



February 03, 2025

KATE REID
MLA, GREAT SLAVE

Oral Question 312-20(1): Transitional Housing Options and Supports

Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Oral Question asked by the MLA from Great Slave, on October 18, 2024, regarding steps the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) is taking in the next three years of the Legislative Assembly to help us reach Functional Zero for homelessness.

I had committed to providing a more detailed timeline on the work toward establishing functional zero goals for all communities. Functional zero goals are based on the understanding that while homelessness may still occur, such as through evictions or fleeing family violence, it should be rare, brief, and non-recurring. This means that fewer people are experiencing homelessness, and that when they do, it is only a short time before they can access a stable, long-term housing resource.

The first step toward establishing functional zero goals is understanding the scope of existing homelessness in a community. The Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs (EIA) has begun this process in Yellowknife and has been working with the City of Yellowknife and local non-government organizations (NGOs) since July 2024, to quantify shelter space availability, demand, and shortfalls, while identifying underserved populations. The City's Point-in-Time (PIT) Count conducted on behalf of the Government of Canada, will provide additional data in early 2025. A key aspect of this work is identifying communities of origin of people experiencing homelessness, and whether they would return to their home communities if this was an option, as this will inform EIA's work with Northwest Territories' (NWT) communities in setting their own functional zero goals.

The next step is establishing coordinated access to homelessness and housing services. This involves creating a streamlined system for people experiencing homelessness to access housing and supports. The City of Yellowknife has initiated work on this system under the Federal Reaching Home program. EIA is collaborating with the City and local NGOs to enhance this system by increasing service integration, which includes establishing a by-names list of individuals experiencing homelessness to prioritize access to appropriate resources, such as transitional or supportive housing, as they become available.

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The lessons learned in Yellowknife will contribute to our work to support other communities to set functional zero goals. Engagement will begin in Inuvik in 2025 to engage GNWT staff, NGOs, and community partners on Integrated Service Delivery (ISD) and the NWT Homelessness Strategy and begin discussions on what functional zero goals may look like in this community.

Addressing homelessness in the NWT requires more than setting goals and coordinating access. We must also create housing resources to meet the needs of each community. NWT Housing is working diligently to support the development of new housing, including permanent supportive housing. While transitional housing is vital for those moving out of homelessness, treatment, or fleeing violence, we must also ensure permanent supportive housing is available for individuals whose homelessness stems from a lack of resources addressing their health, mental health, or disability needs.

In conclusion, the GNWT is committed to a comprehensive approach to addressing homelessness, focusing on collaboration, data-driven decision-making, and the creation of sustainable housing solutions. As we continue to work with our partners, we remain dedicated to fostering a system where homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring, providing all individuals with the opportunity for stable and long-term housing.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R.J. Simpson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

R.J. Simpson
Premier

- c. Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Director, Legislative Affairs and House Planning, Executive and Indigenous Affairs