

1.0 Background

The Nipissing District 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan was developed in accordance with the provincial *Housing Services Act* (2011), which required Ontario's 47 Service Managers to develop housing and homelessness plans for their service areas. In the Nipissing District, the plan was endorsed by 8 of the 11 municipalities and was approved by the District of Nipissing Social Services Administration Board (DNSSAB) in December 2013 (Resolution No. 2013-210). To ensure plan implementation, annual progress updates are prepared as required by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) and approved by the DNSSAB. This is the progress update for 2022, marking the eighth year of the plan's implementation.

In 2019, the 5-Year Review of the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan was prepared and approved by the Board of Directors of the DNSSAB and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The 5-Year Review included an updated demographic and housing needs background report and an amended list of strategic objectives based on consultation with community stakeholders and a review of current and future operations.

2.0 Recap: The Plan Format

The local 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan provides a strong framework for guiding DNSSAB's housing policy, planning and investment decisions over the duration of the 10-year term. The plan facilitates this by establishing clear objectives and a number of housing and homelessness strategies, actions and targets to consider for achieving the objectives. As a living document however, the plan is also subject to change in concert with the current operating environment, resources, housing and homelessness outcomes, and unforeseen and/or random events.

It should also be noted that the implementation of many of the strategies in the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan require partnerships and the involvement of other agencies, service providers, etc. Additionally, the plan's strategies range in complexity and resource requirements, from relatively simple strategies that can be carried out in the first couple of years with few resources, to complex ones that will take much longer and require extensive resources.

As per the 10-Year Plan, the DNSSAB's housing and homelessness objectives for the next 10 years – or until otherwise changes – are to improve housing stability and prevent homelessness in the Nipissing District. Continuing to provide more affordable housing options along the housing continuum, and sustaining and expanding the current housing portfolio, are also areas of focus for the Board. Furthermore, to fulfill the plan's objectives, the Board will also need to raise awareness and public education, while taking a leadership role and working closely with community partners.

Specifically, the above can be broken down into the following six, overarching housing and homelessness strategic objectives:

1. Homelessness Prevention, Shelters and Diversion



Figure 1.0 – Breakdown of 10 Year Plan Actions

2. **Improving Housing Stability**
3. **Increasing Housing Affordability and Options along the Housing Continuum**
4. **Sustaining and Expanding the Housing Portfolio**
5. **Leadership, Integration, Coordination and Advocacy**
6. **Awareness, Education, Information and Best Practices**

3.0 Implementation and Progress in 2024

Although the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan has reached the end of its lifespan, DNSSAB continues to report on the Plan's implementation until a new 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan is established. In 2024, DNSSAB made substantial advancements toward developing the upcoming plan by allocating resources to the creation of a Housing Needs and Supply Study, Housing Targets Study, and a Homelessness System Review and Hub Feasibility Study. These studies will serve as foundational elements in shaping the strategies and actions for the next plan.

Funding sources supporting target achievement in 2024 included Reaching Home, Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP), Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB), Canada Ontario Community Housing Initiative (COCHI), Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI), and municipal funding. In total \$12,102,438.00 was invested to support the ongoing implementation of the plan's strategic objectives in 2024.

The following pages of the report outline the actions taken in 2024 to meet the strategic objectives of the plan.

Strategic Objective #1: Homelessness Prevention, Shelters and Diversion

Strategies:

- Improve the homelessness prevention and shelter diversion system that will assist citizens in finding appropriate and sustainable housing in the shortest amount of time.
- Develop a “Coordinated Access” approach to addressing homelessness in Nipissing District.
- Establish an Emergency Homelessness and Housing Response Team.
- Find a solution to meeting the chronic requirements of individuals who are homeless, in both urban and rural settings.
- Community partners and agencies advocate for those who are at-risk of becoming homeless and those who are homeless.

Action Taken in 2024:

- Evergreen contract continued to be in place with the Crisis Centre North Bay for shelter services at the 19-bed Four Elms Shelter in North Bay.
- Funded a 12-hour overnight Low-Barrier Shelter with 21-beds in North Bay through the Crisis Centre North Bay.
- Funded 24/7 homelessness services and supports during the winter months (November-April) to support 34 individuals through the Crisis Centre North Bay.
- Funded Emergency Shelter Overflow Services through the Crisis Centre North Bay.
- Funded the provision of additional shelter bed capacity during days with extreme cold weather alerts.
- Funded Shelter Supports Rehousing through the Crisis Centre North Bay. The supports help individuals and families transition from the shelter to more permanent housing accommodations.
- Funded District-Wide Unsheltered Outreach Services through Nipissing First Nation, True Self Debwewendizwin. The services assist individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness by providing peer support and referrals to other community agencies.
- Funded Community Emergency Response services through Low Income People Involvement of Nipissing. The services ensure that supports are available when an emergency occurs in the Nipissing District. Stabilization and rehousing supports are available.
- Continued to provide Healthy Communities Funding to community service providers, many of which provide critical services to homeless and at-risk of homeless individuals and families.
- Nipissing District became a veteran homelessness reduction community with Built for Zero Canada.

Strategic Objective #2: Improving Housing Stability

Strategies:

- Develop a Housing Eviction Prevention program.
- Community housing workers are available to provide advocacy and support services to tenants and/or homeowners.
- Consistent and coordinated discharge planning from hospital, detox, addiction, mental health, and youth and adult correctional facilities.
- Develop rural outreach and transportation services to support housing retention in rural communities.
- Improve senior citizen's ability to Age in Place.
- Ensure that citizens have adequate, affordable and suitable housing.

Action Taken in 2024:

- Funded and directly delivered Long-Term Housing Rent Supplements with supports from community partners for individuals identified on the homelessness prioritization list. The program helps to subsidize rental units in the private market to increase affordability.
- Funded a Rent Bank and Resiliency Fund through Low Income People Involvement of Nipissing. The services provide financial assistance for rent and utility costs to prevent homelessness.
- Funded Housing in Trusteeship and Brief Intervention Trusteeships through Low Income People Involvement of Nipissing. Trusteeships help individuals and families to manage their finances and to ensure that money is available for rent, food, and other essential items.
- Funded and directly delivered a Direct Client Benefits program. The program provides financial support to individuals and families experiencing homelessness or at-risk of homelessness.
- Funded Homelessness Prevention Supports and Services through Low Income People Involvement of Nipissing. The service provides direct benefit support and navigation to individuals and families who are at-risk of homelessness.
- Funded a Community Mobile Housing Support Program through the Crisis Centre North Bay. The program assists individuals and households that are homeless or at-risk of homelessness to find and retain housing in the Nipissing District.
- Funded and directly delivered Rapid Re-Housing Bridging Housing Allowances. The housing allowances provide temporary rental subsidies to households as they await permanent housing benefits or other financial increases.
- Funded a Housing Support Program through the Brain Injury Association of North Bay and Area. The program supports individuals and households to secure housing, remain stably housed, and reduce barriers to service access.
- Funded a Youth Housing Support Program through the Crisis Centre North Bay. The program helps youth secure safe and appropriate long-term housing through navigational supports and life skills development.
- Continued to fund and directly deliver the Nipissing Renovates program to assist low to moderate income homeowners with funding to repair and retrofit their home.
- Expanded the Community Paramedicine Program to offer services at homeless shelters, street outreach, and within community housing.

Strategic Objective #3: Increasing Housing Affordability and Options Along the Housing Continuum

Strategies:

- Assist qualified homeowners to create secondary suites in their homes as a means of increasing the supply of affordable rental housing, where permitted through official plans.
- Explore opportunities to expand rental subsidy programs.
- Aligning various funding sources with the Strategic Objectives of the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan.
- Leverage resources in order to maximize affordable housing options along the continuum.
- Increase the supply of affordable rental housing.
- Increase the supply of transitional/second-stage housing.
- Increase the supply of supported/supportive housing.

Action Taken in 2024:

- Launched and directly delivered an Additional Dwelling Unit program aimed at increasing affordable rental housing by creating a secondary suite or additional unit as permitted within the municipality.
- Funded and expanded rental subsidies including rent supplements, portable housing benefits, and housing allowances. In 2024, rental subsidies increased by 18 units.
- Continued to refer households to the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) to assist with housing affordability. In 2024, 65 households were referred to the COHB Program.
- Launched a Transitional Housing Allowance program to help subsidize rental costs for individuals residing in transitional housing units such as Northern Pines, Suswin, and Futures.
- Subsidized the operating costs for the Northern Pines 60-unit transitional and supportive housing complex.
- Continued to fund and directly deliver the Homeownership program which provides down-payment assistance for first time homeowners.
- Released a Request for Expression of Interest for affordable housing development and worked closely with developers to move projects forward.
- Collaborated with District municipalities on affordable housing initiatives.
- Completed the construction of 24 units in Northern Pines Phase 3 in November 2024.
- Submitted applications to numerous affordable housing development funding opportunities.
- Advocacy efforts continued at all levels of government for funding tied to affordable housing development.

Strategic Objective #4: Sustaining and Expanding the Housing Portfolio

Strategies:

- Renew and/or redevelop social housing assets.
- Review the social housing portfolio.
- Maintain Nipissing's service level standards in social housing.
- Create opportunities to facilitate new housing projects.

Action Taken in 2024:

- Allocated approximately \$1 million for social housing repairs, supporting 10 social housing providers with critical infrastructure upgrades and repairs.
- A 60-unit affordable housing development was announced in North Bay. The housing project will be owned and operated by the Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services.
- Continued to fund Urban Native and Provincial Reformed providers who reached the end of their operating agreements.
- Continued to implement a new integrated housing system for social housing management and the centralized waiting list.
- Approved the community housing service agreement framework for housing providers who have reached the end of their operating agreements.
- Continued the redevelopment of Mackay Homes, which included the provision of rent supplements at unit turnover to increase affordability in the District.
- Worked closely with community housing providers interested in housing development.
- Funded tenant supports which assists in managing challenging tenancies in the community housing portfolio.
- Continued to follow the Service Levels Standards Action Plan and increased service levels by 31 units in 2024.

Strategic Objective #5: Leadership, Integration, Coordination and Advocacy

Strategies:

- Ensure the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan is implemented.
- Strengthen the partnership between Housing Access Nipissing, non-profit housing providers and service providers.
- Increase the collaboration between DNSSAB and/or any of the following: community partners, municipalities, federal government, provincial governments.
- DNSSAB recognizes and supports the Nipissing District Homelessness and Housing Partnership.
- DNSSAB will be a leader and advocate in supporting homelessness prevention initiatives and affordable housing solutions.
- Develop Indigenous housing solutions.

Action Taken in 2024:

- The Board continued to align funding with the actions and priorities identified within the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan.
- Maintained positive communication with community housing providers, issuing 6 Housing Services Notices to housing providers in 2024. Individual meetings with each housing provider were held to discuss potential housing development plans and needs.
- Maintained positive communication with the District municipalities. Collaborated with municipalities for the newly launched Additional Dwelling Unit Program. Individual meetings with each municipality were held to discuss potential housing development plans and needs as referenced in the Housing Targets Study.
- DNSSAB continued in the role of the local Community Entity for the Reaching Home Homelessness Strategy.
- DNSSAB continued to be an active member of the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) – National Working Group. The group provides recommendations to the federal government on improvements to HIFIS.
- Advocacy efforts continued at all levels of government regarding the need for funding for affordable housing, supportive housing, homelessness supports and services and increases to social assistance rates.
- Continued to collaborate with Indigenous partners regarding housing and homelessness needs. In 2024, True Self Debwewendizwin continued to provide outreach services for unsheltered homeless and DNSSAB partnered with the North Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre to provide housing allowances to residents of Suswin Village.

Strategic Objective #6: Awareness, Education, Information and Best Practices

Strategies:

- Improve the public's access to information on housing and homelessness programs including housing options and support services.
- Increase awareness concerning housing and homelessness issues in the District.
- Ensure that citizens have access to stable employment opportunities to secure and maintain adequate, safe and affordable housing.
- Increase Indigenous cultural awareness and safety.
- Develop and implement a quality standards framework and best practices program for social housing and housing programs.
- DNSSAB becomes a repository of housing information, data and knowledge.

Action Taken in 2024:

- Continued to update the DNSSAB website to ensure that housing and homelessness resources are easily accessible.
- Launched a data portal on the DNSSAB website with a dashboard on active homelessness which pulls from the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System and a dashboard featuring housing indicators from the 2021 Census. The data portal also features data from the previous Point-in-Time Homelessness Enumeration.
- Held a District-wide Point-in-Time Homelessness Enumeration in October 2024. The count consisted of 48 survey locations and 67 surveyors.
- Finalized a Housing Needs and Supply Study to better understand the current housing supply and demand including determining needs and gaps across the entire housing continuum. The final report was approved by the Board in April 2024.
- Finalized a Homelessness System Review and Hub Feasibility Study to identify gaps, challenges, and successes within the current homelessness system and to determine the need and operating model for a 24/7 integrated shelter and hub in North Bay. The final report was approved by the Board in April 2024.
- Finalized a Housing Targets Study to determine the number of subsidized, affordable rental, and affordable ownership units required in the Nipissing District by 2035. The final report was approved by the Board in December 2024.
- The three housing and homelessness studies completed and approved in 2024 have all been uploaded to the DNSSAB website.
- The North Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre and True Self Debwewendizwin continue to be active members on both Coordinated Access Nipissing and the Community Advisory Board.
- Achieved a Quality By-Name List with Built for Zero Canada.