

Standing Committee on
Accountability and Oversight



Report on Committee's Statement on the Housing and Healthcare Crises in the Northwest Territories

20th Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly

Chair: Mr. Denny Rodgers

MEMBERS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT

Denny Rodgers
MLA Inuvik Boot Lake
Chair

Sheryl Yakeleya
MLA Dehcho
Deputy Chair

Julian Morse
MLA Frame Lake

Daniel McNeely
MLA Sahtu

George Nerysoo
MLA Mackenzie Delta

Richard Edjericon
MLA Tu Nedhé-Wiilideh

Kieron Testart
MLA Range Lake

Robert Hawkins
MLA Yellowknife Centre

Kate Reid
MLA Great Slave

Shauna Morgan
MLA Yellowknife North

Jane Weyallon Armstrong
MLA Monfwi

SPEAKER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Speaker:

Your Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight is pleased to provide its *Report on Committee's Statement on the Housing and Healthcare Crises in the Northwest Territories* and commends it to the House.



Mr. Denny Rodgers,
Chair, Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT**

**REPORT ON COMMITTEE'S STATEMENT ON THE HOUSING AND
HEALTHCARE CRISES IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**

Table of Contents

COMMITTEE'S CALL FOR URGENT ACTION	1
COMMITTEE CONCERNS: HOUSING	3
COMMITTEE CONCERNS: HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES	4
CALL TO ACTION.....	5

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT

REPORT ON COMMITTEE'S STATEMENT ON THE HOUSING AND HEALTHCARE CRISES IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

COMMITTEE'S CALL FOR URGENT ACTION

This report sets out the Accountability and Oversight Committee's (Committee's) concerns and call for urgent government intervention regarding the crisis conditions that have developed in the delivery of healthcare and social services and affordability and availability of housing across the Northwest Territories.

Through correspondence before the Fall Sitting Committee issued the following statement to their Cabinet counterparts:

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight is committed to upholding the 4 Priorities of the 20th Legislative Assembly, which are:

- ***the suitability, accessibility, and affordability of housing;***
- *a strong economic foundation;*
- ***access to health care and addressing the effects of trauma;*** and
- *safe residents and communities.*

Committee has become increasingly concerned with the crisis conditions that continue to develop in the delivery of health and social services (HSS) and the affordability and availability of housing in the NWT. After thorough consideration, Committee is not able to support a Capital Plan while the top priorities of the 20th Legislative Assembly still require urgent attention, action and associated funding.

We have heard from our constituents, frontline staff and practitioners that our primary healthcare system is seeing unsustainable challenges. We are calling on the Government to make immediate changes and adopt a more staff-centric approach that will incorporate the input of our critical healthcare staff and frontline workers, protect their mental health, and show them that they are valued. We are

requesting a fundamental culture shift which we acknowledge may need to include changes made to the foundational governance and accountability structure. We also wish to see adequate supports given to youth mental health and other HSS services such as therapeutic and diagnostic supports. Failure to solve these problems impacts our capacity to deliver services and our fiscal sustainability goals by causing unnecessary costs to address the crisis points.

Committee is concerned that Housing NWT (HNWT) is not making significant progress on addressing the housing crisis that exists across the entire housing continuum in the NWT. Given the available data, we believe that Housing NWT has enough information to take meaningful action to advance the creation of more housing units. We need more investment into the creation of housing units.

It is not lost on Committee the gravity of the position that we have taken and would reiterate that we are urgently seeking a course correction from Government with appropriate resourcing behind it that reflects our both the Assembly priorities and the concerns of NWT residents. Committee is very concerned about the fragility of our healthcare system and the apparent inability to put appropriate resources into Housing.

Committee remains dedicated to fostering a transparent and collaborative budget process. It has become clear to us that failing to fix these problems is undermining our ability to practice responsible fiscal management and puts our goals in jeopardy. We believe that by putting appropriate focus on our shared priorities, we can achieve a more prosperous and resilient future for all. We look forward to continuing this vital conversation and hope that we will see the appropriate shift during this Government Session.

Committee understand that the capital budget is before us, however, we cannot approve this budget until we see real commitments for change and a shift in government resources that better reflects the priorities of the Assembly.

This report is presented to the House as a demonstration of Committee's ongoing commitment to transparency alongside a continued call for action to better and more immediately address the priorities of the 20th Legislative Assembly.

In recent discussions, it has become clear that the Government's mechanisms to address the serious issues that have arisen in Housing NWT (HNWT) and Health

and Social Services (HSS) are falling short of what is necessary to make meaningful change. As we navigate the complexities of our fiscal and policy landscape, we are reminded that it is imperative that we as a government make informed decisions that reflect the needs and values of our communities and residents.

We are becoming increasingly concerned that those needs and values are not being addressed meaningfully, so we are prepared to take a strong position to urge the Government to act right away.

COMMITTEE CONCERNS: HOUSING

Committee observes that HNWT is not making, nor plans to make significant progress on addressing the housing crisis that exists across the entire housing continuum in the NWT when considering the [Housing NWT Action Plan 2022-2025](#). The lack of meaningful metrics and targets put forward by HNWT in their Action Plan make it difficult for Committee, or any other stakeholder, to ultimately understand the capacity and capability of the organization.

Committee advocates for HNWT to use all available data and evidence now to advance the creation of new housing units across the entire housing continuum to advance the creation and/or retrofit of housing units aggressively and ambitiously. Committee requires a far greater commitment from Cabinet to put more resources into supporting territorial housing needs. Committee is ultimately seeking a commitment to the creation of expanded Housing units and resourcing behind that commitment.

In the spirit of reconciliation, Committee acknowledges and supports the work done collaboratively with Indigenous Governments. To that end, Committee also expects that HNWT will better demonstrate and report on how they are working with and supporting the work of each of the Indigenous Governments in delivering their housing strategies. The GNWT must support the bi-lateral relationship between the Indigenous Governments and the Federal Government to ensure that additional resources can flow directly to Indigenous communities.

Finally, Committee acknowledges the ongoing and serious challenges faced by municipalities and small communities who are attempting to identify lands suitable

for housing stock development and are finding the options limited and/or not suitable. As such Committee urges the Department of Environment and Climate Change to commit to and proactively pursue arrangements where bulk land transfers to municipalities can occur, including implementing transparent, clear processes to help departments and municipalities understand how they can participate. Committee maintains that any real or perceived limitations of municipalities (interest of the community, community type, community legislative and administrative tools, and community capacity and resources) are the concern of the municipality and would encourage ECC to not take a paternalistic approach.

COMMITTEE CONCERNS: HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Committee is aware of the increasingly unsustainable issues faced by both the Department of HSS and the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority (NTHSSA) including the indications from front-line staff and practitioners that the primary care system may be on the verge of collapse.

Committee is calling on the Minister of HSS to take all actions necessary to immediately intervene and stabilize primary, secondary, and tertiary care. We have seen evidence that the current management model is not staff-centric, nor does it foster problem solving or incorporate the input of our critical healthcare staff and frontline workers. We wish to see a governance and management organizational structure implemented right away that signals to staff they are valued.

A culture shift is required that empowers our frontline staff and makes the Northwest Territories an attractive place to live and work. We know that HSS has received evidence-based observations, and clear, achievable recommendations from a number of sources. For example, the March 1, 2024 [correspondence from the NWT Medical Association](#), which was tabled in the House on May 28, 2024, contained organizational and systemic change recommendations. Committee calls on HSS to respond to these recommendations.

Committee is also concerned that there are not adequate levels of support in schools for youth mental health and other vital HSS services such as therapeutic and diagnostic supports for our children and young people.

Committee sees evidence that not enough is being done to show appreciation and support for our healthcare staff and frontline workers, including supporting their physical and mental health, and we call for concrete action. Committee urges more efforts to enhance recruitment and retention of healthcare frontline workers, specifically around point-of-care staff. Committee is also aware that many of our practitioners are not being supported in the face of significant challenges with critical staffing and resource shortages. For example, we know that healthcare practitioners are regularly denied requests for annual leave, and policies related to organizational demands are interpreted and implemented in such a way that makes it challenging for staff to take the leave allotted to them.

CALL TO ACTION

This concludes the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight's *Report on Committee's Statement on the Housing and Healthcare Crises in the Northwest Territories*. In conclusion, Committee remains dedicating to fostering a transparent and collaborative capital budget process that gives the appropriate, urgent attention to our Territory's top priorities. We believe that by focusing our attention to prioritize and adequately fund healthcare and housing issues, we can achieve a more prosperous and resilient future for all.

Committee is very concerned about the fragility of our healthcare system and the apparent inability to put appropriate resources into Housing.

Committee will continue to consider the Capital Plan that is before us, but our concerns with operations and services are serious ones. As previously stated, Committee is not in a position to support a Capital Plan while we feel the top priorities of the 20th Legislative Assembly are not being addressed to the best of our abilities. Committee is calling for a shift in resources that better reflects the priorities of the 20th Assembly.

We look forward to continuing this vital conversation during the Fall 2024 Session.