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One Year Later, New Data Confirms Homelessness in Northern Ontario Is Accelerating Faster Than Systems - and Communities - Can Sustain

Updated report shows worsening housing pressures, rising costs, and growing economic impacts

Parry Sound, Ontario – January 13, 2026

The release of [Municipalities Under Pressure: One Year Later](#) builds directly on the landmark homelessness report published in January 2025 by NOSDA, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), and the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA). The updated findings show that homelessness continues to rise faster than housing supply, prevention, and support systems can respond - with Northern Ontario experiencing the most severe impacts. A link to the report can be found at www.nosda.net

From 2024 to 2025, homelessness in Northern Ontario increased by 37.3 per cent, compared to 7.8 per cent across the province. Since 2021, homelessness in the north has increased by approximately 117.5 per cent, more than double the provincial rate. While Northern Ontario represents five per cent of Ontario's population, it now accounts for nearly ten per cent of all known homelessness in the province.

In just one year, the number of people experiencing homelessness in Northern Ontario rose from 5,930 to 8,142, highlighting the widening gap between need and system capacity.

"One year after we warned that homelessness would continue to grow without sustained, coordinated action, the data confirms that Northern Ontario is now facing a deepening systems failure - with serious consequences for people, communities, and local economies," said Michelle Boileau, Chair of the Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association (NOSDA).

Growing Housing Pressures Are Driving Long-Term Homelessness

The report confirms that homelessness in Northern Ontario is increasingly shaped by structural housing shortages, not short-term shocks. Limited availability of deeply affordable, supportive, and community housing is restricting exits from homelessness and increasing the number of people remaining unhoused for longer periods.

In 2025, 13,104 households were on community housing waitlists in Northern Ontario, up from 8,467 in 2021 - a more than 50 per cent increase in just four years. These pressures are contributing to longer shelter stays, increased chronic homelessness, and rising system costs across health, emergency, and social services.

"Here in the District of Parry Sound we have an affordability crisis and are seeing firsthand how quickly homelessness is growing in communities that simply don't have the housing supply or service capacity to keep up," said Rick Zanussi, Chair of the District of Parry Sound Social Services Administration Board (DSSAB). *"Our district's rural geography, aging housing stock, and limited rental market make it even harder for people to find and keep stable homes. This data confirms what our frontline workers and*

community partners have been telling us: without coordinated, housing-led investment, more people will continue to fall through the cracks, and the impacts will be felt across our entire community."

The impacts are also deeply inequitable. Indigenous people account for 40.7 per cent of homelessness in Northern Ontario, reflecting long-standing systemic barriers and the need for Indigenous-led, culturally appropriate housing and homelessness solutions developed in partnership with Indigenous communities.

Homelessness Is Also an Economic Issue

Beyond its human toll, homelessness is increasingly undermining community and economic stability across Northern Ontario. Municipalities are absorbing rising costs for emergency shelters, health care, public safety, and encampment responses, while housing shortages make it harder to attract and retain workers, support business growth, and sustain local economic development.

Persistent homelessness reduces labour-market participation, strains municipal budgets, and diverts resources from infrastructure, housing supply, and community-building investments that support long-term economic resilience.

Without changes to current system conditions, the report projects that homelessness in Northern Ontario will continue to rise through 2035 - reaching approximately 16,900 people under steady economic conditions and more than 27,500 people in an economic downturn

A Call for Coordinated, Housing-Led Action

The findings reinforce a key conclusion from last year's report: homelessness is not a temporary crisis, but the result of system-level gaps across housing, income, health, and social services. Managing emergency pressures alone will not reverse the trend.

Addressing homelessness at scale requires a housing-led, prevention-focused, and coordinated approach, with sustained investment in deeply affordable and supportive housing, stronger prevention and housing stability supports, and alignment across all orders of government.

"If we want to reduce homelessness, strengthen communities, and support economic growth in Northern Ontario, we must move beyond managing crisis conditions and invest in system capacity that delivers long-term housing stability," said Michelle Boileau *"The cost of inaction - both human and economic - will only continue to grow."*

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About NOSDA

The Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association (NOSDA) represents municipal service managers responsible for housing, homelessness, and social services across Northern Ontario. NOSDA advances evidence-based policy, sustainable funding, and coordinated, housing-led solutions that reflect the unique realities of northern, rural, and remote communities.

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