

North

N.W.T. to see \$60M in federal housing dollars, allocation to be determined

Discussions underway to determine how funds will be distributed, N.W.T. Housing Minister says

Natalie Pressman · CBC News · Posted: Apr 14, 2022 4:30 AM MDT | Last Updated: April 14, 2022



Northern Affairs Minister Daniel Vandal, Yellowknife Mayor Rebecca Alty, N.W.T. Housing Minister Paulie Chinna and N.W.T. MP Michael McLeod commented on federal housing dollars allocated to the Northwest Territories at a press conference Wednesday. (Natalie Pressman/CBC)

The Northwest Territories will receive \$60 million over two years to tackle the territory's housing crisis from a federal budget directing \$10.1 billion dollars to housing — but how that funding will be allocated in the N.W.T. isn't yet clear.

N.W.T. Premier Caroline Cochrane described the investment as "a drop in the bucket" after the federal budget announcement last week.

Dan Vandal, minister of Northern Affairs called it "a down payment," using the [exact wording he'd used just one day before](#) in Iqaluit.

Vandal's comments were made during a press conference in Yellowknife Wednesday where he, MP Michael McLeod, N.W.T. Housing Minister Paulie Chinna and Yellowknife Mayor Rebecca Alty spoke on national housing dollars allocated to the territory announced in last week's federal budget.

The latest federal budget sets a goal of doubling Canada's current rate of new home construction over the next decade.

Chinna said decisions about allocations are still happening "in internal discussions within the department."

She said that Housing NWT is working with communities and local housing authorities to "determine those needs," and relying on partnerships with non-profits and Indigenous groups to distribute the money.

Chinna called housing in the territory "critical" and acknowledged the "significant waitlist throughout the Northwest Territories" as well as "a significant need for home repair."

Where funds for repairs and home renovations will come from, however, has also not yet been determined.

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Vandal pointed to a working group between the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and territorial officials "to look at how we can become more efficient," and to collaborate on solutions to best get roofs over residents' heads.

"We understand the North has unique challenges and we are going to overcome those through collaboration and partnership," he said.



Northern Affairs Minister Daniel Vandal said that an intergovernmental working group would help get funding into communities more efficiently, and ensure investment dollars benefit Northern contractors. (Natalie Pressman/CBC)

He said the same intergovernmental group would work toward putting the federal dollars to work faster — an issue Kátł'odeeche First Nation (KFN) Chief April Martel raised at the federal standing committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs last week.

Martel said the administrative process is lengthy since federal funding goes to the territorial government before reserves and other communities in the territory have access.

"For us to access funding from the GNWT is very complicated," she said. "Like right now I applied through the Government of the Northwest Territories under the housing corporation, and it's going to take me two years to review the application and then probably another year to actually build my home."

Addressing Martel's comments, McLeod told reporters Wednesday that the government is working with KFN "to try and ensure a strategy."

"They do receive funding from the federal government but it's really not meeting their needs, as they indicate, so we're trying to see if we can work out an arrangement," he said.

Northwest Territories MP Michael McLeod commented on the \$60 million allocated to the N.W.T. in the federal budget for housing over the next two years. (Natalie Pressman/CBC)

In addition to the \$60 million dollars allocated to the territory for housing, McLeod and Vandal pointed to a \$4.3 billion investment into Indigenous housing in Canada as well as \$300 million for an urban, rural and Northern Indigenous housing strategy.

Vandal said the intergovernmental working group would also focus on keeping the money in the North and ensuring contracts are given to local businesses.

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