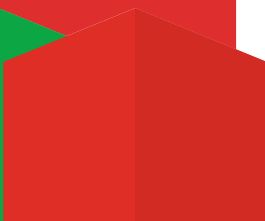


Blueprint for Action  
on Housing

# Meeting the Housing Needs of GN Staff

## Engagement Tool

Nunavut Housing Corporation



# Introduction

The Nunavut Housing Corporation (NHC) is leading the development of an Action Plan to address Nunavut's housing crisis – the Blueprint for Action on Housing (BPAOH). The BPAOH will serve as a strategic action plan to be implemented over the next ten years. The Action Plan is a GN-wide perspective on the issues, solutions, and actions required to address housing challenges in Nunavut.

To inform the development of the BPAOH, the NHC has been carrying out departmental engagement sessions –supplemented by interviews and small focus groups – from April 1- June 17. The first round of engagement involved over one hundred participants from across the GN and other stakeholder groups.

This report provides a summary of the Issues – Challenges and Potential Solutions that should be addressed in the BPAOH. The table at the end of the report will be the focus of second round of engagement scheduled from May 30 – June 3, 2016. **Departments are asked to review the table and consider what concrete actions could be taken (or are already being taken) to address Nunavut's housing issues.**

NHC thanks you for your continued participation in developing a Blueprint for Action on Housing.

## Goal 3: Defining Housing Demand Factors

Nunavut's housing continuum is incomplete. The territory lacks a diverse range of housing options that are affordable and responsive to the needs of Nunavummiut. As a result, there is a deepening dependence on government subsidized housing to attract and retain government employees and movement to homeownership or private market rental remains limited.

### Topic for Discussion

Meeting the housing needs of GN staff will require a collaborative, interdepartmental approach that addresses the gaps in Nunavut's housing continuum to define housing demand factors now and in the future.

### Meeting the Housing Needs of GN Staff

#### a. Issues

The current GN Staff Housing program cannot meet the housing needs of all employees, as there is not enough staff housing stock to meet existing employee demand, and is therefore not sustainable. The cost to build and maintain staff housing stock is a growing burden to the GN.

There is a deepening dependence on government-subsidized housing to attract and retain government employees and movement to homeownership or private market rental remains limited. However, GN employees may be discouraged from transitioning out of subsidized staff housing due to limited options for housing in Nunavut.

It is important to try to find ways to more effectively promote transition out of staff housing and into homeownership or private market rental.

#### b. Challenges

Capital planning occurs in a linear and often uncoordinated fashion. There is a lack of communication across GN Departments on this issue. That is, there is **not a holistic approach** to infrastructure planning and funds are not being used as effectively to address different but related aspects.

There is little incentive to transition out of staff housing and for many, GN salaries are not enough to afford market rent.

Several HR challenges contribute to this issue. The development of GN positions continues with limited concentrated focus on housing requirements. However, staff housing is tied to an individual's ongoing employment with the GN. If people are required to leave staff housing then there is a **risk of losing capable workers**.

Participants expressed that existing **GN policies create barriers** for people transitioning out of staff housing. Priorities are predetermined to an extent in terms of who can access staff housing – for example, Justice, Health and Education are granted priority – which leaves other departments without options when housing stock is limited.

### c. Potential Solutions

Participants all agreed there is a need for **greater collaboration, coordination, communication**. This includes inter-departmental collaboration (for example, holistic capital planning and an approach to infrastructure development) but also with NTI for housing and policy development. There needs to be better coordination between the NHC and respective departments in matching positions with available and suitable staff housing stock.

It was suggested that **ICCP be used more effectively** to assist with a whole-of-government approach. Participants further noted that there should be a coordinated process for both ICSPs and Economic Development Plans to promote sustainable community growth and development.

Participants recommended an **evaluation** of GN policies – namely, the **Staff Housing Policy** – which may be hindering the process. Examination of the **Staff Housing Program** could assist with better defining its purpose/objectives and the Program's role over the long-term, as well as to determine how to increase the capacity of existing stock to meet staff needs. The current GN Staff Housing program attempts to address both staff recruitment and retention. Participants offered that an evaluation of the recruitment and retention strategy could **shift the focus more to recruitment** and away from using it as a retention tool.

Session participants noted that the development of a **zoned approach for the delivery of housing programs** should proceed, including the modification of existing programs and the creation of new programs with a focus on **affordability and suitability** for beneficiaries and generating new construction. This approach may take better advantage of decentralized structures by targeting programming according to zone, and potentially could increase the mixture of housing type in emerging private markets/ longer leases prioritized over construction.

Ultimately, it was recommended that any selected approach to developing housing stock adopt a **community-by-community approach** to planning, to identify trade-offs, and infrastructure requirements.

Participants pointed to the need for **creative solutions** such as long-term rental **lease-to-own model**, by leveraging the ability of employees to borrow/invest or require public/private partnership. One approach may be to assign a cap to the number of years an employee stays in staff housing, but **strategies** are needed to phase into the private market.

There is need to strengthen programs and initiatives that encourage people to **invest their own capital** into the private housing market. It was suggested that improved planning and coordination of hiring and **human resource processes** can allow for better long-term forecasting of Staff Housing demand. A review of GN housing allowances could help to identify ways to promote / **incentivize transition out of staff housing** to homeownership and private rental. Lastly, discussions pointed to **increasing self-reliance** of Nunavummiut in order to reduce dependence on government or an employer for housing.

#### Meeting the Housing Needs of GN Employees

The following table provides a summary of the issues and solutions that were raised in the round one engagement sessions, as well as action items and roles for their implementation (TBD during round 2), for this topic of discussion. There was general consensus from participants on the identified issues, potential solutions and action items presented below. The purpose of round two is to confirm / validate what we heard in round one and further develop action items, roles and responsibilities, and timelines for the Blueprint for Action on Housing (BPOAH).

| Issue / Challenges  | Potential Solution(s)   | Action Item(s)   | Existing Initiatives  | Parties Involved in Implementation & Lead/Support | Oversight Committee | Timeline |
|---|---|--|---|---|---------------------|----------|
| <p>The GN lacks a holistic approach to infrastructure / capital planning, does not focus on housing, and there is limited communication and coordination across GN Departments.</p> <p>Funds are driven by various political priorities to an extent and need to be used more effectively to address different but related aspects.</p>   | <p>-Approaches include <b>greater inter-departmental collaboration</b> (for example, holistic capital planning and an approach to infrastructure development) but also with NTI to develop a new protocol with goals.</p> <p>-<b>Improved planning and coordination</b> of hiring and <b>human resource processes</b> can allow for better long-term forecasting of Staff Housing demand.</p>   | <p><b>Review the mandate and procedures of ICCP and develop a workplan for ICCP to work more effectively</b> to assist with a whole-of-government approach to capital planning. Recommendations may include: stipulations for annual meeting; refinement of planning variable in the pre-planning / planning process; other mechanisms to increase coordination between departments.</p> <p>-Adopt a <b>“depending planning”</b> approach that incorporates checks/balances to consider other housing inputs such as power requirements and costs in each community.</p> <p>-Coordinate an integrated process for the development and implementation of both <b>ICSPs and Economic Development Plans</b> to promote sustainable community growth and development.</p> <p>-CGS to establish on a role as a point of liaison/access between the construction industry, service industry, and departments requiring services.</p> <p>-Conduct an evaluation of the GN Staff Housing policy to examine the Staff Housing Program’s <u>purpose/objectives</u> and the Program’s role over the long-term, as well as to determine how to <u>increase the capacity</u> of existing stock to meet staff needs.</p> | <p><b>Business Plan Priorities (2016-19)</b></p> <p>-NHC continues to work closely with the Department of Finance, GN Human Resources Division, and other GN departments to improve forecasting and assessment of staff housing needs.</p> <p><b>GN Strategies</b></p> <p>-Exploring housing options for GN staff is a priority under the <b>GN’s Long-Term Comprehensive Housing and Homelessness Strategy</b>. Actions are focused on meeting the recruitment and retention requirements of GN staff while also providing supports for employees to enter the private housing market.</p> |   |                     |          |
| <p>Existing GN policies create barriers for people transitioning out of staff housing.</p> <p>The current GN Staff Housing Program attempts to address both staff recruitment and retention through provision of subsidies that the housing to employment with the GN.</p> <p>Further, participants stated that priorities are predetermined to an extent in terms of who can access staff housing which leaves</p> | <p>-An <b>evaluation of policies</b> – namely, the <b>GN Staff Housing Policy</b> and <b>CGS Procurement Policy</b> – which may be hindering the process. Participants offered that an evaluation of the recruitment and retention strategy could <b>shift the focus more to recruitment</b> and away from using it as a retention tool.</p> <p>-In terms of policy development, there needs to be <b>better coordination</b> between the NHC and respective departments in matching positions with available and suitable staff housing stock.</p> <p>-Develop an approach to <b>better manage vacant units</b> which are reserved for unstaffed positions</p> | <p>-Conduct a review of current staff housing allocation to determine under-housed and over-housed</p>   | <p><b>GN Strategies</b></p> <p>-The <b>Department of Finance</b> has committed to expanding the GN’s profile as an employer of choice through increased recruitment/retention initiatives such as increased benefits, subsidies, and other incentives. Subsidized GN staff housing rents represent a main incentive program.</p>  |   |                     |          |

| Issue / Challenges  | Potential Solution(s)  | Action Item(s)   | Existing Initiatives  | Parties Involved in Implementation & Lead/Support | Oversight Committee | Timeline |
|---|--|--|---|---|---------------------|----------|
| <p>other departments without options; there is not enough staff housing stock to meet existing employee demand.</p>   | <p>-Modify housing programs / priorities in order to take advantage of decentralized structures<br/>-Developing staff housing stock should adopt a <b>community-by-community approach</b> to planning, to identify trade-offs, and infrastructure requirements.</p>  | <p>-Develop a <b>zoned approach for the delivery of housing program</b>, including the modification of existing programs and the creation of new programs with a focus on <b>affordability and suitability</b> for beneficiaries and generating new construction.<br/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Target programming according to zone could potentially increase the mixture of housing type in emerging private markets/longer leases prioritized over construction.</li> </ul> </p> <p>-Re-evaluate current recruitment strategies for vacant, allocated staff housing units. Consider factors such as whether certain positions need to be located in specific communities, or can be decentralized / located elsewhere.</p> <p>-Conduct a review of <b>public/private partnerships</b> opportunities to foster private market rental. Options or incentives may include leasing, subsidies, and tax breaks. For example, consider a range of options such as short-term leases and long-term leases of a variety of property types e.g., vacant hotel suites.</p> <p>-Conduct a review of GN housing allowances to help identify ways to promote / <b>incentivize transition out of staff housing</b> to homeownership and private rental. Consider such factors as whether inuit / local hires and CSAs can qualify for staff housing.<br/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It has been reasoned that increased allowance to \$1000/month and potentially adjusting household allowances based on no. of dependents / sliding scale based on income, could allow the market to fill housing needs in Iqaluit.</li> </ul> </p> | <p><i>Lack of staff housing is identified in the <b>Nursing Recruitment and Retention Strategy (2007)</b> as one of the biggest barriers to recruiting nurses in Nunavut. The Department of Health has committed to work with the NHC to address this issue and determine long-term solutions for staff housing.</i></p> <p><b>Business Plan Priorities (2016-19)</b><br/>-NHC has also created a new approach for selecting communities for allocation of staff housing construction projects.</p>   | <p></p>   | <p></p>             | <p></p>  |
| <p>The cost to build and maintain staff housing stock is a growing burden to the GN. However, movement to homeownership or private market rental remains limited, and lacking incentives.</p> <p>This is further complicated by barriers to homeownership such as inflated market rental rates.</p> <p>Growing the private market requires that land issues are resolved so that markets can respond to demand.</p> | <p>-Expand housing options to encourage / <b>incentivize</b> GN employees in <b>transitioning out of</b> subsidized staff housing. <b>Creative strategies</b> are needed encourage entry into the private market.<br/>-A long-term rental <b>lease-to-own model</b> (e.g., rent scaling) could leverage the ability of employees to borrow/invest</p> <p>-One approach may be to assign a cap to the number of years an employee stays in staff housing, or to gradually reduce the allocated housing subsidy over time.</p> | <p>-Conduct a review of GN housing allowances to help identify ways to promote / <b>incentivize transition out of staff housing</b> to homeownership and private rental. Consider such factors as whether inuit / local hires and CSAs can qualify for staff housing.<br/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It has been reasoned that increased allowance to \$1000/month and potentially adjusting household allowances based on no. of dependents / sliding scale based on income, could allow the market to fill housing needs in Iqaluit.</li> </ul> </p>  | <p><b>Business Plan Priorities (2016-19)</b><br/>-The NHC has made changes to the homeownership program to increase access, improve the application process in order to encourage growth in Nunavut's homeownership market.</p> <p><b>GN Strategies</b><br/>-Housing plays an important role affecting both staff mobility and the capacity for departments to hire and retain GN staff in the communities they are needed.<br/><i>The Human Resource Strategy</i> prioritizes investment in education and training in order to attract and retain Nunavummiut and non-Nunavummiut for public</p> | <p></p>   | <p></p>             | <p></p>  |

| Issue / Challenges   | Potential Solution(s)  | Action Item(s)  | Existing Initiatives       | Parties Involved in Implementation & Lead/Support | Oversight Committee | Timeline |
|--|--|---|----------------------------|---|---------------------|----------|
| <p>This would reduce pressures on existing staff housing and free up O&amp;M funding to fund construction or leasing of staff housing in non-market economies.</p> | <p>-Discussions pointed to increasing self-reliance of Nunavummut in order to reduce dependence on government or an employer for housing.</p> <p>-Develop a detailed transition plan to encourage transitions out of staff housing with 'new' offers other than long-term staff housing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o A plan for staff not currently in staff housing would have unique incentives (e.g., increase from existing \$400 per month to new allowance).</li> <li>o Existing leases for units in Iqaluit would have to slowly transition to 'overhold' or be renewed with 'minimum' # of units (i.e. RFT – commit to X number of units, and allow for additional on an 'as needed' basis to support transition).</li> </ul> | <p>-Strengthen programs and initiatives that encourage people to invest their own capital into the private housing market</p> <p>-Establish a working group with TOR supported by a financial analyst to crunch the numbers for creating and implementing transition plan incentives.</p> | <p>service employment.</p> |   |                     |          |



