

Community Housing Plans

Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation is helping to address the high cost of living in our territory by implementing Northern solutions for Northern housing. We are working with other governments and housing stakeholders to support Indigenous and local governments in their housing aspirations and create initiatives to address homelessness. As part of its Strategic Renewal, the Housing Corporation is developing Community Housing Plans to guide and support strategic development and investment in each community.

In 2017, one of the key findings of the Engagement Survey on Housing was a strong desire for Community Housing Plan development across the Northwest Territories. The Housing Corporation has responded by beginning work towards a housing plan with each of the 33 communities in the Northwest Territories. We are using a planning process with the community and other stakeholders that reflect community values and priorities.

To ensure that these plans are community driven and will support local intentions to address housing needs, we are working with the local leadership. We are promoting community ownership of housing plans, local coordination and activity planning that is suitable for the community. Local housing facilitators are being hired to assist with community planning.

The Community Housing Plans will combine the knowledge of community residents with housing data, statistics and other material relevant to housing needs such as information on health, education, employment and land. To guide planning, the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation is using the solid and proven planning principles of community involvement, skills development, flexibility, sustainability and respect for local cultural and traditions.

Mr. Speaker, the Community Housing Plan process involves five steps: pre-planning, needs assessment, housing plan, implementation and monitoring. The process will result in a Community Housing Plan that contains a community profile, a needs analysis and a housing plan with measurable goals and outcomes that can evolve over time.

Pre-planning sets the foundation. This work includes meeting with stakeholders to discuss potential resources, partnerships and information gathering. We have conducted housing research and developed methodology to guide the approach in each of the communities.

Needs assessments are conducted through community engagement. One of the lessons learned through the Voices on Housing survey was the importance of local voices and local input. At this stage, the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation will ask each community to designate a council member to work directly with us to support the housing planning activities and community engagements. These engagements happen at the community level and include discussions in public areas, small group discussions, and school and home visits.

As we move to the Housing Plan stage, which is starting to happen now, we will work with each individual community to engage appropriate stakeholders. Stakeholders will participate in local housing forums to share information, develop partnerships and establish a strategic planning direction to develop the Community Housing Plan.

This strategic direction will inform the Community Housing Plan that will be presented to Councils for Plan Adoption at the Implementation stage. Further to Implementation, we will work with communities to monitor these housing plans on an ongoing basis once they have been developed.

Mr. Speaker, the Community Housing Plan process has begun, with six communities selected based on stakeholder feedback, community interest and community readiness to engage in the planning process. To date, we have signed Agreements to Participate in Housing Planning with the communities of Whatì, Fort Liard and Paulatuk.

We have also met with leadership in the communities of Délı̄ne, Jean Marie River and the Kát'odeeche First Nation, and we anticipate moving forward in those communities in the near future.

Community Housing Plans are critical in ensuring that infrastructure investments are made in the right areas. As we see investments under the National Housing Strategy roll out, including the National Housing Co-investment Fund, community housing plans will help guide all parties in making the right investments. Indigenous, federal, territorial and municipal governments will all be able to use the plans in meeting housing needs in Northwest Territories communities.

Mr. Speaker, I am excited for a future of community-led Housing Plans in the Northwest Territories. Housing involves partnerships at all levels. Having a community voice in planning is critical to any success we have moving forward. Not only will these plans ensure that housing programs and services reflect community values and priorities, but they will also prepare us to take maximum advantage of federal housing funding, private industry investment and other partnerships as they become available. I look forward to seeing these Community Housing Plans as they are completed and working together with all our people to improve housing outcomes in each and every community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.