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# Guiding Principles

This Framework for Action aligns closely with Inuit Societal Values. These guiding principles are fundamental to building healthy communities rooted in Inuit culture and traditions, and the Department of Family Services has ensured that this framework incorporates these values. Below is a description of the principles most relevant to addressing homelessness and how they were taken into consideration as the framework was developed:

## **Inuuqatigiitsiarniq: Respecting others, relationships and caring for people**

This principle reminds us to be compassionate, caring and sensitive to the struggles of each person. The circumstances that lead to homelessness are complex and many factors must be considered when developing solutions. A holistic approach that speaks to the needs and challenges of each individual will provide a platform for transitioning out of homelessness and into stable housing.

## **Tunnganarniq: Fostering good spirits by being open, welcoming and inclusive**

This principle speaks to the importance of including all those who play a role in addressing homelessness, especially those who have been or who are currently homeless. Individuals with lived experience of homelessness must be involved in discussions that affect them and the Department of Family Services will work to create an inclusive environment that is safe, welcoming and respectful. Everyone's input is crucial to making informed decisions and ensuring that our efforts are aligned with the needs of those experiencing homelessness.

## **Pijitsirniq: Serving and providing for family and/or community**

Helping family and community is an important part of Inuit culture. This principle reminds us that it is our duty as a society to care for those in need, especially our most vulnerable, marginalized citizens. Every person deserves to have a home and we must make it our priority to ensure that Nunavummiut experiencing homelessness have access to safe, stable housing and any supports needed to maintain it, while providing opportunities to hone the life skills necessary to prevent further episodes of homelessness.

## **Ajiiqatigiinniq: Decision making through discussion and consensus**

Building on the idea that an inclusive process is the best way forward, this principle further emphasizes the importance of including the voices of community members, key partners, service providers, government and non-government representatives and individuals with lived experience of homelessness in the conversation. Informed decisions cannot be made without allowing the input of all involved to be heard and considered. Additionally, coming together to share our different perspectives and ideas will deepen our understanding of each

other's roles in finding solutions for homelessness and the different challenges we face, as well as build and strengthen relationships among partners to foster new ways of thinking and working together.

### **Piliriqatigiinni/ Ikajuqtiigiinni: Working together for a common cause**

Strong working relationships will be a key factor in reducing homelessness. While many organizations play very different roles in addressing homelessness, it is important to remember that all are working towards the same goal. Good communication and structured ways of working together will help us to remain centered around this purpose. It is the Department of Family Services' priority over the next year to establish a foundation where all partners including government, Inuit organizations, non-profit organizations,

community representatives, service providers, front line workers and individuals with lived experience of homelessness are engaged and included in the collective effort to address homelessness.

### **Qanuqtuurniq: Being innovative and resourceful**

Addressing homelessness in Nunavut will require innovation and resourcefulness among all involved. The Department of Family Services will work to identify and make the best possible use of existing government and community assets. With our partners, we will discuss possibilities, welcome new ideas, and develop creative solutions while continuously exploring ways to obtain additional funds and resources. We will also look to success stories from similar jurisdictions to see what could be adapted and applied to Nunavut.



# Introduction

Homelessness in Nunavut is a widespread issue affecting the lives of many people across the territory. There are individuals and families within our communities who are without a safe place to sleep, who lack stability and security and who struggle from day to day just to survive. The limited number of emergency shelters and access to services designed to assist homeless Nunavummiut means that many individuals are taken in by friends or family, resulting in overcrowded homes. Others have no place to go and are forced to seek shelter in places not meant to be housing and to endure the extreme climate and harsh conditions of our environment.

Homelessness is a complex issue, often compounded by factors such as mental illness, addiction, family violence, or loss of employment. A coordinated system of care consisting of a range of support services is needed to assist homeless Nunavummiut as they work towards transitioning into stable housing. Currently, accessing and navigating the existing network of services is difficult.

Additionally, the absence of a complete range of housing options prevents some individuals from accessing the housing best suited to their needs. There is no transitional housing, which serves as a bridge between emergency shelters and stable housing, and a lack of supportive housing, which meets the needs of those who are unable to live independently. Furthermore, the shortage of affordable, suitable housing options makes it difficult for many individuals to find stable housing, leaving them trapped in the state of homelessness.

## The Role of the Department of Family Services

The role of the Department of Family Services with respect to homelessness is centred on supporting solutions for Nunavummiut experiencing absolute homelessness and those at risk of absolute homelessness.

**Absolute homelessness** occurs when an individual is without housing of any kind, and includes people staying in emergency shelters and those with no choice but to sleep in places not meant to be permanent, year-long housing such as abandoned houses, tents, sheds, or even outdoors<sup>1</sup>.

This differs from **hidden homelessness**, also known as “couch surfing”, where an individual does not have a usual home. The hidden homeless include people staying with family or friends and those who remain in correctional facilities or medical institutions longer than necessary, or endure unhealthy relationships because they are without housing arrangements. Without stable housing, the hidden homeless are at constant risk of absolute homelessness. Nunavut’s lack of diverse housing is being addressed through the Government of Nunavut’s forthcoming *Blueprint for Action on Housing*, coordinated by the Nunavut Housing Corporation.

In guiding the implementation of this Framework for Action, the Department of Family Services’ work will be focused on emergency homeless shelters, transitional housing and the coordination of homelessness services.

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<sup>1</sup> Not including individuals living in tents or cabins for cultural or recreational purposes.

This framework complements the work being done by the Nunavut Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, a forum for organizations that are committed to a shared understanding of poverty and a shared approach to poverty reduction in Nunavut. The Roundtable's shared approach to poverty reduction recognizes the need for more emergency shelters, transitional and supportive housing options, increased access to housing and better coordination of support services to meet the different needs of Nunavummiut.

Further, consistent with the performance measurement framework developed under the *Collaboration for Poverty Reduction Act* and as described in the *Makimaniq Five Year Poverty Reduction Action Plan*, we have identified indicators to measure progress in our efforts to increase access to housing that is affordable and meets Nunavut's diverse needs.

This framework will also complement solutions for Nunavummiut at-risk of homelessness currently being developed through poverty reduction, housing, mental health, addictions and family violence programming.

## Public Dialogue on Homelessness

Until recently, there has been no extensive public dialogue on homelessness in Nunavut. Communities are aware that this issue exists and efforts are already being made to help those in need. More engagement is needed to develop a deeper understanding of the challenges facing homeless Nunavummiut and to guide us in responding more effectively to this problem.

As a starting point towards encouraging public dialogue on how to best address homelessness, the Department of Family Services commissioned a research study to establish the scope of the problem and to bring the voices of those affected by homelessness into the conversation. The study, *Profile of Homelessness in Nunavut* (Vink, 2014) was built around the importance of an inclusive process which encourages and values the participation of communities, front-line workers and individuals with lived experience of homelessness. This unique approach provided invaluable insight into what is needed to overcome homelessness in Nunavut and the importance of community involvement.

Several methods were used to gather information for the study, including point-in-time counts of individuals experiencing absolute homelessness across Nunavut in February and March of 2014, detailed surveys of those who self-identified as homeless and discussions with key homelessness partners.

- The point-in-time counts provided a sense of the scope of the problem by estimating the number of individuals experiencing absolute homelessness across the territory on one specific day.

Direct counts were conducted in Iqaluit, Rankin Inlet and Cambridge Bay in locations where homeless individuals are known to spend time, and indirect counts were conducted in the remaining communities by contacting service providers by phone and asking them to estimate how many individuals they were aware of who were without housing of any kind.

- The surveys were a mechanism to engage individuals who self-identified as homeless and provide an opportunity for them to share their experiences, including what contributed to their loss of housing, what support services they accessed, and what they felt they needed to move beyond homelessness.

Everyone had a story to tell, and while the circumstances and events that lead to homelessness are diverse and complex, the resulting experiences shared common threads: constant danger of having no safe place to sleep, feelings of frustration and despair, difficulty finding help and navigating the support services, and a sense of disconnect from family and community.

- The discussions with key homelessness partners were used to initiate a dialogue about a Nunavut-specific understanding of homelessness, discuss the challenges homeless individuals face when connecting to support services or transitioning into stable housing, and gather suggestions about what would help individuals find housing. Participants included government representatives, Inuit organizations, service providers and front-line workers from across the territory.

The information and insights obtained from the research study and subsequent community meetings have shaped the content of this framework. Homelessness agencies, key partners and individuals with lived experience of homelessness shared their thoughts on ways to lead those experiencing homelessness into a more safe, stable and self-reliant way of life.

This framework is founded on two fundamental beliefs:

1. In order to effectively address homelessness in Nunavut, we *must* work together. All stakeholders including government, Inuit organizations, service providers, community non-profit organizations, front line workers and individuals with lived experience of homelessness must come together to coordinate efforts and share ideas, knowledge and resources.
2. The best way to address homelessness is at the community level. With 25 communities spread across our vast territory, each with its own unique needs, challenges and resources, a “one size fits all” approach will not work. It is crucial to actively engage each community throughout the territory and encourage community-driven initiatives.

This Framework for Action takes a ground-up, grassroots approach by using available resources in the most effective, creative, productive ways possible. It is a living document which centres around the importance of creating new partnerships and discovering how best to work together, and will evolve as conversations continue and as new ideas emerge.



# Homelessness in Nunavut

Homelessness can take on many forms and impacts people in different ways. It affects all types of people including individuals and families, youth, adults, elders, and those with disabilities or illnesses. The root causes of homelessness are diverse and complex, resulting in experiences that are unique for each person.

## What Does Homelessness Mean to Nunavummiut?

Homelessness can mean staying with family or friends in an overcrowded home, without a place to call one's own. The hidden homeless, or "couch surfers", if not relying on the kindness of family or friends, simply would not have any place to go. Homelessness can mean living outside in make-shift huts, sheds or sea cans on the outskirts of communities. Others find themselves seeking refuge in furnace rooms, cold porches, under building heating vents or, where they exist, emergency homeless shelters. Homelessness can mean having to leave a community or even the territory to find shelter or a home. For many other Nunavummiut, the daily struggle of paying rent or a mortgage and feeding their family, coupled with the high cost of living, lack of suitable employment and relationship breakdowns puts them at risk of becoming homeless.

While one person may consider themselves as homeless in a given living situation, another person may not consider themselves homeless given the same set of circumstances. For example, not everyone staying with family or friends, without a place of their own, would consider themselves homeless. Many enjoy living with and caring for extended family. For others living in the same circumstance, constantly sharing space can feel intrusive and burdensome, and they long for the security of their own place. Even benevolent homeowners providing shelter to friends and family with no other home have expressed feeling homeless in their own homes, lacking personal space and safety.

Some Nunavummiut who live outside in tents, huts or sheds may not consider themselves homeless, content to live on the land, free of shelter rules or tenant responsibilities, having no desire for conventional housing. Others have been forced to live outside due to housing arrears, lack of affordable housing options or shelter policies and do consider themselves homeless. Some who are able to access emergency shelters may stay for years and consider the shelter to be home, surrounded by staff and friends they call "family." Furthermore, there are many who would not identify as homeless because they have never known any other way of living.

## What are the Root Causes of Homelessness?

The circumstances and events that lead to homelessness are different for each person, and more often than not, it is a combination of factors that cause someone to lose their housing.

The *Profile of Homelessness in Nunavut* (Vink, 2014) research study conducted surveys with Nunavummiut who considered themselves to be homeless, and asked them what factors contributed to their situation.

The following table was taken from the study and lists the different issues reported by the survey respondents. While these results provide helpful insights into what causes homelessness, it is important to



keep in mind that the relatively small number of respondents may not reflect Nunavut's population as a whole.

<b>Profile of Homelessness in Nunavut (Vink,2014)</b>	
<b>Survey Results: Factors Contributing to Homelessness</b>	
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Percentage of Respondents Affected</b>
Income is not enough to afford housing	25%
Family, partner or roommate forced them to move	25%
Broke up with a spouse or other family change	23%
Moved to a new community	21%
Hurt or threatened by someone in the home	20%
Evicted	15%
Using alcohol, using drugs or other substances	15%
No income	9%
Mental illness/disability	9%
Income from work dropped or stopped	8%
Released from prison/jail	8%
Removed/relocated through justice/RCMP	5%
Fire	5%
Family member or personal illness	3%
Released from a health facility	3%
Income Assistance dropped or stopped	2%
Left employer that provided housing	2%
Released from a mental health facility	1%

## The Cycle of Homelessness

For some, homelessness is a temporary crisis that each person and each family tries to move out of as quickly as possible. For others, it has become a long-term struggle. For others still, it is a reoccurring cycle that can last for years at a time, or even a lifetime. A person who has been couch surfing, house-sitting or moving from community to community may suddenly find themselves without a place to stay, wandering the streets in search of refuge. A family staying in an emergency shelter may leave to stay with family or friends, only to return to the shelter because they feel they are burdening an already overcrowded home or have overstayed their welcome. Others who are fortunate enough to find stable housing may be vulnerable to homelessness for reasons such as low or unstable income, housing arrears, tenant damages and abusive relationships, and soon find themselves homeless again.

## The Effects of Homelessness

No matter how the experience of homelessness manifests itself, it is important to recognize that it is much more than simply being without housing. Homelessness affects every aspect of one's life: one's sense of

self-worth, the ability to sustain personal relationships, to hold a job, and offers little room to think about or take advantage of opportunities to better one's circumstances. Without housing stability and security, meeting basic needs is a daily struggle.

This struggle is sometimes compounded by a disconnect from culture, home community or even the territory. The lack of comfort, support and familiarity that come with one's connection to culture and community can result in feelings of loneliness and despair, along with a loss of motivation or ability to work towards overcoming homelessness.

Homelessness is felt by the community and territory as a whole. Many homes are overcrowded, a stressor that has resulted in an increase in violence, substance abuse, conflict, and suicide.

## **Sense of Community**

Nunavummiut have a unique and strong sense of community and collectively carry the burden of what it means to be homeless in Nunavut.

Together, Nunavummiut care for the most vulnerable citizens, including those without a home. In the absence of shelter and support services, it is not uncommon for families and entire communities to take people in or raise money to send a homeless individual or family to another community or even outside of the territory, where services can be accessed.

If not for the humanity of friends, family, neighbours and communities, homelessness in Nunavut would be much more acute. Compassion for others means that Nunavummiut will not see someone suffer in the cold, will take in those who have been abandoned, and at times share limited resources to help others.



# Framework for Action Summary

This Framework for Action is based on ideas and priorities brought forward by key partners through community-led discussions and detailed surveys of individuals experiencing homelessness. It is centred on the principle of working together through an inclusive process that solicits and incorporates the input of all those affected by homelessness, especially that of communities and Nunavummiut with lived experience of homelessness.

The Framework for Action is a short-term framework consisting of actions to be carried out in the upcoming year, led by the Department of Family Services. Family Services will work to improve coordination among key partners, create a clear picture of each community's needs, remove barriers preventing homeless individuals from accessing support services, update policies to better support homelessness initiatives and identify ways to increase resources.

Family Services will also work to engage homelessness partners and stakeholders across Nunavut to participate in the development of a long-term plan. It is our vision that these short-term actions will establish the foundation needed to create a long-term plan together.

1. **Strong Working Relationships:** Coordinate efforts among key homelessness partners to improve the effectiveness, delivery and accessibility of supports and services. This will include better coordinating programs and services provided by the Department of Family Services, to address community needs, engaging individuals with lived experience of homelessness, and strengthening the partnership between the Department of Family Services and other Government of Nunavut Departments, notably the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Justice and Health.
2. **Community Engagement and Needs:** Engage communities across the territory to establish an understanding of what resources are required to address the needs of each community. This will guide us in using our limited resources to achieve the greatest impact possible.
3. **System of Care:** Decrease barriers preventing individuals experiencing homelessness and those at risk from accessing the support services they need. This will be achieved by raising awareness of existing services and improving coordination and delivery of services at the community, regional and territorial levels.
4. **Policy:** Update Department of Family Services policies to better support shelter operations and homelessness initiatives.
5. **Resources:** Identify ways to increase resources at the community, regional and territorial levels in order to support the development of new shelter and support services, programs, and transitional housing in Nunavut.

# Framework for Action

## 1. Strong Working Relationships

Working together effectively is essential in order to support solutions for absolute homelessness and those at risk of absolute homelessness successfully. No one organization can accomplish this alone.

Understanding and sharing this responsibility is the first step in creating a more coordinated response. Collaboration will save time, energy and resources, and most importantly, contribute to healing the wound that continued experiences of homelessness have created.

In an environment where each of the 25 communities is isolated from one another, working better together can be challenging, but is essential. All involved must commit to creating a space that is welcoming and inclusive; a space where new relationships and creative solutions can be forged.

The following actions have been identified as ways to better coordinate efforts among key homelessness partners in order to improve the effectiveness, delivery and accessibility of supports and services.

### **(I) Coordinated Response: Department of Family Services, Government of Nunavut**

The Government of Nunavut's Department of Family Services consists of several divisions whose policies and programs impact efforts to address homelessness in different ways: Poverty Reduction, Child and Family Services, Career Development and Income Assistance. Better connecting the roles that each of the divisions play in the homelessness system of care will help to coordinate and strengthen support services and ultimately have a greater positive impact on homeless Nunavummiut. We will also review policies and programs related to homelessness to improve their effectiveness and streamline their delivery.

### **(II) Engage individuals with lived experience of homelessness**

The input of individuals with lived experience of homelessness is essential to developing solutions for homelessness and for those at risk. Those who have faced this harsh reality understand better than anyone what it means to be without a home and all of the struggles and challenges surrounding it. Good decisions cannot be made without their involvement.

This engagement must be undertaken in ways that are comfortable, safe and supportive. To ensure the participation of individuals who have or who are experiencing homelessness in Nunavut, the Department of Family Services will:

- Contact shelters and other places where individuals experiencing homelessness are known to spend time and emphasize the value of their input in our efforts to address homelessness
- Invite individuals with lived experience of homelessness to participate in:
  - Community Action Groups
  - Focus groups and research opportunities
  - One-on-one discussions

- Reduce barriers to participation by offering supports such as transportation or taxi vouchers
- Offer incentives to get involved such as honoraria and gift certificates
- Provide opportunities for one-time or ongoing participation

### **(III) Strengthen the Department of Family Services' partnership with the Nunavut Housing Corporation**

The Nunavut Housing Corporation plays a vital role in the creation, coordination and administration of affordable housing and housing programs across the territory. It is the Corporation's mission to provide homes to all Nunavummiut which promote a healthy, secure, independent and dignified lifestyle.

There is an obvious connection between solutions to homelessness and the broader housing work of the Nunavut Housing Corporation.

Through this Framework for Action, the Department of Family Services and the Nunavut Housing Corporation will ensure our collective response to homelessness in Nunavut is comprehensive, coordinated and viable.

The Department of Family Services will work with the Nunavut Housing Corporation to:

- Continue to share information and resources, particular to:
  - Identifying potential units that could serve as emergency shelter or transitional housing solutions
  - Advocating for the housing needs of Nunavummiut who are absolute homeless or at risk of absolute homelessness
- Identify solutions to support absolute homeless Nunavummiut transition into permanent, independent housing
- Coordinate the development and implementation of policies and strategies, inclusive of the forthcoming *Blueprint for Action on Housing*, that will effectively and holistically respond to the housing and housing support needs of those experiencing absolute homelessness

### **(IV) Strengthen the Department of Family Services' partnership with Health and Justice**

The Departments of Health and Justice play vital roles in the delivery of services that help address some of the root causes of absolute homelessness as well addressing its effects. Through this Framework for Action, the Department of Family Services will work with Health and Justice to determine ways to better reach individuals experiencing absolute homelessness through existing services and to identify gaps where there is a need to create new programs.

## 2. Community Engagement and Needs

Throughout the research process for the *Profile of Homelessness in Nunavut* (Vink, 2014) study, visits were made to Nunavut's three regional centres: Iqaluit, Rankin Inlet and Cambridge Bay. Due to time and financial constraints it was not possible to visit the remaining 22 communities. Instead, community partners and service providers were contacted by phone and asked about the extent of absolute homelessness in their communities. However, conversations were limited and there is still much to learn about the various needs and priorities of each community.

As an immediate step towards engaging our partners in developing community-based solutions, the Department of Family Services will lead targeted discussions to determine each community's needs and priorities.

Through the Department's community engagement, we will:

- Establish key homelessness contacts in each community
- Identify needs, priorities, resources and commitments at the community level in order to develop and implement homelessness solutions
- Identify areas where more research is required to understand and respond effectively to homelessness
- Facilitate information-sharing with community partners locally and Nunavut wide
- Prepare reports that discuss the state of homelessness in each community and identifies the community's needs, concerns and accomplishments
- Discuss the concept of Housing First<sup>2</sup> and explore the possibility of adapting it to Nunavut communities

We will also seek to build an understanding in each community of the socio-demographic characteristics of Nunavummiut experiencing absolute homelessness and those most at risk. This will help to determine the types of housing and supports needed to promote successful, independent living.

Taken together, this information will help to establish an understanding of the needs of each community and resources required to address them. This information will guide us in using our limited resources to achieve the greatest possible impact.

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<sup>2</sup> Housing First is an evidence-based approach where housing is provided to individuals experiencing homelessness along with supports to address addiction or mental health issues, and housing is not contingent on sobriety or treatment. Employment and Social Development Canada, Housing First website accessed at [http://www.esdc.gc.ca/eng/communities/homelessness/housing\\_first.index.shtml](http://www.esdc.gc.ca/eng/communities/homelessness/housing_first.index.shtml)

### 3. System of Care

Support services play a critical role in the prevention, reduction and reoccurrence of homelessness and together form the system of care. The range of support services offered to individuals experiencing homelessness and those most at-risk is broad and varies in communities across Nunavut. These include:

Counselling	Cultural
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alcohol and drug</li> <li>• Addictions</li> <li>• Mental health</li> <li>• Grief and loss</li> <li>• Trauma recovery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshops that support kamiq and amautiq making, sewing, carving</li> <li>• On the land healing retreats</li> <li>• Access to traditional foods</li> <li>• Access to Elder's Circles</li> </ul>
Health	Financial
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health education: nutrition, meal planning</li> <li>• Medication administration and stabilization</li> <li>• Monthly health check-ups with on-site doctors</li> <li>• Referrals to counseling, medical, legal and other health services in and out of territory</li> <li>• Wellness workshops</li> <li>• Outpatient services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Income Assistance</li> <li>• Financial literacy and management</li> <li>• Community fundraising for emergency travel</li> </ul>
Housing	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Referrals to housing support</li> <li>• Assistance with accessing housing (arrear payment, wait list application)</li> <li>• Building relationships with the private sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walk-in day programming and services (laundry services, bathing)</li> <li>• Food and clothing banks</li> <li>• Employment readiness programs</li> <li>• Life skills training</li> <li>• Community outreach</li> <li>• Parenting programs</li> <li>• Child care</li> </ul>

These support services are delivered by the federal, territorial, and municipal governments as well as Inuit organizations and community non-profit organizations. Service delivery and accessibility varies, sometimes making it difficult for individuals to access. Navigating this system of care can be confusing and overwhelming, and can deter individuals from pursuing supports that could help them in their time of need.

The following actions have been identified as ways to decrease barriers that prevent individuals experiencing homelessness and those at risk from accessing the supports they need through better coordination and improved delivery of these services in communities, regionally and territory-wide. Further, these actions will help to strengthen the capacity of communities and their response to individuals and families who find themselves homeless. The Department of Family Services will work to:

- Identify current shelter and support services throughout Nunavut to determine whether gaps or duplication of effort exist in the system of care
- Increase information sharing among shelters, service providers and homeless individuals to address knowledge gaps that exist in the system of care
- Raise awareness of existing shelter and support services through community gatherings, local radio announcements, social media, posters, and pamphlets
- Create a shelter and service pocketbook resource that clearly identifies all homeless shelter and support services and a statement of the types of services that each organization provides
- Create a toolkit consisting of clear, step-by-step homeless response guidelines to be followed by community service providers locally and Nunavut wide in order to prevent homeless individuals and those at risk from suffering unintended disruptions or gaps in service provision
- Support homelessness initiatives focused on prevention and helping individuals experiencing homelessness move towards permanent, stable housing.

## 4. The Department of Family Services Homelessness Policies

Revisions to the Department of Family Services policies related to homelessness are underway to determine how they can better support the operations of shelters and homelessness initiatives. The Department will work with our partners to ensure that the policies will have a more positive impact on individuals experiencing homelessness, communities and non-profit organizations working to help the homeless.

## 5. Resources

Communities are making the best use of what resources they have, and it is vital that we support them and continue to explore ways to obtain more resources for the various community-based organizations whose work directly impacts all those who are homeless and most at-risk.

In order to make progress towards reducing absolute homelessness, an increase in financial and human resources is needed to support the development of new shelters and transitional housing and support services, programs, and transitional housing in Nunavut. Currently, funding is limited and cannot support additional homelessness initiatives outside of existing solutions. Increasing knowledge and accessibility around available homelessness funding streams will allow non-profit community-based organizations to enhance or develop better services for homeless Nunavummiut.

The Department of Family Services will undertake the following efforts to increase resources at the community, regional and territorial levels:

- Advocate for funding to establish transitional housing
- Collaborate with other Government of Nunavut departments to explore ways to obtain more federal and non-government resources to strengthen community or regionally-based solutions to homelessness
- With government and non-government organizations, identify the costs and benefits of investing in housing and support services for those experiencing absolute homelessness



- Support community partners in seeking federal funding through the Homelessness Partnering Strategy
- Identify how community partners can combine or reallocate financial resources to better respond to individuals experiencing absolute homelessness



# Long-Term Vision

As the Department of Family Services progresses in its implementation of the short-term Framework for Action, we would like to engage homelessness partners and stakeholders across Nunavut to participate in the development of a long-term plan.

In the long term, the Department of Family Services envisions ensuring that the experience of absolute homelessness is only ever a temporary crisis. While a long-term plan would be informed by the work of the Department and build on the short-term framework, we believe it will be important for the long-term plan to address the gaps in Nunavut's Housing Continuum particular to housing for the vulnerable and to continue to strengthen the continuum of care services.

## Housing Continuum – Housing for the Vulnerable

The lack of housing in Nunavut is certainly not the only issue affecting homelessness, but it is arguably the most important. Without a sufficient supply of housing and a range of suitable and supportive options, we will find ourselves trapped in the cycle of homelessness.

### Types of housing needed to support Nunavummiut experiencing absolute homelessness

#### Emergency housing:

Shelters, safe houses and other short-term emergency housing

#### Transitional housing:

Temporary, case-managed housing as a bridge between homelessness and stable housing

#### Supportive housing:

Permanent housing with supports for those with complex needs such as physical disabilities and mental illness

There are significant gaps in Nunavut's current housing continuum (see Diagram 1 below). While there is an overall shortage of all types of housing along the continuum, in order to house the homeless, there is a particular need for more emergency homeless shelters and transitional and supportive housing.

Currently, there are only two homeless shelters in Nunavut, both located in Iqaluit: the Sivummut House for women and children experiencing homelessness, and the Uqutaq Shelter for homeless men. Both shelters are at maximum capacity year round, with many long-term residents. Providing transitional housing will reposition the shelters as an emergency short-term response to address absolute homelessness. Further, it will provide the supports necessary to allow these long-term residents to move toward securing permanent housing, self-reliance and independence.

It is also important to understand that addressing the lack of housing is not only a matter of *more* housing, but also a matter of the *right kinds* of housing to meet the different needs of homeless Nunavummiut.

Women, children, families, men, youth, Elders and people living with mental illness or disabilities have different needs that must be coupled

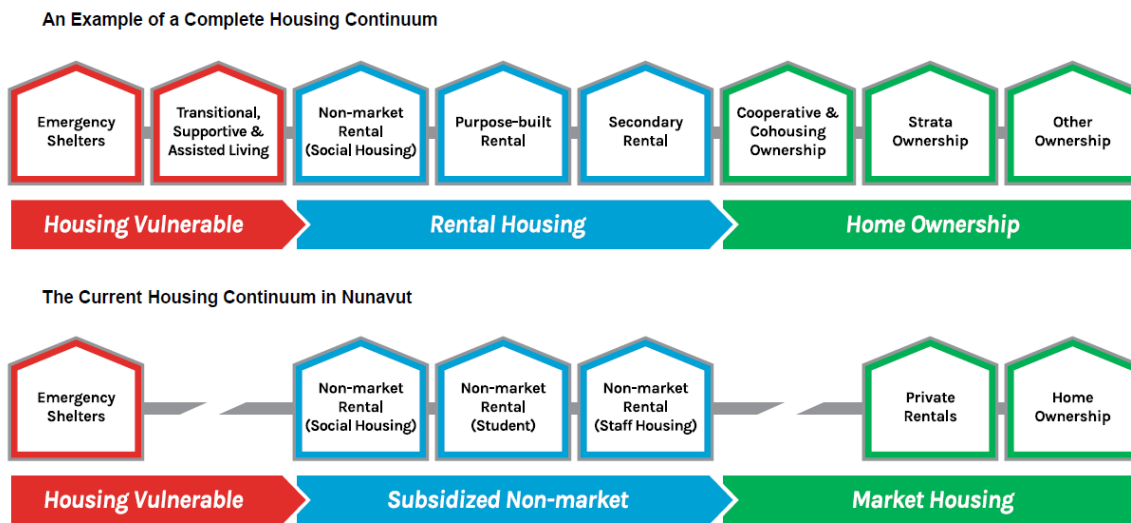
with appropriate housing and supports. Providing supportive housing options will help individuals with specific needs to successfully move out of emergency shelters or transitional housing and prevent further episodes of homelessness.

Some Nunavummiut are able to live independently and simply need access to suitable, affordable housing.

Currently, subsidized public housing serves as a “catch all” option for affordable housing in Nunavut, but this is not a sustainable or effective solution for ending homelessness. Over half of Nunavut’s population relies on public housing (Nunavut Housing Needs Survey, 2010, p.3) and as a result, the wait time to access a public housing unit is several years on average (Nunavut Housing Needs Survey, 2010, Table 17). Currently, there are 5,153 public housing units in Nunavut (Nunavut Housing Corporation, Annual Report, 2014-2015, p.7) and approximately 38% of these are overcrowded (Nunavut Housing Corporation, Rent Scale System Data, April, 2016), leaving many families and individuals at immediate risk of becoming homeless.

The following diagram describes what is needed to form a complete housing continuum and highlights the gaps that prevent Nunavummiut from moving through and out of the Housing Vulnerable section of the continuum:

Diagram 1:



Once armed with a better understanding of community needs, we envision working with our partners in a long-term plan to advocate for the development of and access to long-term supportive, transitional and suitable housing for those experiencing absolute homelessness.

## System of Care

The short-term framework addresses Nunavut's current system of care through actions that focus on decreasing barriers preventing homeless Nunavummiut from accessing the services they need. This includes identifying existing services at the municipal, territorial and federal levels, raising awareness of these services among homeless Nunavummiut and service providers, and improving coordination and knowledge sharing within the system of care.

In the long term, we can build and further these actions by increasing awareness of and access to existing support services and by exploring ways to enhance and restructure the system of care for greater positive impact such as

- Work towards creating capacity to help homeless Nunavummiut navigate the system of care and overcome barriers to accessing and maintaining housing such as paying off arrears, understanding lease agreements, and landlord relations.
- Evaluate ways in which existing shelter and support services interact to make up the system of care in order to address gaps, eliminate duplication and explore how to restructure these services for improved effectiveness, delivery and accessibility.
- Provide more outreach services at emergency shelters, service providers and other places where homeless individuals are known to spend time (local stores, cafés, apartment buildings, airports)
- Create supports identified as needed in the short term framework to help Nunavummiut move through the Housing Vulnerable section of the housing continuum towards permanent, stable housing



# Conclusion

Over the past year, we've heard many stories of hardship and suffering. People from across Nunavut have shared their experiences with homelessness, some as the witnesses of these desperate situations and others as the ones who have or who are currently experiencing it. Every day, individuals and organizations in our communities work selflessly and tirelessly to help those without a home. There is still much work to be done.

With the help of our partners, we have brought homelessness in its many forms to the forefront. Through the development of this Framework for Action we have created a catalyst for further meaningful discussion on what homelessness means to Nunavummiut and how we can all be part of the solution.

It is easy to feel overwhelmed by the challenges of homelessness, but if all involved commit to working together and pool our knowledge, ideas and resources, we can create a future where all Nunavummiut have access to the tools, supports and services needed to find and maintain safe, stable housing.

Let us work together to create a strong, coordinated continuum of supports and to ensure that Nunavummiut have access to a range of affordable, suitable housing options including transitional and supportive housing.

The Angiraqangittuliriniq Framework is a blueprint to guide us through the upcoming year and beyond. Through this Framework for Action, the Department of Family Services' work will be focused on community engagement, emergency homeless shelters, transitional housing and the coordination of homelessness services. Through this Framework for Action, the Department will take the practical steps needed to lay the foundation for a long-term plan. We will work to engage our partners and stakeholders in a collective effort to reduce absolute homelessness in Nunavut and to ensure that the experience of absolute homelessness is only ever a temporary crisis.



# Appendix 1: Key Partners

## **Government of Canada**

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation  
Employment and Social Development Canada  
Service Canada  
RCMP

## **Government of Nunavut**

Department of Culture and Heritage  
Department of Economic Development and  
Transportation  
Department of Family Services  
Department of Health  
Department of Justice

## **Community Organizations**

Akausisarvik Mental Health Facility  
Baffin Correctional Centre  
Embrace Life Council  
Ikaluktutiak Co-operative Ltd.  
Isaccie Group Home  
Kataujaq Society  
Kissarvik Co-operatives  
Maani Uluyuk Illinniarvik  
Nanuq Lodge  
Nunavut Frameworking Commission  
Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society  
Pulaarvik Kablu Friendship Centre  
Qayuqtuvik Soup Kitchen  
Qikiqtaaluk Corporation  
Qulliit Nunavut Status of Women Council  
Tukusigiarvik Centre  
Uquutaq Society and shelter residents  
YWCA Agvvik Nunavut and shelter residents

## **Housing**

Cambridge Bay Housing Association  
Green Row Executive Suites  
Iqaluit Housing Authority  
Nunavut Housing Corporation  
Rankin Inlet Housing Association

## **Inuit Organizations**

Kitikmeot Inuit Association  
Kivalliq Inuit Association  
Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.  
Qikiqtani Inuit Association

## **Municipalities**

Cambridge Bay Community Wellness Centre  
Cambridge Bay Community Wellness Committee  
City of Iqaluit  
Hamlet of Cambridge Bay  
Niksiit Committee

## **Education**

Maani Ulujuk Illinniarvik School  
Nunavut Arctic College  
Kiiliniq High School

## Appendix 2: References

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