

Government-Assisted Housing in the Northwest Territories and the Role of the Federal Government

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Bruce Doern and Christopher Stoney, *How Ottawa Spends 2011-12: Trimming Fat or Slicing Pork?*
McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011

This chapter is about housing in the Northwest Territories (NWT), especially housing for low-income households. The chapter compares housing in the NWT with housing in the rest of Canada.

Main findings:

After World War II, many households in the NWT were relocated by the federal government. "Free housing" (or almost free housing) was often part of the relocation. The housing did not stay "free" for very long.

Today, the NWT Housing Corporation is in charge of most government housing in the NWT. The Corporation receives some funding from the federal government, but it doesn't receive enough to properly do its job. There are more than 400 households on the waiting list for public housing in the NWT.

When you consider the population, the Government of the NWT spends 25 times as much on housing as the average Canadian province. There are three main reasons for this:

- 1 There is a lot of poverty in the NWT, especially in small communities.
- 2 Fuel, water and electricity in the NWT costs much more than in the rest of Canada.
- 3 It costs more to build a house in the NWT than in most other parts of Canada. It costs twice as much to build housing on the Arctic Coast than it does in Hay River or Fort Smith.

Compared to the rest of Canada:

- People in the NWT live in crowded conditions, especially in small communities.
- Housing in the NWT is in poor condition and needs repairs, especially housing in small communities.

If the federal government does not announce new funding for housing soon, many of the housing units that exist today in the NWT will disappear. More units will need major repairs, and more people will be on waiting lists for housing.