

Yellowknife Homelessness Report Card 2008

Yellowknife Homelessness Coalition

Yellowknife Homelessness Coalition Vision:

"A community where nobody is homeless or marginalized."

936 people stayed in an emergency shelter at some point in 2008

This is the first Report Card on Homelessness in Yellowknife. Report Cards help create understanding and measure progress over time against defined criteria. Since this is Yellowknife's first Report Card, it will present a profile of homelessness in the city and introduce many organizations that work to reduce the impact of homelessness here. Future progress in Yellowknife may be measured using the indicators in the table below along with other indicators as data collection systems are developed.

The Current Situation

Homelessness Indicators					2008
Number of individuals who stayed in a shelter					936 ^{*(1)}
Number of times shelter beds were used					67,340
Length of stay in emergency shelters					
# of Days	1-30	31-120	121-180	181+	Total
Single Men	287	82	11	14	394
Single Women	145	39	11	5	200
Youth ^{*(2)} 0-18	24	4	0	0	28
Youth ^{*(2)} 19-25	11	4	0	0	15
Families ^{*(3)}	67	55	12	27	161
Housing Indicators					
Number of public & subsidized housing units					541
Number of accessible public housing units					30
Number of supportive living units					6
Number of clients: supportive living service					33
Number of clients on supportive living waitlist					26
Rental vacancy rate (October 2008)					0.7%
Households overspending on shelter (>30%) ^{*(4)}					34%
Average rent:1-bedroom apartment (Oct 2008)					\$1,178
Income Indicators					
Minimum wage (October 2008)					\$8.25
Increase: Consumer Price Index (Oct. 2007-8)					4.7 %

^{*(1)} includes all individuals from AMH, CNF, SA, SD and YWCA transitional housing

^{*(2)} only youth from the SideDoor

^{*(3)} families in Alison McAteer House, Emergency Housing and Transitional Housing

^{*(4)} see page 11 for further details

What is absolute or visible homelessness?

- Living on the street
- Staying overnight in temporary shelters
- Staying in places not meant for human habitation

Who is "at risk of homelessness"?

It could be you.

See the risks inside on pages 3, 10 and 11.

What is the Housing Continuum?

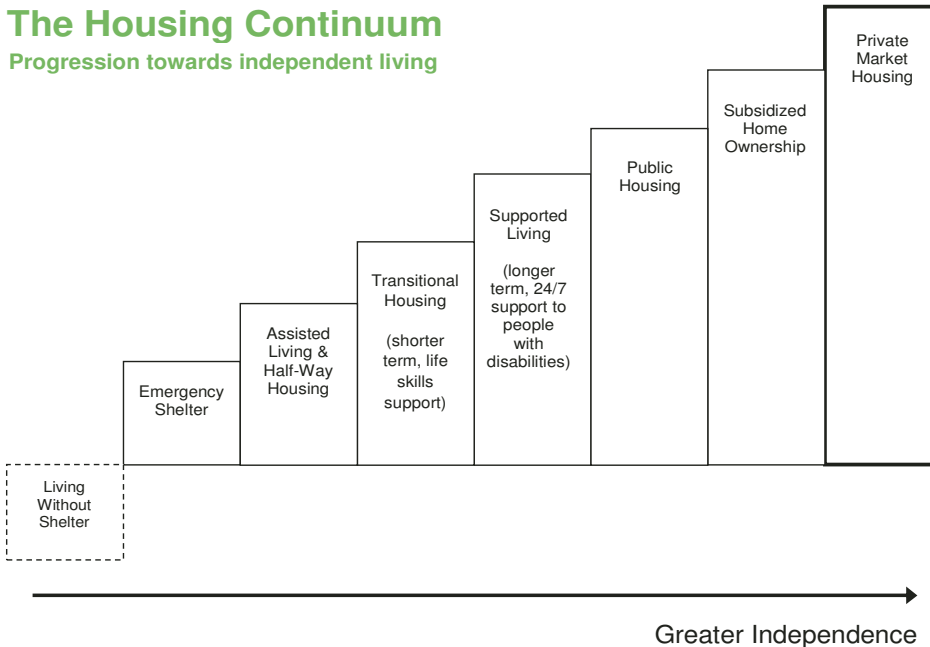
The Housing Continuum is a scale of independent living. It ranges from emergency shelters to private housing. See details inside...



Understanding Homelessness ...

The Housing Continuum

Progression towards independent living



Definitions & Measurement

Homelessness definitions vary greatly. Some definitions are broad and include many steps along the continuum. Other definitions are restrictive and refer to emergency shelter use only. Broad definitions tend to increase the number of people deemed to be homeless.

Homelessness can be complex. Definitions are critical to measuring homelessness.

Importance of Definitions

Homelessness is a term which is used often. Understanding definitions is important when...

- discussing the nature of the problem, causes and solutions;
- reviewing reports, statistics and models for change; and
- developing policies, including allocation of resources.

Variety of Definitions

- **Visible or absolute homelessness:** includes women and men who stay in emergency hostels and shelters and those who sleep rough in places considered unfit for human habitation such as parks, ravines, doorways, vehicles and abandoned buildings.
- **Relative homelessness:** those living in spaces that do not meet basic health and safety standards including protection from the elements, security of tenure, personal safety and affordability.

- **Hidden homelessness:** those who are temporarily staying with friends or family or are staying with a man, woman or significant other to obtain shelter, and those living in households where they are subject to family conflict or violence.
- **At risk of becoming homeless:** those who are one step away from eviction, bankruptcy or family separation e.g. loss of job, illness, rent increase, death of a spouse.
- **Core housing need:** a household whose accommodation does not meet one of the following standards: **affordable** (housing costs, including utilities, do not exceed 30% of before-tax household income); **adequate** (in good condition and does not require major repair); or **suitable** (sufficiently large, with enough bedrooms to appropriately accommodate the household).

GNWT current definition of homelessness:

“Men, women, youth and/or families living without shelter, or temporarily at emergency shelters or in government sponsored traditional housing.”



Photo by Jiri Hermann

... Factors and Forces

Specific Characteristics in the North that Contribute to Homelessness

- Remote geography
- Harsh climate
- High cost of living
- High rates of social issues such as addictions, domestic violence and intergenerational dependency on income support
- Underdeveloped infrastructure
- Inability to access market housing
- Small population base
- Lack of accessible and affordable transportation systems between communities
- High cost of labour and materials needed to increase housing stock
- Cross-territorial migration with minimal funding to supply adequate social housing and other services to migrants
- Cultural transformations and urbanization

Homelessness is often associated with family violence and substance use. Help to put an end to substance use and family violence on the streets and in homes!

General Considerations

- The number of homeless people can be difficult to determine as they can “couch surf” amongst networks of friends
- Couch surfing can make people, especially youth, extremely vulnerable to predators around involvement in criminal activity such as theft, sex trade or drug trade
- School drop out rates in the NWT are high and youth can end up in low paying jobs
- Some homeless people have witnessed or experienced horrific violence and trauma
- Men and women can have underlying addictions and/or mental health issues that can exacerbate their inability to find, secure and keep a permanent residence
- Some people have gone through the criminal justice system
- Homelessness can be cyclical, continuous, spontaneous, incidental, or once in a lifetime
- Often *families* are not on the radar screen in discussions about homelessness

Homeless Population

The homeless population is diverse.

Often people stay at shelters as a last resort. Others can become dependent.

For many people, there is real shame, people hide behind it, are silent about it. They have faced rejection throughout their lives and are often marginalized or judged because of their homelessness.

Some people are resourceful and know how to access services within the community. Others are unaware of the services that exist.

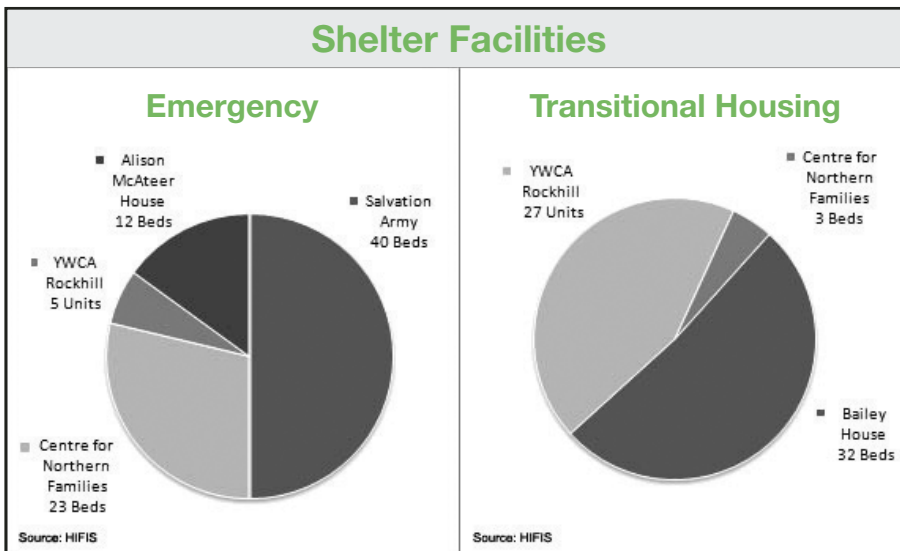
Homelessness factors and forces often interact.



Photo by Jiri Hermann

Homelessness is not all about lack of housing stock

Yellowknife Shelter Agencies, Organizations ...



The Homelessness Coalition's Forum in March 2008 helped to provide community members with information about agencies in Yellowknife.

Agencies/Shelter Support Programs

Yellowknife organizations also provide extensive programming. Examples include, but are not limited to:

Yellowknife has an extensive NGO community which often works together.

Agency	Shelter	Support Programs
Centre for Northern Families (CNF)	Emergency shelter for single women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community advocacy program Daycare within facility
SideDoor (SD)	Emergency drop-in center for youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After school program Evening drop-in center Overnight drop-in
The Salvation Army (SA)	Emergency shelter for single men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lunch and supper for men and women Withdrawal Management Services Foot care, sock exchange Community drop-in medical clinic
	Bailey House transitional home for men (BH)	
YWCA Yellowknife	Alison McAteer House for women and children of family violence (AMH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crisis support Life skills support, including tenancy skills Source of household items, including clothing
	Rockhill Emergency and Transition Housing for families (RH)	

Examples of Related Non-governmental Organizations (NGOS)

- Aurora Oxford Foundation
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- Food Bank
- Food Rescue
- Healing Drum Society
- John Howard Society
- Literacy Council
- Native Women's Association
- NWT Council of Persons with Disabilities
- Religious Organizations
- Tree of Peace Friendship Centre
- Wellness Coalition: Community Service Patrol and Citizens on Patrol ("COPS")
- Women's Society
- Yellowknife Community Foundation

... and Other Change Agents

Yellowknife Homelessness Coalition

Mission statement:

“The Homelessness Coalition is a collaborative forum. It is effective in sharing, creating, problem solving, innovation and responsiveness around meeting existing and emerging needs to address and prevent homelessness and marginalization within our community.”

The Homelessness Coalition was formed in 2000 in response to the National Homelessness Initiative. The Coalition consists of representatives of various governments, social service agencies and interested citizens. It is funded based on a plan approved by the Coalition under the Federal Homelessness Partnering Secretariat. The City of Yellowknife provides in-kind support and acts as the legal entity for the Coalition. The Coalition office is located in City Hall.

The Coalition was instrumental in bringing about the Bailey House transition home for single men and implementing HIFIS (Homeless Individuals and Families Information System). HIFIS is used by Yellowknife shelters to collect data about the use of shelters in the City. Yellowknife was the first community in Canada to generate a HIFIS report.

The Coalition is working on a transition home for women.

Governments

The Homelessness Partnering Secretariat and The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation are key federal organizations.

In the NWT, Health and Social Services (Family and Child Services) is a key department. As the issue overlaps with various departments, a working group was formed with representatives from various departments.

Yellowknife Health and Social Services actively supports programs and projects for homeless people.

Aboriginal governments and communities also have programs and strategies.



Other Sources of Great Insight and Resources

- Individual Citizens
- Businesses
- YK Chamber of Commerce
- NWT Chamber of Commerce
- NWT Association of Communities
- Homeless Population

Mental Health and Addictions

Mental health and addictions services are critical to many homeless people. The NWT Integrated Service Delivery Model outlined numerous goals such as receiving help from the appropriate caregiver at the right time in the most supportive way possible.

Various organizations provide mental health and addiction services, including but not limited to Stanton Regional Hospital, Mental Health Clinic, Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority, Tree of Peace Friendship Centre and Healing Drum Society. There is an addiction treatment facility in Hay River and a Withdrawal Program at The Salvation Army for men and women in Yellowknife.

Coordinated and strategic community plans can be important.

Other Jurisdictions: Mental Health and Addictions

Nationally and internationally, communities are implementing different strategies to address chronic addictions, mental health and homelessness. Examples include:

- 10-Year Plans to End Homelessness
- Housing First Models
- Harm Reduction Models
- New Legislation



Bailey House ...

Rationale

The concept for the Bailey House originated from the community plan developed by the Homelessness Coalition in 2004. The community plan identified priorities for the Coalition over three phases.

In 2004, Phase II of the plan involved the Bailey House project. At that time, Bailey House was envisioned to increase the number of transitional and supportive units available in Yellowknife.

The target group of 'single men' was identified as frequently they are of low priority in the point rating systems used in social housing programs, and these men then need to find appropriate accommodations on the private market. Given market conditions in Yellowknife, finding accommodation was very difficult due to low vacancy levels, high rents and lack of suitable accommodations in the private market.

Operation of the Bailey House was to be transferred over to the Salvation Army upon completion.

Construction: Community Commitment

The Homelessness Coalition acquired the land of the old fire hall on Franklin Avenue. Diavik Diamond Mines Inc. provided in-kind support as Project Manager.

Building and site preparations began in February 2007, including demolition of the previous building, environmental studies and geotechnical investigations as well as architectural designs. Construction on the foundation and building began in April 2007. Residents moved into Bailey House in February 2009.

Construction was made possible through numerous government grants and contributions from many committed individuals and businesses within the community. Businesses and individuals contributed more than \$100,000. Moreover, residents dedicated time, encouragement, creativity, enthusiasm, patience and perseverance. Often it is these non-financial contributions that are key to turning a dream into reality.



Ernie Bailey (son of the late Reverend Gordon and Ruth Bailey) and Major Eric Bond of The Salvation Army officially opened the Bailey House in December 2008.

The Bailey House was named after the late Reverend and Mrs. Gordon Bailey who opened their homes and their hearts to those in need.



Reginald Bailey (nephew to the late Reverend Gordon Bailey and Ruth Bailey) and his wife Gywn attended the opening of Bailey House.

"I like staying at Bailey House because it is a safe place and has programs to help you to stay off of drugs and alcohol. The Bailey House caseworkers help you with struggles in life, but it's up to you if you want to be co-dependent free and live a healthy lifestyle. Down the road, the Bailey House would be a good reference if you were to rent a place in Yellowknife NT."



Bailey House is a dream turned into reality

... Transitional Home for Men

Facilities

The ground floor consists of administrative offices, a programs/board room, laundry facilities and a large room currently being used as a Thrift store.

The second and third floors host 32 rooms: 16 bachelor suites and 16 bed-sit rooms which share a common kitchen and lounge.

In-house supports are in place to assist these men while they create, commit to and follow a personal development plan. A goal of these plans is to reduce the physical, emotional, social and spiritual barriers that may be keeping the men from succeeding in independent living scenarios.

Tenants can take time to stabilize, adjust to work, and develop healthy routines and habits during their time in Bailey House. When appropriate, tenants can access housing on their own with minimal support.



Many Yellowknife residents dedicated their time and skills to creating unique quilts for each resident of Bailey House.



Celebrations & Opening

The development of the Bailey House was marked with memorable celebrations.

Governor General Michaëlle Jean attended in Yellowknife in June 2006 for a sod-turning ceremony. Mayor Van Tighem received a thank you letter from the Governor General extending her gratitude to the community for a warm welcome. In her letter, she noted that root causes of homelessness can vary from one region to the next. She commended the community for assessing the needs of the community and initiating projects such as Bailey House.

The official opening ceremony of Bailey House took place on December 12, 2008. Over 100 members of the community gathered to celebrate the occasion and to unveil the official plaque. Special guests included Mr. Ernie Bailey, son of the late Reverend Gordon and Ruth Bailey, as well as Reginald Bailey and his wife Gwyn, nephew to Gordon and Ruth Bailey. Stew and bannock were provided.

Perhaps the best celebration was when men started to move into their homes in February 2009. This was a moment when the doors and windows truly opened.

*Thank You
Yellowknife!*



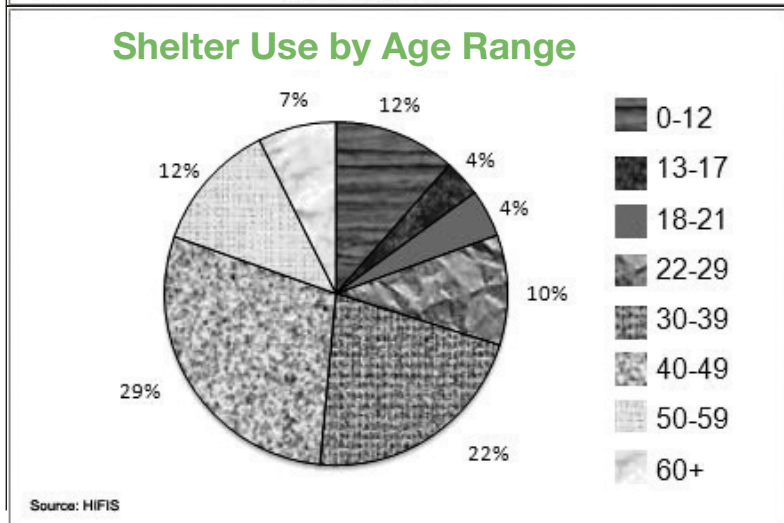
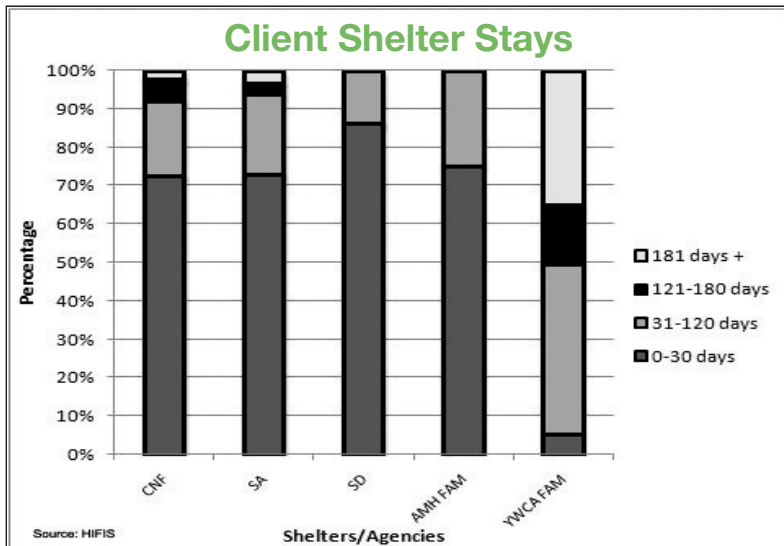
"The Bailey House is a very good place to be because it keeps you going for what you want and there's always someone to talk to when you are down or thinking about doing something stupid."

Transitions in life are not always easy. The Bailey House helps to open doors and windows through a clean, safe and accountable environment.

"Being released from NSCC and going through a divorce I really didn't know what I was going to do. The Bailey House was just opening up and WOW! What a blessing! It is a secure environment. The staff are just great when you need someone to talk to. I am learning to cook for myself and becoming more independent each day. I am so happy that day by day my life is, for the first time, healthy and above all else filled with happiness."



Shelters ...



Youth: 16 ~ 19 years

Youth between the ages of 16 and 19 are in a transitional stage of their lives. During this time period, youth have options and choices, including staying in school, working or seeking the assistance that is available in the community. Youth who do not pursue these options can be vulnerable. Shelters for single men and women are for adults only. The SideDoor is not a shelter, but an overnight drop-in centre for youth.

Shelter Alternatives? Affording Affordable Housing?

Single men, women, and youth can have limited options regarding affordable accommodation. With minimum wages of \$8.25 before tax and a one-bedroom apartment costing on average \$1,178 one would have to work a minimum of 36 hours a week *just for accommodation*. One would have to earn \$24.55 an hour or \$47,000 a year to meet the affordable housing limit of 30%. See pages 10 and 11 for information about housing in Yellowknife.

Men and women can end up living long-term in emergency shelters, reducing the availability of shelter space for emergency purposes

Families

The YWCA Rockhill Housing program incorporates stays of up to twelve months as part of their transitional housing, but up to three months for emergency housing

Residents at Alison McAteer house are permitted to stay longer than six weeks only after consultation with management. Many women and children fleeing abuse must qualify for government subsidized housing to access public housing.

Yellowknife is a supportive community. Do we offer enough support ... the right kind of support?

Single Men and Women

There are no limits to the length of stays at emergency shelters for single men (SA) and women (CNF) with some individuals having resided there for years, continuously or intermittently.

Perceptions in the community are varied and often divided regarding the use of shelters. Some people believe shelters should accept people, including those using substances, on an ongoing basis. Other people believe there is some enabling and improper use of emergency shelters. Solutions are difficult as there can be a gap in the system: there are few places for inebriated men and women to stay. Without these shelters, this population group can be at risk.

... & Related Community Services

Meals & Food

The Salvation Army provides lunch and dinner to anyone in Yellowknife 7 days a week. Meals are also provided at the Centre for Northern Families for women. Supporting these organizations are numerous citizens who donate food and other needed items.

The Yellowknife Food Bank operates through dedicated volunteers who give up their Saturday mornings and time during the week to help provide food to those in need. Approximately 130 bags of food are provided to individuals and families on any given Saturday morning.

Food Rescue is a new volunteer program that supplies food donated by local businesses to service providers in YK. Food is delivered through the labour intensive efforts of Ruby & Laurin Trudel and other volunteers. Food Rescue helps to reduce food costs at YK organizations & provides nourishment to citizens.

RCMP Admissions

The RCMP admissions for intoxicated related cases are not included in the homelessness statistics on the front page of this report. This is due in part to the fact that not all of the cases deal with people who are homeless. However, some of the people are homeless and would otherwise be staying in shelters. Some chronic users of substances repeatedly alternate between Yellowknife shelters and the RCMP. Total annual nightly admissions to the RCMP for 2008 were 5,219.

Health Services

Several organizations provide medical services to the homeless. Drop-in medical clinics are available once a week at the Centre for Northern Families as well as The Salvation Army. Dental Services are available throughout the city. Mental Health Services can be accessed through Health and Social Services and other community organizations. Stanton Regional Hospital plays a key role in keeping people in our community healthy.

Non-sheltering Agencies, Businesses & Individuals

Numerous non-sheltering organizations, businesses and individuals within the City help to provide shelter and assistance to the homeless on a day to day basis. Many people go out of their way to help out where they can, sometimes without appreciation or understanding by the homeless of these donations and efforts. Thank you for your contributions Yellowknife!

Substance Use in the North

The RCMP, Fire Department/Medics and Stanton Regional Hospital spend an extraordinary amount of time attending to individuals who have used substances. The Coroner's office reports alcohol-related deaths and this number has been significant over the years. While substance use is not always connected to homelessness, often it is a key factor. Do we have a substance use problem in the north? If yes, what should we do about it?



The Salvation Army



YWCA Rockhill Housing Program

What are the key solutions for Yellowknife?



Centre for Northern Families

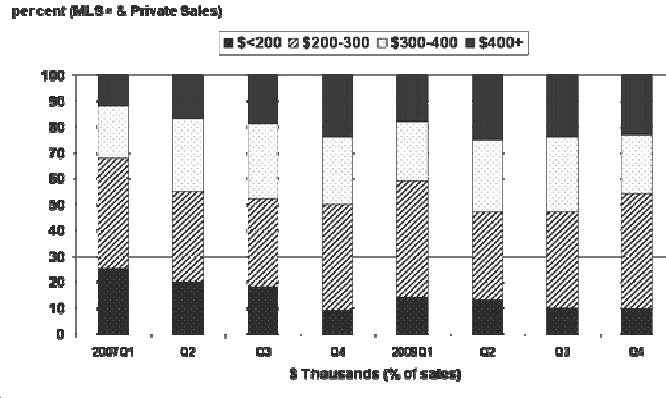


The SideDoor

It's likely not all about lack of funding or insufficient resources. How can understanding, gratitude and accountability reduce homelessness?

Finding and Paying ...

Yellowknife Residential Sales by Price Range

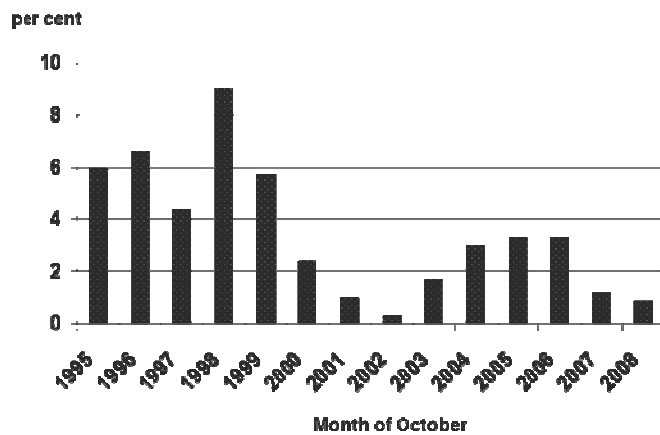


What Housing is Available?

The percentage of sales of entry level homes in the \$0-\$200,000 range has decreased. First-time home buyers may have difficulty finding a home. Citizens may stay in the rental market longer than they desire.

With a 0.7% vacancy rate, finding rental accommodation in Yellowknife can be difficult. This difficulty combined with personal factors, lack of income and changing economic realities can result in homelessness.

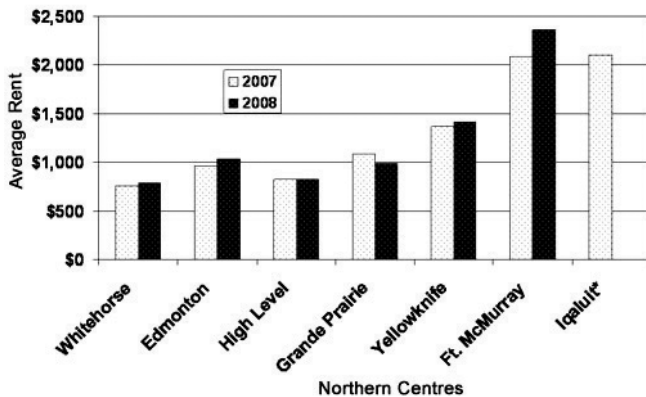
Yellowknife - Apartment Vacancy Rates



It can be difficult in Yellowknife to move from homelessness to renting, and from renting to owning.

Two - Bedroom Monthly Apartment Rent

Yellowknife rents compared with other northern centres



Yellowknife Compared to other Northern Canadian Cities

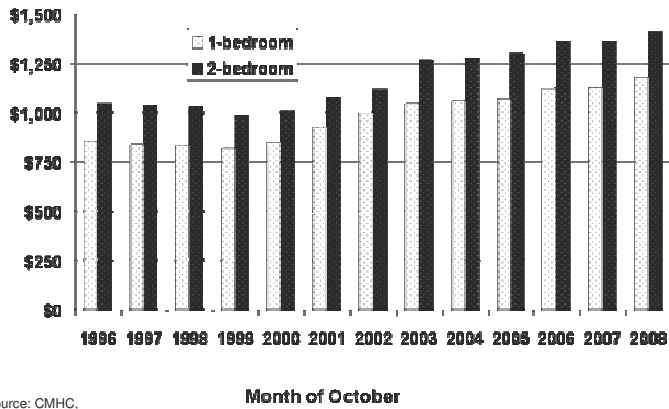
Yellowknife is not the top of the rental market, but it is higher than other northern communities (bottom left).



... for a Place to Call Home in Yellowknife

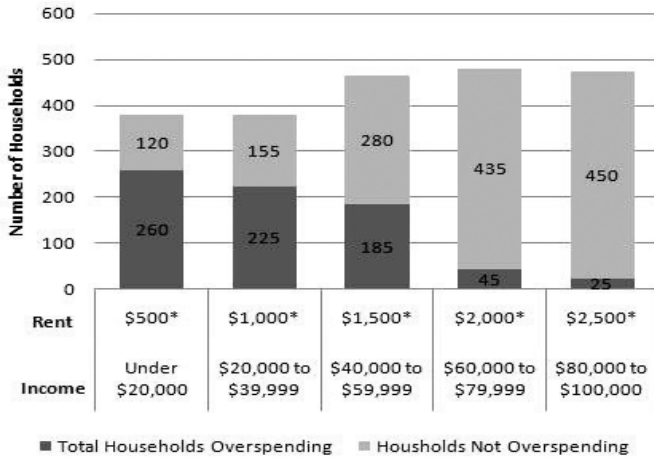
Yellowknife - Average Apartment Rent

Rent levels increase in 2008



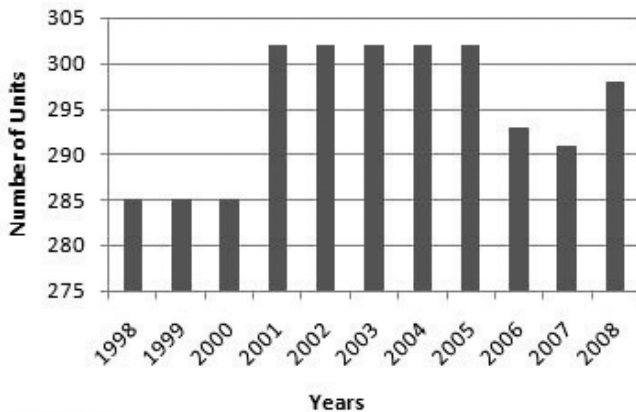
Source: CMHC.

Affordable Rent



Source: CMHC.

Public Housing Units



Source: CMHC

Overspending: Affordable Housing

CMHC and organizations in other countries define **affordable housing** as “housing that costs no more than 30% of gross income”. Exceeding 30% of gross income for shelter places a burden on individuals and families to meet basic living expenses such as rent, food, transportation and clothes.

As people earn more income, the likelihood of overspending decreases (middle left). This trend is not surprising given a decrease in the availability of low-priced homes (previous page), increased rents (top left) and a decrease in the number of public housing units (bottom left).

Are you at risk of overspending?

An Ounce of Prevention

It can be far better to prevent the loss of housing from occurring than to try to fix it afterwards.

Early education and skills development can provide understanding and create options regarding employment and places to live.

Healthy social connections, positive coping skills, financial stability and feelings of safety can help people achieve and maintain permanent housing and independence.

What can YOU do?

1. **Educate** yourself and others about the problem of homelessness
2. **Volunteer** your time to work directly with people experiencing homelessness or organizations at the administration end
3. **Advocate** on behalf of people who are homeless and organizations that work with people who are homeless
4. **Contribute** financially to organizations that work to end homelessness
5. **Become aware of the language you use** and ensure that your language is appropriate in the circumstances, consider if your communication is based on understanding, rather than judgement
6. **Be aware of and help change attitudes** about homelessness among your friends, family and people within the community to help reduce NIMBY (“not in my backyard”) reactions
7. **Be inclusive** and promote inclusive communities
8. **Plan** for unexpected circumstances, participate in financial management and life skills development
9. **Inquire - ask questions of your community** to encourage positive development at the individual and community levels
10. **Participate** in the collection of sound data so that problems can be identified and solutions proposed
11. **Be creative** in identifying solutions
12. **Say “No”** to family violence
13. **Encourage** support for mental health and addictions
14. **Minimize** substance use in our community
15. **Help** to reduce homelessness, not just manage it

SHARE IDEAS ⇒ IMPLEMENT IDEAS!

Many agencies and their dedicated staff assist homeless individuals and families on a regular basis. However, the elimination of homelessness requires the cooperation of the entire community, including all levels of government, local businesses and the homeless.

This first Report Card on Homelessness in Yellowknife is an opportunity to inform the community about homelessness in Yellowknife.

Production of this report was funded by the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy. *Thank you* to community members who helped to collect the data presented in this report. While this report card was produced in association, it cannot reflect the views of all Coalition members.

For further information or to become involved, please contact The Yellowknife Homelessness Coalition at homelessness@yellowknife.ca or (867) 669-3409.

Community cooperation and strategic thinking... along the Continuum

~ Creative Change ~

**Food Rescue
Volunteer Program**



Ruby and Laurin Trudel of Yellowknife put their ideas into action starting in 2008. Food Rescue provides donated food to various organizations in Yellowknife.

“The world we have created today as the result of our thinking thus far has problems which cannot be resolved by thinking the way we thought when we created them.”

Albert Einstein

