



## BRIEFING NOTE HS47-21

For Information  For Approval

**Date:** October 27, 2021

**Purpose:** **Homelessness Action Plan**

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**Reviewed by:** Catherine Matheson, CAO

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### RECOMMENDATION:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Board accepts the report “Homelessness Action Plan in the Nipissing District” as described in HS47-21; and

THAT any financial implications for the Board associated with the respected actions in the Plan be brought forward to the board for decision prior to commitment; and

THAT staff provide quarterly updates to the Board on the progress of plan and achievement of the priorities.

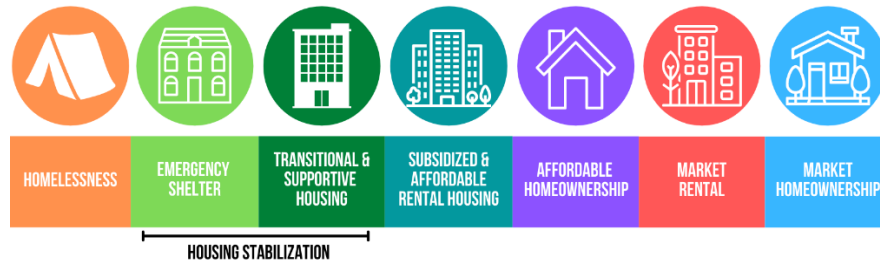
### BACKGROUND:

The report, “Homelessness Landscape in Nipissing District” (Sept. 2021) was presented to the Board in September and highlighted the increase in local homelessness despite significant investments and planning efforts by staff and other community organizations. The Homelessness Action Plan follows up on the report and presents an action framework to address local homelessness over the next 12 months. The framework provides a clear path of action for staff and the Board to follow, which is realistic, attainable, and within the Board’s scope of responsibility and strategic direction.

The Homelessness Action Plan follows a specific definition of homelessness and certain assumptions for setting the priorities and developing the action items. The community work and progress to date was also important to look at and acknowledge in the development of actions.

In the action plan, the priorities and their respective actions are located on the housing continuum to indicate which part of the housing supply they address. As the primary focus is on the homeless population, most of the priorities and action items will affect the left-hand side of the continuum (i.e., from absolute street homelessness to transitional and supportive housing).

Additionally, reference is made to other related planning strategies - from other community plans - that the priorities and actions are related to. In some cases, the following priorities and action items are already underway but will now be fast-tracked or given greater priority for completion, based on their potentially large impact in reducing homelessness. In other cases, the priorities and action items are new but are seen as critical to achieving some of the other priorities or intended outcomes.



**REPORT:**

The Homelessness Action Plan features 7 sections guided by their specific priority and a total of 42 actions. Actions are also tied to associated planning strategies through the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan, The sections below will list each section and their respective priority statements and actions.

Unsheltered Homelessness

Priority: Establish a coordinated system of outreach supports to quickly connect unsheltered homeless individuals with housing and health services and programs.

Actions:

- Continue with and build upon the Encampment Coordinated Response Table and ensure the representation of decision-makers from the City of North Bay, North Bay Police, DNSSAB, North Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre, and other health and social services providers with the aim to move unsheltered homeless individuals to housing.
- Ensure that there is sustainable funding for emergency response teams to assist with crisis situations including encampments, housing that has been condemned, and housing destroyed by a natural disaster or fire.
- Provide mobile health and crisis response services such as street nursing, which are also linked to coordinated access (i.e., location of available housing) and case management.
- Ensure that there is space available to rapidly shelter or re-house individuals who are transitionally homeless or have been affected by housing that has been condemned or accommodations that have been destroyed by natural disasters or fires, or COVID infections.

- Building upon the community work that has been done, complete and formalize the process for obtaining the names of homeless individuals and utilize a case management model to house and support individuals promptly.
- Establish the necessary data-sharing agreements between relevant service providers, to share client information and data in support of case management (above), research and analysis, and planning.

### Emergency Shelter Services

Priority: Develop a shelter system that is innovative, cost-effective, and easy to access, to provide housing stability and rapid re-housing as required.

Actions:

- Utilize provincial homelessness funding to continue to cover the operating costs of the Low-Barrier Shelter to March 31, 2022, with an emphasis on rapid rehousing for those experiencing episodic or transitional homelessness.<sup>1</sup>
- The DNSSAB to develop a funding strategy to cover the operating costs of the Low-Barrier Shelter from April 1 to December 31, 2022.
- Reduce - with an aim to eliminate - the use of shelter overflow in hotels/motels through coordinated access, transitional housing, and/or rapid housing options (see also, Unsheltered Homelessness).
- Offer 24/7 shelter and day programming for the homeless population.
- Utilizing the by-name list, conduct a risk assessment of individuals utilizing the low-barrier shelter, or in known encampments, and utilize a case management model to house and support individuals promptly.
- Explore current development projects and opportunities to reserve housing units for homeless families.

### Transitional & Supportive Housing

Priority: Create dynamic transitional and supportive housing that stabilizes individuals and promotes life skills development and independent living.

Actions:

- Convert the Low-Barrier Shelter into stage-one transitional housing.

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<sup>1</sup> Those experiencing episodic homelessness tend to move in-and-out of homelessness periodically and have stayed in an emergency shelter three or more times in the past year. Transitional homelessness refers to those who have experienced a significant or disastrous event in their life and become homeless, but are more likely to stay in a shelter for a brief period.

- Establish a permanent location for the stage-one transitional housing, which includes looking at the costs and benefits of staying at the existing location vs. moving to another.
- Create a coordinated service system with central accountability for the on-site delivery of a wide array of support services including mental health, addictions, counselling, education, life skills, employment, food security, and housing-based case management.
- Continue to advocate for sustainable funding to support the operations of all transitional housing programs.
- The DNSSAB to fund the Gateway House transitional housing programs pending health or housing support from the provincial government.

### Homelessness Prevention Services

Priority: Provide a suite of coordinated homelessness prevention programs and services that will provide long-term stabilization and security to households and individuals at-risk of homelessness.

#### Actions:

- Review the efficacy of the local Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI), the Board's main homelessness prevention program delivered through provincial funding.
- Depending on the results of the review above, consider providing additional funding for financial management programs such as trusteeships.
- Depending on the results of the review above, consider requiring households that have repeatedly accessed homelessness prevention programs to take part in financial management programs such as trusteeships.
- Increase data collection of homelessness prevention programs to include follow-ups with households that received assistance.
- Expand investments for rental subsidy programs that are not specifically tied to the Social Housing Waiting List. (Note: Doing this however, would not lead to a decrease in the Service Level Standard shortfall and would need to be explored further).
- Increase data sharing between organizations that offer homelessness prevention programs to better serve vulnerable populations.
- Start tracking the number of repeat clients and utilize a housing-based case management model to work with, and stabilize, individuals in their homes and prevent the loss of housing.

### Other Housing Services

Priority: Adequate, suitable, and affordable housing options including rental and homeownership that meet the diverse needs of the community.

Actions:

- Seek sustainable funding for homeowners who require critical home renovations/retrofits. This funding is important to assist households in retaining their home and meeting health and safety regulations.
- Seek sustainable funding for down-payment assistance programs. These programs are important to assist households who would like to move from rental accommodations to homeownership.
- Advocate for increased funding to support the development of affordable housing units.
- Leverage DNSSAB and NDHC funds to explore opportunities to expand rental subsidy programs, affordable housing, and revitalize public housing.
- Explore and realize opportunities to increase the number of subsidized housing units through unit acquisitions and new developments.

### Information & Data Collection & Analysis

Priority: Conduct advanced data collection and analysis on the homeless population that supports evidence-based decision-making and enables the measurement of progress, performance, and outcomes.

Actions:

- Dedicate a DNSSAB staff lead for HIFIS and Coordinated Access.
- Implement a By-Name List of homeless individuals in the Nipissing District.
- Implement HIFIS 4.0.
- Require that all service providers that access CHPI and Reaching Home funding be on HIFIS 4.0.
- Ensure that the major service providers related to homelessness are involved in the Coordinated Access system and utilize HIFIS 4.0.
- Expand data sharing agreements between key service system players.
- Increase the reporting requirements for the CHPI Program to include specific planning outcome measures and qualitative descriptive information.

- Increase data collection of housing and homelessness programs to include follow-ups with households that received assistance.
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### System Coordination

Priority: Create a coordinated system of homelessness and ancillary services and supports with a shared vision, purpose, and ownership.

Actions:

- Become a Built for Zero Canada member community once the eligibility period opens.
- Centralize services for supportive and transitional housing tenants and shelter guests – a wide array of support services on-site.
- Ensure the By-Name List of homeless individuals is tied to a group of community service providers who will meet regularly and find coordinated solutions to rapidly rehouse and provide supports to individuals identified.
- Assess the value of funded housing and homelessness programs, supports, and services for their Social Return on Investment.
- Identify individuals who do not have a fixed address in DNSSAB databases and seek their consent to be added to the By Name List in order to connect them with appropriate supports and services.

### **RESOURCES REQUIRED:**

The Homelessness Action Plan is a DNSSAB owned planning document. As the service system manager, DNSSAB plays a large role in housing and homelessness in the Nipissing District. The implementation of action items is, therefore, a top priority for the Board in its goal to realize the vision of *Healthy communities without poverty*. The following actions are intended to assist the Board and staff with the implementation of the Plan:

- Ensure all funding decisions pertaining to housing and homelessness are linked to the Homelessness Action Plan.
- Seek opportunities to create or enhance partnerships in the community to move forward the Homelessness Action Plan.
- Where feasible, realign existing resources to complete/implement the action items listed in the Homelessness Action Plan.
- Apply to available funding resources to complete/implement the action items listed in the Homelessness Action Plan.

- Advocate to various levels of government for additional resources to complete/implement the action items listed in the Homelessness Action Plan that cannot be realized through a realignment of existing resources.
- Review DNSSAB operations in the realm of housing and homelessness but also other interrelated services such as Ontario Works, Children's Services, and Emergency Medical Services (EMS).

## **CONCLUSION:**

In summary, the Homelessness Action Plan represents an opportunity to reassess the homelessness landscape and take immediate action that is realistic to curb the upward trends noted in homelessness and ultimately reach a functional zero end to homelessness. By taking a housing continuum approach, the Action Plan looks to create a spectrum of programs, supports, and services that will effectively move individuals along the continuum. The Action Plan is a DNSSAB initiative, however, it will only be as successful as the collaboration and coordination that takes place among the major service system players. The Homelessness Landscape Report clearly indicated that in response to a changing landscape and societal factors the current approach to solving homelessness has not had the full impact and has not been successful in meeting all the planning outcomes. It is now time to be innovative and create a dynamic homelessness prevention and response system that creates social and economic value in the community.