

Housing Northwest Territories Housing Forum

Mr. Speaker, strengthening relationships with Indigenous governments is a priority of this Legislative Assembly and a key objective in Housing NWT's renewal strategy, so I am pleased to announce the formation of the NWT Housing Forum as another step toward this goal.

As we have been rolling out changes to Housing NWT policies, programs, and ways of doing business through our Renewal Strategy, we have been guided by the Council of Leaders Housing Working Group. The Working Group told us clearly that it wanted to see a more permanent venue to allow NWT governments to collaborate and share information on housing.

Mr. Speaker, we listened, and the result is the NWT Housing Forum, a body co-chaired by an Indigenous government and Housing NWT. Based on a proposal brought forward by the Yellowknives Dene First Nation, the NWT Housing Forum replaces the Working Group. The structure of the NWT Housing Forum is designed to continue the linkage with the NWT Council of Leaders through reporting and eligibility for membership, while providing a more practical and broader focus on the subject matter of housing.

Mr. Speaker the Forum will meet four times a year. An in-person Housing Symposium will also be held in an NWT community every second year. The Indigenous government co-chair will alternate and will be selected every two years by a consensus of the Indigenous government members.

Mr. Speaker, this guiding body will share information, discuss and advocate for improvements and changes to the NWT housing system, allow members to share their own housing-related plans and activities, and find opportunities for collaboration.

The Forum also provides an opportunity for members to interact collectively with the federal government on housing-related matters, especially when speaking with one voice is important.

Mr. Speaker, addressing the housing needs of the Northwest Territories is something that one government cannot do alone. Formalizing this group as the new NWT Housing Forum will build on an already strong foundation and ensure Indigenous governments have a strong voice in the housing needs of their communities.

Mr. Speaker, Housing NWT renewal is an ongoing initiative and Housing NWT will use this Forum to seek input and guidance from members on future changes to programs, policies, and legislation relating to matters within Housing NWT's mandate as well as provide an important, ongoing venue for multilateral housing discussions between Housing NWT, NWT Indigenous governments, and any other groups they wish to include in discussions.

Having the Indigenous governments at the table guiding and leading the discussions on how best to improve the housing situation in the NWT is an example of reconciliation, collaboration and will lead to improvements throughout the NWT.

The NWT Housing Forum will hold its first official meeting on June 9th to confirm the selection of the Indigenous government co-lead.

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.