Kíkinanaw Óma

This is Our Home Here

A STRATEGY TO SUPPORT UNSHELTERED WINNIPEGGERS: ONE YEAR LATER – JUNE 2021



INTRODUCTION

Kíkinanaw Óma: A Strategy to Support Unsheltered Winnipeggers was released in June 2020. The Strategy was created in collaboration as a group facilitated by End Homelessness Winnipeg, with representation from the City of Winnipeg, first responders, outreach workers, homeless-serving agencies and people with lived experience of homelessness. The name Kíkininaw Óma, gifted by Elder Belinda Vandenbroeck, can be translated as "This is our Home Here" from Cree.

The Strategy offered context on unsheltered homelessness in Winnipeg and gave an overview of the work of the Kíkininaw Óma Strategy group over the previous year. Most importantly, it made six key recommendations for supporting individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness or living in encampments.

Since the release of the Strategy, rapid progress has been made on some of these recommendations, while barriers have emerged to the implementation of others. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased urgency for addressing homelessness, building broad awareness that housing is health care. However, COVID-19 has also increased the visibility of unsheltered homelessness in Winnipeg, as health concerns add to barriers some people face in accessing emergency shelters, and as many "hidden" homelessness arrangements, such as couch surfing, have been forbidden under some public health orders.

Outreach services have expanded and work in ever-closer collaboration, supported by strong relationships with first responders when emergencies arise. New and expanded Safe Spaces have emerged, and several new housing initiatives are in development to address key gaps in Winnipeg's housing continuum that contribute to unsheltered homelessness. Yet need may be outpacing the construction of these developments, while rising housing costs continue to keep safe homes out of reach for many. While the post-pandemic future remains uncertain, the one-year anniversary of *Kíkinanaw Óma* offers an opportunity to reflect on progress and reaffirm next steps toward ending unsheltered homelessness in Winnipeg.

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PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

RECOMMENDATION #1: CREATE HOUSING	PROGRESS	NEXT STEPS
End Homelessness Winnipeg is recommended to engage directly with people experiencing unsheltered homelessness to identify housing models that will support their right to housing. Examples may include repurposed dormitories or hotels, modular housing, tiny homes or cabins.	In September 2020, people experiencing unsheltered homelessness and living in encampments were engaged in visioning for a new Indigenous housing initiative. The housing was then designed to meet the expressed needs of those with living experience. Key themes emerged that can also inform future initiatives. A research project to better understand Indigenous homelessness and housing needs is underway.	Originally called "The Village," Astum Api Niikinaahk ("Come Sit at Our Home") was gifted its name by Elder Charlotte Nolin. This housing community will be located near Thunderbird House. Led by Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata with Indigenous partner agencies, it will offer 22 "tiny homes" and a communal lodge for adults experiencing or at risk of unsheltered homelessness starting Fall 2021. The research project will be completed in 2021.
End Homelessness Winnipeg's **Housing Supply Action Committee** is recommended to engage with funders and developers to invest in building culturally relevant, low-income, transitional, low-barrier and supportive housing to meet the community's need.	Developers and funders are being engaged on priority housing types. Funders are also being approached on an innovative social financing model for housing.	Further engagement with developers and funders is required on priority housing needs as well as the social financing model, which will be piloted for a project to develop housing for women and children fleeing violence.
Indigenous governments are asked to partner with **Indigenous housing and homelessness organizations in Winnipeg** on coordinated housing and homelessness initiatives that meet the needs of the city's Indigenous community.	**Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs Eagle Urban Transition Centre** is a partner in Astum Api Niikinaahk. **Shawenim Abinoojii, part of Southeast Tribal Council**, is creating 18 units for youth aging out of care.	Further partnerships such as those supporting Astum Api Niikinaahk are needed; as is a federal Indigenous Housing Strategy led by and for Indigenous people.
The **Government of Canada** is called to construct 300,000 new affordable and supportive housing units for low-income Canadians, as outlined in Recovery for All.	Federal Budget 2021 builds on existing National Housing Strategy (NHS) investments with over $2.5 billion in new and $1.3 billion in previously pledged funding.	The NHS aims to create at least 150,000 units of affordable new housing over 10 years. 150,000 more units of Indigenous, low-income, low-barrier and supportive housing are likely to be needed.

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RECOMMENDATION #1: CREATE HOUSING	PROGRESS	NEXT STEPS
The Province of Manitoba, as a housing funder, is recommended to invest in 200 new units of supportive housing and 470 new units of rent-geared-to-income (RGI) housing in Winnipeg, while maintaining existing housing stock. If housing management is devolved, the strategy recommends that Indigenous organizations be prioritized to manage housing.	In 2020, the Province invested $2.1 million for 70 supportive recovery housing units. In 2021, the Province made 71 existing RGI units available to rapidly house people experiencing or at risk of homelessness; and partnered on a 47-unit project for people exiting homelessness, set to open in 2022. The Province chose Wahbung Abinoonjiiag to manage up to 50 units for women and children affected by family violence.	To fulfill this recommendation, the Province will need to invest in 130 new units of supportive housing and at least 423 RGI units while maintaining existing stock. If housing management is devolved, Indigenous organizations should be prioritized to manage housing.
Manitoba's **Social Innovation Office** is urged to explore innovative ways of financing construction and operation of low-income housing.	The **Social Innovation Office** is currently exploring Social Impact Bonds for social services, but not yet for low-income housing.	The **Social Innovation Office** is urged to explore innovative ways of financing construction and operation of low-income housing.
The **City of Winnipeg** is asked to update its housing policy, review zoning and permitting, land sale and dispersal practices, to facilitate low-income housing development; and offer incentives, through measures such as inclusionary housing, to support non-profit and private developers to help address the city's housing crisis.	Council approved selling up to 15 properties for $1 each to help create new, affordable housing; and approved 88 units through the Major Cities Stream of the Rapid Housing Initiative. It has also tabled recommendations to explore a further menu of options for affordable housing.	The **City of Winnipeg** is asked to update its housing policy, as well as zoning and permitting, land sale and dispersal practices, to facilitate low-income housing development; and offer incentives, through measures such as inclusionary housing, to support non-profit and private developers to help address the city's housing crisis.
RECOMMENDATION #2: INCREASE INCOME SUPPORTS	**PROGRESS**	**NEXT STEPS NEEDED**
The **Government of Canada** is called to implement a national guaranteed minimum income.	Winnipeg Centre MP Leah Gazan presented a unanimous consent motion for a guaranteed livable basic income. Delegates to the 2021 Liberal policy convention endorsed a universal basic income.	The **Government of Canada** is called to implement a national guaranteed minimum income.

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RECOMMENDATION #2: INCREASE INCOME SUPPORTS	PROGRESS	NEXT STEPS
The **Province of Manitoba** is recommended to increase Rent Assist from 75% to 85% of median market rent as part of its plans to enhance this vital program. Further, it is recommended that implementation of the Canada-Manitoba Housing Benefit (CMHB) provide additional supports for, rather than replacement of, rental assistance measures to support low-income tenants.	The 2021 Manitoba budget indexes Rent Assist to 80% of median market rent for households not on EIA who are renting in the private market. The CMHB will provide additional supports for, rather than replacement of, Rent Assist for up to 3,300 people from three groups: youth aging out of care, people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, and people with mental health or addictions concerns who are living in designated supportive housing.	The **Province of Manitoba** is recommended to increase Rent Assist to be indexed to 85% of median market rent for all recipients, particularly those receiving EIA.
It is recommended that intake and access to **EIA and Disability Benefits** be streamlined for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, through a flexible and person-centred approach to service delivery.	Engagement with EIA and Community Living Disability Services is ongoing. The Province has introduced new legislation to create an income supports program for people with severe and prolonged disabilities, separate from EIA.	It is recommended that intake and access to **EIA and Disability Benefits** be streamlined for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, through a flexible and person-centred approach to service delivery.
RECOMMENDATION #3: IMPLEMENT COORDINATED ACCESS	**PROGRESS**	**NEXT STEPS NEEDED**
Community organizations across Winnipeg's homeless-serving sector collaborate on the design and implementation of a Coordinated Access system by 2022, to help prioritize and match unsheltered individuals with available housing using a shared information system.	**Community organizations** have been engaged through a Coordinated Access Council, Working Groups and Engagement sessions to co-create Coordinated Access.	The Coordinated Access system will be in place by March 2022.
End Homelessness Winnipeg is called to provide facilitation and engagement for this process, as well as technical infrastructure and resources.	**End Homelessness Winnipeg** is providing facilitation and engagement for the process, as well as technical infrastructure and resources through HIFIS4.	**End Homelessness Winnipeg**, as Community Entity for Reaching Home, has a key role to play in implementing and evaluating Coordinated Access.

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RECOMMENDATION #3: IMPLEMENT COORDINATED ACCESS	PROGRESS	NEXT STEPS
The **Government of Canada** is asked to continue to fund and monitor implementation of the system through Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy.	The **Government of Canada** continued to fund and monitor Coordinated Access implementation through Reaching Home in 2020-2021.	The **Government of Canada** continues to fund and monitor implementation through Reaching Home.
RECOMMENDATION #4: ENHANCE OUTREACH	**PROGRESS**	**NEXT STEPS NEEDED**
Outreach services continue to collaborate on providing comprehensive, coordinated street outreach coverage across the city, through enhanced communication and collaboration among teams; by facilitating warm handoffs to other agencies that can support pathways to housing; and by advocating collectively for necessary and increased resources from funders.	**Outreach Services** collaborate through **Winnipeg Outreach Network (WON).** WON members are onboarding to HIFIS4 to support collaboration and communication. WON members advocate for necessary and increased resources through various channels including cross-sector tables as well as direct requests to the City and other funders.	Systems mapping may help to identify warm handoffs and referral pathways that can support more exits from unsheltered homelessness.
Outreach services are asked to engage with people experiencing unsheltered homelessness on practical options for upgrading their shelter in ways that meet their identified needs and support their right to housing.	Outreach teams aim to provide requested gear in situ, while encouraging alternate sheltering options and pathways to housing. Community members at large also provide camping gear. WFPS consults with residents in encampments to improve fire safety of camps and shelters.	Costs for quality camping gear can be significant, so Outreach services' supplies can be limited compared to demand. **Funders and donors** should consider this in their supports for **Outreach services**.
End Homelessness Winnipeg has a supporting role to play as a backbone organization, engaging outreach services directly in the creation and implementation of a Coordinated Access system and facilitating coordination and communication among services.	**End Homelessness Winnipeg** provides backbone supports to **WON** for coordination and communication among services; and has engaged WON members in the creation and implementation of the Coordinated Access system.	**End Homelessness Winnipeg** has a continued role to play as a backbone organization supporting coordination and communications for outreach as well as the implementation of Coordinated Access.

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RECOMMENDATION #5: OPEN ADDITIONAL 24/7 SAFE SPACES	PROGRESS	NEXT STEPS NEEDED
The City of Winnipeg is called to implement its 24/7 Safe Spaces grant program.	The grant program was implemented in 2020, resulting in funding for Velma's House and WE24.	Funders should address the resourcing needs of safe spaces that are intending, but not yet able, to operate 24/7.
The Province of Manitoba and **Government of Canada** are urged to match or exceed the City's investments, reflecting the trilateral commitments of the Illicit Drugs Task Force and the Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.	The Province and the **Government of Canada (through Reaching Home)** matched or exceeded the City's investment in WE24 in 2020-2021. Reaching Home also invested in safe spaces operated by Ndinawe, Rossbrook House and SSCOPE.	**The Province of Manitoba** and **Government of Canada** are urged to match or exceed the City's investments in Velma's House, reflecting trilateral commitments of the Illicit Drugs Task Force and the Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.
RECOMMENDATION #6: CONTINUE THE INTERIM STRATEGY AND RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH DURING IMPLEMENTATION OF ALL OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS	PROGRESS	NEXT STEPS NEEDED
The **Kíkininaw Óma strategy group** should continue to meet as needed, with participants working together to improve communications and data flow for the interim strategy, and to increase awareness of and engagement with these recommendations, the interim strategy, and associated resources.	The **Kíkininaw Óma strategy group** has continued to meet, with participants working together to improve communications and data flow for the interim strategy, and to increase awareness of and engagement with these recommendations, the interim strategy, and associated resources, through virtual events, social media, and news coverage.	The **Kíkininaw Óma strategy group** should continue to meet as needed, with participants working together to improve communications and data flow for the interim strategy, and to increase awareness of and engagement with these recommendations, the interim strategy, and associated resources.