

WE CAN DO BETTER: Housing in Inuit Nunangat



Report of the Standing Senate Committee
on Aboriginal Peoples

The Honourable Lillian Eva Dyck, Chair
The Honourable Dennis Glen Patterson, Deputy Chair



March 2017

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42nd Parliament – 1st Session

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The Honourable Dennis Glen Patterson, Deputy Chair

and

The Honourable Senators

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Scott Tannas
Charlie Watt

Ex-officio members of the committee

The Honourable Peter Harder, P.C. (or *Diane Bellemare*) and Claude Carignan, P.C., (or Yonah Martin)

Other Senators who have participated from time to time in the study

The Honourable Senators Ataullahjan, Lankin, P.C., Marshall, Martin, Meredith, Moore, Sibbeston, Tkachuk and Wells

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ORDER OF REFERENCE

Extract from the *Journals of the Senate* of Thursday, February 18, 2016:

With leave of the Senate,

The Honourable Senator Dyck moved, seconded by the Honourable Senator Mercer:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples be authorized to examine and report on best practices and on-going challenges relating to housing in First Nation and Inuit communities in Nunavut, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut and the Northwest Territories, including, but not limited to:

- (a) innovative solutions and technologies for the construction of housing in the North;
- (b) financing opportunities and challenges to the construction, operations, and maintenance costs of housing;
- (c) federal and cost-shared territorial programs and activities in relation to northern housing;

That the committee submit its final report no later than October 31, 2016 and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

After debate,

The question being put on the motion, it was adopted.

Charles Robert

Clerk of the Senate

ORDER OF REFERENCE

Extract from the *Journals of the Senate* of Monday, December 12, 2016:

The Honourable Senator Dyck moved, seconded by the Honourable Senator Cordy:

That, notwithstanding the order of the Senate adopted on Wednesday, October 19, 2016, the date for the final report of the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples in relation to its study on best practices and on-going challenges relating to housing in First Nation and Inuit communities in Nunavut, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut and the Northwest Territories be extended from December 31, 2016 to March 31, 2017.

After debate,

The question being put on the motion, it was adopted.

Charles Robert

Clerk of the Senate

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Throughout their traditional homelands, Inuit face an acute housing crisis which threatens their health and safety. This persistent and growing housing shortage has been characterized as one of the most significant public health emergencies in this country. Severe overcrowding, substandard homes, and a lack of affordable and suitable housing options has left many Inuit families one step away from homelessness; an unsettling reality in one of the harshest climates in the world.

In Nunavik alone, over half of Inuit families live in overcrowded housing. In far too many communities, up to 15 people, including young children, live in small and crumbling three bedroom units. The effect of these conditions, on children in particular, is deeply troubling. Overcrowding results in higher levels of domestic violence and abuse, placing children in unacceptably vulnerable situations.

The lack of decent and affordable housing continues to have serious public health repercussions throughout the Inuit territories. Tuberculosis, which is rare in southern Canada, occurs among Inuit at a rate over 250 times higher than for non-Indigenous Canadians. Inuit families are at higher risk for mental health problems, including stress and anxiety. High levels of respiratory infections among Inuit children, such as chronic lung disease after lower respiratory tract infections, are also linked to crowding and poorly ventilated homes.

Adequate housing contributes directly to improved educational attainment levels, positive relationships, good health and economic prosperity. As Inuit are the youngest population in Canada, there is a growing urgency to identify and implement culturally-appropriate solutions. The Committee heard clearly that if we are serious about providing young Inuit with the ability to participate fully in the life of their communities, investments in housing must be a priority.

To this end, the availability of social housing is essential, especially because private homeownership will likely continue to be financially out of reach for many Inuit. Given the ongoing financial and demographic pressures for social housing, adequate federal support is considered critical by many in order to help territorial and Inuit governments keep up with the escalating housing needs in their regions.

However, we heard consistently, that at current levels, federal funding is inadequate to meet current and projected demand. The high costs of construction (estimated at three times higher than in Toronto), operation, maintenance, and transportation mean that few homes can be built with federal funding. To make matters worse, in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, federal funding for social housing is declining, making it impossible to meet community housing needs.

Recognizing the need for additional federal funding, the Committee recommends that the federal government develop a funding strategy for housing in Inuit Nunangat. Such a strategy, we believe, is necessary not only to address the declining funding under social housing agreements, but also to provide adequate, predictable and stable funding so that regional housing authorities can plan for, and meet, long-term housing needs.

Over the longer term, Inuit need to have access to a range of housing options capable of meeting their needs, including private homeownership, co-operative housing, and rent-to-own opportunities. Currently, barriers such as affordability and the absence of a real estate market have prevented these options from gaining traction in Inuit Nunangat.

Ultimately, any solution to the housing crisis will require the direct involvement of Inuit who experience the housing crisis every day. Currently, targeted federal funding for housing in Nunavik and Nunatsiavut is transferred first to the province, and then to Inuit organizations. As these organizations are better positioned to identify local needs and priorities within their communities, the Committee recommends that federal funding for housing be provided directly to Indigenous organizations.

In this report, we have set out actions to support integrated and community-based solutions that better reflect Inuit cultures and the climate in which they live. This means involving Inuit in meaningful partnerships in the design of suitable homes, exploring new technologies to make better and more affordable homes available, exploring alternative financing opportunities that support greater homeownership, and taking appropriate steps to lower operating and construction costs, while promoting local skilled labour.

Finally, the chronic housing shortage, combined with a young and growing population, requires us to act now to alleviate the vulnerability experienced by far too many Inuit families due to a lack of housing and to ensure that generations of Inuit to come can fulfil their promise.

INTRODUCTION

We need to consider that the challenges presented by inadequate housing are likely to have long-term effects on today's youngest generation, which may deprive them of their ability to participate fully in the future of their Inuit homelands and Canada.¹

For over 60 years, beginning with the first permanent settlements, Inuit have struggled with inadequate and unsafe housing conditions. High rates of overcrowding, long wait lists for subsidized housing, and the number of homes in need of major repairs across Inuit homelands represents one of the most persistent and critical public health issues in this country. The lack of appropriate and adequate housing has, and continues to have, far reaching consequences for the health and well-being of Inuit communities. Unacceptably high levels of respiratory illnesses, infectious diseases and family violence can all be linked to poor housing conditions, as can the direct negative effects on children's ability to learn and social relationships.

The housing situation places many Inuit communities and families at risk, with many Inuit facing the constant threat of becoming homeless in one of the harshest climates in the world. Addressing the despair that arises from these challenges is even more critical when one considers that Inuit, with a median age of 23 years, are the youngest population in Canada. Access to safe and adequate housing must therefore be a shared priority if we are serious about not jeopardizing the mental, spiritual, and physical well-being of Inuit generations to come.

This report hopes to build on the solid work that has been done in this area by others in order to set out some prescriptions to address some of the factors that contribute to the housing crisis in Inuit communities, including the high costs of materials and shipping, inadequate funding, remoteness of communities, the need for skilled labour, a lack of infrastructure and a harsh arctic climate.

Our proposals are informed by, and have benefitted from, the insightful testimony of those who appeared before the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples during its study on northern housing which took place between February and June 2016. Specifically, the study examined the best practices and ongoing challenges relating to housing in First Nations and Inuit communities, with a particular focus on Nunatsiavut, Nunavik, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. The Committee acknowledges that First Nations in the Northwest Territories face challenges similar to their Inuit neighbours. The recommendations contained in this report, where relevant, apply equally to them.

Over the course of the study, the Committee held fifteen meetings in Ottawa where it heard from over 50 witnesses including Inuit governments and community members, northern housing authorities, Indigenous organizations working in the North, academics, architects, and youth representatives. In April 2016, the Committee travelled to communities in Nunavik and Nunavut to see first-hand the challenges and best practices relating to housing in the North. The Committee would like to thank the witnesses who opened their homes and took the time to share their day-to-day lives and experiences with us.

¹ Cathleen Knotsch and Dianne Kinnon, [*If Not Now...When? Addressing the Ongoing Inuit Housing Crisis in Canada*](#), National Aboriginal Health Organization, 2011.

This study follows our previous reports on First Nations housing and infrastructure on reserve which were released in February and June 2015.² These reports did not directly examine the situation for First Nations and Inuit living in northern Canada. Therefore, the Committee felt that the unique challenges facing northern regions, including jurisdiction, geography, and climate, among other factors, justified a separate study.

This report outlines the Committee's observations, conclusions, and recommendations which we believe could begin to address the housing challenges faced in Inuit Nunangat and among First Nations communities in the Northwest Territories. The report begins with background and discussion of the current state of housing in the North before turning to possible ways to alleviate the situation.

² Senate, Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, [Housing on First Nation Reserves: Challenges and Successes](#), Eight Report, 41st Parliament, 2nd Session, February 2015; Senate, Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, [On-Reserve Housing and Infrastructure: Recommendations for Change](#), Twelfth Report, 41st Parliament, 2nd Session, June 2015.

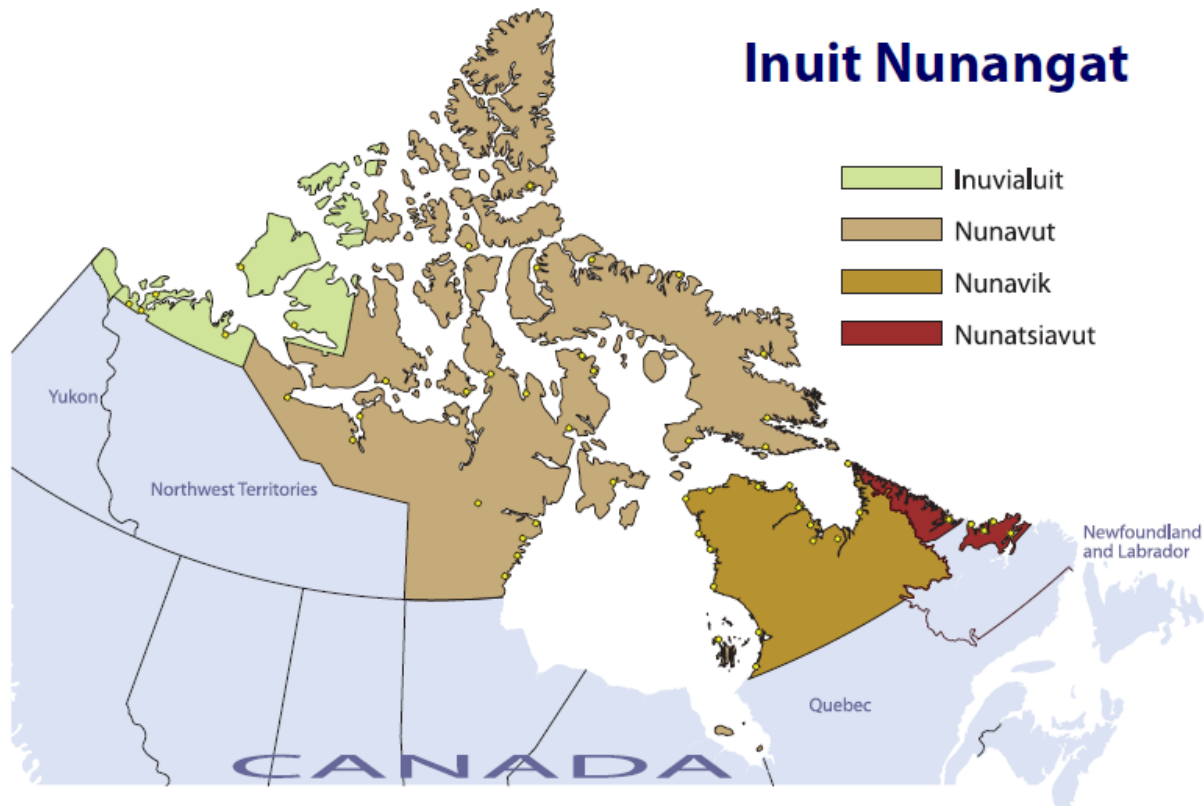
BACKGROUND

Before discussing the housing challenges faced by Inuit in northern Canada, it will be helpful to outline the Inuit regions of Canada (known collectively as Inuit Nunangat), the role of the federal government with respect to housing in Inuit Nunangat, and the roles of housing authorities in each of the regions.

A. The Inuit Nunangat: Population and Governance

Inuit Nunangat which means "the place where Inuit live" In Inuktitut, is comprised of four regions: Inuvialuit (the Northwest Territories), Nunavut, Nunavik (Northern Quebec) and Nunatsiavut (Labrador). As shown in Figure 1, Inuit Nunangat covers a vast territory of approximately 2.7 million km².

Figure 1 – Map of Inuit Nunangat



Source: Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, [Maps of Inuit Nunangat \(Inuit Regions of Canada\)](#)

This geographic region is home to approximately 44,995 Indigenous peoples, the majority of whom are Inuit. Table 1 shows the population in each region by Indigenous group. This population is widely dispersed across the Inuit Nunangat which comprises 53 communities, many of which have less than 500 residents.

Table 1 – Indigenous Population of Nunavut, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut and Inuvialuit Settlement Region, 2011

Region	Inuit	First Nations	Métis	Indigenous population in proportion of total population
Nunavut	27,070	130	130	86%
Nunavik	10,755	55	50	90%
Nunatsiavut	2,330	10	20	90%
Inuvialuit Settlement Region	3,310	890	185	77%
TOTAL	43,455	1,175	385	86%

Sources: Statistics Canada, [Fact Sheet for Inuit Nunangat](#), *Aboriginal Peoples: Fact Sheets*, 29 March 2016; Statistics Canada, [Fact Sheet for Nunavut](#), *Aboriginal Peoples: Fact Sheets*, 29 March 2016; Statistics Canada, [Fact Sheet for Nunavik](#), *Aboriginal Peoples: Fact Sheets*, 29 March 2016; Statistics Canada, [Fact Sheet for Nunatsiavut](#), *Aboriginal Peoples: Fact Sheets*, 29 March 2016; Statistics Canada, [Fact Sheet for Inuvialuit Region](#), *Aboriginal Peoples: Fact Sheets*, 29 March 2016.

Governance in each of the four regions varies in accordance with signed comprehensive land claim agreements. In 1993, the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement* was signed providing (among other matters) lands, compensation, and hunting and fishing rights to Inuit beneficiaries. The territory of Nunavut was created in 1999 and the Government of Nunavut was established as a public government.

The administrative region of Nunavik was created in 1975 by the *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement* (JBNQA). The JBNQA specifically includes provisions related to housing. Section 29.040 states that existing housing programs for Inuit shall continue “until a unified system, including the transfer of property and housing management to the municipalities, can be arranged.”³ Further, the JBNQA devolved some areas of responsibility, including education and health care to the Inuit of Nunavik leading to the creation of organizations such as the Kativik School Board, and the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services. Following the signing of the JBNQA, the Kativik Regional Government was created in 1978 by provincial legislation. The Kativik Regional Government is considered a municipality under this legislation and is responsible for local matters such as regional administration and the development of municipal infrastructure.⁴

The Nunatsiavut Government was created in 2005 as an Inuit regional government pursuant to the provisions of the *Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement*. Under the Agreement, the Nunatsiavut Government exercises jurisdiction over matters such as health, education and housing. Through

³ Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, [James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement and Complementary Agreements](#), 1975, section 29.0.40.

⁴ Government of Quebec, [Act Respecting Northern Villages and the Kativik Regional Government](#), 1978.

negotiated fiscal financing agreement, the federal government provides funding to the Nunatsiavut Government for the provision of various programs and services.⁵

The Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR), located in the Northwest Territories and the North Slope Region of the Yukon, was established by the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement* signed in 1984.⁶ The final agreement did not include self-government provisions, though negotiations in this regard are currently underway.⁷ Until then, responsibility for social programs and services, such as housing, is assumed by the Government of the Northwest Territories.

As suggested above, jurisdiction for housing in the four Inuit regions is complex as in most cases there are multiple levels of government involved. These arrangements are outlined below to provide context for the remainder of the report.

B. The Role of the Federal Government for Housing in Inuit Nunangat

The federal government has played a role in housing for Inuit since about the 1950s, when it began to offer social welfare programs (including healthcare, education and housing), in Inuit communities. To facilitate the delivery of these programs, the federal government encouraged Inuit to settle permanently in sedentary communities by offering housing.⁸ Housing was constructed and provided to Inuit in northern communities under several programs, including the Eskimo Housing Loan Program⁹ which was initiated in 1959.¹⁰ Under this program, and others that followed, Inuit increasingly settled in permanent communities over the subsequent decades.¹¹

Following this initial involvement, the federal government's direct role in Inuit housing became more and more limited. Beginning in the 1970s, the federal government began transferring responsibility for Inuit housing to the relevant provinces and territories. In 1974, the Northwest Territories assumed responsibility for the management of the public housing program in the territory from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.¹² In 1981, following the coming into force of the 1975 *James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement*, the federal government transferred the ownership and management of all social housing in Nunavik to the Quebec provincial government.¹³

⁵ Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, [Nunatsiavut Government Fiscal Financing Agreement](#), section 2.

⁶ Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, [General Briefing Note on Canada's Self-Government and Comprehensive Land Claim Policies and the Status of Negotiations](#).

⁷ Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, [Inuvialuit Final Agreement](#).

⁸ Sarah Bonesteel, [Canada's Relationship with Inuit: A History of Policy and Program Development](#), INAC, June 2006.

⁹ The Eskimo Housing Loan Program was created in 1959 and was a rent-to-own program that allowed Inuit to become homeowners. A second program known as the Eskimo Rental Housing Program was introduced in the 1960s to address the deficiencies of the Eskimo Housing Loan Program.

¹⁰ Sarah Bonesteel, [Canada's Relationship with Inuit: A History of Policy and Program Development](#), INAC, June 2006.

¹¹ Sarah Bonesteel, [Canada's Relationship with Inuit: A History of Policy and Program Development](#), INAC, June 2006.

¹² Sarah Bonesteel, [Canada's Relationship with Inuit: A History of Policy and Program Development](#), INAC, June 2006.

¹³ Société d'habitation du Québec, [Housing in Nunavik](#), November 2001.

In each region of Inuit Nunangat, the federal government has transferred its responsibilities for Inuit housing to other levels of government. In 2005, for example, the Nunatsiavut Government received jurisdiction over housing through its comprehensive land claims agreement.

Given this context, the current role of the federal government in Inuit housing is limited largely to the provision of funding.¹⁴

C. Federal Funding Programs for Northern Housing

The federal government provides funding for housing in Inuit Nunangat to provincial and territorial governments primarily through two programs administered by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC): the Social Housing Agreements and the Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH) initiative.

The IAH initiative provides funding for various activities, including new construction, renovation, homeownership assistance, rent supplements, shelter allowances, accessibility modifications and accommodations for victims of family violence. Under agreements with CMHC, each province and territory matches the federal investments. Provinces and territories are responsible for the design, delivery and administration of affordable housing programs to meet the needs within their jurisdictions.¹⁵

These bi-lateral agreements do not specify the amount of funding allocated to each region of Inuit Nunangat by provincial and territorial governments. However, in 2016, the federal budget announced \$177 million over two years through CMHC's IAH initiative to specifically support northern and Inuit housing, including \$8 million to Yukon, \$12 million to the Northwest Territories, \$76.7 million to Nunavut, \$50 million to Nunavik, \$15 million to Nunatsiavut, and \$15 million to the Inuvialuit Settlement Region.¹⁶

In addition, the federal government, through Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), provides funding for housing directly to the Nunatsiavut Government through a negotiated fiscal financing agreement. A similar arrangement is in place in Nunavik where since 2000, the federal government has provided funding for housing construction to the Makivik Corporation to fulfil its obligations under the *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement*.¹⁷

D. The Role of Housing Authorities

Across Inuit Nunangat, the provincial and territorial housing agencies are involved in the delivery of housing programs. For example, in Nunavut, the Nunavut Housing Corporation (NHC), delivers housing programs, including social housing, and homeownership assistance programs. In Nunatsiavut, the

¹⁴ Stephen Van Dine, Assistant Deputy Minister, Northern Affairs Organization, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, *Proceedings, Issue 3*, 8 March 2016; Charlie MacArthur, Senior Vice-President, Regional Operations and Assisted Housing, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Proceedings, Issue 3*, 8 March 2016.

¹⁵ CMHC, "[Investment in Affordable Housing \(IAH\).](#)"

¹⁶ Government of Canada, [Growing the Middle Class](#), Budget 2016, 22 March 2016.

¹⁷ Société d'habitation du Québec, [Housing in Nunavik](#), Information document, 2014; [Agreement Concerning the Implementation of the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement on Housing in Nunavik](#), Preamble.

Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation owns 56 homes in the region and provides some programs including social housing and supportive living.¹⁸

At the community level, local housing authorities are also involved in the provision of housing in the four regions. In Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, these local housing organizations are part of the territorial housing corporations. In Nunavik and Nunatsiavut, local housing authorities are separate from the provincial government. For instance, in Nunavik, the Kativik Municipal Housing Bureau delivers social housing and other programs to community members. In Nunatsiavut, the Torngat Regional Housing Association provides housing support in Nunatsiavut through its social housing program.

In some communities, local and provincial housing authorities operate simultaneously and may even have different policies. In Nunatsiavut, both the Torngat Regional Housing Association and the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation provide social housing. Each housing authority has their own rent scale and housing model, as the Torngat Regional Housing Association offers housing through lease-to-own agreements.

¹⁸ Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, [Rental Housing Portfolio](#), 31 March 2016.

THE CURRENT STATE OF HOUSING IN INUIT NUNANGAT

The housing situation in Inuit Nunangat has reached a crisis level. A severe housing shortage has led to overcrowding and hidden homelessness. Further, the housing stock is often of poor quality and not built to withstand the harsh conditions of the North. On our community site visits we observed the extent of the crisis. We saw families with young children living in homes that were badly damaged, but the families stayed because they had no other place to go. We saw homes that were so overcrowded that some family members including young children had to live outside in a shed due to a lack of space. These conditions are unacceptable in our country.

A. Severe Housing Shortage

*For three years no housing construction took place in the community. The waiting list is getting longer and longer.*¹⁹

The housing crisis is characterized by a severe shortage of adequate housing across the four Inuit regions. As observed by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami's (ITK) President Natan Obed, this shortage is not new and has been an ongoing reality in Inuit communities for decades. At present, in Nunavik alone, 1,030 housing units are needed to address the shortage of adequate housing. In Nunavut, these numbers are even higher.²⁰ Terry Audla, President and CEO of the Nunavut Housing Corporation estimated that 3,000 housing units were needed "to close the housing gap between Nunavut and the rest of Canada."²¹ The housing shortage has led to lengthy waitlists for public housing units. In Nunavut, approximately 3,700 individuals in the territory were on a public housing waitlist in 2009-2010.²² In Nunatsiavut, in 2012, there were 196 families that were in need of housing.²³ In the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, 144 units are needed to address the waitlist for housing.²⁴

B. Poor Quality Housing

The shortage of housing is exacerbated by housing units that, in many cases, are often of poor quality particularly with respect to the materials used in their construction and design.

According to Jeff Anderson, CEO of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, most of the social housing stock was built decades ago to less rigorous building standards and was not designed to last in Arctic conditions.²⁵ In Nunavik, for example, a witness suggested that housing materials such as wood

¹⁹ Presentation by Pauloosie Kasudluak, Mayor of Inukjuak to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 21 April 2016.

²⁰ Kativik Regional Government and Makivik Corporation, Housing in Nunavik, Presented to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples in Kuujjuak, 20 April 2016.

²¹ Terry Audla, President and CEO, Nunavut Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 23 March 2016.

²² Government of Nunavut, Nunavut Housing Survey, "[Table 16 – Public Housing Waiting List, Nunavut Regions and Communities, 2009-2010.](#)"

²³ Kate Mitchell, First Minister, Nunatsiavut Government, *Proceedings*, [Issue 9](#), 14 June 2016.

²⁴ Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, [Study on best practices and on-going challenges relating to housing in First Nation and Inuit communities in Nunavut, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut and the Northwest Territories](#), brief submitted to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 31 May 2016.

²⁵ Jeff Anderson, President and CEO, Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 5](#), 12 April 2016.

are unsuitable for the northern climate, as they can bend and sag under extreme temperature variations, resulting in leaks.²⁶

In addition, housing designs are missing key features considered essential for homes in the North, such as much-needed wind barriers to prevent snow accumulation.²⁷ In some homes, insulation is a serious problem, as homes are cold during the winter and too warm in the summer.²⁸



Due to the severe housing shortage, a young family in Igloolik, Nunavut lived in this poorly constructed wooden shed.

The housing designs are also unsafe. Many homes only had a single door. As these doors often freeze in the winter, community members expressed concerns about being unable to escape in the event of a fire or a family violence situation.²⁹

As the pressure mounts to address the housing shortage by building as many homes as possible, quality construction is often sacrificed.³⁰ Witnesses explained that contracts are awarded to the lowest bidder, which often leads to the construction of poor quality homes.³¹ According to a brief submitted by the

²⁶ Municipal Councillor for Inukjuak, Presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Inukjuak, 21 April 2016.

²⁷ Igloolik Housing Association, Presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Igloolik, 19 April 2016.

²⁸ Municipal Councillor for Inukjuak, Presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Inukjuak, 21 April 2016.

²⁹ Municipal councillor for Igloolik, Presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Igloolik, 19 April 2016.

³⁰ Alain Fournier, architect, director, EVOQ Architecture, *Proceedings*, [Issue 6](#), 3 May 2016.

³¹ Municipal Councillor for Inukjuak, Presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Inukjuak, 21 April 2016.

Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, this legacy is highly visible in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, where there are a large number of dilapidated and abandoned buildings.³²

C. Overcrowding

*There has been a 50 per cent increase in overcrowding in the last 15 years. The crisis is getting worse; it is not getting better.*³³

The shortage of housing has led to substantial overcrowding. Indeed, during its visit to communities in Nunavut and Nunavik, the Committee was dismayed by the severity of the problem. The Committee saw small three bedroom units which were home to 15 people, including young children. In these units, there was little privacy for family members, many of whom slept in the same room. Most spaces of the home, including entranceways and boiler rooms, were converted into sleeping areas for family members. In some cases, there was not enough space for everyone and some family members had to live outside in a shed in the backyard.



Mattresses line the floor in this bedroom in an overcrowded house in Inukjuak, Quebec

³² Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, [Study on best practices and on-going challenges relating to housing in First Nation and Inuit communities in Nunavut, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut and the Northwest Territories](#), brief submitted to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 31 May 2016.

³³ Natan Obed, President, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 22 March 2016.

The Committee's first-hand observations about the severity of the overcrowding problem are supported by statistics. Nunavik has one of the highest rates of overcrowding in Canada, with 53% of Nunavik families living in overcrowded homes in 2015.³⁴ The Nunavut Housing Corporation estimates that 38% of social housing tenants³⁵ live in overcrowded conditions across the territory, although this rate is as high as 72% in some communities.³⁶

D. Hidden Homelessness

Faced with lengthy waitlists and few available housing options, the Committee heard that community members are forced to move in with friends and relatives contributing to overcrowded living situations.³⁷ Representatives from the Government of Nunavut's Department of Family Services and from men and women's shelters in Iqaluit explained to the Committee that with limited housing options, community residents have to "couch surf," moving from home to home, depending on the generosity of others. This situation leads to the development of a population of hidden homeless.³⁸

³⁴ Kativik Regional Government and Makivik Corporation, Housing in Nunavik, Presented to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples in Kuujuaq, 20 April 2016.

³⁵ The Nunavut Housing Corporation indicated that over 50% of the population of Nunavut live in social housing. (Nunavut Housing Corporation, Nunavut is facing a severe housing crisis, brief submitted to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 23 March 2016).

³⁶ Nunavut Housing Corporation, Nunavut is facing a severe housing crisis, brief submitted to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 23 March 2016.

³⁷ Community site visit, Igloolik, Nunavut, 19 April, 2016.

³⁸ Department of Family Services, Government of Nunavut, [Angiragangittuliriniq: A Framework for Action for Nunavut's Absolute Homeless](#), 2015-2016. There is a difference between hidden homeless and absolute homelessness. Absolute homelessness is defined by the Government of Nunavut as when an individual does not have any kind of housing, including those who stay at emergency shelters and those "with no choice but to sleep in places not meant to be permanent, year-long housing such as abandoned houses, tents, sheds, or even outdoors."

CONSEQUENCES OF THE HOUSING CRISIS

*The reality is that our children are not adequately housed. Our children sleep in shifts in some households and have no place to do their homework. It's typical to see mattresses lining the floors in many of our homes.*³⁹

Housing is deeply connected to many social issues facing Indigenous communities, including health, education and family violence. The serious social consequences of the housing crisis include physical and mental health problems, educational gaps, an elevated risk of violence, and adverse consequences for youth. As explained by Mr. Obed, housing is an important determinant of health, community well-being and economic development, directly affecting educational outcomes, increasing the risk of communicable disease and adding to social challenges.⁴⁰

A. Communicable Diseases

Overcrowding contributes to the spread of communicable diseases that are rare in southern Canada. When one family member in an overcrowded house gets sick, the disease spreads quickly. In Nunavik, the Kativik Regional Government and the Makivik Corporation testified that active tuberculosis is on the rise in several Nunavik communities and new cases have recently been discovered.⁴¹ According to ITK, in 2011, the reported rate of tuberculosis among Inuit was approximately 254 times higher than the rate for Canadian-born non-Indigenous peoples.⁴²

B. Mould

During its visit to Nunavut and Nunavik, Committee members were concerned to see a number of homes filled with mould. Due to the overcrowding, the ventilation systems were overworked, leading to the build-up of excess moisture in the homes and resulting in the development of mould.

The Committee heard that mould in housing units adversely impacts the health of community members, who have higher rates of respiratory tract infections.⁴³ Given these health impacts, and in desperate need of fresh air, some community members had tried to solve the ventilation problems themselves by cutting small holes in the walls.

³⁹ Jeannie Arreak-Kullualik, Director, Social Cultural Development Department, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., *Proceedings*, [Issue 8](#), 1 June 2016.

⁴⁰ Natan Obed, President, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 22 March 2016.

⁴¹ Kativik Regional Government and Makivik Corporation, presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Kuujuaq, 20 April 2016.

⁴² Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, [Inuit Specific Tuberculosis Strategy](#), March 2013.

⁴³ Kate Mitchell, First Minister, Nunatsiavut Government, *Proceedings*, [Issue 9](#), 14 June 2016.

C. Mental Health

Overcrowding has been linked to a number of mental health challenges among Inuit in these regions, including high rates of depression and stress.⁴⁴ Dr. Riva identified several ways that housing may affect mental health and well-being, including the structure of the house and related issues (such as overcrowding and air quality), the condition of the community where the house is located (including access to recreational space and good quality food), and the perception that individuals have of their housing environment.⁴⁵ Further, in ITK's National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy poor housing is identified as one of several factors of community distress which contribute to an increased risk of suicide among Inuit.⁴⁶ Despite the early stages of her work, Dr. Riva noted that Inuit who do not live in overcrowded dwellings reported more favourable psycho-social factors. For example, they felt they had more privacy and were more satisfied with their home.⁴⁷

D. Educational Gaps

*The housing crisis directly contributes to the grim educational statistics.*⁴⁸

The housing shortage directly affects the educational outcomes of young people across Inuit Nunangat, many of whom are then unable to reach their full potential. In overcrowded living situations, children and young people have few places to study or do homework.⁴⁹ In some households, children take turns sleeping because there is not adequate space. These children and youth easily fall behind in their studies due to a lack of sleep and inability to do homework.⁵⁰

Given this reality, Jeannie Arreak-Kullualik, Director, Social Cultural Development Department, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., stated that "it's not surprising that our children suffer from astronomical dropout rates: 74% of

"The housing crisis directly contributes to the grim educational statistics. Inadequacy of the home impacts all members of [the] family in terms of education, employment, health and family planning, and that means a daily life reality for over half our population."

(Jeannie Arreak-Kullualik, Director, Social Cultural Development Department, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., *Proceedings, Issue 8*, 1 June 2016.)

⁴⁴ Kate Mitchell, First Minister, Nunatsiavut Government, *Proceedings, Issue 9*, 14 June 2016.

⁴⁵ Mylène Riva, Assistant Professor, Department of Social and Preventive Medicine, University of Laval (as an individual) *Proceedings, Issue 7*, 18 May 2016.

⁴⁶ Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, [National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy](#), 2016.

⁴⁷ Mylène Riva, Assistant Professor, Department of Social and Preventive Medicine, University of Laval (as an individual) *Proceedings, Issue 7*, 18 May 2016.

⁴⁸ Jeannie Arreak-Kullualik, Director, Social Cultural Development Department, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., *Proceedings, Issue 8*, 1 June 2016.

⁴⁹ Natan Obed, President, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, *Proceedings, Issue 4*, 22 March 2016 and Olivia Ikey, Ungava Representative, Qarjuit Youth Council, *Proceedings, Issue 7*, 11 May 2016.

⁵⁰ Jeannie Arreak-Kullualik, Director, Social Cultural Development Department, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., *Proceedings, Issue 8*, 1 June 2016.

Inuit children leave school before graduating.”⁵¹ In Nunavik, representatives of the Qarjuit Youth Council suggested that the lack of housing contributes to the high number of youth who do not complete high school, which they estimate at an alarming 90% in their region.⁵²

Speaking from his own personal experience, Adla Itorcheak, Policy Analyst on Housing at Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., emphasized the strong link between higher educational attainment and youth who do not grow up in overcrowded conditions. Mr. Itorcheak remarked that because he grew up in a home that was not overcrowded, he was able to have his own bedroom and therefore the space to pursue his studies, ultimately attaining a university degree. He explained that his siblings and classmates did not have their own rooms and did not complete high school.⁵³

“It took me seven years to get a house. I graduated high school through adult education, I had no children and a good paying job and they said, “We’re sorry, we can’t give you a house.” So then I said, “Well, I should have dropped out. I should have had a child.” You start to reconsider your life choices. Housing has a big effect on youth and their motivation of wanting to go to school and wanting to succeed.”

(Olivia Ikey, Ungava Representative, Qarjuit Youth Council, *Proceedings*, [Issue 7](#), 11 May 2016.)

E. Physical and Sexual Violence

In addition to poor educational outcomes, some witnesses, such as Natan Obed and Olivia Ikey from the Qarjuit Youth Council, linked overcrowding to an increased risk of domestic and sexual violence,⁵⁴ which in many instances, is compounded by the housing shortage and the absence of community services for victims of violence. Victims often remain in their communities rooted in a cycle of violence because they have nowhere else to go.⁵⁵

F. Consequences for Youth

*Young Inuit tend to rethink their life choices in considering the requirements for social housing. Youth start to have children at a young age in order to receive more points to get this housing.*⁵⁶

The housing shortage has a particular impact on youth who form the majority of the population in Inuit Nunangat. Given the limited number of post-secondary educational institutions in Inuit Nunangat, many youth choose to go south to pursue their studies. However, the Committee heard that once they have finished school, youth have difficulty returning and contributing to their communities, unless they move

⁵¹ Jeannie Arreak-Kullualik, Director, Social Cultural Development Department, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., *Proceedings*, [Issue 8](#), 1 June 2016.

⁵² Olivia Ikey, Ungava Representative, Qarjuit Youth Council, *Proceedings*, [Issue 7](#), 11 May 2016.

⁵³ Adla Itorcheak, Policy Analyst on Housing, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., *Proceedings*, [Issue 8](#), 1 June 2016.

⁵⁴ Olivia Ikey, Ungava Representative, Qarjuit Youth Council, *Proceedings*, [Issue 7](#), 11 May 2016.

⁵⁵ Natan Obed, President, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 22 March 2016.

⁵⁶ Olivia Ikey, Ungava Representative, Qarjuit Youth Council, *Proceedings*, [Issue 7](#), 11 May 2016; Kate Mitchell, First Minister, Nunatsiavut Government, *Proceedings*, [Issue 9](#), 14 June 2016.

back in with their parents. In Nunatsiavut and Nunavik, many youth choose to remain in the south and do not return.⁵⁷

This situation is a direct consequence of the housing shortage, as youth have few available options within their communities. The Committee heard that youth are often not eligible for social housing units, which form the majority of homes in many regions of Inuit Nunangat. For instance, in Nunavik, social housing units are allocated on a point system, assessing factors such as income, number of children, health problems, and time on the waitlist. The Qarjuit Youth Council's representatives explained that the system gives more points to low income families and individuals. However, youth generally have higher incomes and no children, so they have difficulty accessing social housing units under this system.

⁵⁷ Olivia Ikey, Ungava Representative, Qarjuit Youth Council, *Proceedings*, [Issue 7](#), 11 May 2016; Kate Mitchell, First Minister, Nunatsiavut Government, *Proceedings*, [Issue 9](#), 14 June 2016.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE HOUSING CRISIS

A number of factors have contributed to the current housing crisis in Inuit Nunangat. Key among these, and discussed in greater detail below, are the history of housing policies in Inuit Nunangat, population growth and the high cost of constructing and maintaining homes.

A. History

There are many reports of Inuit who were told that they would have free housing and that they would be taken care of if they moved into communities. What they received was either completely inadequate housing...or in some cases where Inuit were relocated they had to provide housing themselves. They had to forage from the dump.⁵⁸

Early federal housing policies were characterized by poor planning, insufficient resources, poor implementation, and a lack of understanding of Inuit and the North.⁵⁹ To entice Inuit to settle in permanent communities, the federal government made promises to provide free or low rent housing. As observed by Madeleine Redfern, Mayor of the City of Iqaluit:

Government officials struggled with the whole ability of explaining the concept of welfare and social housing, and in the end, often Inuit were told that the government would be providing them free housing, low-income housing or low-rent housing in perpetuity as one way of enticing Inuit to move into the permanent settlements.⁶⁰

The Honourable George Qulaut, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut, also described the federal promises made to Inuit:

I remember a federal government representative saying: We are bringing houses. You will never pay more than two dollars per month. We will bring education. If you do not take this, you will not receive family allowance.⁶¹

When Inuit arrived in the settlements, they discovered that not enough homes were built for them. Further, the housing was of poor quality and was constructed from materials that were not appropriate for the northern climate.⁶² Mr. Obed, President of ITK described the housing built under these policies as “basically a square box with no utilities and wooden walls with hardly any insulation.”⁶³ Despite these conditions, one witness explained that many Inuit were forced to remain in the settlements.⁶⁴ The

⁵⁸ Natan Obed, President, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 22 March 2016

⁵⁹ Madeleine Redfern, Mayor, City of Iqaluit, *Proceedings*, [Issue 7](#), 10 May 2016.

⁶⁰ Madeleine Redfern, Mayor, City of Iqaluit, *Proceedings*, [Issue 7](#), 10 May 2016.

⁶¹ The Honourable George Qulaut, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut, Presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Igloolik, 19 April 2016.

⁶² Sarah Bonesteel, [Canada's Relationship with Inuit: A History of Policy and Program Development](#), INAC, June 2006

⁶³ Natan Obed, President, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 22 March 2016

⁶⁴ Presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Igloolik, 19 April 2016.

slaughter of sled dogs left many Inuit without the means to travel out on the land to hunt.⁶⁵ As noted in the final report of the Qikiqtani Truth Commission which documented the history of several communities in Nunavut, Inuit without sled dogs or snowmobiles “felt that life in the settlements was a form of imprisonment.”⁶⁶

At the same time, Inuit society was also rapidly changing due to residential schools and the limited control that Inuit had within their communities. Mr. Obed noted that these events, together with poorly-designed federal housing policies, resulted in “...a whole host of different socio-economic issues that [has led] to the gaps that we still see today.”⁶⁷ According to Mr. Obed, as Inuit transitioned to permanent settlements, there was a rise in the suicide rate among Inuit that “corresponds directly with the first generation of children whose parents went through so much hardship and were displaced from their lands and were set in communities where there was very little economic opportunity and severe overcrowding.”⁶⁸

As explained by Mayor Redfern, the initial housing policies were the beginnings of challenges for Inuit:

[I]t’s not surprising that with a poor foundation with respect to housing, we find ourselves 50-plus years later having just simply compounded the problem, more often than not, by repeating the same approach.⁶⁹

B. Population Growth

*With the population growth so rapid, the housing situation is getting worse each and every year.*⁷⁰

A young and rapidly growing population in Inuit Nunangat is placing enormous pressure on an already strained housing stock.

From 2006 to 2011, the Inuit population increased by 10%;⁷¹ whereas, the Canadian population increased by 5.9% during the same period.⁷² In addition, the Indigenous population (including Inuit) is much younger than the rest of the Canadian population. In 2011, the median age of the Inuit population in Inuit Nunangat was 21.7 years of age, with 56% under the age of 25. In comparison, the median age of the total Canadian population was 40.6 years of age, with 36.2% under the age of 25.⁷³

⁶⁵ [Qikiqtani Truth Commission, Thematic Report and Special Studies 1950-1975, QTC Final Report: Achieving Saimaqatiqinngiq](#), Qikiqtani Inuit Association, 2013, page 30.

⁶⁶ [Qikiqtani Truth Commission, Thematic Report and Special Studies 1950-1975, QTC Final Report: Achieving Saimaqatiqinngiq](#), Qikiqtani Inuit Association, 2013, page 30.

⁶⁷ Natan Obed, President, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 22 March 2016.

⁶⁸ Natan Obed, President, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 22 March 2016.

⁶⁹ Madeleine Redfern, Mayor, City of Iqaluit, *Proceedings*, [Issue 7](#), 10 May 2016.

⁷⁰ Olivia Ikey, Ungava Representative, Qarjuit Youth Council, *Proceedings*, [Issue 7](#), 11 May 2016.

⁷¹ Statistics Canada, [Fact Sheet for Inuit Nunangat](#), Aboriginal Peoples: Fact Sheets, 29 March 2016.

⁷² Statistics Canada, [The Canadian Population in 2011: Population Counts and Growth](#), February 2012.

⁷³ Statistics Canada, [Census Profile](#).

Table 2 provides information on the growth and age of the Inuit population in each region of Inuit Nunangat in 2011.

Table 2 – The Inuit Population in Nunavut, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut and Inuvialuit Settlement Region in 2011

Region	Inuit population	Inuit population growth between 2006 and 2011	Median Age	Inuit population under the age of 25	Inuit population under the age of 14
Nunavut	27,070	10%	21.2	59%	37%
Nunavik	10,755	23%	20.6	58%	37%
Nunatsiavut	2,330	8%	28.7	44%	25%
Inuvialuit Settlement Region	3,310	6%	26.2	48%	28%
TOTAL	43,455	10%	21.7	56%	34%

Sources: Statistics Canada, [Fact Sheet for Inuit Nunangat](#), *Aboriginal Peoples: Fact Sheets*, 29 March 2016; Statistics Canada, [Fact Sheet for Nunavut](#), *Aboriginal Peoples: Fact Sheets*, 29 March 2016; Statistics Canada, [Fact Sheet for Nunavik](#), *Aboriginal Peoples: Fact Sheets*, 29 March 2016; Statistics Canada, [Fact Sheet for Nunatsiavut](#), *Aboriginal Peoples: Fact Sheets*, 29 March 2016; Statistics Canada, [Fact Sheet for Inuvialuit Region](#), *Aboriginal Peoples: Fact Sheets*, 29 March 2016; Statistics Canada, [Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: First Nations People, Métis and Inuit](#).

As described by one witness, the housing crisis worsens with a growing population as the number of homes needed to address the shortfall rises.⁷⁴ This reality was confirmed by CMHC officials who indicated that the Corporation was falling farther and farther behind in addressing the growing housing needs in northern communities.⁷⁵

This population growth poses a real challenge for housing authorities in Inuit Nunangat. According to Christopher Duschenes, Director of Northern and Aboriginal Policy at the Conference Board of Canada, the rapid population growth in the region is “outstripping the ability [of authorities] to build”.⁷⁶ For example, the Nunavut Housing Corporation estimates that population growth in the territory would require between 90 and 100 new social housing units every year.⁷⁷ That’s in addition to the 3,000 additional housing units the territory needs to address its current housing shortage.⁷⁸

As noted by Pauktuutit, the national organization representing Inuit women, the high birth rates across Inuit territories mean that over 50 per cent of the Inuit population is currently under the age of 25.⁷⁹ This has resulted in significant program and health implications, especially for young Inuit women and their children. Sexual health and family planning initiatives, within the context of Inuit values, have been identified as a priority issue by some witnesses.⁸⁰ From a housing perspective, the high percentage of

⁷⁴ Olivia Ikey, Ungava Representative, Qarjuit Youth Council, *Proceedings*, [Issue 7](#), 11 May 2016.

⁷⁵ Carla Staresina, Vice President, Affordable Housing, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 10](#), 22 June 2016.

⁷⁶ Christopher Duschenes, Director, Northern and Aboriginal Policy, Conference Board of Canada, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 23 March 2016.

⁷⁷ Nunavut Housing Corporation, [Igluliuqatiqiiilauqta: Let’s Build a Home Together](#), Government of Nunavut Long-Term Comprehensive Housing and homelessness Strategy, January 2013.

⁷⁸ Terry Audla, President and CEO, Nunavut Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 23 March 2016.

⁷⁹ Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, [Health](#).

⁸⁰ Natan Obed, President, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 22 March 2016.

young and lone parent Inuit families means that a range of social and affordable housing options must be available, in part, to ensure the health and safety of young families.

C. High Cost of Constructing and Maintaining Housing

We haven't had any increase in public housing – we've had a few little changes – in the last 15 years in the number of units that we offer to households. That's because of the high cost to run public housing.⁸¹

The high cost of operating and maintaining existing homes in the North is a primary factor contributing to the housing crisis in Inuit Nunangat. With this financial burden, housing authorities struggle to build much needed housing.



The costs of constructing and maintaining housing, in places such as Kuujuaq, Quebec, pictured above, are much higher than in southern Canada.

Some of these costs include heat, electricity, public services (water delivery, waste water collection and garbage collection), property taxes, and maintenance and repair costs. According to CMHC, the average annual cost of these services for a home is \$18,900 per year in the Northwest Territories and \$25,000 per year in Nunavut.⁸² In Nunatsiavut, according to Mr. William Lucy, a Program Coordinator for the Torngat Regional Housing Association, the annual cost of these services for a home is approximately

⁸¹ Jeff Anderson, President and CEO, Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 5](#), 12 April 2016.

⁸² Charlie MacArthur, Senior Vice-President, Regional Operations and Assisted Housing, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 10](#), 22 June 2016.

\$24,000.⁸³ The SHQ reported in 2014 that fees for public services only (excluding electricity) were around \$12,000 a year for a three or four bedroom home in Nunavik.⁸⁴

These high operation and maintenance costs have impeded the ability of some northern housing authorities from building more units. As explained by the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, these growing costs have prevented the Northwest Territories from increasing the total number of public housing units in the last 15 years.⁸⁵ These operation and maintenance costs only grow as more homes are built.⁸⁶ The Nunavut Housing Corporation said that operating and maintenance costs are so high that if the Corporation were to successfully address the housing deficit in Nunavut by adding 3,000 units by 2037, its operating budget would have to double.⁸⁷

1. Declining Funding under the Social Housing Agreements

*When the agreements expire, the thinking at the time, I believe, was that, "Well, the debt is paid off, and the rent will be able to pay for the ongoing operating costs." That may work on that little strip of land across the southern border, but it doesn't work in the North. It's too expensive to operate these units and provide the programs in these isolated areas.*⁸⁸

Despite the high costs of, operations and maintenance, federal funding transfers under social housing agreements are declining.

In the late 1990s, the federal and provincial governments negotiated social housing agreements to transfer the management and administration of all off-reserve social housing programs previously delivered by CMHC to provincial and territorial governments. In return, the federal government agreed to continue to provide an annual subsidy to social housing providers to cover the operating costs and mortgage payments of various social housing projects that were funded by CMHC under previous long-term operating agreements.⁸⁹ As these agreements generally expire after a period of 25 to 50 years, it is expected that the mortgages on these social housing projects would be paid off and the federal subsidies would come to an end.⁹⁰ At this time, the housing units belong to the social housing provider that signed the agreement with CMHC. As shown in Figure 2, the funding provided to the territories under these agreements is set to gradually decline and eventually reach zero by the expiration of the agreements in 2037 and 2038.

⁸³ William Lucy, Program Coordinator, Torngat Regional Housing Association, *Proceedings*, [Issue 9](#), 14 June 2016.

⁸⁴ Société d'habitation du Québec, [Housing in Nunavik](#), Information document, 2014.

⁸⁵ Jeff Anderson, President and CEO, Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 5](#), 12 April 2016.

⁸⁶ Jeff Anderson, President and CEO, Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 5](#), 12 April 2016.

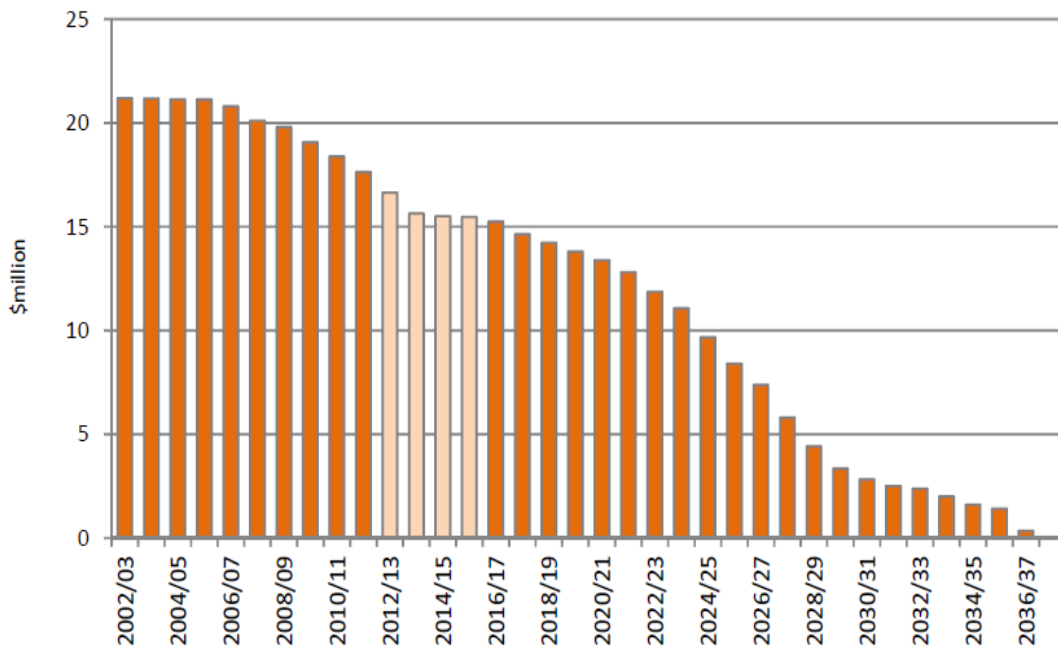
⁸⁷ Terry Audla, President and CEO, Nunavut Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 23 March 2016.

⁸⁸ Jeff Anderson, President and CEO, Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 5](#), 12 April 2016.

⁸⁹ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation [CMHC], ["The Evolution of Social Housing in Canada,"](#) Chapter 9 in *Canadian Housing Observer 2011*, 2011, p. 137. See also Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, ["Federal Government Spending on Housing."](#)

⁹⁰ CMHC, [Summary of the Corporate Plan 2016-2020](#), 2015, page 8.

Figure 2 – Declining CMHC Funding for Operating Social Housing in the Northwest Territories from Fiscal Year 2002-2003 to Fiscal Year 2037-2038



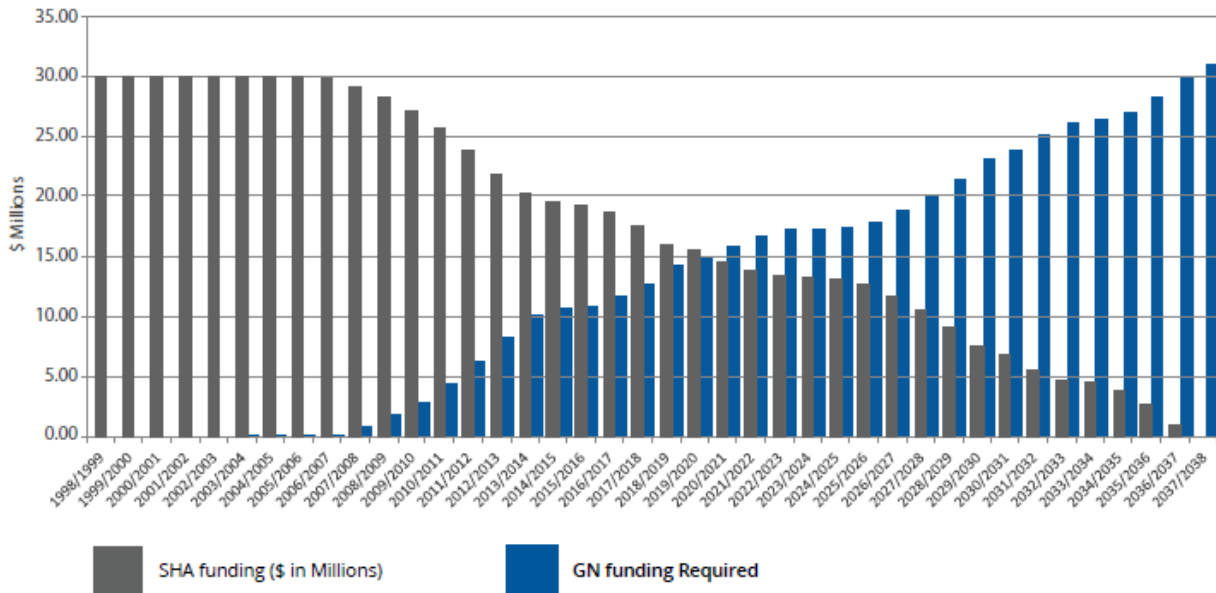
Source: Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, [Northwest Territories Housing Corporation: 2015-16 Business Plan](#), page 5.

This funding decline has already begun in both territories. The Nunavut Housing Corporation reported that as of 2016-2017, funding for social housing from the federal government had already declined by \$10.56 million since its agreement was signed with CMHC (see Figure 3).⁹¹ The situation is similar in the Northwest Territories, as the housing corporation reported that they currently receive \$13 million less per year in funding for social housing compared to when its agreement was signed.⁹²

⁹¹ Terry Audla, President and CEO, Nunavut Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 23 March 2016.

⁹² Jeff Anderson, President and CEO, Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 5](#), 12 April 2016.

Figure 3 – Declining Social Housing Agreement Funding in Nunavut from Fiscal Year 1998-1999 to Fiscal Year 2037-2038



Source: Nunavut Housing Corporation, Brief submitted to the Committee, 23 March 2016.

Witnesses told the Committee that this funding decline is seriously affecting the ability of northern housing authorities to pay for operations and maintenance costs. Once the agreements expire, the housing provider is solely responsible for the operating and maintenance costs of social housing units. However, the territories have few options to cover these growing costs. While CMHC provides annual funding allocations for social housing through the IAH initiative to the territorial governments, who are expected to match these investments, operating and maintenance costs are not eligible for funding.⁹³ With few options, the territorial governments must therefore use their own revenues to assume the costs. Jeff Anderson, President and CEO of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, cautioned that this situation may force housing authorities to make fewer social housing units available, stating that, “It’s eventually going to get to the point where we may have to make some tough decisions about reducing the number of units that we offer people because we can’t afford to incur those high costs.”⁹⁴

⁹³ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Response to Questions of the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples*, brief submitted to the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 9 September 2016.

⁹⁴ Jeff Anderson, President and CEO, Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, *Proceedings, Issue 5*, 12 April 2016.

2. Using Rent to Offset Maintenance Costs

Provinces and territories are responsible for creating their own social housing policies. These policies determine eligibility and the amount of rent to be charged to tenants.⁹⁵ However, many residents have difficulty paying rents, and the rents are not sufficient to address the high operating and maintenance costs.

According to Statistics Canada in 2011 in Inuit Nunangat, the median income of Inuit aged 25 to 64 ranged between \$21,000 (those with no certification, diploma or degree) to \$45,000 (those with post-secondary credentials).⁹⁶ However, in Nunavik the Committee heard that the rent for social housing tenants has increased by 8% per year since 2010.⁹⁷ Although residents can apply to have their rent adjusted based on their income, the Kativik Municipal Housing Bureau explained that rent is becoming increasingly unaffordable because a tenant's salary does not increase every year.⁹⁸

The difficulties that social housing tenants experience in paying rent likely explains why housing authorities have difficulty collecting it. The Nunavut Housing Corporation is currently \$29 million in arrears for rent.⁹⁹ Even if the housing authorities were able to collect all of the rental revenues, given the low income of many social housing tenants, the rents collected would likely not be sufficient to cover the costs of operating and maintenance for social housing units.

3. High Costs of Construction in the North

*Construction costs in Nunavut are extremely high in comparison to Southern Canada. On average, construction in Nunavut costs three times more than in the Greater Toronto Area.*¹⁰⁰

Northern housing authorities have difficulty balancing high operating and maintenance costs with the high costs of building new units.

Christopher Duchesne, Director of Northern and Aboriginal Policy at the Conference Board of Canada, indicated that construction costs in the North are up to three times higher than elsewhere in the country.¹⁰¹ Terry Audla, President and CEO of the Nunavut Housing Corporation, made the same observation, explaining that his organization must spend on average between \$400,000 and \$550,000 to build each public housing unit.¹⁰² Jeff Anderson, President and CEO of the Northwest Territories

⁹⁵ Carla Staresina, Vice President, Affordable Housing, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 10](#), 22 June 2016.

⁹⁶ Statistics Canada, [Fact Sheet for Inuit Nunangat](#), Aboriginal Peoples: Fact Sheets, 29 March 2016.

⁹⁷ Kativik Municipal Housing Bureau, Presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Kuujuaq, 20 April 2016; Kativik Regional Government, [Nunavik Inuit Optimistic on Housing Following Meeting with Québec Ministers](#), 8 September 2016.

⁹⁸ Kativik Municipal Housing Bureau, Presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Kuujuaq, 20 April 2016.

⁹⁹ Terry Audla, President and CEO, Nunavut Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 23 March 2016.

¹⁰⁰ Terry Audla, President and CEO, Nunavut Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 23 March 2016.

¹⁰¹ Christopher Duchenes, Director, Northern and Aboriginal Policy, Conference Board of Canada, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 23 March 2016.

¹⁰² Terry Audla, President and CEO, Nunavut Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 23 March 2016.

Housing Corporation, told the Committee that the average cost of building a home ranges from \$300,000 to \$400,000.¹⁰³ In Nunavik, the Société d'habitation du Québec reported that the average cost of building a house varied from \$475,000 for a two-bedroom house to \$550,000 for a four-bedroom house.¹⁰⁴

According to Ray Girouard, Director of Commercial Sales for Kent Homes, a modular construction company from New Brunswick, the difference in construction costs between Inuit Nunangat and the rest of Canada is largely attributable to the cost of shipping construction materials to northern communities.¹⁰⁵ The lack of roads connecting most northern communities with the rest of the country means that construction materials must be delivered by ship.¹⁰⁶

Further, establishing the necessary infrastructure to service residential lots is expensive and can contribute to high construction costs. The Committee learned that, in Iqaluit, it can cost up to \$100,000 to service a lot, and these costs are passed on by the developer to the new homeowner.¹⁰⁷ In Nunatsiavut, these costs can reach up to \$200,000 per lot and are covered in large part by the Nunatsiavut Government.¹⁰⁸

Representatives from the City of Iqaluit told the Committee that the lack of serviced lots is one of the main obstacles to new housing in their community.¹⁰⁹ According to Glenn Cousins, Chair of the Board of Directors of Habitat for Humanity Iqaluit, the lack of serviced lots was the main reason his organization has not been able to build in Iqaluit since 2013.¹¹⁰ In Nain, Nunatsiavut, the Committee was told that no serviced lots were available for development in June 2016.¹¹¹

The Committee did hear one example where an organization was able to reduce costs to facilitate the construction of more housing units. In Nunavik, the Makivik Corporation has implemented several strategies to reduce construction costs by as much as \$62,000 per housing unit. Makivik has achieved this success by: operating as a not-for-profit; reducing the number of construction sites so that a higher number of housing units can share certain fixed costs; lengthening the construction season by shipping building materials the previous year before they are used; and building the same model of homes year after year, which improves efficiency.¹¹²

¹⁰³ Jeff Anderson, President and CEO, Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 5](#), 12 April 2016.

¹⁰⁴ Société d'habitation du Québec, [Housing in Nunavik](#), Information document, 2014.

¹⁰⁵ Ray Girouard, Director of Commercial Sales, Kent Homes, *Proceedings*, [Issue 8](#), 1 June 2016.

¹⁰⁶ Alain Fournier, architect, director, EVOQ Architecture, *Proceedings*, [Issue 6](#), 3 May 2016.

¹⁰⁷ City of Iqaluit, presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Iqaluit, 18 April 2016.

¹⁰⁸ Kate Mitchell, First Minister, Nunatsiavut Government, *Proceedings*, [Issue 9](#), 14 June 2016.

¹⁰⁹ Madeleine Redfern, Mayor, City of Iqaluit, *Proceedings*, [Issue 7](#), 10 May 2016; and City of Iqaluit, presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Iqaluit, 18 April 2016.

¹¹⁰ Glenn Cousins, Board Chair, Habitat for Humanity Iqaluit, *Proceedings*, [Issue 6](#), 3 May 2016.

¹¹¹ Isabella Pain, Nunatsiavut Affairs, Nunatsiavut Government, *Proceedings*, [Issue 9](#), 14 June 2016.

¹¹² Kativik Regional Government and Makivik Corporation, presentation to the Standing Senate) Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Kuujuaq, 20 April 2016

WAYS TO ALLEVIATE THE CRISIS

Although the housing challenges facing Inuit are daunting, there are avenues and potential opportunities that can help to alleviate the crisis. The following section explores some of these strategies and outlines some potential solutions to address housing problems for Indigenous peoples living in the northernmost parts of our country.

A. Stable and Predictable Funding

*Because of its inadequate size, the true impact of investment in affordable housing funding is limited. Unless combined with other Government-of-Nunavut-sponsored capital funding, this investment cannot realistically be used to construct new units to address the growing gap.*¹¹³

It is clear to the Committee that federal funding will continue to play a significant role in addressing the housing crisis in Inuit Nunangat. In most communities across Inuit Nunangat there are few available alternatives outside of social housing. Data published by CMHC shows that 52% of Inuit living in these regions live in social or subsidized accommodation, a proportion that rises to 87% in Nunavik.¹¹⁴ Communities in these regions rely on federal investments for the construction and maintenance of social housing units.

The Committee heard that current federal funding levels are not adequate to address the housing crisis. Witnesses from each region expressed the view that federal funding is inadequate to cover the high costs of constructing, operating, and maintaining housing in the north. For instance, the Nunavut Housing Corporation told the Committee that the territory is expecting to receive \$7.33 million in funding from CMHC between 2014 and 2019 for affordable housing programs. This federal funding must be cost-matched by the Government of Nunavut for a total of \$14.7 million.¹¹⁵ Given the high costs of constructing social housing units in the territory (estimated at between \$400,000 and \$550,000 per unit) and the costs of operating and maintenance (estimated at \$26,000 per unit), witnesses expressed concern that this funding would not provide for the construction of sufficient housing.¹¹⁶ As stated by the Nunavut Housing Corporation, unless this federal investment was combined with other sources of funding, it “cannot realistically be used to construct new units to address the growing gap.”¹¹⁷

Similarly, the Nunatsiavut Government expressed frustration that federal funding provided to them under their fiscal financing agreements is insufficient to address housing needs. At current federal funding levels, the regional government cannot develop enough serviced lots to cope with the need for new

¹¹³ Terry Audla, President and CEO, Nunavut Housing Corporation, March 23, 2016 Meeting.

¹¹⁴ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, [Inuit Households in Canada](#), 2011 Census/National Household Survey Housing Conditions Series, Issue 5, November 2015.

¹¹⁵ Nunavut Housing Corporation, Nunavut is facing a severe housing crisis, brief submitted to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 23 March 2016.

¹¹⁶ Terry Audla, President and CEO, Nunavut Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 23 March 2016.

¹¹⁷ Terry Audla, President and CEO, Nunavut Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 23 March 2016.

homes.¹¹⁸ This problem is exacerbated by the difficulties experienced by the Nunatsiavut Government in accessing other federal funding sources. The absence of a federal housing program for Inuit located south of the 60th parallel (i.e. Nunatsiavut) means that additional federal allocations for housing, such as CMHC's allocations for affordable housing, are transferred directly to the provincial government.¹¹⁹ As these funds are not Inuit-specific, the province determines where they are spent and Nunatsiavut is effectively in competition with other regions for these dollars.¹²⁰ In 2015, the Auditor General of Canada documented the difficulties experienced by the Nunatsiavut Government in accessing this funding, recommending that INAC work with the Nunatsiavut Government and others to identify solutions to "address the lack of a federal housing program for Inuit south of the 60th parallel."¹²¹

The impact of current federal housing dollars is further limited by the high costs of operations and maintenance. In consideration of these costs, many witnesses recommended that federal funding for social housing be increased to meet current and future housing needs.

In addition to the inadequacy of federal funding, witnesses emphasized that the timing of targeted federal investments should better respond to, and reflect, the realities of life in the North. At present, this is not the case. The Nunavut Housing Corporation stated that since housing corporations and territorial governments do not know when funding announcements will be made, they are unable to plan ahead to use these funds for specific objectives, such as community infrastructure needs or better land use planning policies. Further, as observed by the Nunavut Housing Corporation, "[u]npredictable funding also limits the ability for the Government of Nunavut to accomplish additional economic outcomes through initiatives that require longer horizons, such as apprenticeship and training."¹²² The unpredictability of federal funding not only affects territorial and Inuit governments, but also has an impact on local businesses. The Committee heard that when funding is unpredictable, it can impede community economic development by creating a "feast or famine environment" for local contractors.¹²³

Further, when federal targeted funding is received, the Committee heard that these monies have to be spent by the end of the fiscal year (March 31st).¹²⁴ As noted by Mr. Synard, building materials are often received in September. With the March deadline, there is no opportunity to take advantage of the ideal building times in the North which are between May and August. Instead, workers have to start construction projects in September, when the days are getting colder and darker.¹²⁵

¹¹⁸ Kate Mitchell, First Minister, Nunatsiavut Government, *Proceedings*, [Issue 9](#), 14 June 2016; and Isabella Pain, Nunatsiavut Affairs, Nunatsiavut Government, *Proceedings*, [Issue 9](#), 14 June 2016.

¹¹⁹ Toby Anderson, Deputy Minister, Nunatsiavut Affairs, Nunatsiavut Government, *Proceedings*, [Issue 9](#), 14 June 2016.

¹²⁰ Office of the Auditor General of Canada, [Report 3 – Implementing the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement](#), 2015 Fall Reports of the Auditor General of Canada, 2015.

¹²¹ Office of the Auditor General of Canada, [Report 3 – Implementing the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement](#), 2015 Fall Reports of the Auditor General of Canada, 2015.

¹²² Terry Audla, President and CEO, Nunavut Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 23 March 2016.

¹²³ Terry Audla, President and CEO, Nunavut Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 23 March 2016.

¹²⁴ Clarence Synard, Vice President, NCC Development Limited, *Proceedings*, [Issue 8](#), 1 June 2016.

¹²⁵ Clarence Synard, Vice President, NCC Development Limited, *Proceedings*, [Issue 8](#), 1 June 2016.

Ensuring that federal funding is predictable and stable could result in numerous benefits for northern communities. As observed by the Nunavut Housing Corporation:

Consistent, predictable and adequate funding for new housing, along with increased support for operational costs, would allow Nunavut to develop at a much more meaningful pace to truly maximize the return on investment for the federal government. Funding with long-term planning horizons would support the development of neighbourhoods aimed at enhancing community wellness. Longer planning horizons would allow the Nunavut Housing Corporation to take advantage of new technologies in housing construction and maintenance.¹²⁶

The Committee is concerned that the current funding structure negatively affects the ability of housing authorities in Inuit Nunangat to address the housing crisis in their communities and to properly plan for their housing needs. The Committee believes that fundamental changes to the structure, provision and conditions of federal funding are needed. For these reasons, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 1

That the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation work with other federal departments, and the relevant provincial, territorial and Inuit organizations, to develop a funding strategy for northern housing. This funding strategy should address concerns about declining funding under social housing agreements and provide adequate, predictable, stable and long-term funding for housing in the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Nunavik and Nunatsiavut.

B. Funding Delivery Mechanisms

*We know we are better positioned to administer this money. We know the issues. We understand where the needs are, and we know which segments of our population are currently unable to access housing programs.*¹²⁷

Targeted federal funding allocations under Budget 2016 were expected to flow through CMHC's Investment in Affordable Housing Initiative. Under this initiative funding is transferred to the provinces and territories. Carla Staresina, Vice President, Affordable Housing at CMHC, justified this funding delivery approach stating that it is the fastest way to transfer funding to the regions and get housing projects started since the agreements with the provinces and the territories were already in place.¹²⁸

However, a number of witnesses, such as representatives from the Makivik Corporation, remarked that this delivery model often fails to properly account for the needs of Inuit. Kate Mitchell, First Minister of the Nunatsiavut Government, explained that if Budget 2016 funding is provided directly to the province,

¹²⁶ Terry Audla, President and CEO, Nunavut Housing Corporation, March 23, 2016 Meeting.

¹²⁷ Kate Mitchell, First Minister, Nunatsiavut Government, *Proceedings*, [Issue 9](#), 14 June 2016.

¹²⁸ Carla Staresina, Vice President, Affordable Housing, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 10](#), 22 June 2016.

local and regional priorities, such as residential land development, may not receive the required investments.¹²⁹

Additionally, witnesses expressed concern that a portion of the Budget 2016 funding may be retained by the provincial and territorial housing corporations as an administration fee.¹³⁰ CMHC informed the Committee that between 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2016, the percentage of funding withheld by Newfoundland and Labrador, Quebec, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories for administration was as high as 4.7%.¹³¹ Table 3 provides the administrative fees withheld per applicable province or territory.

**Table 3 – Administrative Fees Withheld by Provinces and Territories
Between 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2016**

Province/Territory	Percentage of CMHC Funding Applied to Administrative Costs
Quebec	4.57%
Newfoundland and Labrador	0.89%
Northwest Territories	4.70%
Nunavut	0.00%

Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, [Response to Questions of the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples](#), brief submitted to the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 9 September 2016.

Some witnesses expressed the view that it would be more effective if Budget 2016 funding was transferred directly to the appropriate Indigenous organizations, as opposed to the province or territory. The Nunatsiavut Government suggested that they are better positioned to administer the funding, as they have jurisdiction over housing in the region and are aware of the issues, priorities, and needs.¹³² The Makivik Corporation told the Committee that it successfully manages the funding it receives under the *Agreement Concerning the Implementation of the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement on Housing in Nunavik*.¹³³ In its brief, the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation stated that flowing Budget 2016

¹²⁹ Kate Mitchell, First Minister, Nunatsiavut Government, *Proceedings*, [Issue 9](#), 14 June 2016.

¹³⁰ Kativik Regional Government and Makivik Corporation, presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Kuujuaq, 20 April 2016; Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, [Study on best practices and on-going challenges relating to housing in First Nation and Inuit communities in Nunavut, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut and the Northwest Territories](#), brief submitted to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 31 May 2016; and, Isabella Pain, Nunatsiavut Affairs, Nunatsiavut Government, *Proceedings*, [Issue 9](#), 14 June 2016.

¹³¹ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, [Response to Questions of the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples](#), brief submitted to the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 9 September 2016.

¹³² Kate Mitchell, First Minister, Nunatsiavut Government, *Proceedings*, [Issue 9](#), 14 June 2016.

¹³³ Kativik Regional Government and Makivik Corporation, presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Kuujuaq, 20 April 2016.

funding directly to Inuit organizations would ensure greater Inuit involvement in the process, which is essential to solve the housing crisis.¹³⁴

Mechanisms currently exist to allow for the transfer of federal funds directly to Inuit organizations. In Nunatsiavut, the land claims agreement requires the negotiation of a fiscal financing agreement, whereby the federal government provides funding directly to the Nunatsiavut Government for the provision of programs and services, including housing.¹³⁵ In Nunavik, federal funding for the capital costs of housing is transferred directly to the Makivik Corporation under the *Agreement Concerning the Implementation of the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement on Housing in Nunavik*.¹³⁶

As Budget 2016 funds were set to flow prior to the release of this report; the Committee wrote to the Ministers of CMHC and INAC raising these concerns. The Committee was encouraged to hear from INAC that arrangements are being made to ensure that Budget 2016 funding will flow directly to the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation.¹³⁷ We were further advised that Nunavik and Nunatsiavut both received Budget 2016 funding for northern housing directly from INAC.¹³⁸

The Committee agrees with witnesses that in certain regions, Inuit organizations are well-positioned to identify and address local housing needs and priorities within their communities. As a result, federal funding for northern housing in these identified regions should continue to be transferred directly to Indigenous organizations rather than the provinces and territories. The Committee therefore recommends:

Recommendation 2

That the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation work with Inuit organizations in the Northwest Territories, Nunavik, and Nunatsiavut to ensure funding for Inuit housing is provided directly to those organizations, where appropriate.

C. Marine Navigation Services Fees

Marine navigation services fees pay for services provided by the Canadian Coast Guard to commercial vessels operating in Canadian waters. Not all commercial ships have to pay these fees, as those operating exclusively north of 60° North latitude and between coastal communities in northern Labrador and Nunavik are exempt.¹³⁹ Further, commercial ships coming to northern communities from a southern

¹³⁴ Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, [Study on best practices and on-going challenges relating to housing in First Nation and Inuit communities in Nunavut, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut and the Northwest Territories](#), brief submitted to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 31 May 2016.

¹³⁵ Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, [Nunatsiavut Government Fiscal Financing Agreement](#), section 2.

¹³⁶ [Agreement Concerning the Implementation of the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement on Housing in Nunavik](#).

¹³⁷ Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, [Response to Follow Up Request from the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples – June 22, 2016](#), brief submitted to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 23 September, 2016.

¹³⁸ The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Letter to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 6 December 2016; Government of Canada, [Addressing Urgent Housing Needs in Northern and Inuit Communities](#), News Release, 25 November 2016.

¹³⁹ Canadian Coast Guard, "[Fees to be paid for marine navigation services provided by the Canadian Coast Guard](#)", 1 July 2016.

location, such as Montreal, do not have to pay these fees provided they are bringing goods required for the “maintenance or development” of identified communities in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories and Nunavik.¹⁴⁰

These exemptions do not apply to all 14 Nunavik communities. There are seven Nunavik communities located south of 60° North latitude. Commercial ships travelling to these communities from a southern location are required to pay marine navigation services fees, which as explained by Andy Moorhouse, Vice-President of the Makivik Corporation, add to the already high costs of shipping construction materials to the north.¹⁴¹

The Committee agrees that marine navigation service fees contribute to higher shipping costs for some Nunavik communities. Higher shipping costs result in northern communities paying more for the construction of much needed housing. The Committee believes that lowering transportation costs could allow northern housing authorities to build more housing units, and therefore recommends:

Recommendation 3

That Fisheries and Oceans Canada amend the Fee Schedule to exempt all Nunavik communities from marine navigation services fees.

D. The Housing Continuum

*Nunavut’s current housing continuum prevents Nunavummiut from moving towards permanent, stable housing and self-sufficiency.*¹⁴²

It is clear to the Committee that the most obvious way to address the housing crisis is to increase the housing stock in each of the regions. However, the Committee also believes that housing should address the full range of community housing needs. A complete housing continuum provides residents with a range of housing options and ensures that the most vulnerable community members are able to access some suitable form of shelter.

¹⁴⁰ Canada Gazette, Part I, Department of Fisheries and Oceans – Oceans Act, [Amendments to the Fee Schedule: Fees to be paid for marine navigation services provided by the Canadian Coast Guard](#), 15 September 2012, Volume 146, No. 37.

¹⁴¹ Andy Moorhouse, Vice-President, Makivik Corporation, presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Inukjuak, 21 April 2016.

¹⁴² Government of Nunavut, Department of Family Services, Presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 18 April, 2016.

A complete housing continuum, as shown in Figure 4, includes a progression from emergency shelters to transitional housing, supportive housing, subsidized housing, market rental housing, and finally market homeownership.

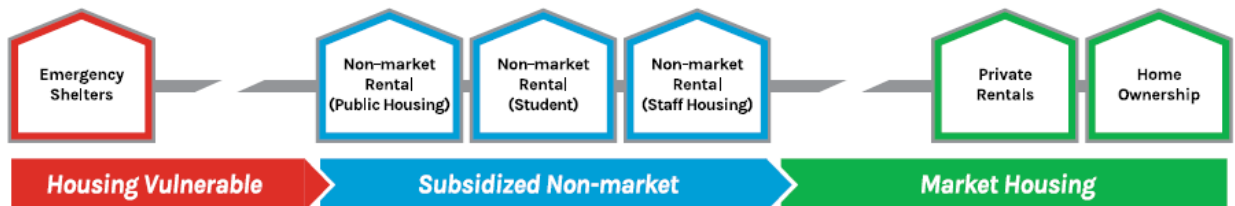
Figure 4 – Example of a Complete Housing Continuum



Source: Nunavut Housing Corporation, [Iquliuqatigiilauqtaq – Let's build a home together](#), Framework for the Government of Nunavut Long Term Comprehensive Housing and Homelessness Strategy, no date.

The Committee heard that at present there are important gaps in the housing continuum across Inuit Nunangat. The Government of Nunavut has adapted the housing continuum to demonstrate these gaps as well as in an effort to better identify local needs. As shown in Figure 5, the territory lacks transitional, supportive, and assisted living options. Transitional housing is temporary and acts as a bridge between emergency shelters and other types of housing, such as public housing.¹⁴³ Supportive and assisted living options are more permanent and could include housing for individuals who face mental and physical challenges.¹⁴⁴

Figure 5 – Housing Continuum in Nunavut



Source: Nunavut Housing Corporation, [Iquliuqatigiilauqtaq – Let's build a home together](#), Framework for the Government of Nunavut Long Term Comprehensive Housing and Homelessness Strategy, no date.

Officials from the Nunavut Department of Family Services explained to the Committee that without transition housing, many individuals have difficulty moving towards more stable housing. The only options for these individuals remains emergency shelters and public housing, which in many cases do

¹⁴³ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, [Transitional Housing: Objectives, Indicators of Success and Outcomes](#), February 2004.

¹⁴⁴ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, [Transitional Housing: Objectives, Indicators of Success and Outcomes](#), February 2004.

not meet their needs. Further, emergency shelters are not a readily available option for many, as there are only a few in Nunavut, and some are well beyond capacity.¹⁴⁵

The lack of emergency shelters was also highlighted. In Nunavik, Committee members heard of a case where an Elder was evicted by force from a social housing unit. Since there were no emergency housing options in the community, the individual had no place to go.¹⁴⁶

Youth representatives also highlighted the need for a safe house when they are experiencing problems at home.¹⁴⁷ Olivia Ikey, from the Qarjuit Youth Council, spoke about her personal experience: “I slept in that safe house many times, so they’re very useful, and we have children that are sleeping under steps because they don’t want to go home to their parents that are drunk. Every community needs a safe house.”¹⁴⁸ Ms. Ikey was hopeful that safe houses could provide opportunities for youth to have a safe place to sleep and better relationships with mental health and social workers.

In order to address the gaps in the housing continuum, the Committee believes that it is necessary to build sufficient transitional housing to support individuals as they move towards permanent housing options. The Committee therefore recommends:

Recommendation 4

That the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation provide sufficient funding to northern housing authorities to permit the construction and operation of additional transitional housing options based on community needs.

E. Staff Housing Allocation Policies

Staff housing is offered by the federal and territorial governments, as well as local Indigenous and private organizations, in an effort to attract skilled workers to remote and northern areas.¹⁴⁹ The following table identifies the number of staff housing units in communities in Nunavut and Nunavik.

¹⁴⁵ Angela Briffett, Senior Planner, Homelessness Initiatives for the Department of Family Services, Government of Nunavut, presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Iqaluit, 18 April 2016.

¹⁴⁶ Municipal Councillor for Inukjuak, Presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Inukjuak, 21 April 2016.

¹⁴⁷ Olivia Ikey, Ungava Representative, Qarjuit Youth Council, *Proceedings*, [Issue 7](#), 11 May 2016.

¹⁴⁸ Olivia Ikey, Ungava Representative, Qarjuit Youth Council, *Proceedings*, [Issue 7](#), 11 May 2016.

¹⁴⁹ Stephen Van Dine, Assistant Deputy Minister, Northern Affairs Organization, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, *Proceedings*, [Issue 3](#), 8 March 2016.

Table 3 – Number of Staff Housing Units in Select Nunavut and Nunavik Communities

Community	Total Number of Housing Units	Number of Staff Housing Units	Number of Vacant Staff Housing Units
Iqaluit, Nunavut	2,260 dwellings in Iqaluit were occupied by their usual residents	34% of housing in Iqaluit	Information not available
Igloolik, Nunavut	350 dwellings in Igloolik were occupied by their usual residents	71	19 staff housing units were unoccupied
Sanikiluaq, Nunavut	190 dwellings were occupied by their usual residents	12 staff housing units in the community	Information not available
Kuujuak, Quebec	Information not available	Approximately 400	Information not available
Inukjuak, Quebec	429	Information not available	10–15 staff housing units were vacant

Source: Government of Nunavut, 2009-2010 Nunavut Housing Needs Survey, [Fact Sheet - Igloolik](#); Government of Nunavut, 2009-2010 Nunavut Housing Needs Survey, [Fact Sheet - Iqaluit](#); Government of Nunavut, 2009-2010 Nunavut Housing Needs Survey, [Fact Sheet - Sanikiluaq](#); Nunavut Housing Corporation, Presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Iqaluit, 18 April 2016; Igloolik Housing Association, Presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Igloolik, 19 April 2016; Presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Sanikiluaq, 21 April 2016; Kativik Municipal Housing Bureau, Presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Inukjuak, 21 April 2016; Presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Inukjuak, 21 April 2016; Olivia Ikey, Ungava Representative, Qarjuut Youth Council, Proceedings, [Issue 7](#), 11 May 2016.

In Nunavut, the majority of the staff housing units are owned by the territorial government.¹⁵⁰ In Nunavik, staff housing units are owned by the Kativik Regional Government as well as other organizations, such as the Kativik Municipal Housing Bureau and the Kativik School Board. Many federal government departments also maintain staff housing in every region of Inuit Nunangat.¹⁵¹ Each organization is responsible for establishing their own policies for the allocation of staff housing units.

Witnesses from Nunavik and Nunavut expressed deep concerns with staff housing policies that they described as discriminatory and unfair to local community members. The impact of local and regional staff housing policies on youth was of particular concern to witnesses. The Qarjuut Youth Council indicated to the Committee that local employees cannot access staff housing in the communities where they work. In Nunavik, for example, staff housing is available only to individuals who live 50 kilometres or more from the community.¹⁵² As noted by Dr. Riva, these policies assume that local residents should be able to find housing in their community, however, in reality; housing shortages mean that housing

¹⁵⁰ Madeleine Redfern, Mayor, City of Iqaluit, *Proceedings*, [Issue 7](#), 10 May 2016.

¹⁵¹ Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, [Directory of Federal Real Property](#).

¹⁵² Qarjuut Youth Council, [Housing issues in Nunavik](#), brief submitted to the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 24 May 2016.

options are severely limited and they may not be able to find suitable housing in the communities where they live and hope to work.¹⁵³

A number of witnesses also raised concerns about the marked differences in the quality of local housing and staff housing units. Olivia Ikey, the Ungava Representative of the Qarjuit Youth Council, explained that community housing is often built with lower quality materials. For example, she pointed to community housing being built with basic tile floors, whereas staff housing will often have wooden floors. According to Ms. Ikey, these discrepancies demonstrate “that we’re second-class citizens within our homes.”¹⁵⁴ Dr. Mylène Riva further noted that these inequities are visible on a daily basis, and lead community members to question why staff housing is better designed than other homes in the community.¹⁵⁵

Staff housing policies also caused tensions in the workplace as local employees work alongside others who may have access to staff housing units. Mayor Redfern described the policies on assigning staff housing units in Iqaluit as “causing significant inequity and disharmony amongst many different groups of people in our community.”¹⁵⁶ These tensions are exacerbated by the housing crisis that exists across the North, where local employees have to live in overcrowded conditions or unsuitable housing because there are few housing options in their communities.

Despite the urgent housing shortage in northern communities, witnesses were frustrated that many staff housing units in their communities remained vacant. Mayor Redfern spoke about the empty staff housing units across Nunavut, which she attributes to the Government of Nunavut’s policy of assigning staff housing, based on specific job positions.¹⁵⁷ Due to the challenges of finding skilled employees in the territory, many positions are difficult to fill and often remain vacant for extended periods. As a result, staff housing units associated with these positions remain vacant.¹⁵⁸

Widespread housing shortages also affect occupants of staff housing units, who may find themselves without suitable housing once their employment status changes. Committee members heard about individuals who remained with a particular employer because they feared losing their staff housing unit. Further, those who are ready for retirement are caught in a catch-22 as they are not eligible for social housing units, and if they retire, they lose their staff house.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵³ Mylène Riva, Assistant Professor, Department of Social and Preventive Medicine, University of Laval (as an individual) *Proceedings*, [Issue 7](#), 18 May 2016.

¹⁵⁴ Olivia Ikey, Ungava Representative, Qarjuit Youth Council, *Proceedings*, [Issue 7](#), 11 May 2016.

¹⁵⁵ Mylène Riva, Assistant Professor, Department of Social and Preventive Medicine, University of Laval (as an individual) *Proceedings*, [Issue 7](#), 18 May 2016.

¹⁵⁶ Madeleine Redfern, Mayor, City of Iqaluit, *Proceedings*, [Issue 7](#), 10 May 2016.

¹⁵⁷ Madeleine Redfern, Mayor, City of Iqaluit, *Proceedings*, [Issue 7](#), 10 May 2016.

¹⁵⁸ Madeleine Redfern, Mayor, City of Iqaluit, *Proceedings*, [Issue 7](#), 10 May 2016.

¹⁵⁹ Natan Obed, President, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 22 March 2016 and Glenn Cousins, Board Chair, Habitat for Humanity Iqaluit, *Proceedings*, [Issue 6](#), 3 May 2016.

The Committee is encouraged that eligibility requirements for staff housing policies may be slowly changing in response to growing concerns that many educated Inuit are not returning to their home communities due to a lack of adequate housing. The Committee heard from Ms. Ikey that there are a few Inuit who were able to access staff housing by working for local organizations.¹⁶⁰ This seems to be an exception, as Ms. Ikey suggested that despite these gains, many Inuit employees, including youth, are still unable to access staff housing units.¹⁶¹

Although witness concerns mostly relate to staff housing allocation policies by local and regional organizations, Mayor Redfern provided the Committee with a case where much needed federal staff housing was not allocated to a local employee. The *Isolated Posts and Government Housing Directive*, applies to the allocation of staff housing units by federal government departments and agencies, with the exception of the Canadian Armed Forces. This policy allocates staff housing based on a descending

The large number of empty units "...creates a lot of tension. It creates a lot of racism, a lot of hate of white people, a lot of hate of people that come up to work...It really hurts when I can't get company housing and I know it's empty. I'm a good employee, I want that house. But I'm from there, so they can't give it to me because of these requirements that were set by the unions."

(Olivia Ikey, Ungava Representative, Qarjuit Youth Council, *Proceedings, Issue 7*, 11 May 2016)

order of priority. Although theoretically local employees seem to have access to staff housing under this Directive, they have less priority than those who are moving to the community for work and do not have any permanent accommodations.¹⁶²

The Committee recognizes that there are few housing options in communities in Inuit Nunangat. As a result, staff housing typically reserved for professional employees, such as nurses and teachers who come from outside the community, are a potential source of housing that could address some the current housing needs. Given the extent of the housing shortage, the Committee believes that policies for the allocation of staff housing units should be flexible, allowing for the possibility that some staff housing units could be made available, or assigned, to employees working in certain employment sectors. The Committee therefore recommends:

Recommendation 5

That the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, in consultation with other federal organizations and Inuit governments, take immediate steps to review and expand the *Isolated Posts and Government Housing Directive's* eligibility criteria to include local Inuit employees, where appropriate.

¹⁶⁰ Olivia Ikey, Ungava Representative, Qarjuit Youth Council, *Proceedings, Issue 7*, 11 May 2016.

¹⁶¹ Olivia Ikey, Ungava Representative, Qarjuit Youth Council, *Proceedings, Issue 7*, 11 May 2016.

¹⁶² National Joint Council, *Isolated Posts and Government Housing Directive*, 1 August 2007.

F. Encouraging Private Homeownership

*High construction and operating costs are significant obstacles to homeownership for a significant portion of the Nunavik population.*¹⁶³

Although many Inuit have a desire to own their own homes, many obstacles currently prevent private homeownership from gaining traction in Inuit Nunangat, and, as indicated in Table 4, very few Inuit have been able to own their own home.¹⁶⁴

Table 4 – Occupancy Status of Inuit Households by Region, 2011

Region	Owner	Tenant
Nunavut	21.9%	78.0%
Nunavik	3.2%	96.8%
Inuvialuit	35.6%	64.0%
Nunatsiavut	72.4% ^a	27.6%
All regions	22.4%	77.5%

Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, "Inuit Households in Canada," Research Highlight, November 2015.

^a: According to the Government of Nunatsiavut, 47% of Nunatsiavut residents are homeowners and 14% are tenants.

1. Obstacles to Homeownership

Homeownership in Inuit Nunangat is simply not affordable for many residents. As Mr. Obed explained, with a median income of \$30,000 and a higher cost of living than elsewhere in Canada, very few Inuit living in Inuit Nunangat can afford to build or own their own homes, let alone pay for the operating and maintenance costs.¹⁶⁵ Tim Brown, the Director of Policy and Strategic Planning at the Nunavut Housing Corporation believes that with these kinds of costs fewer than 100 social housing residents in Nunavut have the financial means to become homeowners.¹⁶⁶

There is also a lack of financial incentive for Inuit to become private homeowners. As the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation indicated in its brief to the Committee, "[f]or those northerners not already dependent on public housing, it quickly becomes apparent that there is no tangible financial benefit to owning versus renting a home."¹⁶⁷ The absence of a housing market in the majority of communities in Inuit Nunangat¹⁶⁸ also provides a financial disincentive for prospective homeowners. As explained by the

¹⁶³ Kativik Regional Government and the Makivik Corporation, presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Kuujuaq, 20 April 2016.

¹⁶⁴ Natan Obed, President, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 22 March 2016.

¹⁶⁵ Natan Obed, President, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 22 March 2016.

¹⁶⁶ Tim Brown, Director, Policy and Strategic Planning, Nunavut Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 23 March 2016.

¹⁶⁷ Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, [Study on best practices and on-going challenges relating to housing in First Nation and Inuit communities in Nunavut, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut and the Northwest Territories](#), brief submitted to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 31 May 2016.

¹⁶⁸ There is an emerging private housing market in communities in Nunatsiavut, Iqaluit and Inuvik.

Kativik Regional Government and the Makivik Corporation, without a housing market, it is difficult for homeowners to sell their homes and recoup part of their investment.¹⁶⁹

Additionally, various witnesses noted that many Inuit do not have enough financial knowledge to plan for purchasing and maintaining a house, and that they are unfamiliar with the acquisition process. Where residents do have financial knowledge, they have difficulty accessing financial services that would help them obtain a loan to purchase or build a home.¹⁷⁰

Land tenure regimes, where land is collectively owned, can also make it challenging to obtain mortgages and mortgage insurance. Mortgage insurance is usually required by lenders when a homebuyer's down payment is less than 20% of the purchase price of a home. However, land in Nunavik communities is owned by Inuit-run local landholding corporations, in accordance with the 1975 *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement*. Landholding corporations are allowed to lease their land to individual homeowners for a maximum five-year renewable term or for a longer term with the approval of the landholding corporation general assembly of members. However, CMHC requires that mortgage loan amortization periods exceed the remaining term of the land lease on which the house is built by at least five years. In addition, the legal regime in the Province of Quebec prevents the creation of mortgageable interests on buildings constructed on lands leased for terms of less than ten years.¹⁷¹ The combination of these factors makes it almost impossible for an individual to acquire a house, unless he or she can dispense with mortgage insurance. The Committee, though, was encouraged to hear that CMHC is currently working with Nunavik landholding corporations, the provincial government and other stakeholders to address these difficulties and to create a mortgageable and insurable interest in Nunavik.¹⁷²

Home insurance can provide residents with protection against natural disasters and other issues that may impact their home. The Committee heard that even if residents are able to purchase a home, they could have difficulty obtaining home insurance because insurance companies do not send inspectors to remote communities in Inuit Nunangat.¹⁷³

Despite these obstacles, various witnesses suggested that homeownership could be one of the solutions to address the housing shortage.¹⁷⁴ Mr. Obed suggested that homeownership could create a diverse housing market, where social housing was not the only option for community members.¹⁷⁵ As explained by Mayor Redfern, encouraging private homeownership could free up social housing units for families

¹⁶⁹ Kativik Regional Government and Makivik Corporation, presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Kuujuaq, 20 April 2016.

¹⁷⁰ Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, [Study on best practices and on-going challenges relating to housing in First Nation and Inuit communities in Nunavut, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut and the Northwest Territories](#), brief submitted to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 31 May 2016.

¹⁷¹ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, [Response to Questions of the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples](#), brief submitted to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples on 9 September 2016.

¹⁷² Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, [Response to Questions of the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples](#), brief submitted to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples on 9 September 2016.

¹⁷³ Olivia Ikey, Ungava Representative, Qarjuit Youth Council, *Proceedings*, [Issue 7](#), 11 May 2016.

¹⁷⁴ Kativik Regional Government and Makivik Corporation, presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Kuujuaq, 20 April 2016.

¹⁷⁵ Natan Obed, President, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 22 March 2016.

who need them most.¹⁷⁶ Witnesses further connected homeownership with economic development. Mr. Synard from NCC Development Limited noted that once individuals own their own home, they have something to borrow against and are creating wealth for themselves and their family.¹⁷⁷ Mr. Obed suggested that homeownership could contribute to individual life goals, such as owning a business or saving for retirement.¹⁷⁸

2. Programs to Encourage Homeownership

In Inuit Nunangat, there are a few existing mechanisms to encourage and support homeownership. The Committee heard about homeownership grant programs in Nunavut and Nunavik that help residents pay for expenses such as home construction and maintenance costs. However, witnesses told the Committee that these programs have not provided the intended results. Terry Audla, President and CEO of the Nunavut Housing Corporation, explained to the Committee that many Nunavut residents who received grants to build their own house ended up being forced to abandon their homes because they could not afford the operating and maintenance costs.¹⁷⁹ Further, in Nunavik, a program that was supposed to build 150 private homes and 50 co-operative housing units between 2012 and 2016 had so little uptake that the provincial government decided to reallocate the funds to build 70 social housing units instead.¹⁸⁰

It may be possible to modify these programs to effectively support homeowners. Representatives from NCC Development Limited in Nunavut suggested that more residents in Nunavut would be interested in owning a home if there were assistance programs that would ensure they could build their home at a cost similar to residents in the rest of the country.¹⁸¹ In Nunavik, Ms. Ikey suggested that program criteria should be simplified and adapted to the realities of the region.¹⁸²

The Committee is aware that the design of programs for promoting access to homeownership in Inuit Nunangat are the responsibility of relevant provincial, territorial and Inuit governments. These orders of government are more familiar with local needs and are in a better position than the federal government and its agencies to provide these solutions. The Committee recognizes that, despite some very real challenges, sincere and promising efforts have been made in this regard.

¹⁷⁶ Madeleine Redfern, Mayor, City of Iqaluit, *Proceedings*, [Issue 7](#), 10 May 2016.

¹⁷⁷ Clarence Synard, Vice President, NCC Development Limited, *Proceedings*, [Issue 8](#), 1 June 2016.

¹⁷⁸ Natan Obed, President, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 22 March 2016.

¹⁷⁹ Terry Audla, President and CEO, Nunavut Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 23 March 2016.

¹⁸⁰ Kativik Regional Government and the Makivik Corporation, presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Kuujuaq, 20 April 2016.

¹⁸¹ Clarence Synard, Vice President, NCC Development Limited, *Proceedings*, [Issue 8](#), 1 June 2016.

¹⁸² Olivia Ikey, Ungava Representative, Qarjuut Youth Council, *Proceedings*, [Issue 7](#), 11 May 2016.

A New Model to Make Homeownership More Affordable

J.D. Irving and NCC Development Limited proposed a model to deliver housing in northern communities. The model entails the construction and shipping of pre-fabricated homes to northern communities in collaboration with NCC Development Limited, which would finish assembling the homes on site. By controlling the entire supply chain, David Saucy, Vice-President, Construction and Equipment Division, J.D. Irving, Limited anticipated that the delivery model could provide affordable homeownership options to northern communities at 20% less than the current method of building houses completely on-site. The two companies are currently working on a pilot project to test this model.

(David Saucy, Vice-President, Construction and Equipment Division, J.D. Irving, Limited, *Proceedings*, [Issue 8](#), 1 June 2016).

Some organizations had ideas about programs that, if available, could provide financial incentives for individuals to become homeowners. The Kativik Regional Government and the Makivik Corporation suggested that a home buy-back program be created to enable homeowners to sell their house if it became necessary to do so.

The Committee agrees with witnesses that private homeownership would help improve the housing situation in Inuit Nunangat. Making private homeownership affordable could encourage the development of a diverse housing market in northern communities and provide an option outside of social housing. Further, private homeownership could be a vehicle for economic development, since equity in homes is an important source of capital for business formation. For these reasons, the Committee believes that the barriers to homeownership need to be addressed and recommends as follows:

Recommendation 6

That the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, in co-operation with the relevant provincial, territorial and Inuit housing authorities, explore ways to support homeownership, such as co-operative and cohousing ownership, home buy-back and grant programs, that are suited to community needs in the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Nunavik and Nunatsiavut.

G. Support a Variety of Housing Options

In the North, the solution to the housing crisis could involve a hybrid solution that blends together social housing and private housing.¹⁸³ Natan Obed suggested that the development of homeownership will “happen in a very different way from what the southern housing market looks like.”¹⁸⁴ With a view to working towards homeownership in the longer term, alternative models should be available in the interim

¹⁸³ Natan Obed, President, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 22 March 2016.

¹⁸⁴ Natan Obed, President, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 22 March 2016.

to residents of Inuit Nunangat. This section discusses alternative models that could support affordable private homeownership in Inuit Nunangat.



A view of some of the housing options in Iqaluit, Nunavut.

In Nunatsiavut, the Torngat Regional Housing Association provides housing to tenants through a rent-to-own agreement. Under this model, tenants pay a monthly rent based on the size of the unit, and become the owner of the unit after 25 years.¹⁸⁵ This type of rent-to-own agreement could also work in other regions. It was proposed by the Kativik Regional Government and the Makivik Corporation as a solution that would increase access to homeownership.¹⁸⁶

According to Olivia Ikey, from the Qarjuit Youth Council in Nunavik, housing co-operatives could draw in young people with jobs, and would “help youth gain independence, help them better manage their

¹⁸⁵ William Lucy, Program Coordinator, Torngat Regional Housing Association, *Proceedings*, [Issue 9](#), 14 June 2016.

¹⁸⁶ Kativik Regional Government and Makivik Corporation, presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Kuujuaq, 20 April 2016.

affairs, work within a board and be responsible for their homes and their environments.”¹⁸⁷ Housing co-operatives have been successful elsewhere.

Over the past three decades, Greenland transitioned from a housing situation where the majority of homes were owned by the state to a private housing market. The primary driver of this transition was the introduction of housing co-operatives, as the state offered cheap loans to finance these projects. Rasmus Ole Rasmussen, Senior Research Fellow at Nordregio told the Committee that in the last five years, it became possible for residents to become homeowners by buying their house out of a co-operative.¹⁸⁸

Alternatively, Jay Thakar, a program manager with Habitat for Humanity Canada, told the Committee that their model gives low-income families the opportunity to benefit from an interest-free loan, as well as financial and maintenance advice, in exchange for 500 hours of volunteer work.¹⁸⁹ Between 2007 and 2013, Habitat for Humanity gave four families in Iqaluit the opportunity to become homeowners. It plans to provide the same opportunity to another six families by 2020.¹⁹⁰ With this new construction, Habitat for Humanity hopes to provide training opportunities to youth in Iqaluit.¹⁹¹ However, at present this model is only available in Iqaluit.

Since its inception, Habitat for Humanity’s Indigenous Housing Program has built 150 homes mainly through partnerships with Indigenous housing groups and communities.¹⁹² Through partnerships with local organizations, the Indigenous Housing Program also provides Indigenous youth with training opportunities in home construction.¹⁹³ Funding to construct these homes is provided by the federal government (CMHC), the provincial and territorial governments, and private donors, among others.

The Committee is encouraged by the success of the Indigenous Housing Program in making affordable homeownership a reality for many Indigenous families. In light of these positive results, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 7

That the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation continue to provide funding to Habitat For Humanity’s Indigenous Housing Program.

¹⁸⁷ Olivia Ikey, Ungava Representative, Qarjuit Youth Council, *Proceedings*, [Issue 7](#), 11 May 2016.

¹⁸⁸ Rasmus Ole Rasmussen, Senior Research Fellow, Specialised in regional development, regional analysis, statistical analysis, GIS, Arctic and Northern regions, Nordregio, *Proceedings*, [Issue 9](#), 7 June 2016.

¹⁸⁹ Jay Thakar, Manager, Indigenous Housing Program, Habitat for Humanity Canada, *Proceedings*, [Issue 6](#), 3 May 2016.

¹⁹⁰ Glenn Cousins, Board Chair, Habitat for Humanity Iqaluit, *Proceedings*, [Issue 6](#), 3 May 2016.

¹⁹¹ Glenn Cousins, Board Chair, Habitat for Humanity Iqaluit, *Proceedings*, [Issue 6](#), 3 May 2016.

¹⁹² Jay Thakar, Manager, Indigenous Housing Program, Habitat for Humanity Canada, *Proceedings*, [Issue 6](#), 3 May 2016.

¹⁹³ Jay Thakar, Manager, Indigenous Housing Program, Habitat for Humanity Canada, *Proceedings*, [Issue 6](#), 3 May 2016.

The Committee believes that Inuit should have access to a variety of housing options in their communities. However, testing and implementing these options will require funding. The Committee sees an opportunity in the Affordable Rental Housing Innovation Fund that was introduced in Budget 2016. This \$200 million fund is administered by CMHC and aims “to encourage new funding models and innovative building techniques in the rental housing sector.”¹⁹⁴ The fund will provide low-cost loans and is “expected to help create up to 4,000 new affordable units over 5 years.”¹⁹⁵ The Committee believes that this fund could lead to the development of alternative housing options in northern communities and therefore recommends:

Recommendation 8

That the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation allocate a portion of the Affordable Rental Housing Innovation Fund specifically to the development of alternative housing options in communities in the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Nunavik and Nunatsiavut.

H. Support the Development and Deployment of New Technologies

*I also could go on and on about the different innovative things that are happening in our regions about housing design, but the reality remains that we have not yet been able to find a solution for a low-cost, well-ventilated, appropriate social housing design that is acceptable to Inuit, that meets our needs, and that is also something that allows for our participation in the building and then operation and maintenance of those structures.*¹⁹⁶

The introduction of new technology in Inuit Nunangat has the potential to improve housing conditions by making homes more affordable. However, in order to take full advantage of this potential, barriers to the development and the implementation of new technologies will need to be addressed.

1. Developing New Technologies

Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) highlighted their Rapidly Deployable Northern House Prototype that addresses some of the current challenges in northern housing. As part of this project, researchers developed a modular house that can fit in a shipping container, is lightweight and can be built in a few weeks by general labourers without specialty tools. Although the department has not yet tested this project in a northern community, they suggested that these modular homes would cost less than half the price of building a typical house in the north.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, [Affordable Rental Innovation Fund](#).

¹⁹⁵ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, [Affordable Rental Innovation Fund](#).

¹⁹⁶ Natan Obed, President, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 22 March 2016.

¹⁹⁷ The Department estimated that the units would cost approximately \$175 per square foot compared to other options currently available in northern communities that can cost up to \$400 per square foot to build. Dean Haslip, Director General, CanmetENERGY-Ottawa, Innovation and Energy Technology Sector, Natural Resources Canada, *Proceedings*, [Issue 8](#), 31 May 2016.

The Committee also heard about new transportation technologies currently in development by LTA Aérostructures (LTAA). LTAA is developing heavy lift cargo airships that would be able to carry pre-fabricated homes and building materials to northern communities. LTAA anticipated that the first airship could be available by 2020.¹⁹⁸

These projects demonstrate how new technologies can make housing more affordable for northerners. However, there are many challenges that limit the development of these technologies, including the need to attract greater private sector involvement in research and development and the lack of capacity in communities to implement or maintain these technologies.

The private sector's involvement is essential to bringing new technologies to market. As explained by Dean Haslip of CanmetENERGY-Ottawa, once the research and development stage is completed, the fabrication and delivery of new technologies is typically assumed by the private sector.¹⁹⁹ Alain Fournier of EVOQ Architecture further suggested that private investment is essential to ensure that the research and development of new technologies is taking place in certain fields, such as heat recovery ventilation systems.²⁰⁰

Despite the important role of the private sector, NRCan officials explained that the lack of private sector involvement is partly due to the small market for new technologies in the north, the small population in northern communities, and the high level of risk which prevents the private sector from investing in these initiatives.²⁰¹ As noted by Mr. Fournier, a new technology such as a heat recovery ventilation system specifically designed for the Arctic is unlikely to be available to consumers as it "won't come from the industry unless there's a market."²⁰² Mr. Haslip suggested that the federal government can play a role in offsetting some of the risks and encouraging private sector businesses to invest.²⁰³ As observed by Mr. Haslip:

Of the many things that the federal government research and development establishment are well suited for, this would be one of them, which would be to target something that is a national priority, but maybe because of market failure or some other reason...it is not being addressed by the private sector...This is the kind of thing that federal government research and development is good at.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁸ Michael Dymont, CEO of LTAA, *Proceedings*, [Issue 7](#), 10 May 2016.

¹⁹⁹ Dean Haslip, Director General, CanmetENERGY-Ottawa, Innovation and Energy Technology Sector, Natural Resources Canada, *Proceedings*, [Issue 8](#), 31 May 2016.

²⁰⁰ Alain Fournier, architect, director, EVOQ Architecture, *Proceedings*, [Issue 6](#), 3 May 2016.

²⁰¹ Dean Haslip, Director General, CanmetENERGY-Ottawa, Innovation and Energy Technology Sector, Natural Resources Canada, *Proceedings*, [Issue 8](#), 31 May 2016.

²⁰² Alain Fournier, architect, director, EVOQ Architecture, *Proceedings*, [Issue 6](#), 3 May 2016.

²⁰³ Dean Haslip, Director General, CanmetENERGY-Ottawa, Innovation and Energy Technology Sector, Natural Resources Canada, *Proceedings*, [Issue 8](#), 31 May 2016.

²⁰⁴ Dean Haslip, Director General, CanmetENERGY-Ottawa, Innovation and Energy Technology Sector, Natural Resources Canada, *Proceedings*, [Issue 8](#), 31 May 2016.

2. Deploying New Technologies

“In many cases, there is no one in the community with the knowledge or expertise to maintain or fix these new technologies — nor do we have the easy access to Home Hardware, Canadian Tire or Home Depot.”²⁰⁵

Even if new housing technologies were more widely available, barriers at the community level would also need to be addressed to implement new technologies. First, these technologies would have to be suited to northern needs and realities. As observed by one witness, this is not necessarily the case today:

Too often pressure from the South to maximize energy efficiency or improve delivery methods to reduce construction costs are proposed for the sake of political expediency and are not based on any standard of research adequate for Northern realities.²⁰⁶

Further, communities need capacity to implement these technologies. As explained by Terry Audla of the Nunavut Housing Corporation, “using and installing the latest technologies in our housing units is impractical.”²⁰⁷ In Nunavut and Nunavik, community members are sometimes not taught how to operate and maintain new systems and technologies, such as heat recovery ventilators. As Alain Fournier pointed out to the Committee, if those ventilators are not properly used and maintained, they have the potential to create more issues.²⁰⁸

Based on the evidence heard, the Committee understands that the research and development of technological solutions for northern housing challenges continue to pose significant financial risks for the private sector, and that it will continue to be carried out mainly by government agencies and universities.

The Committee notes that a number of federal organizations, such as CMHC, the National Research Council and Polar Knowledge Canada are involved in northern housing research and development. However, the Committee is concerned about the lack of federal coordination in this critical field of research and believes that current funding could yield better results if there were a coordinated strategy in place. The Committee also believes that sharing innovative practices and knowledge to help improve how housing is built and supplied in the north should be encouraged. For these reasons, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 9

That the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation work with relevant federal departments and appropriate housing agencies in order to develop a coordinated strategy for government research and development into northern housing.

²⁰⁵ Terry Audla, President and CEO, Nunavut Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 23 March 2016.

²⁰⁶ Terry Audla, President and CEO, Nunavut Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 23 March 2016.

²⁰⁷ Terry Audla, President and CEO, Nunavut Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 23 March 2016.

²⁰⁸ Alain Fournier, architect, director, EVOQ Architecture, *Proceedings*, [Issue 6](#), 3 May 2016.

I. Develop Building Codes for the North

In Canada, building codes ensure that homes are constructed according to a safe and acceptable standard. Model building codes apply to the whole country and are developed under the purview of the National Research Council of Canada.²⁰⁹

Provinces and territories incorporate these model building codes in their regulations, with potential modifications. However, these codes are often not tailored to specific regions. In its brief to the Committee, the National Research Council of Canada indicated that northern conditions may be taken into consideration in the development of the model codes, but the codes are not specifically tailored for the conditions and limitations of the North.²¹⁰

Building codes that are not adjusted for life in the North may contribute to the number of poor quality homes in Inuit Nunangat. A brief submitted by the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation explained that as building codes are not applicable to the northern context, many homes in their communities are designed and constructed according to southern practices which are not appropriate for the North.²¹¹ For instance, Mr. Fournier explained that building codes require the installation of heat recovery ventilators, because homes are built so airtight.²¹² This requirement may not be suited to the north, as these ventilators tend to block and freeze from snow accumulation in northern climates.²¹³

The Committee agrees with witnesses that building codes could contribute to improving the quality of homes in the North, in part by requiring the use of appropriate materials appropriate for the Arctic environment. Ultimately, national building codes should take into consideration the conditions in which houses are used and built. In order to ensure that homes are properly built, and are safe and secure, the Committee recommends as follows:

Recommendation 10

That the National Research Council work with the provinces and territories and other stakeholders to develop model building codes tailored to the conditions and limitations of the North.

²⁰⁹ National Research Council Canada, "[About Codes Canada](#)"

²¹⁰ National Research Council Canada, brief submitted to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 23 August 2016.

²¹¹ Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, [Study on best practices and on-going challenges relating to housing in First Nation and Inuit communities in Nunavut, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut and the Northwest Territories](#), brief submitted to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 31 May 2016.

²¹² Alain Fournier, architect, director, EVOQ Architecture, *Proceedings*, [Issue 6](#), 3 May 2016.

²¹³ Robin Sinha, Director of Housing, CanmetENERGY-Ottawa, Innovation and Energy Technology Sector, Natural Resources Canada, *Proceedings*, [Issue 8](#), 31 May 2016.

J. Ensure Access to Sufficient Information to Minimize Climate Change Impacts

Mapping tools can provide essential resources to determine the location of the best areas to build new homes. This information is particularly important in Inuit Nunangat, where a warming climate has damaged community homes and buildings.

While many communities lack sufficient information about where to build homes and other buildings to minimize damage as a result of a warming climate, some communities in Nunatsiavut and Nunavik have access to tools, such as hazard mapping, to help them make land use planning decisions. Developed by a research team led by Dr. Trevor Bell from Memorial University (Nunatsiavut), and Dr. Michel Allard from Laval University (Nunavik), hazard maps identify the areas suitable for the construction of homes and community buildings in consideration of climate change impacts.²¹⁴

Where available, these tools can have a positive long-term impact on community planning. The Nunatsiavut Government has access to maps depicting available areas for different land uses that take into consideration factors such as coastal erosion, flooding, and snow drift.²¹⁵ According to the Nunatsiavut Government, this information can help them select “appropriate development approaches and foundation designs that will minimize this issue [climate change impacts], thus reducing our repair needs and lengthening the lifespan of our housing stock.”²¹⁶

Federal funding was available to help communities develop tools to address climate change impacts. Under INAC’s Climate Change Adaptation Program, which ended in March 2016, communities across Inuit Nunangat could apply for funding to address challenges including infrastructure vulnerability and permafrost degradation in the North.²¹⁷ As the Committee believes that access to tools to support land use planning is essential to help communities to better plan for the potential impacts of a warming climate, it recommends:

“We need to protect the investment. We know there’s a housing crisis in Inuit regions, so the onus is more to make sure that for those dollars spent now, we protect that investment by making sure that they’re built on solid ground.”

(Trevor Bell, University Research Professor, Geography Department, Memorial University of Newfoundland (as an individual), *Proceedings*, [Issue 7](#), 18 May 2016.)

²¹⁴ Trevor Bell, University Research Professor, Geography Department, Memorial University of Newfoundland (as an individual), *Proceedings*, [Issue 7](#), 18 May 2016.

²¹⁵ Kate Mitchell, First Minister, Nunatsiavut Government, *Proceedings*, [Issue 9](#), 14 June 2016.

²¹⁶ Kate Mitchell, First Minister, Nunatsiavut Government, *Proceedings*, [Issue 9](#), 14 June 2016.

²¹⁷ Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, [Climate Change Adaptation Program](#).

Recommendation 11

That Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada reinstate the Climate Change Adaptation Program to provide funding to help Indigenous communities minimize the impacts of climate change.

K. Develop Local Capacity

Developing local capacity to undertake construction work can provide communities with needed economic development opportunities.²¹⁸ In this regard, the Committee heard that the lack of local skilled labour increases construction costs in northern communities. As explained by Mr. Fournier an architect at EVOQ Architecture, due to the lack of skilled labour, companies constructing buildings in the north have to bring in qualified workers from the south and pay for all associated costs such as food and housing. Mr. Fournier believes that in total, the cost of transporting materials, workers and specialized equipment accounts for at least 30% to 40% of housing construction costs in Inuit Nunangat.²¹⁹

The lack of local skilled labour also increases the operating and maintenance costs, as there is often no skilled workforce available to homeowners for specialized services for upkeep and maintenance.²²⁰ In many cases, to carry out repairs and maintain certain pieces of equipment, materials and equipment have to be sent by plane.

One major consequence of the lack of local skilled construction labour in Inuit Nunangat is that it prevents Inuit from becoming fully involved in housing projects. When skilled labour is brought in for housing projects, the local population is not able to fully benefit from the construction, renovation and maintenance of homes. In order to promote the training of skilled housing construction labour in First Nations and Inuit communities, CMHC developed the Housing Internship Initiative for First Nations and Inuit Youth (HIIFNIY). Each year HIIFNIY provides \$1 million to housing authorities and home builders to help them provide 125 young people with on-the-job training in the housing sector – management, construction, maintenance, renovation or service.²²¹ In the last five years, 11 Inuit out of a total of 633 participants benefited from the HIIFNIY.²²²

The Committee is of the opinion that greater federal investment in capacity development can contribute to reducing some of the housing problems in Inuit Nunangat, while also supporting community economic development. For these reasons, the Committee recommends:

²¹⁸ Christopher Duschenes, Director, Northern and Aboriginal Policy, Conference Board of Canada, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 23 March 2016.

²¹⁹ Alain Fournier, architect, director, EVOQ Architecture, *Proceedings*, [Issue 6](#), 3 May 2016.

²²⁰ Kativik Regional Government and Makivik Corporation, presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Kuujuuaq, 20 April 2016.

²²¹ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, [Response to Questions of the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples](#), brief submitted to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples on 9 September 2016.

²²² Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, [Response to Questions of the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples](#), brief submitted to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples on 29 April 2016

Recommendation 12

That the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation ensure that a greater number of young Inuit from Nunavut, Nunatsiavut, Nunavik and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region participate in the Housing Internship Initiative for First Nations and Inuit Youth.

L. Include a Northern Component to the National Housing Strategy

The federal government has committed to develop a national housing strategy “that will promote innovative approaches to the housing challenges and opportunities that exist across the country.”²²³ Officials from CMHC remarked that this strategy intends to cover the entire housing continuum from homelessness to market housing, and will recognize the diverse housing needs across Canada. The federal government has completed consultations with stakeholders, Indigenous groups and others, in order to develop this strategy.²²⁴

The Committee believes that a national housing strategy could provide a comprehensive plan to address the housing crisis in northern Canada, while demonstrating the commitment of all levels of government to find a resolution to these issues. A national housing strategy could lead to information sharing between regions concerning possible solutions to address the housing crisis. At the territorial and regional level, the Committee heard about work currently taking place to create housing strategies for Nunatsiavut and Nunavut, which could complement a national strategy.

Officials from CMHC told the Committee that it “[...] recognize[s] that the opportunities and challenges for housing in the North and in Indigenous communities warrant tailored approaches and separate consultations that are integrated into the overall national strategy.”²²⁵ Given that the strategy has not yet been completed, the Committee would like to emphasize the importance of ensuring the unique circumstances of the North comprise a separate component of an eventual national housing strategy. Therefore, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 13

That the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, in collaboration with Indigenous organizations and other relevant partners, ensure that the proposed national housing strategy include a specific strategy to address the housing challenges in northern Indigenous communities located in the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Nunavik and Nunatsiavut.

²²³ Charlie MacArthur, Senior Vice-President, Regional Operations and Assisted Housing, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 10](#), 22 June 2016.

²²⁴ Government of Canada, [Let's Talk Housing](#).

²²⁵ Charlie MacArthur, Senior Vice-President, Regional Operations and Assisted Housing, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 10](#), 22 June 2016.

M. Involve Inuit in Housing Policy Decisions and Planning

*Firstly, housing designed for the North has typically been culturally unsuitable for Indigenous families and has been shown not to meet the needs of life in the North. While we recognize that some progress has been achieved in this area thanks to a handful of pilot projects, the reality is that much remains to be done until these individual success stories translate into large-scale improvement across the North.*²²⁶

To ensure that housing meets cultural needs, Inuit must be involved in housing projects. Mr. Duchesne noted that current research on northern housing suggests that projects are more successful when “there’s greater ownership and involvement at the community level.” This could be achieved through community involvement in the conceptualization, design, building, and maintenance of homes.²²⁷

Despite these potential benefits, Inuit are not often involved in housing projects, particularly in the area of housing design. Current housing designs in many cases do not meet community needs, such as houses without wind barriers that are facing the strong prevailing winds of the north, rather than the south. Further, these housing designs often lacked important cultural elements, such as room for snowmobiles or areas for Inuit to prepare hides.²²⁸ Witnesses identified several areas, such as ventilation systems and the orientation of homes, where Inuit knowledge could contribute to improved housing designs.²²⁹

It may take time to develop greater Inuit involvement in housing design. As Dr. Riva observed:

I'm hopeful that eventually housing construction will not just be in a crisis mode, responding to a crisis, but that time will be taken to sit down with the communities to talk about what type of houses people would like to have: how big of a room, the shape of the room, more bedrooms, fewer bedrooms, bigger communal spaces.²³⁰

²²⁶ Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, [Study on best practices and on-going challenges relating to housing in First Nation and Inuit communities in Nunavut, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut and the Northwest Territories](#), brief submitted to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 31 May 2016.

²²⁷ Christopher Duschenes, Director, Northern and Aboriginal Policy, Conference Board of Canada, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 23 March 2016.

²²⁸ Alain Fournier, architect, director, EVOQ Architecture, *Proceedings*, [Issue 6](#), 3 May 2016; Assistant SAO in Sanikiluaq, 22 April 2016.

²²⁹ Municipal councillor for Igloolik, Presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Igloolik, 19 April 2016.

²³⁰ Mylène Riva, Assistant Professor, Department of Social and Preventive Medicine, University of Laval (as an individual) *Proceedings*, [Issue 7](#), 18 May 2016.

In some communities, work to explore ways to involve Inuit and integrate local knowledge in housing design is already taking place. The importance of encouraging this involvement was addressed by Alain Fournier:

If you're going to do a pilot house, do it right, not just sort of pay lip service, "Oh, we've done a sort of pilot house." Have real consultation and dialogue. Don't just go once to talk to people and then never see them again. Talk to them and find out what they want. Go back to your drawing board, even though now it's a computer. Go back to them once you've drawn out your first concepts and show it to them and discuss it with them so that there will be a real buy-in, because this is also what you want. You want people to see that you've respected them in the discussions and dialogue that you had with them, that you've followed the suggestions and that they will be part of it.²³¹

Over the course of the study, the Committee learned of culturally-appropriate designs and projects including the Northern Sustainable House initiative and a pilot project led by the Nunatsiavut Government.

The Northern Sustainable House initiative is a CMHC project to construct energy efficient pilot houses in different northern communities. Thus far, four homes have been constructed under this initiative one; in the Northwest Territories (Inuvik) and one in Nunavut (Arviat).²³² According to Charlie MacArthur, Senior Vice-President, Regional Operations and Assisted Housing for CMHC, these homes are designed with community input and aim to be culturally appropriate for residents.²³³ At times, design features from these houses have been built into homes built by housing corporations, as was the case in Nunavut.²³⁴

In Nunatsiavut, a pilot project led by the Nunatsiavut Government focussed on community involvement to construct a sustainable multi-unit dwelling in Nain during the summer of 2016. As explained by Kate Mitchell, First Minister of the Nunatsiavut Government, to design the house, architects, local building

"I also could go on and on about the different innovative things that are happening in our regions about housing design, but the reality remains that we have not yet been able to find a solution for a low-cost, well-ventilated, appropriate social housing design that is acceptable to Inuit, that meets our needs, and that is also something that allows for our participation in the building and then operation and maintenance of those structures...Hopefully we can work together across Inuit regions...on how to solve this, and then work together towards that solution."

(Natan Obed, President, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 22 March 2016.)

²³¹ Alain Fournier, architect, director, EVOQ Architecture, *Proceedings*, [Issue 6](#), 3 May 2016.

²³² Duncan Hill, Manager, Housing Needs Research, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 3](#), 8 March 2016. Other houses were built in Yukon.

²³³ Charlie MacArthur, Senior Vice-President, Regional Operations and Assisted Housing, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 10](#), 22 June 2016.

²³⁴ Terry Audla, President and CEO, Nunavut Housing Corporation, *Proceedings*, [Issue 4](#), 23 March 2016.

experts and community members were brought together to identify features that would create a comfortable and culturally appropriate living space.²³⁵

The Committee believes that these projects have the potential to set an example for Inuit involvement in housing projects across Inuit Nunangat. Accordingly the Committee strongly urges CMHC to work with northern housing authorities to explore ways to involve Inuit in the conceptualization, design, construction, and maintenance of housing in their communities.

²³⁵ Kate Mitchell, First Minister, Nunatsiavut Government, *Proceedings*, [Issue 9](#), 14 June 2016.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Access to safe, adequate and affordable housing is essential for the health and well-being of Inuit communities across Inuit Nunangat. However, persistent housing shortages as well as poor quality housing has meant that Inuit have struggled for decades to secure appropriate housing for themselves, and for their families, often with far-reaching consequences for family relationships, child health and overall physical and mental health outcomes. Addressing the housing situation across the Inuit homeland is made even more complex by a unique set of factors, such as a harsh climate, remote, small and dispersed communities, a general lack of infrastructure, including road and rail corridors, high costs of labour and materials, low incomes and little private investment to support a housing market.

The Committee agrees that housing is a key determinant of health and that while it “may not be the only issue, all issues relate to housing.”²³⁶ The chronic housing shortage, combined with a young and growing population, requires immediate action if we are to stem the despair and vulnerability that burden far too many Inuit families. In this report, we have set out actions to support integrated and community-based solutions that better reflect Inuit cultures and the climate in which they live. This means involving Inuit in meaningful partnerships in the design of suitable homes, exploring new technologies to make better and more affordable homes available, exploring alternative financing opportunities that support greater homeownership, and taking appropriate steps to lower operating costs and construction costs, while promoting local skilled labour.

The Committee believes that these actions are necessary to ensure that Inuit have access to much-needed affordable, appropriate and adequate housing that meets national standards. If we fail to act immediately to address the acute and chronic Inuit housing needs, we will fail to remove the barriers that prevent Inuit, and the generations of Inuit to come, from fully participating in the promising future of Inuit Nunangat - *the place where Inuit live*.

²³⁶ Cathleen Knotsch and Dianne Kinnon, [If Not Now... When? Addressing the Ongoing Inuit Housing Crisis in Canada](#), National Aboriginal Health Organization, 2011, page 1.

APPENDIX A: WITNESSES

March 8, 2016

Stephen Van Dine, Assistant Deputy Minister, Northern Affairs Organization (*Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada*)

Allan MacDonald, Director General, Implementation Branch, Treaties and Aboriginal Government (*Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada*)

Elizabeth Logue, Director, Inuit Relations Directorate, Northern Affairs Organization (*Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada*)

Duncan Hill, Manager, Housing Needs Research (*Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation*)

March 9, 2016

Hilda Broomfield Letemplier, Member (*National Aboriginal Economic Development Board*)

March 22, 2016

Natan Obed, President (*Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami*)

Colleen O'Keefe, Director of Engineering (*Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation*)

Morley Linstead, Director of Policy, Research and Monitoring (*Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation*)

March 23, 2016

Christopher Duschenes, Director, Northern and Aboriginal Policy (*The Conference Board of Canada*)

Terry Audla, President and CEO (*Nunavut Housing Corporation*)

Gershom Moyo, Vice President and CFO (*Nunavut Housing Corporation*)

Tim Brown, Director, Policy and Strategic Planning (*Nunavut Housing Corporation*)

April 12, 2016

Jeff Anderson, President and CEO (*Northwest Territories Housing Corporation*)

Diane Lafleur, Assistant Deputy Minister, Federal-Provincial Relations and Social Policy Branch
(*Department of Finance Canada*)

Roger Charland, Director, Federal-Provincial Relations Division, Federal-Provincial Relations and Social Policy Branch (*Department of Finance Canada*)

May 3, 2016

Alain Fournier, Architect, Director (*EVOQ Architecture*)

Jay Thakar, Manager, Indigenous Housing Program (*Habitat for Humanity Canada*)

Glenn Cousins, Board Chair (*Habitat for Humanity Iqaluit*)

May 10, 2016

Madeleine Redfern, Mayor (*City of Iqaluit*)

Michael Dymont, CEO, Ltaa (*The Parliamentary Group*)

Marc Bourret, President, Ltaa (*The Parliamentary Group*)

Patrick Gagnon, Managing Partner (*The Parliamentary Group*)

May 11, 2016

Louisa Yeates, Vice President (*Qarjuit Youth Council*)

Olivia Ikey, Ungava Representative (*Qarjuit Youth Council*)

May 18, 2016

Mylène Riva, Assistant Professor, Department of Social and Preventative Medicine, University of Laval
(*As An Individual*)

Trevor Bell, University Research Professor, Geography Department, Memorial University of Newfoundland
(*As An Individual*)

May 31, 2016

Dean Haslip, Director General, CanmetENERGY-Ottawa, Innovation and Energy Technology Sector
(*Natural Resources Canada*)

Robin Sinha, Director of Housing, Buildings and Communities, CanmetENERGY-Ottawa (*Natural Resources Canada*)

Debra Haltrecht, Acting Director, Housing Division, Office of Energy Efficiency (*Natural Resources Canada*)

Duane Ningaqsiq Smith, Chair and Chief Executive Officer (*Inuvialuit Regional Corporation*)

June 1, 2016

Jeannie Arreak-Kullualik, Director, Social Cultural Development Department (*Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.*)

Adla Itorcheak, Policy Analyst on Housing (*Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.*)

Clarence Synard, Vice President (*NCC Development Limited*)

Ray Girouard, Director of Commercial Sales (*Kent Homes*)

David Saucy, Vice-President, Construction and Equipment Division (*J.D. Irving, Limited*)

David Irving, Director of Business Strategy, Construction and Equipment Division (*J.D. Irving, Limited*)

June 7, 2016

Rasmus Ole Rasmussen, Senior Research Fellow, Specialised in regional development, regional analysis, statistical analysis, GIS, Arctic and Northern regions (*Nordregio*)

Ryan Weber, Senior Research Advisor (*Nordregio*)

June 14, 2016

Kate Mitchell, First Minister (*Nunatsiavut Government*)

Johannes Lampe, President (*Nunatsiavut Government*)

Toby Anderson, Deputy Minister, Nunatsiavut Affairs (*Nunatsiavut Government*)

Isabella Pain, Nunatsiavut Affairs (*Nunatsiavut Government*)

William Lucy, Program Coordinator (*Torngat Regional Housing Association*)

Richard Boase, Inspector (*Torngat Regional Housing Association*)

June 22, 2016

Stephen Van Dine, Assistant Deputy Minister, Northern Affairs Organization (*Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada*)

Allan MacDonald, Director General, Implementation Branch, Treaties and Aboriginal Government
(Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada)

Charlie MacArthur, Senior Vice-President, Regional Operations and Assisted Housing *(Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation)*

Carla Staresina, Vice President, Affordable Housing *(Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation)*

Luisa Atkinson, Director, First Nations Housing *(Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation)*