



NOSDA Homelessness Research – Key Messages

- The Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association (NOSDA), in collaboration with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA), has partnered with HelpSeeker to release a groundbreaking report on Ontario’s homelessness crisis.
- Northern communities face an especially urgent crisis, known homelessness has risen by an estimated 204% since 2016, growing from 1,771 people to 5,377 people in 2024.
- In Northern Ontario, without significant provincial action starting now, this number could grow to 15,000 in the next decade.
 - The number of people experiencing known homelessness annually in Northern Ontario could range from 10,674 to 26,633 by 2035, depending on economic conditions.
- Indigenous People are disproportionately affected, representing nearly 45% of people experiencing chronic homelessness in northern communities.
 - Tailored investments in culturally safe, Indigenous-led housing solutions, as well as strategies to stabilize populations locally and reduce service migration, are critical to ensuring that northern communities are equitably supported within this broader response.
- In Northern Ontario, the average wait time on the Community Housing (RGI) Waitlist is 38 months.
 - Northern Ontario has some of the highest percentages of housing in need of major repairs, with smaller communities experiencing even greater challenges. In many cases, over 50% of housing units require major repairs, and for some communities, the figure reaches as high as 70% to 80%.
- Homelessness is increasing three times faster in rural communities, and four times faster in northern communities.
 - Transportation Barriers and limited public services in Northern Ontario make accessing shelters, healthcare, and supports particularly challenging, which worsens housing instability.

- While Ontario municipalities are stepping in to help, provincial and federal governments are not doing their part.
 - Municipal spending on homelessness and housing programs has increased substantially in recent years, more than doubling since 2020 to over \$2.1 billion in 2024, representing 51.5% of the total reported funding across all three levels of government.
 - Meanwhile, recent provincial and federal investments are nominal.

- A fundamentally new approach is needed focusing on long-term housing solutions instead of temporary emergency measures and enforcement:
 - HelpSeeker research estimates that \$11 billion over 10 years could end chronic homelessness by boosting the supply of affordable housing, improving transitional and supportive services, and enhancing prevention programs.
 - To largely address encampments, around \$2 billion over 8 years is needed.
 - Recognizing the unique challenges faced by Northern Ontario, it is suggested that up to 20% of the \$2 Billion to end encampments, be allocated to address capacity gaps, issues created by geographic isolation, and the overrepresentation of Indigenous populations in homelessness.
 - In addition to representing a significant proportion of service need, encampments in Northern Ontario are shaped by distinct local factors, including geographic isolation, higher construction costs, and limited shelter capacity. For example, northern construction costs average \$500 per square foot for a standard 700-square-foot unit, resulting in \$350,000 per unit. To ensure equitable funding, funding formulas must reflect these cost disparities, ensuring that resources are sufficient to address regional variations without placing undue strain on local systems.

- Recent provincial investments in affordable housing and emergency shelters are appreciated but are insufficient.

- NOSDA members are ready to work with the province on a new approach that would actually solve this crisis.