

Synthesis of priority actions
to reduce and eliminate poverty in the NWT
2010-13

Compiled by Julie Green

Introduction:

Participants from communities across the NWT took part in a number of workshops and round tables and a formal consultation on poverty in the last three years. They identified priorities, goals and objectives for action for their communities. These priorities are included in the six reports listed below.

The No Place for Poverty workshop in 2010 and the Targeting Poverty workshop in 2013 used a 'dot' voting system to rank importance of recommendations. In those cases, the number of votes cast is in brackets.

Below is an attempt to synthesize the recommendations and group them according to the five pillars of the anti-poverty strategy.¹ A companion document compiles all suggested anti-poverty actions.

The numbers after the statement refer to the reports in which the recommendations appeared. Only recommendations that appeared in multiple reports are included.

Comparisons between report recommendations are approximate rather than identical.

The reports are:

1. No Place For Poverty Workshop Report (2010)²
2. What We Heard from Northerners About Poverty (dated August 2011, tabled Feb. 2012)
3. Anti-Poverty Strategy Round Table – Hay River (June 2012)
4. Anti-Poverty Strategy Round Table – Inuvik (October 2012) – restated Hay River actions
5. No Place for Poverty Targeting Poverty Workshop Report (2013)
6. Anti-Poverty Roundtable (2013) – report not yet available, but there are notes on priorities

¹ Building on the Strengths of Northerners, (tabled 2013)

² No Place for Poverty is 31-member coalition of NGOs, municipal governments, first nations organizations and others who have been lobbying for the reduction and elimination of poverty since 2009.

Priorities by pillar:

Pillar 1 – Children and Family Support

- Implement and fund a quality, accessible, and affordable early childhood program in every NWT community and family resource centres. (1, 3, 4, 6)³
- Improve pay and streamline training for early childhood workers. (1, 4)
- Expand prenatal/postnatal programs. (4, 5)
- Expand the number of school healthy programs (breakfast and lunch). (3, 4, 5)
- Expand programs for youth, including mentoring. (4, 5)

Pillar 2 – Healthy Living and Reaching our Potential

- Make addictions treatment aftercare and mental health support available in every community. (1, 3, 5)
- Make grade school education more relevant and better funded. (1, 3, 5)
- A cohesive approach with more opportunities and partnerships for pre-employment training, life skills, and literacy development will be available throughout the NWT. (3, 5)
- Deliver life skills and financial life skills training. (3, 4)
- Provide more school-based prevention and awareness programs (preschool to Grade 12) on such issues as alcohol and drugs, family violence, parenting and teen pregnancy to encourage attendance and increase academic success. (1, 3, 5)⁴

Pillar 3 – Safe and Affordable Housing

- Pilot the Housing First model for housing people who are chronically or episodically homeless. (5, 6)⁵
- Tax incentives, subsidies, and other initiatives (creation of secondary suites) will be provided to increase the stock of affordable housing and overcome barriers in market communities. (1, 2, 3, 4)

³ This priority received 45 votes at the Targeting Poverty workshop

⁴ This priority received 21 votes at the Targeting Poverty workshop

⁵ This priority received 25 votes at the Targeting Poverty workshop

- Community housing plans will support new uses, repairs, renovations and other ways to better use existing housing stock to meet current needs. (3, 5)
- In small communities without market housing, there will be additional skills development training for local trades people, construction standards will be enforced, access to home repair programs will be easier and more understandable, and funding will be available to repair and purchase existing houses. (3, 4)
- Local housing organization staff will increase support to tenants with arrears to help them get out of debt so that people remain housed. (3, 4)
- Incentives will be increased to enable seniors to stay in their own homes. (3, 4)
- Shelter programs and advice will be available to people 16 -19 years of age. (3, 4)
- Introduce legislation to limit rent increases by unit, per year. (3, 4)
- Educate people in need about housing options and responsibilities. (4, 5)
- Develop standards for and invest in more short-term emergency shelters. (4, 5)
- Put 'system navigators' in place in each community to facilitate access to appropriate housing and other services. (5 votes) (5)

Pillar 4 – Sustainable Communities

- Implement a living wage specific to each NWT community. (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7)⁶
- Address lack of employment and barriers to government jobs, especially in small, remote communities. (2, 4, 5)
- NWT communities will have the capacity to produce a percentage of their food requirements. (3, 4, 5)
- Socio-economic impact and benefit agreements will have 50% northern hire targets that are enforced and measured. (3, 4)
- Support traditional economies (harvesting, arts/crafts, tourism, food production) through training, marketing, and supply networks. (3, 4, 5)⁷
- Offer supports throughout the early childhood, K-12, and postsecondary continuum to encourage attendance and success (e.g. counselling and relationship building). (10 votes) (5)

⁶ This priority received 14 votes at the Targeting Poverty workshop

⁷ This priority received 11 votes at the Targeting Poverty workshop

Pillar 5 – Integrated Continuum of Services

- Legislation will be enacted to establish a publicly accountable independent secretariat to monitor and address policy integration, gaps, and conflicting issues and report annually. (1, 3)
- Within an integrated continuum of services that best serves grassroots people, clarify what ‘partnership’ means and how it can work (e.g. community driven programs that are fair, transparent, and designed by/for the community and supported in policy and with funding from all orders of government) (11 votes) (5)
- Coordination, communication, and access to programs/services will be increased – “no wrong door” approach. (1, 3)
- Guided by a ‘systems navigator’ or coordinator, pursue an integrated case management approach (‘right from the start’) that involves relevant and necessary agencies and the client. (3, 4, 5)⁸
- Where appropriate, amalgamate all local social and economic committees and provide core funding to NGOs on a multi-year basis. (21 votes) (5)⁹

Priorities that don’t fit into the pillars but which garnered votes at the Targeting Poverty workshop:

Create an NWT Aboriginal anti-poverty table with community tables. (29 votes) (5)

⁸ This recommendation got 8 votes at the Targeting Poverty workshop.

⁹ A similar recommendation, provide core and multi-year funding to community agencies so as to reduce the ‘bureaucratic’ burden, received 6 votes at the Targeting Poverty workshop.