

## **Family & Child Homelessness at Crisis Levels: More Investment Needed Now**

YELLOWKNIFE (January 18, 2021) Without significant investment in affordable family housing options across the territory, YWCA NWT is sounding the alarm that the housing situation will continue to worsen and families with children will be without a safe place to call home. It is expected that in the coming year this issue will become more serious due to Covid-19 related job losses and tenant evictions.

“In our experience, homeless families aren’t necessarily living on the streets – they are well hidden. They are often moving from couch to couch and living in dangerously overcrowded, unsafe, and unaffordable housing. During the Covid-19 pandemic, shelters were created for homeless individuals to isolate but there were no options for families who did not have suitable housing to self-isolate or maintain social distancing,” said Hawa Dumbuya-Sesay, Executive Director of YWCA NWT. “Public health orders advised people to stay home, but home to many families means being crowded into unsuitable housing. The situation is critical, and we need major investments immediately so families have a place to live.”

Since April 1, 2020, YWCA NWT has helped to house 78 families (100 adults and 156 children), by working with local landlords to secure rental units, and prevented 49 families from becoming homeless by paying their rental arrears or outstanding bills that may have led to their being evicted or hurting their credit. It is estimated that people with families would need to work three or more full time jobs at minimum wage to afford a 3-bedroom apartment at market rent in Yellowknife and basic necessities.

“The primary cause of homelessness is a lack of affordable housing, and the key to addressing homelessness is to give homeless families an affordable place to live. We are a non-profit organization and although we are doing everything we can, it’s not enough. We have more than 50 families on a wait list and housing enquiries on a weekly basis – and that’s just in Yellowknife. We need to work together, strengthen our partnerships and encourage investment that will help ensure the most vulnerable people in our community have a safe place to live which is the care, compassion and basic human needs that NWT residents and families deserve.”

Over the next several weeks, YWCA NWT is launching a campaign to raise awareness about family homelessness in the NT.

### **For more information, please contact:**

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