Kíkinanaw Óma

This is Our Home Here



A STRATEGY TO SUPPORT UNSHELTERED WINNIPEGGERS: TWO YEARS LATER
JULY 2022

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 *Kíkinanaw 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 *Kíkinanaw Óma* Strategy group in its first 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 increased the visibility of unsheltered homelessness in Winnipeg, and amplified calls for sustainable housing solutions. The lifting of orders, and reopening of spaces, along with the establishment of new services like the N'Dinawemak Indigenous led 24/7 safe space, have meant that unsheltered homelessness decreased during the winter of 2021-22 to below pre-pandemic levels. However, emergency shelter capacity reached its highest-ever levels, pointing to the ongoing need for low-income, low-barrier, Indigenous-led housing options.

Outreach services continue work in ever-closer collaboration, supported by strong relationships with first responders when emergencies arise. Several new housing initiatives have opened their doors or 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. Outreach services are observing increased need for health supports, detox and crisis stabilization services, harm reduction supplies, and Naloxone. Strategy partners are also working to develop a data collection and measurement strategy to monitor collective progress. The two-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 living in encampments were engaged in visioning for a new Indigenous housing initiative that was then designed to meet their expressed needs. Key themes emerged that can also inform future initiatives. A research project to better understand Indigenous housing needs was undertaken.	Astum Api Niikinaahk faced a range of pandemic-related construction delays. It will offer 22 Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) "tiny homes" and a communal lodge for adults experiencing or at risk of unsheltered homelessness starting Summer 2022. The project is complete. The report will be released in Summer 2022.
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 and an innovative social financing model for housing.	Further engagement with developers and funders is needed on priority housing needs as well as the social financing model.
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** is a partner in Astum Api Niikinaahk; N'Dinawemak; and the Coordinated Access system, Naatamooskakowin. **Southeast Tribal Council**, through Shawenim Abinoojii, opened 18 transitional RGI units for youth and young families. **The Manitoba Métis Federation** has opened a Rapid Services Site and is building a housing hub set to open in 2023.	Further partnerships must be cultivated, and successes must be learned from, adapted and scaled, particularly for housing and homelessness initiatives that meet the needs of Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and nonbinary people experiencing or at risk of unsheltered homelessness.
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 and the Vote Housing campaign.	Federal Budget 2022 builds on existing National Housing Strategy (NHS) investments with $1.5 billion over two years to extend the Rapid Housing Initiative.	The NHS aims to create at least 150,000 units of affordable new housing over 10 years. 150,000 more units of Indigenous-led, low-income, low-barrier and supportive housing will likely 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 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.	The 2021 Winnipeg Rental Housing Supply Baseline Scan indicated backward movement on this target, with 790 RGI units lost between 2019-2021. The Province has invested in 141 units of supportive housing through agreements to support Bruce Oake, Tamarack, Riverwood House and Homes First housing initiatives.	To fulfill this recommendation, the Province will need to invest in at least **60 new units of supportive housing and 1254 RGI units** while maintaining existing stock. If housing management is devolved, Indigenous organizations should be prioritized to manage housing. The Province is anticipated to release new housing and homelessness strategies in 2022.
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 147 units of transitional and RGI housing through two rounds of the Major Cities Stream of the Rapid Housing Initiative. It has also launched The Affordable Housing Now Program to support housing projects participating in CMHC affordable housing programs under the NHS, to help leverage federal funds available to projects in Winnipeg.	The **City of Winnipeg** is asked to update its housing policy, as well as zoning and permitting practices, to facilitate further low-income housing development.
RECOMMENDATION #2: INCREASE INCOME SUPPORTS	**PROGRESS**	**NEXT STEPS NEEDED**
The **Government of Canada** is called to implement a national guaranteed minimum income.	On December 16, 2021 **Senator Kim Pate** and Winnipeg Centre **MP Leah Gazan** introduced Bills S-233 and C-223, which if passed, would establish the first national framework for an unconditional Guaranteed Livable Basic Income for all persons over 17 across Canada. Both bills include the same title and text and mark the first ever, coordinated effort from within the House of Commons and the Senate for 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 indexed Rent Assist to 80% of median market rent for households not on EIA who are renting in the private market. The CMHB provides additional rental supports for more than 2,000 Rent Assist recipients 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.	EIA is partnering with several outreach service providers to streamline intake, facilitating mobile applications and signatures, as well as connection to specific workers who can fast track intake. Engagement with EIA and CLDS is ongoing. Bill 72, The Disability Support Act and Amendments to the Manitoba Assistance Act, passed in October 2021, introduced a new income support program for people with severe and prolonged disabilities, separate from EIA, but details are still being worked out.	It is recommended that intake and access to **EIA and Disability Benefits** continue to 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 design and implementation of a Coordinated Access system by 2022, to help prioritize and match unsheltered individuals with available housing.	**Community organizations** have been engaged through a Coordinated Access Council, Working Groups and Engagement sessions to co-create Naatamooskakowin, Winnipeg's Coordinated Access system.	The system has been in place since March 31, 2022. In its first two months, the system supported 74 intakes and 10 warm hand-offs to housing programs.

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RECOMMENDATION #3: IMPLEMENT COORDINATED ACCESS	PROGRESS	NEXT STEPS NEEDED
End Homelessness Winnipeg is called to provide facilitation, engagement, tech infrastructure and resources for this process.	**End Homelessness Winnipeg** provided facilitation and engagement for the co-creation of Coordinated Access.	**End Homelessness Winnipeg is** providing technical infrastructure and resources for Coordinated Access through HIFIS4.
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 2021-2022.	The **Government of Canada** continues to fund and monitor Coordinated Access 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 the **Kíkinanaw Óma Outreach and Encampment Responses Working Group** and **Winnipeg Outreach Network (WON).** Several teams use or are onboarding to a real time communications app, Signal, as well as the HIFIS4 shared information system, to support casework and pathways to housing. Outreach workers advocate for resources through various channels including cross-sector tables and direct requests to the City and other funders.	HIFIS4 onboarding will facilitate data gathering and reporting on outcomes. 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. WFPS consults with residents in encampments to improve fire safety of camps and shelters. A fire barrel pilot program was implemented with WFPS in Winter 2021-2022	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**.

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RECOMMENDATION #4: ENHANCE OUTREACH	PROGRESS	NEXT STEPS NEEDED
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 **outreach teams** for coordination and communication among services; and engaged outreach workers in the creation and implementation of Coordinated Access.	**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.
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. However, this funding is not sufficient to support 24/7 operations on its own, and ends December 31, 2023.	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. The Province and Reaching Home have also invested in Velma's House and N'Dinawemak safe spaces.	**The Province of Manitoba** and **Government of Canada** are urged to increase investments in Velma's House to ensure 24/7 operations, 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 **Kíkinanaw 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 **Kíkinanaw Óma strategy group** has continued to meet, with participants working together to improve communications and data flow, and to increase awareness of and engagement with these recommendations, the Kíkinanaw Óma strategy, and associated resources, through virtual events, social media, and news coverage.	The **Kíkinanaw Óma strategy group** should continue to meet as needed, with participants working together to improve communications and data flow, and to increase awareness of and engagement with these recommendations, the interim strategy, and associated resources.