

In November 21, 2018, the Nunatsiaq news reported that “Adequate housing, as defined under international law, is “the right of every woman, man, youth, and child to gain and sustain a safe a secure home and community in which to live in peace and dignity.” (Living in tents no shortcut to public housing, says Nunavut Housing Corp. boss, November 21, 2018) Currently, in Nunavut, there is a housing crisis. It needs to be understood as a financial failure, not as a construction imbalance. The lack of housing is affecting many residents from newborn babies to elders, and it is so bad that the Nunatsiaq report noted that the territory’s housing corporation faces very hard choices about who is most deserving, when many are in dire circumstances.” (Living in tents no shortcut to public housing, says Nunavut Housing Corp. boss, November 21, 2018) The residents of Nunavut should be advocating strongly for affordable housing because there are not enough houses. As a result, their physical health is in danger and their mental health is suffering.

There is clearly not enough adequate housing in Nunavut. There are a lot of people who have become homeless because their house is overcrowded. “Several researchers have concluded that “38% of Inuit in social housing live in overcrowded conditions and some other communities go up to 72%” (Nunavut Housing Corporation’s Appearance before the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, March 23, 2016) In my hometown of Arviat, more than 100 individuals and families are on the waiting list for social housing, waiting for almost 10 years to be placed in a house. The majority of these people are living in their parents’ or friends’ house with many other people, even though they’re over the age of 20. Josh Ryan-Collins, who is a researcher at University College London reported that “Unless citizens of Canada win the lottery or

start a business, they will have to rent for life. Canada is one of the most wealthiest nations in the world, and there's still empty houses when they can be replaced, rebuilt or even destroyed." (No, the housing crisis will not be solved by building more homes, October 14, 2018) CBC goes on to say that "Construction costs in the North are 3x higher in comparison to southern Canada, but that isn't the problem to homelessness and poverty, it's the lack of jobs that's causing the problem." (Nunavut Housing Corporation's Appearance before the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, March 23, 2016) For example, there is one person I know who works full-time but he moves between his two sisters' houses often wondering if he will get locked out. When he does, he has to resort to crashing with his friend. He said one of his sisters makes him feel unwelcomed. He has nowhere else to go. People lose their homes because they haven't paid their bills for a long time and if they can't afford \$60 a month they will not be able to live in one. I've seen some people's bills totaling up to 3 thousand dollars. For most middle class workers, that's triple a pay cheque.

It is important that Inuit voices are heard and understood. Their physical health is in danger because of the mold inside the homes. In November 22, 2018, CBC reported that "Charlene Kappianaq mentions that she started to notice the sores from her two-year-old son's legs in April. Shortly after, her eight-year-old daughter developed a similar irritation on her fingers and palms that made it painful to even hold a piece of paper. Kappianaq also states that she called the local housing corporation workers for a house visit but as of November Kappianaq is still waiting for a visit." (Igloolik children covered in black mold in housing unit, November 22, 2018) As stated in the research, "Gary Collins, director of project management for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, is

the lead on mold remediation efforts. In 2017, Collins responded to complaints from tenants and investigated 271 units across 25 communities. They conducted visual tests and inspected the inside of walls and ceilings, finding that 116 units required outside contractors for a heavy-duty clean.” (Igloolik children covered in sores because of black mold in public housing units-November 22, 2018) There are some children in Arviat who just moved to another unit with their parents and became sick because of the smoke stains on the walls that were caused by another tenant as well as the amount of mold found in the house. Many of these things can be fixed with proper action taken by the government and the NHC. In order to do this, we must work together and find a way to make the living experience of Nunavut residents safer and healthier.

Finally, I would like to discuss the mental wellness of the people in Nunavut and how it is being broken down because of overcrowded and unhealthy housing. The main reason why families are so physically and mentally broken down is because of overcrowded houses. In October 2005, researcher, *“Liam Reynolds stated that living in an overcrowded house causes stress, tension, and sometimes family break-up, anxiety and depression, lack of privacy, particularly for adolescents, and disrupted sleep patterns. Overcrowding can inhibit education and child development by causing difficulties in studying and doing homework, emotional problems leading to development delays for children. Other studies that analyze data from various censuses and health surveys have linked overcrowding with the following health problems: respiratory and infectious diseases, common mental health disorders, accidents around the home, tuberculosis.”* (Full house? How overcrowded housing affects families, October 2005)

This is a reality for many people in Arviat and in many other communities around the territory. The lack of housing and overcrowded living accommodation have caused women to experience premature births because of the stress and depression caused by such conditions. The World Health Organization said that mold increases the risk of asthma attacks, respiratory ailments, headaches, fatigue and sore throats.

“People who live in moldy environments may also have more depression. WHO Interviewer visited households in eight cities and asked residents about depressive symptoms, such as problem sleeping and decreased appetite. The heightened depression risk also correlated to respondents’ perception that a damp, moldy environment cannot be controlled, as well as to documented physical health problems linked to mold exposure.” (Environmental Health Perspectives-Mental Health: Molding a Link to Depression- November 2007).

Epidemiologist Edmond Shenassa of Brown University stated that if you are sick from mold and feel you can’t get rid of it, it may affect your mental health. As you can see, mental health definitely suffers because of overcrowding and the unhealthy environment it causes.

I acknowledge that the Nunavut population is growing faster than the Nunavut Housing Corporation can build houses. At the current rate population growth, housing will never catch up. Unfortunately, for the NHC, adequate housing is a human right that needs to have full attention. Citizens need to understand that this issue cannot be fixed overnight. There many houses still requires significant renovations. Citizens need to give the NHC time because there are a lot to do. There are also people that need to pay their bills or else the NHC will have no choice but to give the house to another individual/family that needs it. Although this is true, the NHC also needs to realize that renovations should be finished in a timely fashion. When these renovations begin, they must be fully prepared to finish as quickly as possible. If someone is psychology abused

by someone in their house, talking to mental health services is important. They should be able to help with that. But in the end, NHC needs to realize that many of these issues are stemming from the housing crisis. Many of the physical and mental illnesses occurring would be alleviated drastically if the residents of Nunavut had proper housing.

The residents of Nunavut should be advocating strongly for housing because there are not enough houses, their health is in danger and their mental wellness is being broken down. Many people live in social housing that is in need of renovations which would help alleviate the risk of major health issues both mental and physical. “Adequate housing, as defined under international law, is ‘the right of every woman, man, youth, and child to gain and sustain a safe and secure home and community in which to live in peace and dignity.’” (Living in tents no shortcut to public housing, says Nunavut Housing Corp. boss, November 21, 2018) “People who live in moldy environments may also have more depression. World Health Organizations interviewers visited households in eight cities and asked residents about depressive symptoms, such as problems sleeping and decreased appetite. The heightened depression risk also correlated to respondents’ perceptions that a damp, moldy environment cannot be controlled, as well as to documented physical health problems linked to moldy exposure.” (Environmental Health Perspectives, November 2017). In order to begin fixing this major issue, we must educate ourselves about the things that NHC staff is doing. The more we know, the more we can advocate for the basic needs of the people in Nunavut.

References

1. Living in tents no shortcut to public housing, says Nunavut Housing Corp. boss – https://Nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/65674living_in_tents_isnt_a_shortcut_to_public_housing_says_nunavut_housing/ **November 21, 2018**
2. Mental Health: Molding a Link to Depression <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2072855/> **November 2007**
3. No, the housing crisis will not be solved by building more homes— <https://ftalphaville.ft.com/2018/10/15/1539577800000/No—the-housing-crisis-will-not-be-solved-by-building-more-homes/> **October 14,2018**
4. \$240M for Nunavut housing ‘nowhere near’ what territory needs, says housing corp. – **December 6,2017** <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/240-million-national-housing-strategy-nunavut-housing-corporation-1.4435911>
5. Nunavut is facing a severe housing crisis –**March 23, 2016** [assembly.nu.ca/sites/default/files/TD%20158\(3\)%20EN%20Nunavut%20is%20Facing%20a%20Severe%20Housing%20Crisis.pdf](http://assembly.nu.ca/sites/default/files/TD%20158(3)%20EN%20Nunavut%20is%20Facing%20a%20Severe%20Housing%20Crisis.pdf)
6. Employed and homeless: Housing crisis in Nunavut hamlet forces shelter to expand – **May 2,2017** <https://www.cbc.ca/news/Canada/north/Nunavut-cambridge-bay-homeless-shelter-1.4093690>
7. Full house? How overcrowded housing affects families – **October 2005** https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_and_research/policy_library/policy_library_folder/full_house_how_overcrowded_housing_affects_families
8. Iqloolik children covered in sores because of black mould in public housing unit – **November 22, 2018** <https://www.cbc.ca/news/Canada/north/mould-igloolik-nunavut-housing-1.4913795>