



**Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee
Report 29-20(1): Report on Committee Project: Housing as a Human Right**

Background

The Standing Committee on Social Development tabled their Committee Report, “Report 29-20(1): Report on Committee Project – Housing as a Human Right”, on October 28, 2025. The report contains 44 recommendations to the Government of the Northwest Territories that address a broad range of housing-related issues, including legislative and policy frameworks, housing delivery and accountability, homelessness and shelter services, Indigenous partnerships, land and infrastructure, and funding and capacity.

On October 30, 2025, CR 29-20(1) was considered in Committee of the Whole. The Committee recommended that the Government of the Northwest Territories respond to the report within 120 days.

Recommendation 1

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories formally and officially recognize housing as a human right. Specifically, the Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories urgently create new legislation that recognizes the right to adequate housing as it is articulated in international human rights law in the United Nations Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This new legislation should incorporate accountability mechanisms found in Canada’s *National Housing Strategy Act*, including developing and maintaining a robust housing strategy to progressively realize housing as a human right in the Northwest Territories.

GNWT Response

The GNWT partially agrees with this recommendation. While the GNWT recognizes the intent, the proposed legislative approach is not feasible within the 20th Legislative Assembly.

The GNWT recognizes that challenges to adequate and affordable housing exist across Canada, and that factors specific to the North complicate access to housing in the NWT. The Department of Justice is currently undertaking a review of the *Residential Tenancies Act*, which will closely consider recommendations in the Committee's report.

While the GNWT recognizes the intent behind developing new human-rights-based housing legislation, this work is not feasible within the current Legislative Assembly. The GNWT's legislative priorities for the 20th Legislative Assembly have already been established, and any new legislative work would require direction from a future Assembly.

The GNWT continues to work within the federal framework that recognizes housing as a fundamental human right under the *National Housing Strategy Act* and advances this approach through federal-territorial housing agreements. Under the 10-year bilateral agreement between the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation and Housing Northwest Territories (Housing NWT), approximately \$155 million in combined federal and GNWT investment is being used to protect, renew, and expand social and community housing in the NWT. As part of this work, the GNWT will continue to advocate to the federal government for increased and sustained funding.

As the Committee itself notes (p.31 of the report), no other provincial or territorial government in Canada has legislated housing as a human right. The GNWT must consider the fiscal and operational realities as a small jurisdiction of approximately 45,000 people. Legislating such a right would create significant expectations without the financial capacity to fulfill them.

The GNWT remains committed to continuing to work with Indigenous Governments, communities, and the federal government to improve the suitability, accessibility, and affordability of housing in the NWT. This ongoing work is guided by Housing NWT's mandate to increase the wellbeing of individuals and communities by providing fair access to quality housing supports for those most in need, supported by a people-centred approach that reflects Housing NWT's expanded role in delivering social housing and housing-related services.

Recommendation 2

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories publicly recognize the colonial legacies that have contributed to Indigenous homelessness in the Northwest Territories. To address these legacies, the Government of the Northwest Territories should use the principles outlined in the Northwest Territories' *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Implementation Act* to guide policy changes in the housing sector and increase local government decision-making to facilitate the co-development of new housing policies by council leaders and Indigenous Governments.

GNWT Response

The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and notes that this work is already underway.

The government has committed, through the priorities of the 20th Legislative Assembly, to address the impacts of colonization and trauma and to working collaboratively with Indigenous Governments to improve wellbeing across the territory.

The GNWT is advancing this work through implementation of the *Northwest Territories United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Implementation Act*, which commits the GNWT to aligning its laws and policies with UNDRIP and co-developing a territorial UNDRIP Action Plan with Indigenous Governments and Organizations.

Housing NWT's Strategic Renewal, mission, vision, and values further reinforce this direction through a focus on reconciliation, collaboration, and client-centered service. These values guide ongoing policy work and the co-development of approaches with Indigenous Governments.

A key venue for this collaboration is the NWT Housing Forum, established in 2023 and co-chaired by the GNWT and an Indigenous Government representative. Since its inception in June 2023, the Forum has met on a quarterly basis and the GNWT has brought forward several initiatives for input, including the public housing smoking ban, market housing opportunities, proposed updates to public housing rent scales and Core Need Income Thresholds, and the Territorial Housing Needs Assessment.

In addition, Local Housing Organizations (LHOs) deliver housing programs and services under Community Housing Services Agreements with the GNWT. LHOs, made up of housing authorities and associations, play an important role in supporting community-led approaches to housing delivery and ensuring programs reflect local needs and priorities.

Recommendation 3

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories create the Office of the Territorial Housing Advocate and appoint a Territorial Housing Advocate. The Territorial Housing Advocate and its Office should operate as an independent, nonpartisan entity, modeled after the Federal Housing Advocate. Its objective should be to advance meaningful action to address inadequate housing and homelessness in the Northwest Territories. The Office should be created within the 20th Legislative Assembly. An implementation plan to create this Office should be developed and tabled in the House within one year.

GNWT Response

The GNWT partially agrees with this recommendation, supporting its intent while taking a different approach.

Through its research on a territorial housing advocate role which the GNWT committed to completing in response to Motion 21-20(1), it found that the Federal Housing Advocate is housed within the Canadian Human Rights Commission under the *National Housing Strategy Act*. The federal model embeds housing accountability within an existing human rights institution rather than creating a standalone office. This approach demonstrates that the key functions of a housing advocate, such as investigation, reporting, and providing recommendations, can be supported through existing oversight mechanisms.

In the NWT, several independent oversight bodies provide effective avenues for residents to raise concerns related to housing. The Office of the NWT Ombud reviews complaints related to fairness and administrative decisions made by GNWT departments and agencies, and has engaged with the GNWT on housing-related files in recent years, providing independent findings and recommendations. The NWT Rental Office provides an accessible and independent process for resolving landlord-tenant disputes under the *Residential Tenancies Act*. The Office of the Auditor General of Canada conducts financial and performance audits of GNWT housing programs and reports findings to the Legislative Assembly. The Human Rights Commission addresses housing-related discrimination and systemic issues under the *Human Rights Act*.

The GNWT also reports annually to the Legislative Assembly, undergoes financial and program audits, and is subject to public review by the Standing Committee on Social Development. Together, these existing mechanisms provide transparent and independent accountability.

The GNWT will continue to focus its resources on improving housing delivery, strengthening partnerships with Indigenous Governments, and addressing the root causes of housing need, rather than establishing a new and duplicative administrative structure.

Recommendation 4

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories assign the Territorial Housing Advocate and its Office to investigate how human rights and advocacy organizations can pursue legal remedies for violations of the right to housing through legal or policy frameworks. This research study should identify existing legal barriers to housing-related claims, consider amendments to the Northwest Territories' *Human Rights Act* or other relevant statutes, and establish clear mechanisms for litigation and legal recourse. The research study should be done in consultation with affected communities and legal experts and presented to the Legislative Assembly for consideration within the first year of the Office's creation.

GNWT Response

The GNWT partially agrees with this recommendation, supporting its intent while taking a different approach.

As noted in the response to Recommendation 3, the GNWT does not believe a Territorial Housing Advocate or an associated office is required at this time. Residents have access to established, independent avenues to address housing-related concerns through the NWT Human Rights Commission, the Office of the Northwest Territories Ombud, and the NWT Rental Office.

While the GNWT will not be creating a new position or office, we recognize the importance of continually improving the systems that are already in place. The GNWT will explore opportunities to strengthen these areas, including where additional research or policy work may be required to reduce barriers for residents. Proposed improvements can be brought forward for discussion and input from Standing Committee.

The GNWT will also continue to strengthen public awareness of the options currently available and ensure that housing policies and legislation support fairness and transparency for all residents.

Recommendation 5

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories review and amend the Northwest Territories' *Residential Tenancies Act* to include a proportionality framework that considers reasonable alternatives and ensures that evictions are used as a last resort only in serious situations, such as those where criminal activities are present.

GNWT Response

The GNWT partially agrees with this recommendation.

The Department of Justice is currently undertaking a review of the *Residential Tenancies Act* which will closely consider recommendations in this Report. Based on the results of the current review, the Department plans to bring forward proposed amendments to the Act during the 21st Legislative Assembly. At that time, the public, partners, and stakeholders will be engaged on any proposed amendments being brought forward.

Recommendation 6

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories review the Evictions from Public Housing Policy to incorporate consideration of multi-generational living arrangements prior to eviction decisions.

GNWT Response

The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and notes that this work is already underway.

The evictions process in the Northwest Territories is governed by the *Residential Tenancies Act*, which is under review, and is currently used by GNWT as a last resort. The GNWT works with tenants to achieve successful tenancies for those tenants who are committed to remaining in public housing. To do so, the GNWT works in collaboration with Public Housing Tenants to develop Tenant Success Plans that are unique and considerate of individual circumstances including multi-generational living arrangements to find resolutions. The GNWT continues to work with tenants with diverse living arrangements and challenges to ensure successful tenancies.

Recommendation 7

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories increase the number of supportive living and transitional housing options for individuals who are evicted from public housing. Steps and timelines to achieve this should be included in the Government's costed action plan as referenced in Recommendation 22.

GNWT Response

The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and notes that this work is already underway.

The GNWT recognizes there are important investments required across the housing continuum. In NWT communities, transitional housing is an area that is being served by public housing. The GNWT is currently exploring pilot opportunities to provide transitional housing like supports in current public housing units. A pilot project in Yellowknife should begin in 2026 in collaboration with a non-government organization (NGO). The GNWT recognizes wraparound supports are needed to ensure that some NWT residents are successfully moving across the continuum. Housing NWT is working closely with the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs (EIA), in addition to Health and Social Services, to continue to lobby the federal government to ensure that more supportive and transitional housing options are available for residents of the Northwest Territories.

Recommendation 8

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories amend the *Legal Aid Act* and its regulations to include matters arising under the *Residential Tenancies Act*, as well as other housing-related legal matters, such as evictions, that may fall outside of the *Residential Tenancies Act*, as subjects to which legal aid services may be provided. The Government of the Northwest Territories should utilize the upcoming new federal Blueprint for a Renters' Bill of Rights to inform the development of effective legal aid services for tenants that reduce the power imbalance. To provide effective legal services, the Government of the Northwest Territories should allocate funding to the Legal Aid program to support services provided for housing-related matters.

GNWT Response

The GNWT partially agrees with this recommendation.

The GNWT prioritizes the legal aid services available to cover the most serious cases involving violence, deprivation of liberty, and contentious family law matters. Fiscal and human resource constraints prohibit Legal Aid from considering housing-related issues under the *Residential Tenancies Act*. The Legal Aid Commission operates an Outreach Legal Aid program that provides access to justice for all Northwest Territories residents regardless of economic status. While the Outreach Lawyer cannot represent people in court, the clinic provides one hour of free legal advice for each legal issue. These can include tenant rights, family law, benefits claims, employment rights, mental health reviews, small claims, wills and estates, and immigration. Demand consistently outstrips availability by a wide margin. The Outreach Lawyer is also responsible for public legal education, producing guides for self-represented litigants, and travelling to small communities for outreach activities.

The GNWT looks forward to reviewing and learning from the federal Blueprint for a Renters' Bill of Rights to see how legal aid service provision to renters in the Northwest Territories might be improved.

Recommendation 9

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories review and ensure that Housing Northwest Territories' policies are culturally appropriate, including that any related applications be available in Indigenous languages. The Government should also implement policies to train Government Service Officers on culturally appropriate advocacy related to housing issues.

GNWT Response

The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and notes that this work is already underway and ongoing.

Through its Strategic Renewal, Housing NWT works closely with Indigenous Governments when developing or revising policies. The NWT Housing Forum, co-chaired by GNWT and an Indigenous Government representative, provides a regular venue for partners to provide input on policy direction, share community perspectives, and support culturally informed approaches.

The GNWT agrees with the Committee's recommendation on improving access to information in Indigenous languages and has taken steps to make key materials more accessible. Examples of existing or soon-to-be-available translations include the Tenant Handbook in Tłıchǫ and Dene Zhaté (South Slavey), translations of Housing NWT's mission, vision and values, updated public housing webpage, a new public housing fact sheet, radio ads for the Canada-NWT Housing Benefit, and radio ads for the public housing smoking ban campaign in Dënesųłné (Chipewyan), Wiilideh, Tłıchǫ and Dene Kədə (North Slavey). As Departments and Agencies, including Housing NWT, begin implementing the new GNWT Indigenous Languages Service Standards over the coming years, additional tools and mechanisms will be available to better serve housing clients in the official Indigenous languages.

Housing NWT continues to strengthen internal capacity as part of the Strategic Renewal. This includes biannual training provided to Local Housing Organization staff across the territory to support consistent and community-informed service delivery. As part of the LHO training in May 2025, Housing NWT invited Dene Wellness Warriors, an Indigenous-owned counselling and wellness practice grounded in trauma-informed and culturally grounded healing supports, to provide a cultural safety perspective on topics such as team building, self-regulation, de-escalation and self-care.

Additionally, Housing NWT has provided Government Service Officers with training sessions in the past and remains open to providing additional training where there is interest.

Government Service Officers (GSOs) operate within the Single Window Service Centres across the Northwest Territories (NWT), a service delivery model recognized for its culturally responsive approach. This model is designed to respect and integrate the traditional and cultural needs of NWT residents. GSOs often speak the Indigenous languages of the communities they serve and are trained to ensure services are delivered in a culturally safe and respectful manner. Their role includes assisting residents in accessing programs and services provided by both the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) and the Government of Canada, including those offered through Housing NWT.

Recommendation 10

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories present a legislative proposal by mid 2026 to significantly modernize the Northwest

Territories' *Residential Tenancies Act*. The amendments should be centered on the right to adequate housing and provide clear guidance to tenants and landlords on their rights and responsibilities.

GNWT Response

The GNWT partially agrees with this recommendation.

The Department of Justice is undertaking a review of the *Residential Tenancies Act* during the 20th Assembly in response to annual reports of the Rental Officer and the recurring issue of illegal activities in public housing raised through various channels. Based on the results of the review, the Department plans to bring forward proposed amendments to the Act during the 21st Legislative Assembly. Engagement with the public, stakeholders, and partners will be undertaken on the proposed amendments once the Department is ready to move forward.

Recommendation 11

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories conduct an operational review of the Northwest Territories Rental Office, including whether it is accessible for tenants and landlords, whether it is adequately staffed, and whether access to justice through the Northwest Territories Legal Aid Commission is integrated within the roles and responsibilities of the Rental Office.

GNWT Response

The GNWT does not agree with this recommendation at this time.

The GNWT is not planning a review of the Northwest Territories Rental Office beyond the considerations that arise through the ongoing review of the *Residential Tenancies Act*. The Department of Justice routinely considers feedback from the public, partners, and stakeholders related to the operations of the Rental Office, and this input continues to help inform administrative and operational decisions by the Department.

Where capacity pressures or service gaps are identified, the Department of Justice will go through established business planning process including seeking additional resources where warranted.

Recommendation 12

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories work with Housing Northwest Territories and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to develop and endorse a draft definition of the housing continuum that reflects the northern context. This preliminary northern housing definition should incorporate Indigenous understandings of housing and home and support a reframing of housing policy and funding models to

align with the lived realities of northern communities. Committee encourages the use of the alternative framework developed through the “At Home in the North” project led by Dr. Julia Christensen. It is further recommended that Housing Northwest Territories publicly release this draft definition by the end of 2026 to support ongoing dialogue and policy development.

GNWT Response

The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and notes that this work is already underway.

The GNWT is collaborating with Dr. Julia Christensen on initiatives including *At Home in the North*, work related to Core Need Income Thresholds, and examining barriers to employment for individuals living in social housing and will continue to draw on this work to help inform a northern understanding of the housing continuum. The GNWT will engage Indigenous Governments, community governments, NGOs, and other partners through existing forums, including the NWT Housing Forum, to explore a shared definition. Subject to this engagement, the GNWT intends to work toward the public release of a draft definition by the end of 2026.

Recommendation 13

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories reassess its role in providing homeownership programs in communities that are initiating their own locally led housing programs. Where there are locally led initiatives, the Government should redirect its investments to empower Indigenous Government-led or other locally led homeownership programs that offer cultural and community specific supports.

GNWT Response

The GNWT agrees with this recommendation from Committee and notes that this work is already underway.

GNWT is already planning to review its current homeownership programs, including their administration, implementation, and evaluation. Engagement with Indigenous Governments regarding the possibility of transferring the responsibilities of homeownership program implementation and administration has already begun.

Collaboration and partnership with Indigenous Governments is being promoted through the NWT Housing Forum. GNWT must also consider, in its review, the delivery of its homeownership programs with consideration of delivery to non-Indigenous people, as well as communities with multiple Indigenous Governments.

Recommendation 14

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories reinstate the 1980's Homeownership Assistance Program, with modern adjustments to reflect current needs. Committee further recommends the Government implement the "northern transitional homeownership model" which was presented to Committee.

GNWT Response

The GNWT partially agrees with this recommendation, supporting its intent while taking a different approach.

While the 1980's Homeownership Assistance Program was successful in achieving its goals, The GNWT does not believe a re-instatement of this program would be successful today. The costs to build housing have substantially increased, the labour market has changed and building codes and standards have changed. As such, implementation today would not be possible without a mortgage from a financial institution, which may be challenging in non-market communities.

The GNWT will review its current homeownership programs with the goal of modernizing policies and procedures, and adjusting to better reflect current needs, which may include elements of the Homeownership Assistance Program. The GNWT will also look to other jurisdictions homeownership programs, as well as the northern transitional homeownership model.

Recommendation 15

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories review municipal funding policies administered by the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs to ensure they do not create barriers to community-directed housing initiatives, including staff housing, and to commit to a timeline for when this review will be complete.

GNWT Response

The GNWT partially agrees with this recommendation, supporting its intent while taking a different approach.

Based on feedback received from community governments, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs is reviewing and updating the Community Public Infrastructure (CPI) Policy to allow for staff housing purchases. This will give community governments more tools for recruiting and retaining staff. The CPI Policy will be updated by Spring 2026.

Recommendation 16

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories review the current housing policy environment to identify and implement new or expanded incentives that support the development of affordable market housing.

GNWT Response

The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and notes that this work is already underway and ongoing.

The GNWT continues to advance initiatives to incentivize the development of affordable market housing for NWT communities.

In 2025-2026, GNWT reduced barriers and incentivized private sector and Indigenous Governments to invest in affordable housing by modernizing the rental rates for the market housing program.

The GNWT continues to promote the Canada NWT Housing Benefit program to support tenants seeking private market rental accommodation.

The GNWT also continues to provide Indigenous Governments and the private sector with information on the GNWT's market housing needs across the NWT for teachers, nurses and other community front line workers. This provides useful information to inform business cases for further affordable market housing investment.

Recommendation 17

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories expedite the development of a Territorial Building Code to encourage the development of safe and appropriate housing and to dismantle barriers to building in the north and to publicly commit to the timelines necessary for this work to be brought forward.

GNWT Response

The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and notes that this work is already underway.

The Department of Infrastructure (INF) is advancing development of a Building Standards Framework for the Northwest Territories that is anticipated to formally adopt several of the model national codes at a territorial level.

As noted in the GNWT's response to the previous recommendation from Standing Committee, this is a large, multi-departmental initiative requiring a substantive engagement process. INF, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA), and Housing NWT are committed to working together to advance this initiative. The initiative is expected to develop a policy framework by the end of 2026.

Recommendation 18

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories develop and implement a territorial trades strategy for housing-related trades that offers training and certification programs for local residents and builds long-term capacity. This program should establish an agency of tradespeople to ensure access to services across the territory and should subsidize contractors travelling to remote communities.

GNWT Response

The GNWT partially agrees with this recommendation, supporting its intent while taking a different approach.

Housing NWT continues to support trades capacity development by fully funding up to 15 apprentices through its LHOs. The GNWT also supports the broader Apprenticeship, Trade and Occupation Certification program by requiring at least one apprentice work assignment for each new construction contract.

Housing NWT will continue to work with ECE to actively promote the Housing Maintainer trade certification, which would provide needed housing maintainers for our Local Housing Organizations and other organizations.

The GNWT is piloting the use of District Housing NWT trades teams to support Local Housing Organizations in completing priority repairs and maintenance activities across the NWT. These teams will also provide opportunities for further apprenticeship development.

Recommendation 19

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories sign Memorandums of Understanding with Indigenous Governments who have settled land claims with land use policies to encourage housing development.

GNWT Response

The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and notes that this work is already underway.

The GNWT is committed to building partnerships with Indigenous Governments and, where there is mutual interest, works with them on formal arrangements that specifically address housing. These agreements support collaboration on housing planning, program delivery, land and tenure considerations, and capacity building.

To date, the GNWT has entered into:

- MOU on Housing with the Tłıchǫ Government (May 2022).
- MOA on Housing with the Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated (August 2022).
- MOU on Housing with the Délı̨nę Got'ı̨nę Government (February 2023).
- A Collaborative Agreement with the Gwich'in Tribal Council (April 2024).
- MOA on Housing with Acho Dene Koe First Nation (January 2026)

Other agreements are currently under development and the GNWT will continue to pursue similar agreements as Indigenous Governments express interest.

This work also aligns with the mandate commitment to support communities in accessing and managing land for housing. During this Assembly, GNWT has transferred seven lots to Indigenous Governments and non-government organizations, including five lots for Indigenous Government housing projects in Fort McPherson, Gameti, and Whatı̨, and two lots to Habitat for Humanity in Yellowknife. GNWT continues to work with partners to identify additional land for future housing projects.

Recommendation 20

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories develop policies that improve coordination between Housing NWT and other GNWT departments to remove barriers to housing development. This includes urgently increasing the supply of land suitable for residential construction, simplifying land use planning and approval processes, and embedding climate adaptation into land development strategies.

GNWT Response

The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and notes that this work is already underway.

The GNWT appreciates the Committee's focus on addressing housing challenges across the territory and shares the Committee's commitment to improving coordination between Housing NWT and GNWT departments to remove barriers to housing development.

Work is already underway to strengthen interdepartmental collaboration through the Housing NWT Renewal Strategy, which emphasizes integrated planning and partnerships with Indigenous Governments, community governments, the federal government and the private sector.

The GNWT recognizes the urgency of increasing the supply of land suitable for residential construction. The Department of Environment and Climate Change, MACA and Housing NWT are advancing initiatives to identify and prepare land for development, while ensuring that community planning and approval processes are streamlined and transparent.

Housing NWT and MACA are also working collaboratively to advocate with the Federal government for flexible funding agreements that allow for community governments to address derelict and abandoned properties to free up land suitable for new housing development.

Embedding climate adaptation into land development strategies is a priority for this government. The GNWT is committed to incorporating northern climate resilience measures into all housing and land development policies to ensure long-term sustainability and protect communities from the impacts of climate change.

The GNWT will continue to work closely with the Standing Committee, Indigenous Governments, and stakeholders to implement practical solutions that address housing needs and support healthy, sustainable communities across the Northwest Territories.

Recommendation 21

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories, through Housing Northwest Territories, collaborate with Local Housing Organizations to revise their repair and maintenance policies in a manner that empowers public housing tenants to undertake minor repairs and maintenance themselves where appropriate.

GNWT Response

The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and notes that this work is already underway.

The GNWT agrees with Committee's intention to empower public housing tenants. Currently, the *Residential Tenancies Act* allows tenants to repair damage caused by the wilful or negligent conduct of the tenant or persons who are permitted on the premises by the tenant.

With this in mind, the GNWT will review its current repair and maintenance policies with the intent to empower public housing tenants to carry out minor repairs and maintenance of their units. This work will be informed by reviewing current and emerging best practices in the industry. The GNWT is already considering two pilot projects that would allow some minor repairs, such as patching and painting to be carried out by tenants, in collaboration with industry partners.

Recommendation 22

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories provide adequate funding and investment in the development of transitional housing and in strengthening the shelter and safe home system in small communities of the Northwest Territories to relieve the burden on the Yellowknife shelter system. As the first step to achieve this, the Government of the Northwest Territories should develop a costed action plan, outlining specific action steps each with an assigned budget and timeline, and table this in the House within the 20th Legislative Assembly.

GNWT Response

The GNWT agrees with this recommendation from Committee.

Housing NWT and EIA will work closely together to develop a costed action plan looking to expand transitional housing stock in the Northwest Territories. This plan will not be limited solely to small communities but include all communities where the data supports the need for an expansion of services. The GNWT is moving forward with Transitional Housing for Addiction Recovery Program projects for those returning from treatment in Inuvik and Yellowknife, a 24-unit temporary transitional housing project and a permanent transitional housing facility, both in Yellowknife. We must continue to leverage existing funding and program sources, such as Northern Pathways to Housing.

While migration from smaller communities into the Yellowknife shelter system may be partly attributed to the lack of shelter space in those communities, the issue is more complex and influenced by multiple factors. The influx of individuals sleeping rough in Yellowknife during the summer of 2024 highlighted this complexity and underscored the absence of robust data to explain how individuals from outside Yellowknife come to access shelters and services in the city. EIA is working collaboratively with Housing NWT to improve data collection to develop a more evidence-informed understanding of these migration patterns.

Recommendation 23

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories create a 24-hour shelter in the City of Yellowknife, either through an existing or new program, to ensure wrap-around supports are accessible for those utilizing homelessness shelter spaces to move along the housing continuum.

GNWT Response

The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and notes that this work is already underway.

In Yellowknife, 24-hour shelter services are currently available, delivered through a combination of facilities rather than a single 24-hour shelter.

Looking ahead, when the Wellness and Recovery Centre becomes operational in 2027, existing services will be consolidated into a 24/7 facility providing integrated homeless supports in Yellowknife. The GNWT will continue to work with service providers and partners to improve services and reduce barriers to access.

Recommendation 24

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories create 24-hour shelters in communities across the territory, prioritized according to the urgency of shelter needs in the communities, to ensure wrap-around supports are accessible for those utilizing homelessness shelter spaces to move along the housing continuum.

GNWT Response

The GNWT partially agrees with this recommendation, supporting its intent while taking a different approach.

The GNWT acknowledges that 24-hour shelter services are especially needed in the north during the colder months and is pleased to share that in 2026, we will announce significant investments to increase shelter services in the territory outside of Yellowknife. The new funding levels increases shelter services to 24/7 in Inuvik, Hay River and Fort Simpson during wintertime given that these communities do not have access to 24/7 shelter services in their communities. During the warmer summer months (June, July and August) shelters funded by the GNWT will continue to operate up to 16 hours a day (closed during the day), consistent with usual practice due to seasonal reductions in demand for shelter services.

Shelter spaces are a critical component of the housing continuum; however, they are designed to address immediate, short-term needs and are not intended to provide ongoing supports. The GNWT is prioritizing investment in transitional and supportive housing to help individuals stabilize their basic needs and progress toward long-term goals such as health, employment, and permanent housing.

Recommendation 25

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories review and implement strategies to assist non-profit and charitable organizations with contracts to provide social housing or Housing First, with the rise of insurance costs, specifically for their rental housing programs.

GNWT Response

The GNWT agrees with this recommendation from Committee and notes that this work is already underway.

The GNWT conducted an analysis on the rising costs, specifically insurance, for NGOs which provide services such as Housing First, and shelter operations, and this was factored into the development of the proposed budget increases in 2026-27.

Recommendation 26

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories actively collaborate with municipalities and communities across the territory to develop and implement a standardized encampment protocol. This protocol should prioritize the safety and dignity of individuals living in tent encampments, while also ensuring respectful coexistence with neighbouring residents, properties, and public spaces. Establishing clear guidelines and responsibilities will help prevent conflict, support vulnerable populations, and promote community well-being.

GNWT Response

The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and notes that this work is already underway.

The GNWT is committed to working with multiple levels of government, agencies and service providers to develop standard operating procedures. The GNWT is working towards having this completed by Spring 2026.

Recommendation 27

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories work with the federal government to ensure that funding mechanisms, such as those established under the Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy, provide direct and equitable funding to Indigenous Governments and organizations, including those with both settled and unsettled land claims. This approach is necessary to address and reduce funding disparities between regions and to support equitable access to housing resources for all Indigenous peoples across the Northwest Territories.

GNWT Response

The GNWT agrees with this recommendation from Committee.

The GNWT will continue to advocate for direct and equitable access to federal housing funding for Indigenous Governments and Indigenous organizations in the NWT, regardless of land claim status including through the NWT Council of Leaders. Responsibility for transparency and reporting on distinctions-based funding allocations, however, rests with the federal government and the funding recipients.

The GNWT has raised this issue with Canada through multiple intergovernmental venues, including federal-provincial-territorial housing tables and discussions related to the Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy. The NWT Housing Forum has also supported this work by coordinating direct engagement between Indigenous Governments and federal departments. A special meeting was held in 2023 on the Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy where Indigenous governments provided direct feedback on northern housing needs and funding gaps.

The GNWT remains committed to sustained advocacy to ensure that Indigenous Governments and Indigenous organizations receive direct and equitable funding in the NWT.

Recommendation 28

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories collaborate with the Yukon Government and the Government of Nunavut to develop a unified pan territorial advocacy plan. This plan should be used to advocate to the Government of Canada to ensure that federal policies and funding are better aligned with Northern realities and Indigenous perspectives in light of federal strategies (i.e. Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy) and funding that continues to fall short in reaching the housing needs of northerners.

GNWT Response

The GNWT partially agrees with this recommendation, supporting its intent while taking a different approach.

The GNWT works alongside Yukon and Nunavut through federal-provincial-territorial housing tables and other intergovernmental forums. These venues allow the territories to raise shared challenges such as high construction costs, limited infrastructure, and the need for flexible, distinctions-based funding.

The three territories have explored more formal pan-territorial approaches in the past. The benefit of pan-territorial approaches has sometimes been limited by the approach the Government of Canada has taken to housing funding, and it is one of many intergovernmental advocacy tools. The GNWT will continue to look for opportunities to advance common northern housing issues pan-territorially where interests align.

The GNWT will also continue to raise northern housing needs directly with the Government of Canada, including the need for federal programs like the Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy to better reflect the realities faced by NWT communities.

Recommendation 29

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories incorporate the recommendations contained in this report into its proposed 3-Year Housing Plan. Committee expects the Housing Plan to clearly demonstrate how each recommendation is being addressed, including the actions to be taken, anticipated outcomes, and timelines for implementation.

GNWT Response

The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and notes that this work is already underway.

In March 2025, the Legislative Assembly approved an increase to Housing NWT's capital plan, providing approximately \$50 million annually for the remainder of the 20th Assembly. This multi-year investment continues to bring us towards improving the suitability, accessibility, and affordability of housing in the NWT.

While the 2025/26 capital planning process is completed, we believe elements of Committee's report are already reflected within it. Examples include early engagement with Local Housing Organizations and Indigenous governments on project design and location, increasing local and northern contracting, and advancing modular construction through a three year, 88-unit design-build initiative.

The GNWT will consider the Committee's recommendations as part of future capital planning processes.

Recommendation 30

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories, through Housing Northwest Territories, enhance transparency and reporting of distinction-based funding allocations to ensure that the needs of each community and the overall advancement of housing in the territory are being met.

GNWT Response

The GNWT partially agrees with this recommendation, supporting its intent while taking a different approach.

Distinctions-based housing funding is administered directly by the Government of Canada to Indigenous Governments and Indigenous organizations. The GNWT is not involved in these funding decisions and is not always informed of allocation details. In some cases, Indigenous Governments may also choose not to share this information with the GNWT. Transparency and reporting therefore rest with the federal government and funding recipients.

The GNWT will continue to advocate for direct and equitable access to federal housing funding for Indigenous Governments and Indigenous organizations in the NWT, regardless of land claim status. While the federal government leads distinctions-based funding processes, the GNWT engages with Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada and other federal partners to identify where territorial support may be helpful in advancing federally funded housing priorities in the communities.

Recommendation 31

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories establish a mechanism to more equitably assess eligibility for homeownership programs. These programs should take into account individual circumstances, particularly in cases involving outstanding mortgage and rental arrears, to ensure that the programs are responsive to the complex realities faced by residents.

GNWT Response

The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and notes that this work is already underway.

The GNWT agrees with Committee's intention to ensure equitable assessments of eligibility for homeownership programs. The GNWT already evaluates applications by considering the individual circumstances and complex realities of applicants. The GNWT wants to ensure clients are set up for success by ensuring clients understand expectations and realities of being a homeowner, including responsibilities, such as maintenance, and liabilities (particularly in non-market communities). The GNWT will carry out a broader review of all homeownership programs to assess eligibility and ensure that programs meet the needs of NWT residents.

Recommendation 32

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories provide more transparency surrounding the specific age and condition of housing units allowable under the Homeownership Initiative Policy, and publicly publish the age of public housing units that have been deemed eligible for the Homeownership Initiative Program.

GNWT Response

The GNWT agrees with the recommendation and notes that this work is already underway.

The GNWT appreciates Committee's recommendation to enhance transparency within the Homeownership Initiative Program. We recognize that clear and accessible information is essential for residents considering homeownership opportunities.

The GNWT is committed to providing greater clarity on the age and condition requirements for housing units eligible under the Homeownership Initiative Program to clients interested in becoming homeowners under the Program. Work is underway to review and update program guidelines to ensure they are easy to understand and publicly available. This commitment aligns with our broader commitment to accountability and openness in housing programs, while supporting informed decision-making for residents across the territory.

Recommendation 33

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories reform the housing appeal process to support the progressive realization of the right to housing and ensure more inclusive, transparent, and efficient oversight. This necessarily includes:

- That all appeals under Public Housing and Homeownership Programs bypass the District Director and proceed directly to the Housing Appeal Committee to streamline the process and reduce administrative burden and barriers;
- That the composition of the Housing Appeal Committee be revised to require membership of individuals with lived experience of homelessness or housing need, and where possible, individuals with expertise in human rights, to ensure a more representative and rights-based approach to decision-making.

GNWT Response

The GNWT partially agrees with this recommendation, supporting its intent while taking a different approach.

Under Housing NWT's Renewal Strategy, the appeal process for certain Housing NWT decisions was re-established in 2022, with an Independent Appeal Committee as a final step. The GNWT created a three-tier appeal process to ensure a thorough review of decisions at the community and regional level are exhausted first. These intermediate steps ensure more efficient resolutions and ensure all information is presented and considered, and a thorough review package is available for consideration by the Committee, should it reach this stage. The Appeal Committee serves as the final authority to review appeal decisions made by Local Housing Authorities and District Directors.

For the future appointment of public members to the Appeal Committee, the GNWT will consider lived experience of homelessness or housing need as an asset for selection criteria.

The GNWT will continue to monitor and collect data on the current housing appeal process to help inform a future review of the housing appeal policies, including the composition of the Housing Appeal Committee.

Recommendation 34

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories transition all current housing rating systems to a rights-based approach, focusing on ensuring fair and equitable access to housing for all, particularly those in greatest need. This should involve prioritising vulnerable groups, promoting non-discrimination, and empowering tenants in the housing process.

GNWT Response

The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and notes that this work has already been completed.

The GNWT agrees with Committee that the point rating system must reflect and focus on fair and equitable access to housing for all, particularly those in greatest need.

Under the Housing NWT Renewal Strategy, the public housing point rating system was updated and modernized in 2023 to add social factors, such as chronic homelessness and family violence. As of December 2025, the GNWT also added additional points for transitional housing considerations. The GNWT is open to continuing to evolve its point-rating system with its ongoing work to recognize the differing and evolving circumstances of those along the housing continuum through its program delivery.

The GNWT will continue to review and update policies, procedures and guidance on the point rating system to promote fairness, transparency, and consistency. This will be done with a view to ensuring policies are person-centered and culturally appropriate.

Recommendation 35

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories review the Public Housing Tenant Eligibility Policy to ensure that it provides those ineligible for public housing a clear and time-bound response to how they could have their eligibility reinstated.

GNWT Response

The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and notes that this work has already been completed.

The GNWT agrees with the importance of this recommendation and has already incorporated this into its policies and procedures. The GNWT provides ineligible Public Housing applicants with a written response outlining the reasons for their ineligibility. GNWT continues to make referrals and work with ineligible applicants to achieve eligibility for its Public Housing Program. As per Public Housing Policy, applications are reconsidered, and eligibility can be reinstated, after a 6-month waiting period.

Recommendation 36

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories revise the Community Housing Plan policy to include capacity-building supports tailored to community needs. This should include additional human, financial, and technical resources to support implementation of housing plans.

GNWT Response

The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and notes that this work has already been completed.

Previously, the GNWT focused its efforts on the development of housing plans at the community level, however, with the increase in distinctions-based funding from the Government of Canada to Indigenous Governments, the demand for community housing plans has been reduced significantly. As a result, the GNWT has shifted its focus to the completion of the Territorial Housing Needs Assessment. At present, GNWT remains open to working with any interested Indigenous Government or community government that wishes to develop a Community Housing Plan.

Recommendation 37

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories conduct an audit of the Small Community Homelessness Fund to determine and report on its overall policy performance.

GNWT Response

The GNWT partially agrees with this recommendation, supporting its intent while taking a different approach.

The GNWT will conduct a program evaluation of the Small Community Homelessness Fund as part of its future program evaluation work. Based on risk factors identified through Phase II of the GNWT's Government Renewal Initiative the review of this program was not deemed one of the higher priority program reviews.

Recommendation 38

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories revise and adjust the eligible income thresholds for co-payment for the Senior Home Repair Program, the Seniors Aging in Place Program, and the Home Repair Program based on inflation and cost of living increases, and review every 3 years thereafter.

GNWT Response

The GNWT agrees with this recommendation from Committee.

The GNWT is aware of concerns and challenges with the co-payment option and, as part of its Renewal Strategy, removed co-payment for the Emergency Repair Program on April 2023. The GNWT is planning a review of its homeownership programs with the goal of modernizing policies and procedures and better reflecting current needs. Co-payment requirements will be assessed in the context of this planned review.

Recommendation 39

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories review and revise the eligible properties for the Senior Home Repair Program, the Seniors Aging in Place Program, the Home Repair Program, and the Preventative Maintenance Program, specifically expanding the eligibility coverage of each policy to include primary residences outside municipal boundaries.

GNWT Response

The GNWT does not agree with this recommendation at this time.

The GNWT will review and revise eligibility of its current homeownership programs with the goal of modernizing policies and procedures, and of making adjustments to better reflect current needs. Due to the high demand for repair programs within NWT communities, expanding eligibility to primary residences outside municipal boundaries is currently not being considered.

Recommendation 40

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories review the Disposal of Residential Property Policy to ensure that Housing Northwest Territories' assets located on treaty territory, and subject to disposal under the policy, provide Indigenous governments with the first right of refusal.

GNWT Response

The GNWT agrees with this recommendation from Committee.

The GNWT will be amending the prioritization criteria set out in the current Disposal of Residential Property Policy to include Indigenous Governments.

Recommendation 41

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories review the Community Housing Support Initiative program to ensure it is reaching its goals and full effectiveness. Specifically, Committee recommends interviewing current and past recipients on the feasibility of supporting housing affordability and adequacy beyond the duration of their contribution agreement in order to evaluate the initiative's long-term impact on housing. It is recommended that the Government of the Northwest Territories publish the results of the program review and share it with the Standing Committee on Social Development.

GNWT Response

The GNWT agrees with this recommendation from Committee.

The Community Housing Support Initiative is delivered through contribution funding and the GNWT receives reporting from recipients as part of existing agreements. Through ongoing discussions with those who have received or requested this funding, the GNWT is aware of the benefits of the initiative and how it is being used to support housing outcomes.

The GNWT will work with Indigenous Governments and other past recipients to review and refine program guidelines to support greater equity across Indigenous Governments, and to improve reporting. Following this work, the GNWT will return with updated application and reporting requirements to support the collection of specific data and enable a more rigorous review. The GNWT will share outcomes with the Standing Committee on Social Development.

Recommendation 42

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories review all Housing Northwest Territories' financial policies, including policies respecting loans and grants, to ensure treaty obligations are upheld. Specifically, to ensure that policies safeguard against unfairly including treaty-related income such as dividend payments, or gifts, into an applicant's income and thus disproportionately impacting their eligibility or level of assistance. The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories make any necessary policy changes to achieve this.

GNWT Response

The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and notes that this is already the case.

The Public Housing Income Policy uses line 15000 of Canada Revenue Agency's Notice of Assessment, which does not include non-taxable benefits. Treaty-related income such as dividend payments, or gifts are non-taxable benefits and therefore are not included in an applicant's income for assessing public housing rent.

Recommendation 43

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories review and revise the Collections Policy to ensure that the policy prioritizes the well-being and dignity of individuals and their right to adequate housing. Collection actions should not jeopardize an individual's ability to secure and maintain adequate housing. Further, the Collections Policy should establish clear accountability mechanisms to ensure that collections comply with human rights standards. In its review, the Government of the Northwest Territories should engage individuals and communities experiencing housing challenges.

GNWT Response

The GNWT partially agrees with this recommendation, supporting its intent while taking a different approach.

The GNWT's rent collections continue to provide critical resources to operate and maintain the territory's public housing program.

The GNWT continues to take a client centered approach to assist and counsel clients in addressing their arrears situations, including the use of affordable repayment plans. Formal collection actions are a last resort.

The GNWT recognizes that there are client situations where collection efforts should be suspended and debt forgiveness considered. In these circumstances, GNWT works closely with clients to fully utilize available debt forgiveness options under the government's *Financial Administration Act*, including compromise agreements.

Recommendation 44

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories respond to this report within 120 days.