



Date: January 29, 2026

SUBJECT: Request for Funds to Operate Safe Homes in Fort Simpson and Fort Good Hope

Minister Lesa Semmler
Department of Health and Social Services
Government of the Northwest Territories

Minister Lucy Kuptana
Responsible for the Status of Women
Housing NWT
Government of the Northwest Territories

Minister Caroline Wawzonek
Department of Finance
Government of the Northwest Territories

Premier R.J. Simpson
Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs
Government of the Northwest Territories

Dear Minister Semmler, Minister Wawzonek, Minister Kuptana and Premier Simpson:

My name is Hawa Dumbuya-Sesay, and I am the Executive Director of YWCA NWT, a nonprofit that has been empowering women, youth, and families in the Northwest Territories since 1966. On behalf of our organization, I am writing to formally request that the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) commit to funding our safe homes in Fort Good Hope and Fort Simpson in the 2026/2027 fiscal year and beyond.

As you are aware, YWCA NWT received \$1 million from Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) Canada in 2019 to launch safe homes in regions without access to family violence shelters. This funding has been used to develop, open, and operate safe homes in Fort Simpson and Fort Good Hope. Given that there are only six family violence shelters serving 33 communities in the territory, these safe homes have filled a critical gap in services. Since 2023, over 52 women and 18 children in these two communities have been supported through this program.

We have heard repeatedly how these homes have made a substantial difference in the Dehcho and Sahtu regions. The following quote is from a community member in Fort Good Hope, taken from an interview conducted in November 2023 with our evaluation partner, Good Roots Consulting:

“The fact that we have a safe home in our region is a big step, and that it’s open to the region. I’ve heard people talking about it. They refer to it a lot now. It’s too early to tell, but the fact that it’s there and it’s moving in a positive direction for families and women who need a safe space. I’ve known a few women who have used it, even if only for a short time. It’s really good to know they have that option here. In such a remote community, sometimes things like this you only see in bigger centres.” (Community Member, Fort Good Hope, 2023)

Our WAGE funding is set to expire on March 31, 2026. Despite diligent efforts—including two CMHC applications and extensive discussions with potential funders (including the GNWT)—we have not secured operational funding beyond the pilot period. WAGE provided a one-time extension, but as the department faces significant budget reductions with Budget 2025, continued support is not available. We have also been actively collaborating with both Łíídlı̄ Kúę First Nation and K’asho Got’ine Community Council for the past two years to secure stable funding but without success.

If funding is not secured for the next fiscal year and going forward, the safe homes will have to close. Women and children in Fort Simpson and Fort Good Hope will lose access to these critical services that they have come to rely on in time of need.

YWCA NWT is seeking a total of \$340,000 in funding for the 2026/2027 fiscal year: \$210,000 for Fort Simpson (which is routinely accessed by more women) and \$130,000 for Fort Good Hope. These proposed budgets are based on actual expenditures over the past year and would allow us to continue operating the homes as they are currently structured. We may require an increase in future years if the need increases.

Our organization has also committed resources internally to support the homes. For example, we coordinate after-hours access to the homes through the 24/7 crisis line at our shelter, Alison McAteer House, providing supervision to the staff in Fort Good Hope and other supports to both homes on a regular basis. We remain committed to contributing the time, resources, and energy needed to keep these homes open.

We have consistently engaged with the territorial government on the sustainability of these programs, including direct discussions with the Department of Health & Social Services regarding transitioning to territorial funding upon the end of our current grant. To date, we have not been able to secure this support. Given that this Assembly’s priorities include “safe residents and communities,” and the Department of Health & Social Services’ priorities include “taking action on the crisis of family and community violence,” we respectfully submit that funding these safe homes directly aligns with the GNWT’s stated commitments. We strongly urge the Government of the Northwest Territories to allocate the requested funds to both safe homes in the 2026/2027 fiscal year and on a long-term basis so that women and children in these regions can continue to receive the support they need.

Our organization demands this action as governments look North to invest millions of dollars—primarily through the military and resource extraction—in the name of sovereignty. True sovereignty begins with the people and communities who live here.

The sustainability of life-saving services that ensure the safety and well-being of residents must be central to all funding decisions in the NWT.

The NWT experiences the second-highest rate of family violence in Canada, after Nunavut. Women and children are the primary victims of this violence and often have nowhere to go for refuge, especially in small, remote communities. According to a 2020 Statistics Canada report, women in the territories are most often victims of physical assault in private residences—many of these assaults go unreported. These women do seek support from shelters and safe homes.

Family violence occurs daily in the NWT. Our government must make crucial investments in this area to ensure that survivors receive the services, programs, and support they need during life-threatening events.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to your response and stand ready to work collaboratively with the GNWT to keep these services open in the long term.

Sincerely,



Hawa Dumbuya-Sesay
Executive Director
YWCA NWT

CC: Meaghan Brackenbury, Community Outreach & Advocacy, YWCA NWT

Amy Fraser, Safe Home Lead (Fort Simpson), Łídlıı Kúé First Nation

Brenda T'seleie-Pierrot, Safe Home Lead (Fort Good Hope), YWCA NWT