



*Alternatives North*

19 January 2018

The Honourable Michael McLeod  
Member of Parliament for NWT  
Government of Canada

The Honourable Caroline Cochrane  
Minister Responsible for the Housing Corporation  
Government of the Northwest Territories

This letter responds to the recent release of the National Housing Strategy as well as the GNWT document *Towards Level Ground* and the subsequent policy renewal required to implement it.

To begin, we are pleased with the new investment in housing presented in the National Housing Strategy after a long decline in federal investment. We note that this strategy commits the federal government to invest \$40 billion over 10 years in new housing, rent supplements, renovations and protection from loss of affordable housing. We are particularly pleased that the strategy is rights-based, included a gender based analysis and aligns housing needs with climate change and accessibility issues. We are encouraged the strategy “will align with public investment in job creation, skills training, transit, early learning, health care and cultural and recreational infrastructure”.

On a territorial level, we are pleased with some of the policy changes to NWT HC programs including the establishment of an income threshold below which no co-payment is required. We also appreciate the summary of the Action Plan with targeted funds for different initiatives.

However, we have a series of questions to ask and look forward to your response.

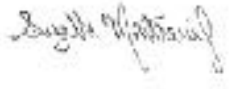
1. For the National Housing Co-investment Fund, will the GNWT allocate the \$28,100,000 identified in *Towards Level Ground* to benefit from this program (or amounts identified per year when federal funds become available)?
2. The National Housing strategy notes “up to \$200 million in federal lands will be transferred to housing providers”. Does this apply to the NWT given the transfer of most lands with devolution?
3. In addition to the \$36 million provided to the NWT through the re-announced Focus on Northern Housing, the strategy outlines a “Distinctions-Based Indigenous Strategies” investment. Will NWT First Nations, Inuvialuit and Métis groups have access to these funds and in what year will these funds become available?

4. The Canada Community Housing Initiative identifies when long term social housing operating agreements expire and require renewal, the federal government will renew its investment in these agreements but will require that provinces and territories match this funding. *Towards Level Ground* does not identify funds set aside for supporting social housing operating agreements. Will the NWT be able to identify funds to allocate to this initiative? If so, do you have an estimate of amount of funds available?
5. The Canada Housing Benefit will provide direct support to families to help pay rent. Will the GNWT commit to adding this support to its own rent supplement programs and not claw back these funds, including from clients on income assistance? Will the Canada Housing Benefit be provided to non-governmental organizations that provide rental support to their target groups in housing need?
6. How will the gender based plus analysis for the National Housing strategy be carried out in the NWT?
7. The Supporting Northern Housing program allocated \$97.7M to “address urgent housing needs” in the territories but only \$40 million of this fund had been used as of Sept. 30, 2017. Has the GNWT spent all the funds allocated to the NWT HC? If not, are there plans for using the rest of the available funds in this fiscal year?

In addition to these questions, we are providing our recommendations for the implementation of the National Housing Strategy in the NWT. We recommend:

1. That the GNWT not claw back any direct support to individuals for rent supplements or housing renovations.
2. That income thresholds for funding allocation for the Canada Housing Benefit consider the high cost of living in the North and be determined on a regional basis.
3. That the NWT HC income threshold be raised to \$90,000 per household.
4. That the housing co-operative model be supported and existing co-ops be encouraged to apply for new housing initiatives.
5. That funding for women’s shelters be used to assist NWT community groups operating this service to replace the building where the program is operating when it is no longer suitable for repairs.
6. That any new construction of housing units include criteria for energy efficiency, accessibility and cultural components.
7. That NWT HC Seniors Aging in Place program combine purpose of retrofits to include energy efficiency and accessibility.
8. That Indigenous-led housing initiatives be prioritized.
9. That all projects include a component of skill building and ability to maintain homes on a community basis.

Thank you for your consideration of these questions and recommendations. We look forward to your response.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Suzette Montreuil".

Suzette Montreuil  
For Alternatives North