

**Government of the Northwest Territories Homelessness Strategy**

Mr. Speaker, homelessness is a complex, multifaceted tragedy experienced by many individuals and families in the Northwest Territories, and is an epidemic across Canada. It was my desire to see our government do more for our most vulnerable residents, including those who experience homelessness, that led me into politics. I am very proud to say that later today I will table A Way Home: A Comprehensive Strategy to Address Homelessness in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, the factors that lead to homelessness are often complicated and nuanced, as are the supports needed to prevent it and help those living in it. Our government recognizes the need for a more integrated approach to addressing homelessness. This is why we have committed to developing a whole-of-government strategy to address homelessness in the NWT.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution that will prevent and end all homelessness in the NWT. To develop and implement person-centred solutions, we must commit to working together with multiple GNWT departments and with Indigenous and community partners. We have the knowledge and expertise, and many of the programs and services needed, to significantly reduce homelessness by addressing the factors that lead to homelessness.

Mr. Speaker, this document incorporates the feedback received on the draft homelessness strategy tabled on March 30, 2023. I would like to thank the Indigenous governments, community governments, non-governmental organizations, private industry stakeholders, and members of the public for their contributions to this long-awaited strategy. I would also like to thank the Standing Committee on Social Development for their thoughtful feedback on the draft strategy, and for their recent report on Homelessness Prevention, which helped inform the action areas outlined in the strategy.

This strategy sets the path towards strengthening our collective efforts to addressing homelessness and to providing better support to individuals and families experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, homelessness. The strategy identifies actions that we can take to

practically address homelessness in all its forms, including enhancing supports for those at risk of becoming homeless, and improving person-centred services for those experiencing chronic homelessness.

The ultimate goal proposed by the strategy is to support all communities in the Territory to achieve “functional zero” homelessness. A functional zero objective recognizes that, while we cannot expect homelessness to be fully eradicated, we can take action to ensure homelessness is prevented whenever possible, and when individuals and families do experience homelessness, it is brief, rare, and non-recurring.

Mr. Speaker, our continued collaboration with community partners is essential for achieving these goals. The actions identified in the strategy recognize the important contributions of Indigenous, community, and non-governmental partners in implementing people-centred solutions. The GNWT has an important role in supporting these partners across the NWT as they continue to identify and implement local solutions that address homelessness.

In addition to identifying a need for better collaboration with partners, this strategy acknowledges the need for improved coordination of the GNWT’s programs and services. It outlines the importance of ensuring that these programs and services align with the needs of NWT residents and communities. The GNWT’s program design and service delivery should not be a barrier to access.

Mr. Speaker, a home is more than just a roof over your head. It is a connection to the land and water; culture and family. This strategy recognizes the need to honour individuals’ agency, dignity, and strengths, and to connect them with the culturally-safe support they need.

I would like to once again express thanks to Indigenous governments and organizations, community governments, non-governmental partners, and the public for their contributions in developing this strategy. I look forward to continuing to work alongside all of you to make meaningful change through our collective efforts to address homelessness in the Northwest Territories.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.