on the encampment issue, we have had the opportunity to collaborate further on a number of strategic goals within these pillars, including:

- Combining efforts between three levels of government and the NGO sector,

- Doing grassroots work to determine the needs of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness,
- Evaluating and building upon our existing shelter resources, and
- Working to anticipate ongoing needs and create supportive and transitional resources to prevent this from becoming a recurrent issue.

Unsheltered homelessness and homeless encampments are an issue that has been impacting every major jurisdiction in Canada. For every individual experiencing homelessness there is a unique story; however, the past few years have provided a perfect storm of circumstances that have contributed to the crisis levels of unhoused people we are witnessing today. COVID-19, floods, and wildfires have put pressure on a population already experiencing shortages in suitable and affordable housing and increasing drug potency and toxicity.

We are working on several initiatives to address homelessness and housing, across the GNWT and with our federal and municipal partners. This includes short-term efforts to expand emergency shelter spaces to meet the need before winter, as well as longer-term efforts to increase supportive, transitional, and affordable independent housing options and reduce the pressure felt by NGOs and GNWT staff providing shelter services in Yellowknife and in regional centres. While EIA is coordinating this work, the Department of Health and Social Services, the Department of Justice, NWT Housing and the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services lead service provision in this area and are essential in the work to plan and develop this capacity.

While the encampment situation has been challenging for all involved, including people experiencing homelessness and addictions, neighbourhood residents, and NGOs, it has allowed us to gain valuable insight into the needs of encampment residents and others in unsheltered homelessness, and build collaborative fora to work with multiple levels of government and NGO partners to meet community needs. It has also provided an invaluable opportunity to demonstrate our support for the NGO sector and build the relationships we will need to rely on to address homelessness effectively.

With your permission, I will now ask Mr. MacDonald to lead Members through the presentation.

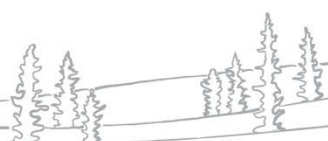
Thank you.



# Homelessness in the Northwest Territories and Encampments in Yellowknife

Prepared for the Standing Committee on Social Development

September 6, 2024



# Table of Contents

- Encampments
- Response
- Homelessness Strategy
- GNWT Mandate 2023-2027



## 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 sommaire et du message du premier ministre et du ministre.

Government of Northwest Territories / Gouvernement des Territoires du Nord-Ouest

# Encampments

## CAPACITY OF SHELTER AND HOUSING PROVIDERS IN YELLOWKNIFE

68

### EMERGENCY SHELTERS

Salvation Army - 31  
YKWS Women's Shelter - 11  
Sobering Centre - 26

### TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

Bailey House - 32  
Spruce Bough - 27  
Housing First/Rapid Rehousing - 26  
Single Room/Second Stage Housing - 23

108

## UNMET HOUSING NEEDS

Approximately 30 to 60 residents will be unsheltered due to current capacity of housing.



30-60

Unsheltered residents

# Encampments Cont'd

- June 2024 – shelter demand exceeds capacity of Salvation Army
- June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024 – City Homelessness Roundtable
- July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024 – Community Partnership Meeting

## Points of Consensus:

- **Individuals experiencing homelessness in Yellowknife far exceed shelter capacity**
- **Few individuals in shelter were ready for completely independent housing options**
- **Need to prioritize supportive housing options over expansion to shelter capacity**



# Encampments Cont'd





# Encampments Cont'd



## 13 Aug. 2024

All encampment residents have moved onto 51st St site. Encampment size estimated at 12-15 residents. GNWT begins working to acquire resources to mitigate neighbourhood impacts.

## 26 Aug. 2024

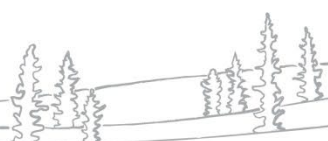
Fencing provided between encampment and alley between 51st and 52nd Streets, to reduce foot traffic in the back alley and provide better control of access to the site.

## 22 Aug. 2024

Portable toilets and a garbage bin provided on site. Encampment size estimated at 17-25 residents.

## 10 Sep. 2024

Encampment to be dismantled and cleared for use by NWT Housing. NWT Housing site staging to begin September 16th, 2024.



# Encampments Cont'd

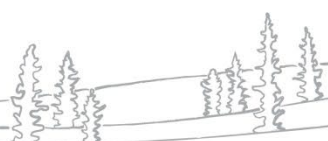
## Ad Hoc Interagency Encampment Working Group

### Purpose

Information sharing and collective problem solving of issues related to this and other encampments in and around Yellowknife.

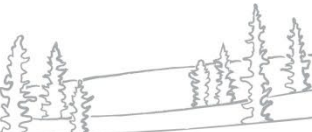
### Membership

- EIA
- City of Yellowknife
- NWT Housing
- Department of Justice
- NTHSSA
- CIRNAC
- RCMP
- Salvation Army
- Yellowknife Women's Society
- Home Base Yellowknife



# Encampment Cont'd

- NWT Housing needs the current encampment lot cleared and ready for use by September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
- Awareness that, while 51<sup>st</sup> St encampment residents are most visible, there are other encampment sites in the city
- Demand for shelter spaces expected to increase
  - Need for secure storage space for belongings identified as a barrier to shelter use, as were:
    - Need for less chaotic environments (overwhelming to those with mental health/neurodivergence)
    - Safe storage for substances (both legal and non-legal)



# Response



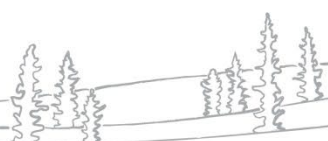
**EXPAND EXISTING SHELTER  
CAPACITY WHERE POSSIBLE**



**EXPLORE ALTERNATIVE  
OPTIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS**



**WORK TO EXPEDITE  
CREATION OF SUPPORTIVE  
HOUSING RESOURCES**



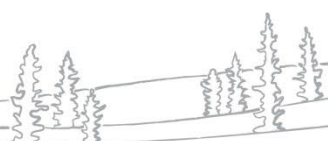
# Homelessness Strategy

Coordinated  
Access

Shelter  
resources

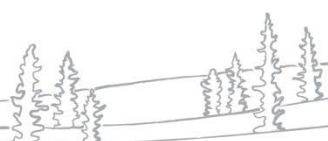
Transitional and  
supportive  
housing options

Improve data  
collection and  
sharing



# GNWT Mandate 2023-2027

- Housing
  - The GNWT will:
    - Increase housing availability for all residents by working with partners to address gaps in the northern housing continuum including more transitional and supportive living options
    - Collaborate across departments and with partners to support vulnerable residents, prevent and reduce homelessness, and encourage self-sufficiency



# Supplementary Materials



# Types of Homelessness

Housing instability and homelessness includes:

- **Precarious housing** (one crisis away)
- **Invisible homelessness** (couch surfing, staying in dangerous situations)
- **Visible homelessness** (shelter use)
- **Chronic homelessness** (visible homelessness + 6 months)
- **Unsheltered homelessness** (visible homelessness + no access to shelters)

Downward Pressure

- COVID-19
- Decreasing Affordability
- Evacuations
- Increasing Drug Use
- Renovictions
- Release from Incarceration





# Homelessness in the NWT

- Follows patterns witnessed in all jurisdictions across Canada as cost of housing rises
- Territorial issue – high core housing need
- People often displaced to Yellowknife, regional centres to access services

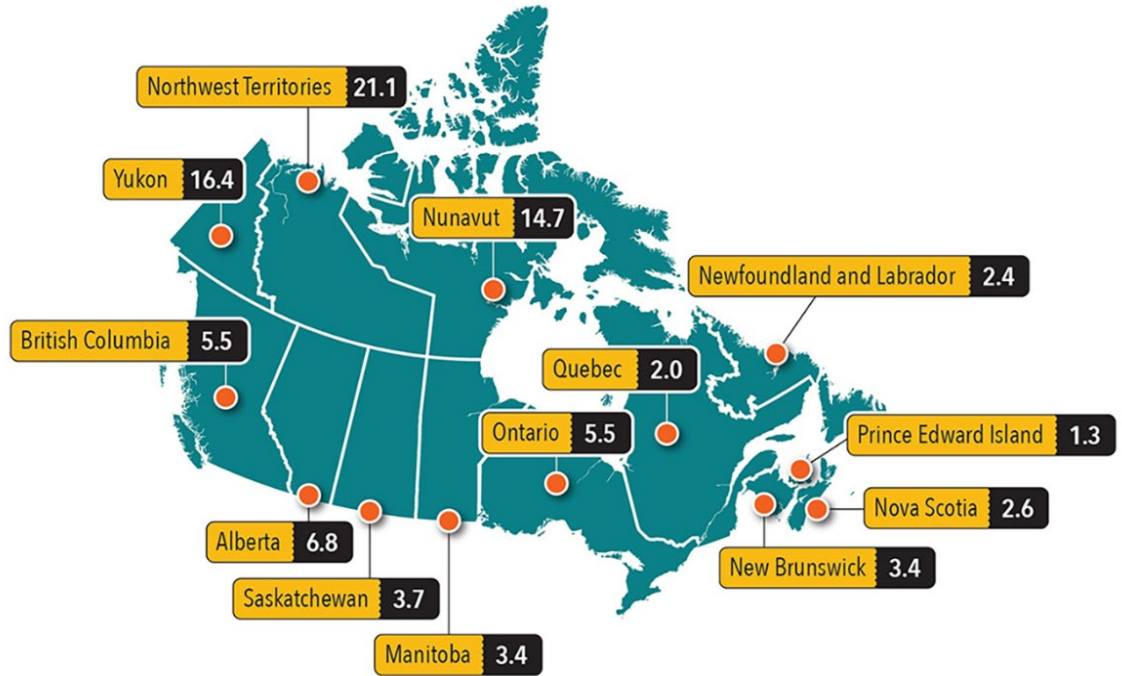
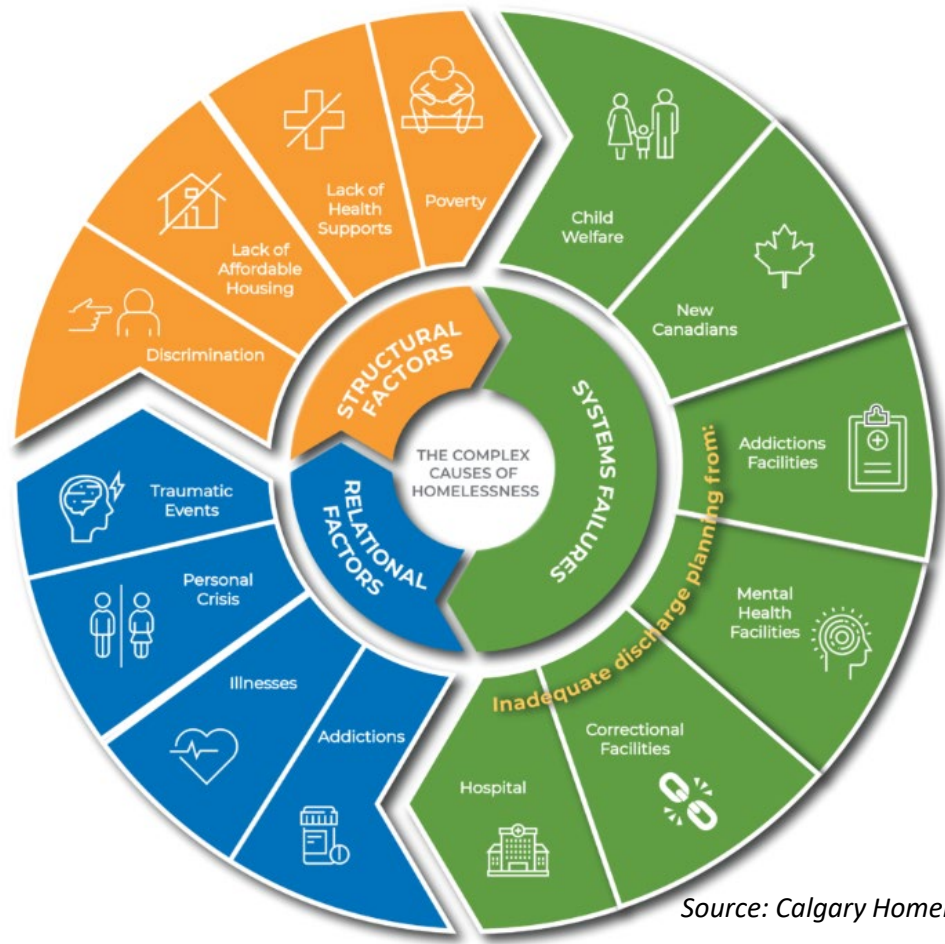


Figure: Number of emergency shelter beds by population of 10,000  
Source: HICC, 2020

# Diversity in Homelessness

- Variety of pathways into homelessness requires flexibility in responses
- Generally, most individuals are experiencing multiple barriers and have exhausted many of their personal and social support/family resources



Source: Calgary Homeless Foundation