Miramichi Homelessness Strategy

PREPARED FOR:

Greater Miramichi Service Commission | Commission de services du Grand Miramichi

Greater Miramichi Service Commission – Community Advisory Board

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THANK YOU

We would like to first thank individuals with lived or living experience of homelessness or housing insecurity who shared their experiences and insights with us. Many thanks to all who participated in the consultation process between June and August 2025, and importantly, thank you to those who respond to this crisis every day.

Those involved in this process include:

- Affordable Housing Working Group
- AIDS NB
- Bathurst Shelter
- Capital Family Services
- Chaleur Regional Service Commission
- Dining with Dignity
- Genesis Village for Hope
- Greater Miramichi Rural District
- GMSC Housing Authority Staff
- GMSC Management Reps
- GovNB Department of Social Development
- Habitat for Humanity
- Horizon Health Network
- Inclusion NB
- Jeremy's Mission

- John Howard Society
- Local Clergyman
- Migmaq Justice
- Miramichi Food Bank
- Miramichi Housing Solutions Board
- Miramichi Regional Multicultural Assoc.
- Miramichi School Board
- Natoaganeg First Nation
- New Brunswick Community College
- New Tide Counselling & Consulting
- North Shore Mi'kmaq Tribal Council
- Shannex (Seniors Living)
- United Way
- YEP

1 Forward

The Greater Miramichi Service Commission (GMSC) recognizes the critical importance of this work and remains deeply committed to supporting the Community Advisory Board (CAB) as it advances the implementation of this strategic plan. Addressing homelessness in our region is a complex challenge, one that demands a coordinated, compassionate, and sustainable approach.

Meaningful progress can only be achieved through strong partnerships and shared responsibility. GMSC looks forward to working closely with our partners, stakeholders, all levels of government, municipal leaders, and community organizations to ensure this plan delivers real, measurable outcomes for those who need it most.

Together, we can create solutions that not only respond to immediate needs but also lay the foundation for long-term stability and well-being across the Greater Miramichi region. GMSC is proud to play a leadership role in fostering collaboration and driving initiatives that make a lasting difference in the lives of individuals and families in our communities.

Roberta McIntyre
Chief Executive Officer
Greater Miramichi Service Commission

2 Planning Context

Homelessness has rapidly become an urgent crisis for the Greater Miramichi region. While this has long been a challenge for those most at risk, homelessness increasingly affects working families, seniors, youth, and newcomers from other parts of Canada and abroad.

In recent years, housing instability has grown, emergency shelter usage has soared, and key community partners have voiced deep concerns about rising need and inadequate service capacity.

Several factors have come together to create this situation:

- **Shortage of safe, affordable, and accessible housing:** Rents have increased while income supports remain unchanged. Many residents are just a crisis, or paycheque or two away from losing their homes. Shelters often operate at or near capacity, and "hidden homelessness" – such as couch surfing and living in unsafe spaces – is common.
- **Service system gaps:** Many people facing homelessness in Miramichi often have complex needs, including mental health, addictions, and barriers to accessing health or social supports. Many cannot access help due to administrative barriers, lack of documentation, or limited service coordination.
- **Resource constraints:** Community and frontline organizations are frequently volunteer-driven and underfunded, relying on donations and the efforts of a small group of passionate advocates, while human connection remains one of the most commonly cited pillars leading to positive outcomes. Public systems remain fragmented, and funding is often short-term or unpredictable.
- **Social and policy barriers:** Community stigma, "Not in My Backyard" (NIMBY) attitudes, and restrictive zoning and bylaws have made it difficult to both expand the housing supply and support new social solutions, especially for rural or marginalized populations.

Average emergency shelter occupancy rate (Miramichi, 2021–22)

94%
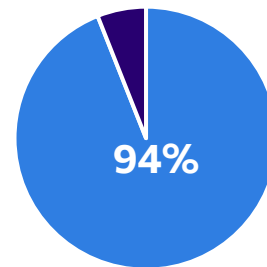
According to our 2025 survey, **82% of local residents feel that affordable housing is inadequate.**

"Homelessness in Miramichi has evolved into a visible, urgent crisis affecting a widening circle of community members."

Recognizing these challenges, the Greater Miramichi Service Commission (GMSC) and the Community Advisory Board (CAB) present this Homelessness Strategy to guide action, coordination, and advocacy across the whole Miramichi region.

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Miramichi's homelessness response is powered by a diverse network of committed organizations. In addition to those listed in the "Thank You" section, the community benefits from the efforts of grassroots groups such as Jeremy's Mission and Dining with Dignity; health, housing, and Indigenous organizations; and key partners like the John Howard Society, Horizon Health Network, and Miramichi Food Bank.

Methodology

To ensure the strategy reflects real needs and opportunities, a thorough community engagement and research process was used. The approach included:

- **Stakeholder engagement:** Diverse voices were heard, including people with lived/living experience of homelessness, Indigenous communities, service providers, grassroots groups, government departments, and the broader public, comprising over 40 local organizations and groups.

- **Inclusive, accessible methods:** The engagement process ran from June to August 2025 and included public surveys (373 responses), focus groups, interviews, and voice memos, ensuring meaningful participation and consultation, especially for underrepresented groups.

- **Research-based foundation:** A jurisdictional scan reviewed effective approaches from comparable regions, with a focus on promising local models. Successful initiatives from Fredericton and across Canada were analyzed, focusing on those demonstrating integrated support, housing innovation, and strong community collaboration.

> **Key Engagement Stats**
>
> **373** unique survey responses
>
> **47** attendees in engagement sessions
>
> **12** in-depth interviews
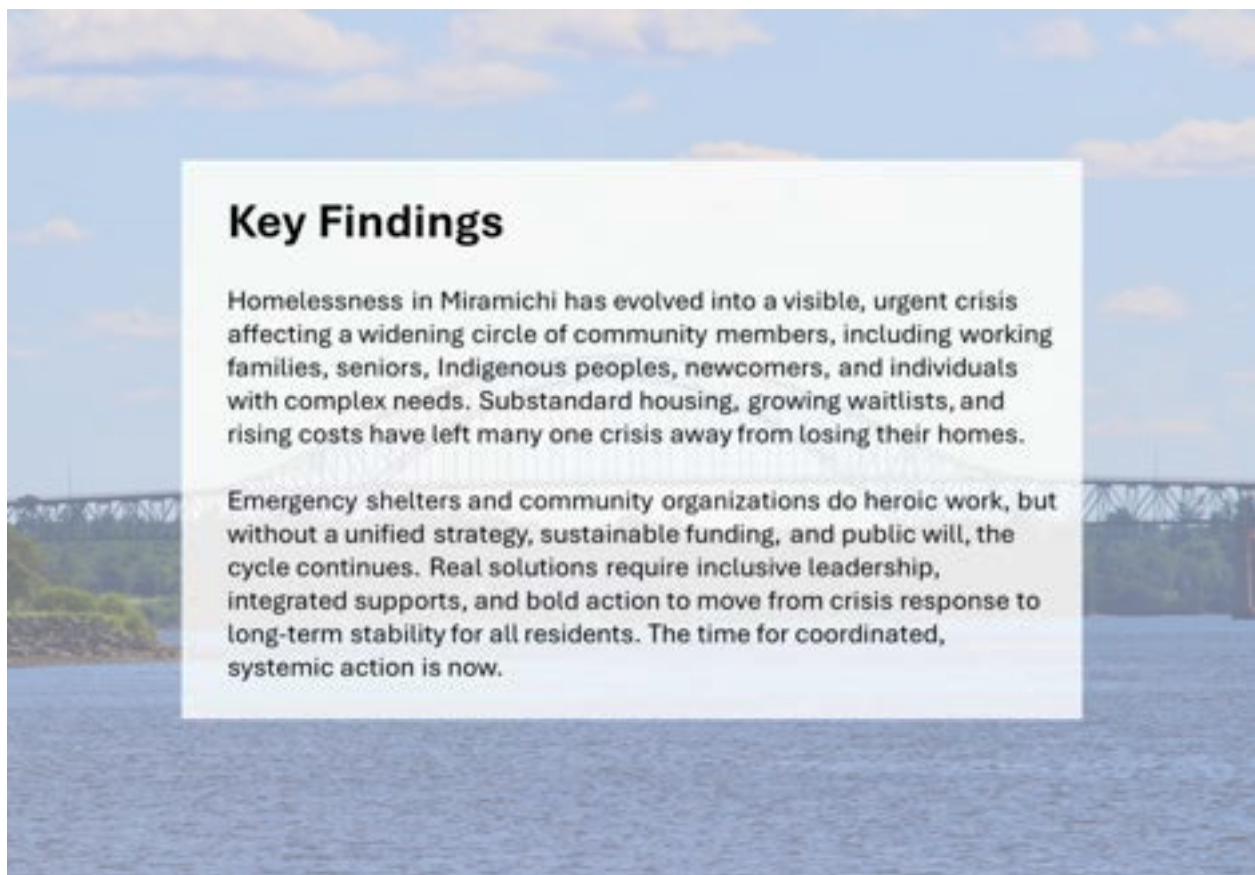
Summary of Background Research

The background research review examined promising initiatives from New Brunswick and other Canadian communities, with a focus on Fredericton's "12 Neighbours" micro-home program, adaptive reuse of underutilized religious spaces (e.g., through United Property Resource Corporation), and volunteer-driven meal services (Fredericton Community Kitchens). Lessons for Miramichi include the power of community-led governance, benefits of multi-sector partnerships, importance of low-barrier wraparound supports, and value of combining funding streams (public, private, and philanthropic).

Effective programs identified in the scan blend tailored housing with direct access to mental health, substance use, and primary care – delivered onsite or through strong partnerships. Common findings underline shared priorities: governance clarity, data-driven service delivery, and flexible resource models that adapt to changing demand. Miramichi's strategy draws directly from practices and successes in communities facing similar challenges. **See Appendix A (Background Research Report) for full details and lessons learned.**

Summary of Stakeholder Engagement

Between June and August 2025, over 40 local organizations, people with lived and living experience, Indigenous partners, and community residents took part in engagement activities. Stakeholders highlighted urgent gaps in affordable housing, the need for integrated wraparound supports (including health and addictions), and called for improved coordination among providers. Recurring themes included severe system fragmentation, pervasive stigma, success of volunteer-led and Indigenous initiatives, and the desire for action-oriented local leadership. Participants also stressed the importance of ongoing, authentic inclusion of lived and living experience in both design and delivery of all homelessness solutions.

The barriers identified ranged from lack of affordable housing to inaccessible services and high levels of "hidden" homelessness, particularly among working families, seniors, and youth. To advance solutions, stakeholders recommended more person-centered, culturally safe programming, greater investment in prevention and rapid response, improved governance/accountability, and a stronger CAB role in community education, partnerships, and advocacy. For a comprehensive breakdown of feedback and recommendations, see **Appendix B (What We Heard Report Summary).**

Key Findings

Homelessness in Miramichi has evolved into a visible, urgent crisis affecting a widening circle of community members, including working families, seniors, Indigenous peoples, newcomers, and individuals with complex needs. Substandard housing, growing waitlists, and rising costs have left many one crisis away from losing their homes.

Emergency shelters and community organizations do heroic work, but without a unified strategy, sustainable funding, and public will, the cycle continues. Real solutions require inclusive leadership, integrated supports, and bold action to move from crisis response to long-term stability for all residents. The time for coordinated, systemic action is now.

This Strategy Aims To...

1 Set a shared direction and focus for all partners working to prevent and address homelessness in Miramichi.

2 Inform and support the work of the <u>Community Advisory Board</u> – a collaborative group of local agencies, service providers, people with lived experience, and community representatives.

3 Create a unified pathway for community action, shifting from crisis responses to upstream prevention, supporting dignity, and long-term stability for all residents.

This Strategy is built on the principle that ending homelessness requires everyone's involvement: community organizations, all levels of government, Indigenous partners, people with lived experience, and local residents. Its goals are practical, people-centered, and rooted in both research and lived realities.

What Do We Hope to Accomplish?

By setting a clear plan informed by local insight and proven evidence, the Strategy will help the CAB:

- **Coordinate and focus collective action**: Reduce duplication, clarify roles, and support real progress.
- **Build public and political will**: Advocate for sustainable funding and policy reform.
- **Continue to involve those directly impacted:** Ensure ongoing participation of people with lived/living experience in all decisions.
- **Shift the local focus from emergency responses to prevention and recovery**: Expand housing options, wraparound services, and upstream interventions.

This Strategy aims to speak authentically with and for the community, representing a plan that is practical, inclusive, and ready to guide focused, collaborative action.

3   Vision and Mission

A vision and a mission are two essential guideposts for this collective effort, helping the CAB and its partners define both where they want to go and how they intend to get there. In the context of this Strategy, the vision sets out the long-term, ideal future the community wishes to achieve – a future shaped by compassion, dignity, and stability for all. The mission, on the other hand, guides the daily actions and focus of the CAB as it works with stakeholders to turn that vision into reality.

The CAB's vision and mission for this Strategy have been informed by direct feedback and aspirations from the Miramichi community, including people with lived experience of homelessness, Indigenous voices, local organizations, government partners, and residents. These statements are built from research, engagement, and the strongly expressed values of compassion, dignity, inclusion, and practical action heard throughout the consultation process.

3.1   Vision

The vision is an inspirational statement describing the future that the CAB aspires to create. It expresses the "ideal state" that the community is working toward and provides a north star to guide all decisions, partnerships, and activities. In the context of this homelessness strategy, the vision sets a bold direction, motivates action, and unites partners behind a shared dream.

> **We envision a Miramichi where everyone has a safe, affordable home and the supports they need to thrive. We aim to build a caring community where all people live with dignity and connection, making homelessness rare, brief, and never repeated.**

3.2   Mission

The mission statement describes the purpose and core work of the CAB and partners. It answers the question, "What are we here to do, and how will we do it?" The mission is practical – it shapes the decisions, activities, and collaborations needed to make the vision real.

> **The CAB promotes inclusion, reduces stigma, and drives practical solutions that are grounded in evidence, guided by lived experience, and built on strong relationships and values. Through our strategic partnerships, we coordinate, advocate, educate, and share resources, leading a community-wide response to homelessness in Miramichi.**

4 Commitments

The CAB is guided by a shared foundation of values that shape all its work to prevent and address homelessness in Miramichi. These commitments define how the CAB will approach every partnership, decision, and action, ensuring that efforts are always grounded in respect, inclusion, and community spirit.

These commitments form the foundation of the CAB's ongoing leadership, advocacy, and community action as we work toward a future where homelessness is rare, brief, and not repeated in Miramichi:

- ✓ **Evidence-Informed and Community-Guided Decision Making:** Using evidence, local knowledge, and lived experience to guide actions and continually improve our approach.
- ✓ **Dignity and Respect:** Treating every person with inherent dignity, fairness, and respect, recognizing the value of all community members.
- ✓ **Compassion and Empathy:** Approaching all work with compassion and genuine care, striving to understand and respond to the real-life challenges that people face.
- ✓ **Inclusion and Equity:** Promoting inclusion and equity in every decision, ensuring that voices from all backgrounds, especially those with lived experience, are heard and considered.
- ✓ **Collaboration and Partnership:** Building strong, trusting partnerships across sectors, organizations, and cultures, working together to create solutions greater than any one group alone can achieve.
- ✓ **Transparency and Accountability:** Acting with openness, honesty, and accountability in all processes, and communicating clearly with our partners and the community.
- ✓ **Hope and Determination:** Fostering a spirit of hope, creativity, and perseverance in tackling challenges, always believing that progress is possible when we work together.

5 Strategic Pillars

The following five strategic pillars reflect the key priorities and values identified by the community through engagement and research. Each pillar focuses on a central theme vital to addressing homelessness in Miramichi, providing a structure for targeted goals and coordinated actions. Together, these pillars form the foundation for sustained, community-driven progress across the homelessness response.

Where possible, goals for each pillar are listed in order of priority based on frequency and urgency noted by community stakeholders during engagement. This approach helps guide early action and ensures goals with the most community consensus are acted upon first.

5.1 Pillar 1: Collaboration, Governance, and Sustainable Systems Change

This pillar covers the role of the CAB and shared accountability, resource sharing, data-informed planning, capacity-building, policy advocacy, and pursuing multi-year funding solutions. The research reflects a community will for the CAB to contribute through effective coordination, clear governance, and facilitation of sustainable partnerships between government, Indigenous nations, community groups, service providers, and those with lived experience. The following goals and action items, together, aim to bring sustainable systems change for the CAB while supporting adherence to the commitments for Miramichi residents.

Goal #1.1 – Strengthen and clarify CAB governance and structure

- Ensure clear membership criteria for the CAB, with defined roles for both executive/strategic participants and frontline/operational members.
- Develop and share a "Terms of Reference" or governance document to support consistent participation and decision-making (see **Error! Reference source not found.**).
- Hold regular meetings providign strategic direction and operational coordination.

Goal #1.2 – Improve coordination and partnership across sectors and regions

- Facilitate regular cross-sector and interagency meetings to promote shared problem-solving and avoid duplication of effort.
- Expand partnerships to include municipal, provincial, Indigenous, rural, and grassroots organizations, and involve new sectors or groups as needed.
- Map existing services and resources to identify gaps and opportunities for better alignment.

Goal #1.3 – Advocate together for policy and funding that enable long-term solutions

- Lead or join advocacy campaigns for policy updates and bylaw reforms, and for securing designated community status and multi-year funding.
- Collect and present data and local stories to support advocacy.
- Seek formal agreements (e.g., with province or federal government) for ongoing resource support.

COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD (CAB) STRUCTURE & GOVERNANCE

The CAB serves as the coordinating body for homelessness action and advocacy in Miramichi. To ensure transparency, accountability, and adherence to all commitments, the CAB will be governed by a Terms of Reference (TOR) that is reviewed annually. The TOR will clearly outline:

- **Membership Criteria:** The CAB will consist of both executive/strategic members (senior representatives empowered to make organizational commitments) and operational/front-line members, including people with lived or living experience and Indigenous partners.
- **Voting Structure:** Each member organization will appoint one voting representative. Decisions will generally be made by majority vote, with conflict-of-interest protocols established.
- **Defined Roles and Responsibilities:** The TOR will define specific roles for the co-chairs, board members, and any supporting staff for minute-taking, agenda setting, or committee coordination. Co-chairs will share leadership duties, ensuring both continuity and diverse perspectives. Working groups or subcommittees will address specific issues pertaining to, for example, youth, rural, or Indigenous needs, or drive discrete projects. There is opportunity for the CAB to:
    - Ensure the active and regular involvement of people with lived/living experience within decision-making, program evaluation, and public communications (a "nothing about us, without us" approach, particularly for decisions impacting Indigenous individuals and communities).
    - Maintain a visible and evolving map of services and assets in the community that services and community members may easily access and use to navigate support.
    - Act as a connector for smaller organizations and grassroots initiatives, guiding toward support with grant applications, organization of back-office/shared services, mentorship, and skills development.
    - Take a hands-on approach to bringing solutions to community through initiatives like real-time housing match meetings with landlords, service providers, and other involved parties, to directly connect people to housing using the by-name list.
    - Engage in policy advocacy grounded in local data and storytelling, including coordinated "policy position" statements and advocacy campaigns in consultation with member organizations.
- **Reporting Relationships:** The CAB will report recommendations and provide updates to the GSMC and, as appropriate, to the City Council and Regional Service Commission (RSC) Board. Reporting responsibility will be clearly designated to avoid loss of momentum with any member or staff turnover.
- **Accountability and Follow-Up:** The CAB will track commitments, regularly monitor strategy progress, and assign and distribute responsibility for action follow up to specific members or subcommittees. A plain language summary of the CAB's purpose, structure, and capabilities for public posting and distribution can also inform the public on how they may engage and participate in community initiatives.

Goal #1.4 – Promote openness, accountability, and transparency in all CAB activities

- Communicate CAB decisions, progress, and barriers openly to the community using public meetings, reports, and multiple feedback channels.

Hybrid CAB meeting for strategy creation.

- Establish a system to collect data, monitor, evaluate, and review progress on CAB priorities, updating partners and the community regularly, and improve over time.
- Define who is responsible for following up on commitments to ensure accountability.

Goal #1.5 – Build system capacity for ongoing improvement and sustainability

- Support and mentor grassroots and smaller non-profit organizations with grant writing, administration, and partnership-building.
- Develop or support training and skill-building for CAB members, partners, and frontline workers.

5.2   Pillar 2: Housing and Service Integration

The CAB may support expanded access to affordable, appropriate, and supportive housing through establishing connections between housing, health, and community supports. This includes both rapid and long-term housing options, linking housing with services, and reducing system fragmentation.

Goal #2.1 – Expand access to safe, affordable, and appropriate housing for all

- Advocate for increased affordable and supportive housing units, including diverse options for seniors, youth, Indigenous peoples, and people with complex needs.
- Support and adopt innovative housing models such as modular and rapid-deployment homes, co-housing, and adaptive reuse of community spaces (e.g., faith-based infrastructure).
- Work with municipal and provincial partners to address restrictive zoning and land-use policies that limit new housing supply and supportive housing development.
- Ensure culturally safe and choice-based housing and supports are available (connected to Pillar 3).

Goal #2.2 – Link housing with integrated health, mental health, and addiction supports

- Facilitate partnerships between housing providers and health services to ensure wraparound care is available where people live, not just at separate facilities.
- Encourage and help coordinate co-location of supports, including harm reduction, counseling, addictions treatment, and life-skills coaching within or alongside housing sites.
- Advocate for increased funding and training for staff to deliver these supports.

Goal #2.3 – Develop coordinated systems for housing access, matching, and navigation

- Strengthen or support the implementation of a by-name list and coordinated access system so that individuals and families can be quickly matched to the most appropriate housing and services.
- Host regular, real-time meetings between housing providers, outreach staff, and case managers to match available units directly with those most in need.
- Improve information sharing and referral processes across organizations to ensure nobody falls through service gaps or has to "start over" at each entry point.

Goal #2.4 – Reduce barriers and fragmentation in the housing, support, and transition systems

- Identify and address gaps where individuals are exiting systems (like justice, hospital, or care) into homelessness, working with partners for better discharge planning.
- Promote housing models that offer residents meaningful personal choice (such as pet-friendly, harm-reduction, family, or sober/clean options).
- Advocate for and support streamlined access to attaining documentation, ID, and income supports to remove administrative roadblocks.
- Support programs that help people move quickly from shelter or unsafe conditions into permanent housing, reducing wait times and bureaucratic steps.

5.3   Pillar 3: Person-Centred and Culturally Safe Supports

Providing individualized, trauma-informed, and culturally safe supports that meet people where they are is key to meaningful change. This includes integrating lived-experience leadership, mental health and addiction supports, harm reduction, and wraparound care for diverse groups (seniors, youth, Indigenous people, those with disabilities).

Goal #3.1 – Embed lived and living experience in service design, decision-making, and delivery

- Recruit and support people with lived or living experience of homelessness as leaders, advisors, peer workers, program designers and administrators – not only as consultants (connected to Goal 5.5).
- Provide ongoing opportunities for peer-led education, support, and mentorship across initiatives.
- Provide tangible support and compensation for participation of those with lived experience, being mindful to remove barriers to participation by supporting transportation, technology, or childcare needs.

Goal #3.2 – Ensure all services reflect trauma-informed and harm reduction best practices

- Offer regular training for service providers, CAB members, and partners on trauma-informed care, harm reduction, and anti-stigma approaches.
- Integrate harm reduction – including access to safe supply, naloxone, and non-abstinence-based supports – into housing and outreach services.
- Develop easy-to-understand resources and protocols so that providers at all levels can respond compassionately in crisis.

Goal #3.3 – Strengthen wraparound supports tailored to individual needs and life stages

- Expand or facilitate access to mental health, addictions, and primary care supports, delivered where people already access services or housing.
- Coordinate case management, outreach, and navigation so individuals receive continuous, personalized support through their housing journey.

Consultants meet with community organizations who are making an

Goal #3.4 – Champion the development and delivery of culturally safe and inclusive supports for Indigenous peoples and diverse populations

- Design and deliver housing and service options and culturally relevant supports in partnership with Indigenous communities and individuals.
- Build respectful, ongoing partnerships with all local First Nations and Indigenous-run organizations to design and deliver services.
- Advocate for and support Indigenous-led peer, harm reduction, and community-based mental health services.
- Ensure supports are available both within and outside Indigenous communities, with the option for individuals to choose what is best for them.

Goal #3.5 – Reduce social isolation and promote connection, dignity, and belonging among people served

- Facilitate and expand peer support programs, community hubs, and opportunities for social connection, volunteering, and leadership.
- Encourage inclusive practices across all services, ensuring that the needs of marginalized groups, such as people with disabilities, 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, and newcomers, are respected.
- Celebrate "bright spots" and positive community stories that demonstrate transformation, respect, and genuine inclusion.

5.4   Pillar 4: Prevention and Upstream Solutions

This pillar aims to encourage a focus shift from reactive emergency response to prevention and early intervention. This means keeping people housed through diversion programs, immediate crisis funds, improved discharge planning, and proactive supports that reduce inflow into homelessness.

Goal #4.1 – Keep people housed and prevent new entries into homelessness

- Develop and promote rapid intervention funds (such as rent or utility arrears programs) to address financial crises before they lead to eviction.
- Support the creation and coordination of diversion programs that help people stay in their current housing or move directly to new housing without entering shelter.
- Work with landlords, community agencies, and government partners to ensure early identification of at-risk tenants and quick response.

Goal #4.2 – Build strong discharge planning and transition supports for people leaving institutions

- Advocate with health, corrections, and child welfare partners to develop or strengthen protocols that prevent discharges from hospitals, treatment, or jail directly into homelessness.
- Host cross-sector planning meetings to address gaps and coordinate 'warm handoffs' to housing and community supports at release or discharge.
- Track and share outcomes to identify where the system is falling down, so transition strategies can be improved.

Goal #4.3 – Invest in upstream, community-based solutions for youth, seniors, and vulnerable populations

- Promote life-skills and tenancy training for youth aging out of care, as well as targeted supports for seniors and those living with disabilities.
- Facilitate partnerships between schools, community services, and health providers to catch risk signs early and connect young people or vulnerable seniors with the right resources.

Goal #4.4 – Expand access to flexible, low-barrier support services to address root causes and prevent crisis

- Enable crisis navigation, case management, and flexible supports to address not only housing issues but the underlying drivers such as mental health, addiction, or domestic violence.
- Work with volunteer and peer-led organizations to provide community-based help before people reach crisis point.

Goal #4.5 – Promote community awareness and reduce stigma to encourage individuals to seek help early

- Lead or support public education and storytelling campaigns to change attitudes around homelessness and asking for help, tapping peer voices and lived experience (connected to Pillar 5).
- Provide information on support pathways and how to access services before a crisis develops, targeting workplaces, schools, and community groups.

5.5   Pillar 5: Community Engagement, Education, and Reducing Stigma

The final pillar aims to build broad-based community understanding, support, and buy-in through transparent communication, public education, and storytelling. This pillar includes destigmatizing homelessness, involving those with lived experience in advocacy, and developing partnerships with landlords, businesses, and regional partners.

Goal #5.1 – Increase public awareness and understanding of homelessness and its root causes

- Launch ongoing public education and awareness campaigns that share real stories from individuals with lived experience, highlighting the realities of homelessness.
- Host community forums, speaker events, or "myth-busting" sessions in partnership with local organizations, service providers, and community groups.
- Support peer-led storytelling events or speaker series to mainstream the voices and perspectives of people with lived experience.
- Create accessible materials (posters, social media, radio) that address common misconceptions and present homelessness as a community issue rather than an individual failing.

Goal #5.2 – Foster two-way communication and build trust with all community members

- Develop a clear communications plan for sharing minutes, decisions and updates with community, municipal partners, and the public through social media and accessible formats.
- Hold regular public CAB meetings with open invitations to community members and offer feedback channels (email, online forms, suggestion boxes) for community questions and concerns.
- Provide consistent updates to the public about progress, barriers, and new initiatives in the Strategy.
- Encourage local media to cover positive stories of community support and successful housing outcomes, rather than only providing visibility in crises or when discussing encampments.

Goal #5.3 – Encourage supportive businesses

- Collaborate with local businesses, service providers, landlords, and faith groups to promote inclusive practices and training on anti-stigma, trauma-informed, and equity principles.

- Advocate for and celebrate businesses and organizations that demonstrate compassion and inclusion, encouraging others to model their efforts.

Goal #5.4 – Build community participation, volunteering, and advocacy in homelessness response

- Organize volunteer drives, advocacy workshops, and "day of action" events to give residents concrete ways to support ending homelessness.
- Develop and promote engagement opportunities for youth, seniors, Indigenous community members, and others who may be underrepresented, helping everyone see their role within the solutions.
- Support or partner with local initiatives and encourage broader fundraising and resource contributions from the community and local businesses.

Goal #5.5 – Empower and center people with lived and living experience as community educators and leaders

- Provide opportunities and support for people with lived experience to lead educational sessions, serve as CAB ambassadors, or be peer educators in schools and workplaces.
- Offer adequate compensation, mentorship, and leadership training to ensure meaningful involvement and reduce barriers to participation.

6 Measurement & Monitoring

Regular measurement and monitoring are essential to ensure that the Miramichi Homelessness Strategy remains relevant, impactful, and accountable to the community. For the CAB, this means adopting practical approaches to track progress, identify challenges, and adjust actions as needs and opportunities change. Ongoing monitoring helps show where efforts are working, where there are gaps, and where more focus or partnership is needed.

Measurement may reflect both system-level progress and the lived reality of people facing homelessness. This means using a mix of numbers (such as how many people found housing or accessed services), feedback (stories and surveys), and partnership indicators (like the number of organizations collaborating or initiatives supported).

Reporting results back to the community is also critical. Clear, regular updates build trust and help maintain broad engagement, while demonstrating the CAB's commitment to transparency and collective improvement. Where possible, progress against key indicators (adjacent textbox) should be made public and accessible.

> **SUGGESTED KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**
>
> - Number of individuals and families housed (by population group and duration housed)
> - Rate of return to homelessness
> - Number and diversity of partnerships/collaborative initiatives (including Indigenous and rural partners)
> - Engagement of people with lived/living experience (advisory/decision-making roles, peer positions)
> - Average length of time experiencing homelessness
> - Wait times for housing, support services, and key programs
> - Client and partner feedback (satisfaction surveys, community forums, qualitative stories)
> - Incidents and reductions in stigma (tracked via public attitudes or community surveys)
> - Number of upstream prevention interventions (eviction diversion, crisis fund use)

7 Implementation Plan and Next Steps

A phased implementation plan will help the CAB move from strategy to action, recognizing both immediate governance decisions and needs, as well as the mission toward longer-term system change. The final plan will be divided into:

- **Short-term Actions (0–12 months):** Initiatives that can be launched using current resources and organizational capacity. These include the development of CAB governance documents, formalizing cross-sector partnerships, initial expansion of outreach activities, and targeted housing advocacy.

- **Longer-term or Resource-Dependent Actions (1–5 years):** Work requiring substantial new investment or policy change, such as developing new affordable/supportive housing units, expanding wraparound services, and implementing broader prevention measures. High-level cost/timeline estimates will be labeled as [To Be Determined – based on further planning].

- **Assignment of Leads:** Each action will be assigned a lead (e.g., CAB, specific community partner, or municipal/provincial advocacy group) with roles divided into: (a) actions for local delivery, (b) actions for provincial advocacy, and (c) strategic partnerships.

ALIGNMENT WITH PROVINCIAL STRATEGY

Many strategic goals in this plan align closely with the New Brunswick provincial housing and homelessness priorities, especially around prevention, wraparound supports, Housing First principles, and Indigenous and rural inclusion.

The CAB will continue to identify where local action is possible and where additional provincial partnership or advocacy is critical, ensuring efforts complement wider policy initiatives.

The community would benefit from an asset map of resources currently available. In the interim, ongoing work will include cataloging community assets and updating this inventory as new organizations, programs, and volunteers step forward.

Implementation Planning Summary Table

The table below describes each goal from the strategy, listed in order of priority based on frequency and urgency noted by engagement participants, where possible. A summary of resourcing requirements, key next steps, anticipated timeline, and lead(s) are listed for each goal.

Provincial responsibilities or advocacy items (in the last column) reflect areas needing policy change, legislative reform, or resource support from the Government of New Brunswick or federal government, whereas local responsibilities indicate actions that Miramichi organizations can deliver directly. The Key Next Steps column provides a launching point for leads to begin work, and Timeline allows for identification of 'quick wins' versus long-term aims.

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Pillar 1: Collaboration, Governance, and Sustainable Systems Change

#	Goal (shortened)	Key Next Steps Summary	Cost/Resource Implications	Timeline	Local / Provincial / Advocacy (lead)
1.1	Strengthen and clarify CAB leadership structure & roles	Define membership, draft Terms of Reference, hold regular strategic/operational meetings	Minimal admin time	0–3 months	Local – CAB/GMSC
1.2	Improve cross-sector partnership & coordination	Hold regular interagency meetings, expand partnerships, map resources for alignment	Minimal to moderate admin	Ongoing	Local – CAB
1.3	Advocate for policy/funding for long-term solutions	Lead/join advocacy, present data & stories, seek formal agreements with government	Low (staff time)	Ongoing	Advocacy – CAB
1.4	Promote CAB openness & accountability	Communicate publicly, monitor data/progress, define responsibilities for action follow-up	Minimal admin	Immediate, ongoing	Local – CAB
1.5	Build system capacity and support smaller organizations	Mentor grassroots orgs, support grants/admin, train/skill-build CAB/partners/frontlines	Low to moderate (training, grants)	Ongoing	Local – CAB

Pillar 2: Housing and Service Integration

#	Goal (shortened)	Key Next Steps Summary	Cost/Resource Implications	Timeline	Local / Provincial / Advocacy (lead)
2.1	Expand access to affordable & supportive housing	Advocate for new units & innovative models, tackle zoning barriers	Moderate to high (capital, staff)	Medium to long term	Advocacy/Local – CAB/GMSC
2.2	Integrate housing with health and addiction supports	Build partnerships, implement wraparound supports onsite, co-locate care	High (new staffing/services)	Medium to long term	Local/Prov – Horizon Health/John Howard Soc
2.3	Develop coordinated housing access and navigation	Implement by-name list, hold housing match meetings, improve info/referral sharing	Low to moderate	6–12 months, ongoing	Local – CAB/John Howard Society
2.4	Reduce fragmentation in housing/support systems	Improve discharge planning, streamline access to housing supports, promote choices	Moderate (system change)	Medium term	Local/Provincial – CAB/Partners

Pillar 3: Person-Centred and Culturally Safe Supports

#	Goal (shortened)	Key Next Steps Summary	Cost/Resource Implications	Timeline	Local / Provincial / Advocacy (lead)
3.1	Embed lived experience in service design & delivery	Recruit/support people with lived experience as advisors/workers, ensure compensation	Low (honoraria, admin)	Immediate, ongoing	Local – CAB
3.2	Ensure trauma-informed, harm reduction, anti-stigma services	Provide training on trauma/harm reduction, create protocols, offer harm reduction onsite	Moderate (training, supplies)	0–12 months, ongoing	Local – CAB/Partners
3.3	Strengthen individualized wraparound supports	Expand access to mental health, addictions, primary care, enhance coordinated navigation	High (if new or expanded services)	Medium term	Local/Provincial – Horizon Health
3.4	Champion culturally safe & Indigenous supports	Design culturally relevant options with Indigenous community, create true partnerships	Low to moderate	Ongoing	Local – Indigenous partners/CAB
3.5	Promote social connection & inclusion	Support peer/community programs, inclusive services, highlight positive stories	Low to moderate	Immediate, ongoing	Local – CAB/Partners

Pillar 4: Prevention and Upstream Solutions

#	Goal (shortened)	Key Next Steps Summary	Cost/Resource Implications	Timeline	Local / Provincial / Advocacy (lead)
4.1	Prevent homelessness, keep people housed	Launch/pilot rapid intervention funds & diversion, early identification with partners	Moderate (pilot fund, outreach)	0–12 months	Local – John Howard Society/CAB
4.2	Build discharge planning supports for institutions	Strengthen protocols with hospitals/corrections, host cross-sector meetings	Low to moderate	12–24 months	Provincial/Local – Horizon Health
4.3	Invest in upstream solutions for youth, seniors, vulnerable	Provide life/tenancy training, partner with schools/health, target at-risk seniors/youth	Moderate (program funding)	Medium term	Local – Partners/CAB
4.4	Expand low-barrier, flexible support services	Case management, crisis navigation, increase flexible community-based supports	Moderate (staffing/service cost)	Ongoing	Local – CAB/Partners
4.5	Promote awareness and reduce stigma for early help-seeking	Lead public education/storytelling, info for early support in workplaces, schools	Low (materials, outreach)	0–12 months	Local – CAB/Lived Experience Ambassadors

Pillar 5: Community Engagement, Education, and Reducing Stigma

#	Goal (shortened)	Key Next Steps Summary	Cost/Resource Implications	Timeline	Local / Provincial / Advocacy (lead)
5.1	Increase public awareness about homelessness	Public awareness campaigns, storytelling, forums, accessible materials	Low to moderate	Immediate, ongoing	Local – CAB/Partners
5.2	Foster two-way communication and community trust	Hold public meetings, provide updates, establish feedback channels	Low	Immediate, ongoing	Local – CAB
5.3	Encourage supportive businesses & partners	Collaborate with businesses/faith/landlords on inclusion, celebrate supporters	Low	Immediate, ongoing	Local – CAB/Partners
5.4	Build community volunteering and advocacy	Organize volunteer drives, workshops, drive engagement of underrepresented groups	Low	Ongoing	Local – CAB/Partners
5.5	Empower people with lived experience as leaders	Provide leadership, mentorship, and paid roles as educators, ambassadors	Low (honoraria, training)	Immediate, ongoing	Local – CAB/Lived Experience Advisory

8   Conclusion

This Strategy represents Miramichi's commitment to real change, built on compassion, collaboration, and the community strengths. By working together, listening carefully to lived experience, and focusing on practical, achievable goals, we look toward a future where homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring. The Community Advisory Board stands ready to lead with determination, always keeping dignity and inclusion at the forefront.

Guided by the five pillars – collaboration and governance, integrated housing and services, person-centered supports, prevention, and community engagement – the CAB will aim to strengthen partnerships, champion upstream solutions, expand diverse housing options, reduce stigma, and centre the voices of those most affected.

With every action and partnership, we aim to build a stronger and more caring Miramichi: one where everyone has a safe place to call home and the s

Appendix A – Background Research Report

Miramichi Homelessness Strategy: Background Research Report

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1   Introduction & Context

This jurisdictional scan and case study review, compiled by the MQO-ATN research team for the Greater Miramichi Service Commission (GMSC), is intended to inform the City of Miramichi's Homelessness Strategy.

This project focuses on addressing critical issues related to poverty, homelessness, and food insecurity, all of which were only exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This research will examine strategies to support vulnerable populations, including youth and chronically homeless seniors, who are disproportionately impacted by service gaps.

This scan identifies promising practices and models from other communities and organizations that may inform GMSC's approach. It includes a review of select jurisdictions and case study initiatives that align with the local context and needs. Selected case studies include:

- Housing Initiatives: 12 Neighbours Program (Fredericton, NB)
- Adaptive Reuse of Faith-Based Infrastructure: United Resource Property Corporation (Ontario)
- Community Meal Programs: Fredericton Community Kitchens (Fredericton, NB)

The jurisdictional scan focuses on the City of Fredericton, a leading example of integrated homelessness response within a nearby and comparable setting.

The research methodology includes a combination of background document analysis and targeted desktop research. Potential jurisdictions and case studies have been selected based on their relevance to the local population groups of concern, the effectiveness of their approaches in addressing service gaps, and the availability of publicly accessible information. The goal is to provide actionable insights and practical examples that can guide the development of a more coordinated, effective, and locally responsive homelessness strategy.

2   Overview of Local Landscape

The City of Miramichi is facing increasing challenges related to homelessness and food insecurity, particularly among youth and seniors experiencing chronic homelessness. Recent statistics show that during the 2021–22 fiscal year, Miramichi's emergency shelter occupancy hit 94%, which is significantly higher than neighbouring Bathurst's 66%, demonstrating the demand in the area.[i] This trend also reflects broader provincial impact: from 2021 to 2023, homelessness in New Brunswick's major cities, including Miramichi, doubled, resulting in one of the largest recent point-in-time counts for the region.[ii]

Local stakeholders in Miramichi have identified several population groups disproportionately impacted by the region's growing homelessness crisis, including youth, chronically homeless seniors, and individuals with complex needs who are not adequately supported by existing systems. These groups often experience intersecting challenges such as mental illness, substance use, and housing instability that require coordinated, wraparound services. However,

gaps across the housing and social service systems limit the community's ability to respond effectively.

Housing access is a central challenge. Miramichi currently operates a single six-bed emergency shelter, which stakeholders have flagged as insufficient to meet demand. The shortage of transitional and affordable housing further limits options for those seeking longer-term stability. Some individuals are forced into unsafe or precarious living arrangements, placing them at greater risk of chronic homelessness and associated health concerns.

Youth experiencing homelessness face unique challenges. While organizations such as Miramichi Housing Solutions provide temporary shelter, there are limited longer-term supports such as transitional housing or independent living programs that could help young people break the cycle of homelessness. National research suggests that delayed intervention during adolescence increases the risk of long-term homelessness, making this a critical area for local action.

In addition, community activism and public perceptions are important contextual factors in Miramichi's homelessness landscape. While some community members have mobilized around the issue, concerns regarding "not in my backyard" (NIMBY) attitudes have also been raised, which can impact the implementation of new solutions. More broadly, stakeholders have emphasized the need to shift from reactive to proactive approaches. Much of the response to homelessness in Miramichi currently focuses on emergency services such as shelters, policing, and crisis health care rather than on upstream prevention. Service delivery remains fragmented, with limited coordination among providers and few mechanisms to enable early intervention. Addressing these systemic gaps will be essential to building a more responsive and equitable homelessness strategy for the region.

The Homelessness Community Advisory Board has opportunity to lead local efforts to address homelessness by coordinating planning and facilitating access to funding. The CAB may bring together service providers, municipal representatives, and people with lived experience to set priorities and inform decision-making. As a potential bridge between policy, funding, and front-line services, the CAB can promote evidence-based solutions and shared accountability to address service gaps for Miramichi's most vulnerable populations. Through ongoing community engagement, the CAB can ensure that the voices of those with lived experience shape local programs and resource decisions. Strengthened governance and partnerships position the CAB to shift Miramichi from crisis supports toward long-term, prevention-focused strategies.

A brief organizational review is being undertaken to situate the client organization within the local context in Miramichi and help clarify its prospective direction and role in addressing these challenges. GMSC's board, governance, and interaction with community will be covered and recommendations regarding goals and direction will be provided.

3 Case Studies

These case studies will provide a comprehensive review that explores three anecdotes for community initiatives that may be echoed in Miramichi, examining the background, objectives, and population groups served by each initiative, as well as an analysis of the sources and allocation of funding.

The document examines how partnerships between local governments, service providers, and community organizations contribute to program effectiveness and service coordination. In addition, the research assesses available data on outcomes, such as impacts on homelessness and service access among priority groups. Each case study concludes with practical takeaways and lessons learned to help inform the development of a locally responsive and effective homelessness strategy for Miramichi.

3.1 Fredericton's "12 Neighbours" Program

The [12 Neighbours Community](link) Program in Fredericton, New Brunswick, represents an innovative and community-driven response to chronic homelessness. Unlike many traditional models, 12 Neighbours is sustained largely through private philanthropy and operates as a social enterprise, providing flexibility in service delivery. The charity's founder, Marcel LeBrun, has been building a tiny home community in north Fredericton since September 2021. His initial goal was to create a safe space for those living on the streets or in the woods. On April 18, the final tiny home was installed in the gated tiny home community.

By combining affordable micro-home housing, wraparound support services, and opportunities for entrepreneurship, the program offers a holistic pathway toward long-term stability and social inclusion for individuals who have historically faced multiple barriers to housing. This case study explores the design, funding, and impact of the 12 Neighbours initiative, drawing insights that may inform the development of a responsive and sustainable homelessness strategy for the City of Miramichi.

3.1.1 Background and Organizational Context

The 12 Neighbours Community Program was launched in Fredericton in 2021 by philanthropist Marcel LeBrun in direct response to rising rates of chronic homelessness in the city. At that time, Fredericton faced major gaps in affordable housing, with especially low vacancy rates and limited supports for people struggling with mental health challenges, addiction, or the impacts of past justice system involvement.

Figure 1. Marcel LeBrun, founder of the 12 Neighbours Community Program. Source: CBC News.

Fredericton was also experiencing rapid and unprecedented population growth, with an 8% increase recorded between the 2016 and 2021 Census years. This growth was driven by both newcomers from across Canada and abroad, as well as a significant increase in older residents, especially those aged 65 and above. Alongside this demographic shift, Fredericton saw rising numbers of smaller and older households, intensifying demand for affordable, smaller homes suited to single people and seniors. Yet, despite mounting need, housing costs escalated, and supply lagged behind demand, leading to persistently low vacancy rates and greater financial stress for renters and low-income households. By 2021, nearly a third of Fredericton renters were living in unaffordable housing, putting many at risk of housing insecurity or homelessness.[iii] These trends combined to create a local housing crisis that left many vulnerable residents without stable or suitable options, requiring a comprehensive approach to breaking the cycle of homelessness and poverty.

To address these needs, the 12 Neighbours Community Program established a micro-home village at Two Nations Crossing. The community's first residents moved directly from tents and unstable shelter into micro-homes in early 2022, underscoring the urgent need for stable, dignified housing.

The primary population served by the 12 Neighbours Community Program includes individuals experiencing chronic homelessness, many of whom face significant, intersecting barriers such as mental health challenges, substance use disorders, physical disabilities, or past involvement with the justice system. This group often finds it especially difficult to access

Figure 2. Housing-first is a key component of 12 Neighbours' mission to end homelessness. Each resident receives their own tiny home in the community, fully equipped with a kitchen, bathroom, solar panels, and a Cisco Meraki network.

and maintain stable housing within the traditional rental market, particularly in a city like Fredericton where affordable, supportive options are limited. Many residents have also cycled through emergency shelters, temporary housing, or periods of street homelessness without finding sustainable pathways out. The program also serves individuals who may have been marginalized by conventional employment systems, offering them an opportunity to rebuild their lives in a safe, supportive environment that prioritizes dignity, personal growth, and social inclusion.

From the outset, the 12 Neighbours Community Program was designed to offer far more than shelter. The program is intentionally focused on building a supportive community where residents feel connected, valued, and empowered. Within this model, the community itself becomes the "healing agent", a key philosophy that sets 12 Neighbours apart from more traditional, service-based housing initiatives.

> "I want to prove that people who are poor and marginalized actually know how to move forward with their lives if you can invest in them. When you start to succeed, you unlock more investment, not less. But in a poor circumstance when you start to succeed, your supports disappear."
>
> *--- Marcel LeBrun, 12 Neighbours Founder*

3.1.2   Program Design and Delivery Mode

The 12 Neighbours Community Program aims to empower participants through permanent supportive housing, developmental wraparound services, and employment pathways, making housing at 12 Neighbours the foundation for a broader ecosystem of supports.

The project involves up to 96 detached, energy-efficient micro-homes (about 18 m²/200 ft² each). Each micro-home is intended to provide not just shelter, but a sense of ownership, privacy, and comfort, offering residents a full kitchen, bathroom, and seasonal upgrades like solar panels. The project constructed about one house per week from September 2021 to April 2024, using a streamlined production model. Residents pay no more than 30% of their income in rent, generally around $200/month for those on social assistance. By creating homes that are both functional and beautiful, 12 Neighbours sends a clear message that every resident is valued and deserving of quality living conditions.

Operation

When a home becomes available, the program works with Social Development to identify high-priority individuals from the by-names list. These individuals are invited to view the home, and if it suits their needs, their rent is subsidized by social development and provincial support.[iv]

Partnerships with technology and infrastructure providers (e.g., Cisco) have equipped the site with robust security, networking, and digital tools. The village's layout, with controlled access and communal spaces, is deliberately planned to balance privacy, safety, and opportunities for social engagement.[v]

> "We believe that permanent housing is the right answer and the right long-term solution. But we need something that's faster deployed and something that can handle helping people with a lot of complexity, substance use disorders and mental health issues... So that's where Neighbourly Homes comes in."
>
> --- *Marcel LeBrun, 12 Neighbours Founder*

The distinctive feature of the 12 Neighbours Community Program is its Social Enterprise Centre, which houses several community-run ventures, including a café, an art and apparel shop, and a modular tiny-home factory. [vi] These enterprises not only generate revenue to sustain the community but, more importantly, provide residents with progressive, low-barrier employment opportunities. The employment model is intentionally designed to be flexible and patient, offering residents the chance to re-enter the workforce at their own pace and according to their personal readiness. Many residents work in the tiny-home factory alongside a crew of approximately 20 carpenters, where they gain valuable skills in construction, craftsmanship, and teamwork. Wages for these roles often exceed the provincial minimum wage, underscoring the program's commitment to providing fair, meaningful work. This approach positions residents not as passive recipients of charity, but as active developers of skills and contributors to their community's growth, rebuilding self-confidence and creating pathways toward long-term economic independence.

Beyond employment, the program also offers a robust network of wraparound supports that are person-centred, trauma-informed, and focused on individual empowerment. Residents have access to a variety of services, including substance-use recovery counselling, mental health supports, primary healthcare referrals, and educational opportunities. These services are either delivered onsite or facilitated through partnerships with local service providers, reducing barriers to access and ensuring timely support. The program adopts a strength-based, recovery-oriented approach that recognizes each resident's potential and prioritizes personal choice, autonomy, and self-defined goals.

Its model of resident-led governance and peer support promotes belonging, ownership, and shared responsibility. Social cohesion is nurtured through everyday roles in enterprise operations and community life, and is embodied by local leaders like "Mayor Al", whose role demonstrates how peer leadership and social cohesion thrive in a self-governed village.[vii]

Marcel LeBrun recently introduced Neighbourly Homes, an expansion of the 12 Neighbours vision focused on rapid housing development and meeting urgent needs. The Neighbourly Homes model emphasizes "ultra-low barrier" transitional housing that can be rapidly deployed. Units are private, lockable, safe, furnished, and do not impose restrictions like curfews or mandatory daytime checkouts. The goal is to remove every reason why people might choose to stay outside by providing housing that is accessible, adaptable, and immediately available.[viii]

3.1.3 Funding and Partnerships

The success and scalability of the 12 Neighbours Community Program are closely tied to its diverse funding sources and collaborative partnerships. While the project was initially driven by the vision and personal investment of LeBrun and other private philanthropy, it has since attracted substantial public sector support that has enabled its rapid growth.

From the beginning, the 12 Neighbours Community Program has benefited from private investors and social enterprise revenue. LeBrun personally invested over $4 million of his own funds into the initiative, supplementing approximately $12 million in government grants secured from provincial and federal sources.[ix]

Other local philanthropists and donors have actively engaged in the project through the 12N (12 Neighbours) Development Fund, contributing to essential employment and developmental support. One community partnership is with the Fredericton Community Foundation, which provided a $30,000 Game Changer Grant to help launch the Path to Independence initiative. This funding directly supported employment and training opportunities for residents, including roles in the tiny-home construction crew and social enterprises, helping to build skills and increase residents' financial independence. Additionally, the program has formed connections with regional training institutions and local employers to create accessible pathways for residents who wish to pursue further education or employment outside the community.[x]

Additionally, dozens of private individuals and community groups have made ongoing donations ranging from $1,000 to $10,000+, with many contributing monthly pledges that help sustain the social enterprises and wraparound services.

In February 2023, the program secured over $13 million in combined funding from the provincial and federal governments to support the second phase of development. This funding included a forgivable loan of $2.4 million through the Affordable Rental Housing Program and a long-term commitment of $7.1 million in rent supplements to ensure affordability for future residents.[xi]Additionally, the federal government contributed $3.8 million through the National Housing Co-Investment Fund, a key stream of the National Housing Strategy, to support both the first and second phases of the project. [xii] The program's Social Enterprise Centre also contributes to its sustainability by generating revenue through community-run businesses such as the café, retail shop, and modular home factory.

Figure 3. Collaboration between members of the 12 Neighbours Community.

In addition to its diversified funding model, the 12 Neighbours Community Program has actively developed partnerships with local governments, community organizations, and service providers to strengthen its delivery model and ensure residents receive comprehensive support. From the outset, the program worked closely with the City of Fredericton and the Province of New Brunswick to secure land and funding that enabled rapid community growth.

These relationships were essential in obtaining the public investments that supported the first and second phases of construction, as well as the long-term rent supplements that make sure the homes remain affordable.

The success of the community also depends on strong collaborations with local support services. While the program provides many supports directly within the community, it also connects residents to external organizations for additional services such as mental health care, primary health care, addiction recovery programs, and further educational opportunities. Provided iPads offered with each home allow residents to easily access digital health platforms, community resources, and employment services, reducing barriers to service navigation and enhancing immediate support options. Moreover, the program collaborates with regional educational institutions like the New Brunswick Community College, enabling residents to continue their education or training.

The program's website lists over 50 donors, including Rotary clubs, churches, insurance firms, and community foundations, contributing both financial support and in-kind services. Some have provided materials, volunteer time, or sponsorships that sustain the program's social enterprises. These grassroots contributors help operate the community café and modular home factory, reinforcing both economic viability and resident inclusion.

The multi-layered partnerships that support 12 Neighbours extend beyond formal agreements. Local businesses, faith-based groups, and individual donors continue to contribute both financial resources and in-kind support to help sustain the program's social enterprises. These collaborative cross-sector partnerships ensure that the 12 Neighbours Community is not just a

housing solution but a fully integrated, community-driven model where residents have access to the resources, connections, and supports needed to achieve stability and independence.

3.1.4 Program Outcomes and Impact

Since its launch in 2021, the 12 Neighbours Community Program has achieved significant milestones in both housing provision and resident transformations. In early 2023, the federal and provincial governments together contributed over $13 million in funding to support Phase 2, which added 60 homes to the community, along with rent supplements to uphold long-term affordability. By April 2024, the program had successfully built 96 micro-homes.

New Brunswick's housing minister, Jill Green, praised the initiative as "the most innovative initiative that has been developed in New Brunswick to help vulnerable residents in need of housing". Program leaders report that many residents have gone from living outdoors to being housed and employed within a year, highlighting the efficacy of the integrated model.

The success of the 12 Neighbours Community Program in Fredericton has extended beyond its immediate impact, positioning the model as a blueprint for regional replication. Inspired by the program's innovative, low-barrier approach, other municipalities in New Brunswick have begun adopting similar strategies. Notably, the City of Saint John has partnered with 12 Neighbours to launch transitional Neighbourly Homes, bringing the same courtyard-style, rapidly deployable housing to address local homelessness challenges. These new units are designed to provide ultra-low barrier shelter with wraparound supports and 24/7 staffing, creating a safe and stable environment for individuals with complex needs. This expansion demonstrates how the 12 Neighbours model can be tailored to different community contexts, offering both permanent and transitional housing solutions.

These results reflect both individual renewal and system-level impact, making the program a transformative example for Miramichi's homelessness strategy.

3.1.5 Key Takeaways

The 12 Neighbours Community Program offers valuable insights for communities like Miramichi seeking sustainable, community-driven solutions to homelessness. The following key lessons can inform the design and implementation of future local strategies:

- **Community-Led Governance:** Governance structures at 12 Neighbours are designed to actively involve residents in decision-making, daily operations, and leadership roles. This has fostered a deep sense of community ownership, pride, and accountability, empowering residents to shape their environment and support one another. Embedding community-led governance can foster social cohesion and encourage peer leadership among those with lived experience.

- **Low-Barrier, Wraparound Supports:** Providing housing alone is not sufficient to break the cycle of homelessness. The success of 12 Neighbours stems from its integration of low-barrier, trauma-informed, person-centred support that meet residents where they

are. Services like substance-use recovery counselling, mental health supports, healthcare referrals, and employment pathways are accessible on-site or through strong local partnerships. This holistic approach reduces the systemic barriers that often prevent vulnerable people from seeking or sustaining help.

- **Pathways to Economic Independence:** One of the most innovative aspects of the 12 Neighbours model is the role of its Social Enterprise Centre, which generates revenue and provides meaningful, low-barrier employment opportunities. Residents can participate in flexible jobs that rebuild skills, confidence, and financial independence at their own pace.

- **Flexible, Multi-Sector Partnerships:** The growth and sustainability of 12 Neighbours have relied on a diverse funding model that combines private philanthropy, social enterprise revenue, and public investment. Equally important are the wide-ranging partnerships with local governments, service providers, businesses, faith groups, and educational institutions. These collaborative relationships have provided the agility to scale quickly, the resources to support wraparound services, and the flexibility to tailor solutions to emerging needs, like the rapid expansion of Neighbourly Homes. Miramichi can draw from this example to build a coordinated, community-driven response that leverages multiple funding streams and cross-sector partnerships.

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3.2   United Property Resource Corporation

As housing affordability weakens and homelessness intensifies across Canada, innovative approaches to land and property use are becoming increasingly essential. One emerging solution is the adaptive reuse of underutilized or surplus faith-based infrastructure to meet evolving community needs. Many churches and religious organizations face declining congregations and increasing maintenance costs, leading to difficult decisions about the future of their properties.

In response, organizations like the [United Property Resource Corporation](#) (UPRC) have developed models that transform these properties into mixed-use developments that preserve community heritage while addressing urgent social challenges. UPRC operates as a social-purpose real estate developer, focusing on reimagining church spaces to deliver both affordable housing and essential community services. Their approach balances property redevelopment with social mission, engaging stakeholders from faith communities, government, and the private sector to create sustainable, community-serving assets.

3.2.1   Background and Organizational Context

In 2019, the United Church of Canada established UPRC to assist communities of faith, regional councils, and other entities in making beneficial property decisions. As the first point of contact for all property matters within the United Church network, UPRC was designed to provide strategic guidance to ensure church assets continue to serve the community.

Across Canada, many faith communities are struggling with the dual pressures of declining congregations and aging infrastructure, resulting in large, underutilized properties that are expensive and unsustainable to maintain. These properties, often located in central and well-connected neighborhoods, represent a significant but underused asset base at a time when the country is facing a severe housing crisis.[xiii]

Meanwhile, Canada is projected to experience a shortage of 3.5 million homes by the end of this decade, a gap that has driven housing costs to historic highs and left many middle-class and working families unable to find affordable, family-friendly rental options.

Recognizing this urgent need, UPRC has positioned itself as a

Figure 4. St. Luke's Toronto, Kindred Works's proposal for a 12-story development that includes rental apartments, new community space, and the preservation of a heritage building.

bridge between faith communities and the broader public good by transforming surplus or underutilized church lands into vibrant, mixed-use developments. These projects can also go beyond creating housing, integrating essential social infrastructure such as daycares, food banks, and community hubs while ensuring that the properties continue to fulfill their historic role as centers of support, connection, and service.

This approach is inspired by a larger trend across North America, often referred to as Yes In God's Backyard (YIGBY), which has emerged as a socially conscious alternative to conventional real estate development.[xiv] YIGBY seeks to unlock the potential of faith-based lands for public benefit, countering both the resistance to new housing developments and the loss of community spaces that occurs when properties are sold to purely commercial developers.

UPRC and its development arm, Kindred Works, are at the forefront of this movement, leading a collaborative coalition that includes nonprofits, municipalities, private sector partners, and other faith organizations. Together, they are pioneering a values-driven model of housing delivery that prioritizes affordability, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability while preserving the cultural and spiritual

> "UPRC represents an exciting opportunity to reimagine Canadian neighbourhoods by building diverse, affordable, places where all can live, gather and thrive. We are not just building housing, we are building homes and communities for all Canadians. If these community assets were sold today, the vital benefit to our neighbourhoods would be lost forever."

significance of the properties they redevelop. Kindred Works acts as developer, asset manager, and property manager across its sites, ensuring a consistent and values-driven approach to each project. This strategic framework allows congregations to retain equity stakes in their properties, leverage nonprofit land for public benefit, and reinvest profits in social infrastructure, all while addressing pressing housing shortages in under-served communities.

3.2.2 Program Design and Delivery Mode

UPRC and Kindred Works have created a scalable program model that transforms underutilized church properties into inclusive, mixed-income rental housing anchored in community values. This model prioritizes both social impact and financial sustainability, ensuring that these historic sites continue to serve their neighborhoods in relevant and meaningful ways.

According to UPRC, their program design follows a structured, three-phase planning process that ensures each project is rooted in local priorities and the long-term vision of the congregation. The first phase, **Assessment**, involves a detailed review of the property's condition, current usage, neighborhood context, and financial prospects. UPRC works closely with faith communities to evaluate the property's potential as a foundation for both worship and community life. The second phase, **Strategy**, culminates in a customized Vitality Report that presents tailored recommendations and pathways for revitalization. These options may include rental income strategies, collaborative partnerships, adaptive reuse of underutilized spaces, or

sustainability-focused upgrades. The final phase, **Stewardship**, sees UPRC guiding the congregation through implementation, leveraging expertise in property management, legal frameworks, financial modeling, and environmental design to ensure successful execution.[xv]

Kindred Works was launched as a purpose-driven development platform designed to unlock the potential of church-owned sites and address the growing demand for affordable housing, building on UPRC's foundational expertise. The organization employs a systems-based approach that treats each property not as a standalone project but as part of a larger portfolio, achieving economies of scale in design, construction, and financing.[xvi] Serving simultaneously as developer, asset manager, and property manager, Kindred Works ensures that the long-term purpose, values, and design integrity of each site are preserved. A strong emphasis on architectural quality and environmental performance underpins its model, with trusted partners such as KPMB Architects contributing to scalable, climate-resilient building solutions.[xvii]

> "In the past, sites were often sold. Especially in urban centers, the community space would be lost, they'd be turned into condos and the common good would not be served."
>
> --- *David Constable, Chief Development Officer, Kindred Work*

Projects are typically located on or adjacent to church-owned land and are tailored to reflect the character, scale, and needs of the surrounding communities. Each development includes a mix of unit sizes to support diverse household types, ranging from single residents to multi-generational families. Beyond providing housing, the focus is on building vibrant communities where residents have access to spaces that encourage connection, collaboration, and a sense of belonging.

A hallmark of their programs is the inclusion of shared social infrastructure. Each redevelopment incorporates community-focused amenities such as childcare facilities, communal gardens, bookable multipurpose rooms, and spaces for food distribution or local programs. These shared amenities not only address practical needs but also foster stronger social ties and create inclusive environments. This approach aligns with UPRC's mission to preserve the community-serving legacy of church properties, adapting them to meet modern challenges such as housing affordability, food security, and social isolation.

Unlike traditional developers, UPRC operates at the intersection of property development, social innovation, and urban planning. Its methodology emphasizes long-term community benefit over short-term gains, integrating thorough site assessments, financial feasibility studies, and extensive stakeholder engagement into each project. UPRC also plays an educational role by publishing research, hosting webinars, and offering tools that help faith-based organizations explore adaptive reuse as a sustainable strategy for their properties.

3.2.3 Funding and Partnerships

At the heart of UPRC and Kindred Works' development model is the unique partnership structure between the United Church of Canada, Kindred Works, and a network of public and private financiers.

The United Church of Canada contributes the market value of church-owned land as equity into redevelopment projects. This contribution significantly lowers upfront costs and provides a strong financial foundation for each initiative. Kindred Works then takes responsibility for raising the additional funds required for early-stage design, pre-development, the entitlement process, and full-scale construction.[xviii]

This funding approach combines insured loans from lenders like Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) with grants and contributions from municipal and provincial governments, as well as investments from community-focused partners and others. This collaborative financial framework not only ensures the long-term viability of each project but also preserves the social purpose of the properties while delivering affordable and mixed-income housing.

At the launch of UPRC in 2020, CMHC's Affordable Housing Innovation Fund provided UPRC with a $20 million revolving line of credit to cover pre-development and pre-construction costs across its national portfolio of projects. This funding supports over 200 church-owned sites, enabling UPRC and Kindred Works to more efficiently prepare projects for implementation.[xix] By leveraging the land value contributed by the United Church as equity and combining it with CMHC-backed financing, the model reduces the need for large upfront capital from communities, allowing resources to be reinvested into community programs and services.

Beyond federal support, Kindred Works actively works with provincial and municipal governments, as well as other faith-based organizations to secure additional grants, incentives, and low-interest financing streams that strengthen the financial structure of its projects. Municipal contributions often include development charge deferrals, expedited land-use approvals, or affordable housing funds, while provincial programs may offer capital grants or subsidies for units that meet specific affordability, accessibility, or sustainability criteria.

A notable example of this multi-layered partnership approach is the 2023 Memorandum of Agreement between UPRC and the Eastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC). This collaboration was designed to unlock redevelopment opportunities across ELCIC properties, with the shared goal of creating affordable housing and renewed gathering spaces for local congregations. By combining the land and community assets of faith-based organizations with UPRC's planning expertise and Kindred Works' development capacity, these partnerships produce housing solutions that align with broader public policy priorities, including expanding affordable rental supply, supporting mixed-income communities, and addressing environmental sustainability.[xx]

To achieve financial sustainability while keeping affordability at the core, Kindred Works employs a cross-subsidization model that blends market and below-market rental units. Approximately one-third of all units are reserved for affordable rentals, while the remaining units generate market-rate income to offset costs and fund long-term operations. This balance is supported by revenue diversification, including leasing commercial or community spaces for childcare centers, social enterprises, or other community services. By integrating housing and community amenities, the developments not only generate consistent cash flow but also create vibrant, self-sustaining community hubs.

Impact investing and partnerships with community-focused investors also play a growing role in the funding strategy. Kindred Works attracts socially conscious investors who value projects with strong social and environmental outcomes, including commitments such as Net Positive status by 2030 and rigorous sustainability standards like LEED Gold certification. This approach provides an additional source of capital while aligning with the mission-driven nature of UPRC's work. Philanthropic contributions and partnerships with nonprofits also help reduce costs for social infrastructure within the developments, such as food banks or community kitchens.

Additionally, UPRC and Kindred Works leverage economies of scale by managing a portfolio of over 22 active projects totaling approximately 3,300 housing units. This portfolio-based approach allows them to negotiate better terms with lenders, secure competitive construction contracts, and replicate design and sustainability solutions across multiple sites. By reducing unit costs and streamlining development timelines, the model enhances financial resilience while maintaining affordability and quality.

3.2.4   Program Outcomes and Impact

This initiative has demonstrated that adaptive reuse of faith-based properties can produce measurable outcomes that address both local housing needs and broader community priorities. By focusing on inclusive mixed-income housing and multi-use community infrastructure, the program not only preserves historic and cultural assets but also fosters social cohesion, financial resilience, and long-term sustainability. The organization's portfolio-wide strategy has already delivered a pipeline of 22 active developments totaling 3,300 units, with one-third of these units priced below market rates. This commitment to affordability ensures that Canadians in varying income ranges can access stable, family-friendly rental options in increasingly competitive markets.[xxi] This scalable model integrates architectural excellence, environmental performance, and social return on investment, targeting outcomes such as 80% local spending, one-third below-market rents, and Net Positive status.

UPRC has supported numerous successful church conversions across Ontario, demonstrating the transformative potential of adaptive reuse, particularly when paired with community engagement and social purpose. One of the most notable examples of UPRC's success is the revitalization of Merrickville United Church in Ontario. Facing an uncertain future due to limited resources, the congregation had UPRC explore options that would maintain the building's historic significance while enhancing its role as a community gathering space. Through in-depth

community consultations and a partnership with the local municipality, UPRC helped establish The Pews, a cooperative of nine local organizations that transformed the church into a vibrant village centre. The co-op leases the space at a nominal rate, ensuring long-term financial stability and ongoing property oversight by UPRC. Today, Merrickville United Church serves as a hub for intergenerational connection, cultural activities, and social services, demonstrating how adaptive reuse can simultaneously preserve heritage and foster community vitality.[xxii]

Another powerful case study is St. John's United Church in Brockville, which had suffered a devastating ceiling collapse in 2014. Following significant restoration, the church faced ongoing financial pressures and turned to UPRC for a sustainable path forward. In collaboration with the community, UPRC facilitated the creation of the St. John's Foundation for the Arts, which reimagined the church as a venue for performing arts. [xxiii] Today, the building hosts cultural events and Sunday worship services, preserving its spiritual role while serving as a cultural cornerstone for the region.

UPRC's impact extends to congregations that have disbanded, wishing to ensure that their physical spaces continued to contribute to the community's social fabric. A key example is Keswick United Church, which after 150 years of service, closed its congregation in 2023. Instead of allowing the property to become dormant or sold off, UPRC worked with the Shining Waters Regional Council to redesign the church for multi-use community purposes. The building underwent essential repairs and renovations, with the sanctuary converted into a versatile event space and the hall leased to a childcare provider. Today, Keswick United Church hosts community groups such as the Girl Guides and volunteer organizations, all while generating sustainable revenue under UPRC's ongoing property management.

These success stories highlight the program's wider social impact: strengthening communities, preserving heritage, and creating spaces that meet contemporary needs. Whether through childcare centers, co-operative hubs, or cultural venues, UPRC's approach ensures that formerly underutilized church properties are reimagined as living assets that support social inclusion and economic resilience.

The program aims to scale its impact through Kindred Works' ambitious target of housing 34,000 people over the next 15 years. By maintaining its focus on one-third below-market rents, carbon-conscious design, and collaborative governance models, UPRC and Kindred Works have successfully redefined how faith-based properties can shape inclusive, future-ready communities.

3.2.5 Key Takeaways

The core element of UPRC's impact is its ability to turn declining or disbanded congregations into opportunities for community revitalization. It offers valuable insights for communities like Miramichi seeking sustainable, community-driven solutions to homelessness. The following key lessons can inform the design and implementation of future local strategies:

- **Land-as-Equity Partnerships:** UPRC's success is rooted in a unique partnership structure where the United Church contributes land as equity, allowing Kindred Works to secure funding from CMHC, municipal and provincial governments, and impact investors. This approach reduces upfront costs, attracts diverse capital sources, and ensures that redeveloped properties remain aligned with social purpose rather than purely commercial interests.

- **Community-Driven Design and Engagement:** Each redevelopment begins with a deep understanding of community needs, shaped through consultations with local stakeholders and municipalities. Projects like Merrickville's "The Pews" co-op demonstrate how inclusive planning can preserve historic character while creating vibrant spaces that reflect and serve local priorities.

- **Preservation of Heritage and Community Legacy:** UPRC demonstrates how historic church properties can be revitalized rather than sold off, preserving their cultural and spiritual significance. Transformations like ArtsHub Brockville and Keswick United Church highlight how adaptive reuse can protect legacy spaces while reimagining them as cultural, educational, or community hubs that meet contemporary needs.

- **Financial Sustainability Through Cross-Subsidization:** By blending market and below-market rental units, UPRC ensures ongoing affordability while generating the revenue needed to sustain property operations. Complementary income streams, such as leasing space to childcare centers or cultural groups, further strengthen long-term financial resilience.

3.3   Fredericton Community Kitchens

Fredericton Community Kitchens is a volunteer-driven food security initiative that operates multiple daily meal programs and supports school-based food distribution, providing more than 17,000 meals each month to individuals and families in need. Its success lies in a strong foundation of local partnerships, community engagement, and operational adaptability. By collaborating with schools, nonprofits, food distributors, and volunteers, the organization sustains a high level of service while maintaining a lean structure.

For Miramichi, this initiative offers a valuable model for building resilient and scalable food security strategies. Smaller communities often rely on a few key providers, making them vulnerable to service disruptions if these actors withdraw or face capacity challenges. Fredericton Community Kitchens mitigates these risks through diversified volunteer engagement, decentralized delivery methods, and proactive partnerships with donors and local institutions.

3.3.1   Background and Organizational Context

In the early 1980s, formal municipal or provincial strategies to address hunger were limited, and responding to food insecurity was largely the domain of faith-based organizations, community groups, and volunteers. Fredericton Community Kitchens emerged in that gap, sustained by grassroots energy and charitable donations, and expanding its services as need grew. On its first day of operation, the organization served only four bowls of soup in the basement of a local church, but this act of compassion laid the foundation for what would become a cornerstone of Fredericton's social support network.[xxiv]

From its inception, the Kitchens have been guided by a simple yet powerful mission: to provide nutritious meals to those in need with compassion and dignity, regardless of background or circumstances. Over time, this initiative has transformed from a single-meal program into a multi-faceted organization that offers daily meal services, outreach programs, and school-based food distribution.

> **The mission of Fredericton Community Kitchens:**
>
> Providing nutritious food and a sense of community to those in Fredericton and beyond in difficult economic and social conditions and working to eliminate hunger through education and advocacy."

The evolution of Fredericton Community Kitchens reflects both community needs and the organization's commitment to continuous adaptation. In response to growing demand, the Kitchens introduced an evening meal program in 2000, followed by the launch of a breakfast program in 2006 to support early-morning food access. By 2011, recognizing that certain neighborhoods faced barriers to accessing centralized services, the organization expanded its reach through outreach meal deliveries, particularly to the city's north side.[xxv]

This expansion established a distributed service model that not only increased meal capacity but also allowed the Kitchens to serve populations that were previously underrepresented. Today,

the organization provides three meals a day on weekdays and two on weekends, serving more than 17,000 meals per month, with its main kitchen alone producing 77,000 meals annually.

While Fredericton benefits from a stable public sector and post-secondary institutions, challenges such as poverty, food insecurity, and a shortage of affordable housing persist. The rising cost of living, coupled with seasonal employment patterns, has left many residents vulnerable to food shortages. Children and youth, seniors on fixed incomes, and individuals experiencing homelessness are particularly at risk. Fredericton Community Kitchens has become a trusted resource for these groups, ensuring they have consistent access to nutritious food. The Student Hunger Program is particularly notable, working with over 20 local schools to deliver hundreds of lunches each day and

Figure 5. Some of the crew at the Student Hunger Program. Source: Anglican Diocese of Fredericton.

weekly food backpacks, directly tackling youth food insecurity.

Although Fredericton Community Kitchens remains primarily reliant on non-government sources, donations, volunteers, and philanthropic grants, it has benefited from targeted public and foundation funding that supported program expansion.

Government structures have also offered structural support. The Department of Health defines and differentiates between food banks and community kitchens, providing guidelines for safe food handling and operational best practices for meal-preparation organizations like Fredericton Community Kitchens. This regulatory clarity has helped the organization maintain consistent and safe operations while delivering meals on-site and through mobile outreach channels.

3.3.2 Program Design and Delivery Mode

Fredericton Community Kitchens operates through a carefully structured service model that integrates daily meal preparation, school-based programs, and outreach initiatives. The organization begins each day with menu planning and bulk food preparation in its central kitchen. Volunteers and staff collaborate to source ingredients through purchases, donations, and partnerships with local food distributors, ensuring efficiency while upholding meal quality. The prepared meals are then allocated across three core programs: on-site dining, lunch delivery

for schools, and outreach to community organizations, each with dedicated teams responsible for coordination, packaging, and delivery.

Thanks to this combination of bottom-up volunteer support and evolving local funding, the organization transformed a single kitchen space into a multi-program hub capable of delivering

BREAKFAST	LUNCH	SUPPER
Monday through Friday 7:45 am to 8:15 am	Sunday through Saturday 11:30 am to 12:30 pm	Sunday through Saturday 5:00 pm to 5:45 pm

Figure 6. Regular Meal Serving Times of Daily Meal Program. Source Fredericton Community Kitchens.

breakfast, lunch, supper, student lunches, outreach meals, and more, all while retaining operational autonomy and keeping overhead lean. Grassroots enthusiasm fueled early expansion, and as community needs grew, the organization scaled through careful resource planning rather than hiring large numbers of staff. At the same time, the Kitchens depend on over 300 volunteers and maintain tight cost control, avoiding the overhead generally associated with larger food-service institutions.

The following programs ensure consistent and accessible food support:

- **The Daily Meal Program** remains the core of the organization's operations. Breakfast, lunch, and supper are prepared and served at the main kitchen on weekdays, with brunch and supper offered on weekends. Guests do **not need to register** or show identification, which creates a welcoming and barrier-free environment. Volunteers prepare meals in shifts, ensuring that food is ready at set times each day, and that the dining area remains clean and organized.[xxvi] This approach emphasizes consistency, reliability, and dignity, allowing community members to access meals in a supportive and respectful setting.
- **The Student Hunger Program** began in 2013 when a concerned teacher at Leo Hayes High School believed that up to 200 students in the school were going to school hungry every day. In response, volunteers now prepare and package hundreds of lunches, ensuring that each includes balanced items such as sandwiches, fruit, and snacks.[xxvii] These meals are delivered directly to over twenty schools across Fredericton before the lunch period begins, reducing stigma by making the meals readily available to all students in need, without requiring a complicated sign-up process. Weekly backpack packages are assembled on designated days, containing non-perishable food items that students can take home over weekends. This process is coordinated with school staff to ensure smooth distribution and confidentiality.
- **The Community Outreach Program** extends meal delivery to shelters, transitional housing, and community organizations across Fredericton. Staff and volunteers prepare large batches of meals, which are loaded onto vehicles for delivery at scheduled times. This outreach service is designed to meet people where they are, particularly those who may not have the means or ability to travel to the main kitchen. Regular communication

with partner organizations helps ensure that meal quantities match demand, and that dietary needs or preferences are addressed wherever possible.

- **The newer Grab & Go Breakfast Program** demonstrates the organization's ability to adapt its delivery methods to changing needs. Breakfast items such as fruit, juice boxes, and packaged snacks are prepared in advance and set up for easy pick-up at a local community hub during school mornings. This program requires precise timing and coordination, as it serves young people on their way to school. Volunteers ensure that the environment is friendly and approachable, encouraging children and youth to take what they need without hesitation.

These programs form an integrated delivery system that combines fixed-site services, school-based distribution, and mobile outreach. This structure allows Fredericton Community Kitchens to respond effectively to diverse community needs, while maintaining a consistent focus on accessibility, choice, and dignity. The program design is built for flexibility, ensuring that the organization can quickly adjust to fluctuations in demand, volunteer availability, or external challenges such as public health restrictions.

3.3.3 Funding and Partnerships

Over the past decade, Fredericton Community Kitchens has built a diverse and resilient funding structure that has enabled its evolution from a small church-based soup kitchen into a city-wide multi-program hub.

The organization is primarily sustained by grassroots giving, including individual donors, church groups, and small-scale fundraising events. This strong community foundation allows the Kitchens to remain independent, minimize administrative costs, and direct the majority of its resources to meal preparation and program delivery.

Become an Annual Sponsor

Support us throughout the year in many ways. If you want to commit, your logo can be on vehicles, all print media not tied to events, two social media thank you posts per year and your logo included on all of our banners.
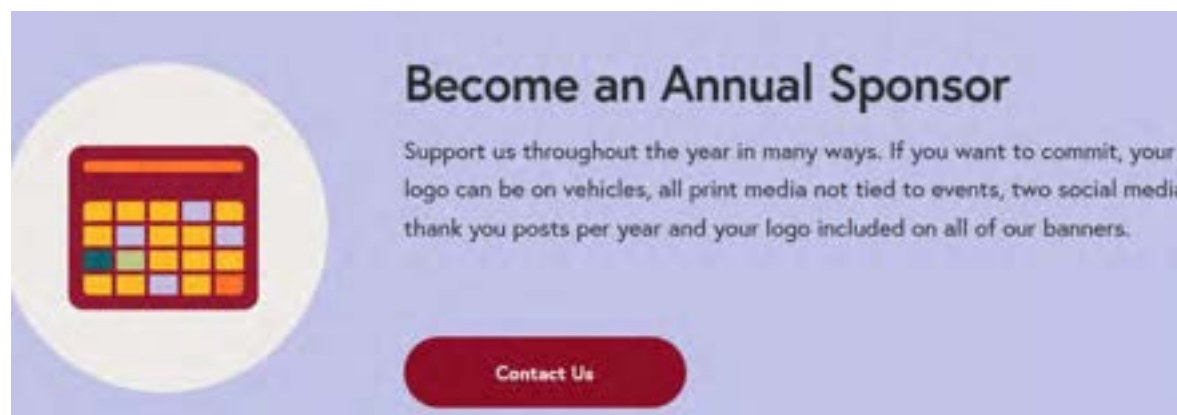
Contact Us

Figure 7. Advocacy for Annual Sponsors. Source: Fredericton Community Kitchens.

Building on the grassroots support, the organization has developed a collaborative partnership model that actively engages local businesses, workplaces, and community agencies. Corporate giving and workplace volunteering are positioned as mutually beneficial opportunities, allowing businesses to demonstrate social responsibility while fostering stronger community ties. Partners contribute through product-based fundraising campaigns, seasonal promotions, and

food drives, while event sponsorships offer businesses visibility through logo placement on vehicles, banners, and social media. These partnerships not only enhance the Kitchens' financial stability but also amplify public awareness of food insecurity and inspire community involvement. [xxviii] This approach strengthens the Kitchens' capacity to provide meals while educating customers on the values of its partners, thus fostering a stronger sense of community connection and shared purpose.

Volunteer engagement remains central to sustaining operations. With more than 300 volunteers supporting food prep, packaging, serving, and delivery tasks across all programs, the Kitchens benefit from highly flexible, low-cost staffing. This volunteer infrastructure is bolstered by corporate partner workplace giving campaigns, in-kind support from local businesses, and sponsorships tied to events and brand visibility. Through these relationships, the organization acquires food donations, kitchen supplies, and logistical assistance with minimal ongoing costs.

The organization's funding base is further strengthened by targeted grants and contributions from foundations. Key supporters such as the Fredericton Community Foundation and programs like Rosemary's Pantry have provided critical funding for capacity-building initiatives. For example, a 2021 grant of $7,500 supported the implementation of the Food for Thought software, improving the coordination and tracking of the Student Hunger Program. These investments have allowed the Kitchens to adopt new tools, streamline logistics, and expand specialized programs without straining day-to-day operations.

Strategic partnerships have also driven program expansion. In 2024–25, the Planning and Strategy Committee met five times to evaluate opportunities for extending services beyond the downtown core. This led to a pilot collaboration with Under the Tent, delivering weekly meals to the city's Northside, as well as a partnership with Sitansisk (St. Mary's First Nation) to provide grab-and-go snacks for school-aged children. [xxix] These initiatives demonstrate the Kitchens' ability to scale its services by leveraging the strengths and networks of trusted community partners rather than expanding its own infrastructure.

The organization's agility was further demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic, when in-person services were restricted by public health measures. Fredericton Community Kitchens secured emergency funding, including support from the TELUS Friendly Future Foundation, to launch a Pantry Delivery Program that provided grocery boxes and ready-to-eat meals to over 150 families per week. This experience underscored the importance of a diverse funding model that balances grassroots donations with flexible corporate and foundation support.

Fredericton Community Kitchens is actively investing in program evaluation, technology adoption, and partnership deepening. For example, implementing digital tools like Food for Thought enables better tracking of school program participants and reduces administrative gaps. The Planning and Strategy Committee continues to assess logistics for expanding services to outlying urban and Indigenous communities. Corporate donors, such as local retailers and service providers, are increasingly offering sponsorship agreements, corporate volunteer days, and event partnerships, further strengthening the organization's long-term financial stability

and community integration. The multi-stream funding strategy, combining grassroots donations, grants, in-kind resources, and strategic partnerships, allows the Kitchens to expand and adapt while keeping core operating costs lean and mission focused.

3.3.4 Program Outcomes and Impact

Fredericton Community Kitchens has established itself as a cornerstone of food security in the city, providing a lifeline to thousands of residents each year. Its impact extends well beyond the provision of meals, fostering a sense of dignity, compassion, and community connection for those who are most vulnerable. The organization's programs address multiple dimensions of food insecurity, from daily nutrition to long-term stability, while also reducing the stigma that can be associated with accessing charitable food services. By combining a welcoming environment with reliable and diverse meal offerings, the Kitchens ensure that no individual is turned away, regardless of background or circumstance.

The scale of the organization's impact is demonstrated by its 2024 operational data. In total, 209,775 meals were served in 2024, reflecting both steady demand and the organization's ability to expand its reach.

Figure 8. Meals Served in 2024. Source: Growing Impact, One Meal at a Time. 2024 ANNUAL REPORT of Fredericton Community Kitchens.

The Daily Meal Program accounted for 77,094 meals, including 11,659 breakfasts, 32,336 lunches, and 33,099 suppers. These consistent meal services form the foundation of the Kitchens' work, providing immediate relief for individuals and families facing hunger on a daily basis. The numbers also reflect the organization's careful coordination of volunteers, food supplies, and kitchen operations to deliver meals efficiently and without compromising quality.

The Student Hunger Program remains one of the Kitchens' most impactful initiatives, delivering 51,936 school lunches and 16,096 food backpacks to children across the greater Fredericton area in 2024. These meals directly address child and youth food insecurity, ensuring that students have access to nutritious food during the school day and over weekends. The

program not only improves the physical well-being of children but also supports their educational success, as adequate nutrition is linked to better focus, attendance, and academic performance. Collaborations with schools have been critical, enabling discreet and efficient distribution that reduces stigma for children receiving support.

The Outreach Program delivered 56,525 meals to shelters, transitional housing, libraries, and community partners in 2024. This decentralized delivery model ensures that food support reaches individuals who cannot easily access the main kitchen, such as seniors with mobility challenges or people living in temporary accommodations. By working with a network of trusted partners, the Kitchens extend their impact into underserved neighborhoods while avoiding duplication of services. This outreach has become particularly important in responding to rising housing insecurity and the growing population of individuals experiencing homelessness in Fredericton.

The Grab & Go Program and Food Box Delivery Program have further diversified the Kitchens' impact. In 2024, 4,540 grab-and-go meals were distributed, primarily serving school-aged children and youth who benefit from quick, accessible food options. Additionally, 3,584 food boxes were delivered to households, providing essential groceries and pantry staples to help families prepare their own meals at home. These complementary services strengthen household food security by combining immediate relief with resources that promote longer-term self-sufficiency.

Further, the success of Fredericton Community Kitchens lies in its ability to foster community resilience. Each meal represents not only nutrition but also a moment of care, helping to build trust and reduce social isolation among vulnerable populations. By maintaining strong volunteer engagement and leveraging partnerships, the Kitchens have created a sustainable model that balances operational efficiency with deep community impact. As demand for food support continues to grow, the organization's track record of delivering nearly 210,000 meals in a single year underscores its critical role in the local social safety net and its capacity to adapt and scale in response to evolving needs.

3.3.5 Key Takeaways

The Fredericton Community Kitchens offers valuable insights for communities like Miramichi seeking sustainable, community-driven solutions to homelessness. The following key lessons can inform the design and implementation of future local strategies:

- **Community-Driven Foundations Build Resilience:** Fredericton Community Kitchens demonstrates how grassroots giving and volunteer energy can form a stable foundation for long-term service delivery. By relying primarily on local donors, small fundraising events, and faith-based contributions, the organization has maintained operational independence and minimized overhead, ensuring that most resources directly support meal preparation and delivery.
- **Diversified Service Models Increase Accessibility:** The organization's multi-program approach, combining fixed-site meal services, school-based food distribution, outreach

deliveries, and grab-and-go options, ensures that support reaches a wide range of clients. This decentralized model reduces barriers to access, particularly for children, seniors, and individuals experiencing homelessness, while allowing flexibility to adjust operations in response to fluctuating demand.

- **Strategic Partnerships Enable Scale and Reach:** Collaborations with schools, local nonprofits, First Nations communities, and corporate partners have allowed the Kitchens to expand their footprint without overextending internal capacity. Initiatives like the partnership with Sitansisk (St. Mary's First Nation) and Under the Tent illustrate how leveraging trusted networks can extend food security programs into underserved areas, including those outside the downtown core.

- **Volunteer Infrastructure Strengthens Community Ownership:** With over 300 volunteers actively engaged in food preparation, packaging, and delivery, Fredericton Community Kitchens has cultivated strong community ownership of its mission. Volunteer engagement is further reinforced by workplace giving programs and corporate volunteer days, which not only provide labor but also deepen local awareness of food insecurity issues.

- **Data-Driven Tools Improve Program Efficiency:** Investments in tools like the Food for Thought software have enhanced the coordination of school meal programs, ensuring that no student is overlooked. This commitment to data-driven operations allows the Kitchens to maintain efficiency even as the volume of services grows, providing a replicable model for other communities looking to integrate technology into food security initiatives.

4   Jurisdictional Scan: Fredericton, New Brunswick

Being within the same Province and facing similar or comparable challenges, Fredericton presents a valuable reference point for Miramichi in exploring localized responses to homelessness and housing insecurity. While larger in population, Fredericton shares many of the same structural and social conditions that shape service delivery in smaller urban centres across the province. The city has gained recognition for advancing community-based housing solutions, including modular construction models and purpose-built transitional communities, alongside sustained partnerships with non-profit agencies and various levels of government. These efforts have been supported by diverse funding sources and demonstrate how targeted investment, innovation, and collaboration can be combined to improve outcomes for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

This scan will review Fredericton's current approaches to addressing homelessness through a focus on systems coordination, strategic planning, and service access for priority populations. These include youth, older adults facing housing displacement, and individuals with complex health and social needs who often fall through service gaps.

4.1.1   Background and Local Context

Fredericton is experiencing a period of rapid demographic and urban transformation. Between 2016 and 2021, the city's population grew by 8%, reaching 67,625 residents, with municipal estimates suggesting this figure climbed to approximately 77,500 by 2024.[xxx] This growth, driven by both interprovincial and international migration, has outpaced historical trends and is expected to continue, with forecasts anticipating a 41% population increase between 2024 and 2044. The fastest growth has occurred among residents aged 65 to 84, consistent with long-standing aging trends. Fredericton's role as a regional employment hub, particularly in the public sector and professional services, further fuels demand as people from surrounding areas seek housing closer to their workplace.

Accompanying population growth is a substantial shift in household composition and housing demand. The number of households is projected to increase by 48% from 2024 to 2044, with the most significant growth expected among households led by individuals aged 45 to 54, as well as older adults aged 75 and over. These changes are driving increased demand for smaller, more affordable dwellings that accommodate one- and two-person households, such as downsizing seniors, lone individuals, and shared living arrangements.[xxxi] As household types and preferences diversify, there is a growing shift toward denser housing forms, including apartments and missing middle typologies, especially as federal programs like the Housing Accelerator Fund incentivize compact, transit-oriented developments.

However, this period of growth has also coincided with a sharp rise in homelessness, creating urgent challenges for the city's housing and social service systems. Between 2021 and 2023, Fredericton experienced a 63% increase in homelessness, a trend driven by low rental vacancy rates, rising costs of living, and limited shelter capacity. In early 2023, the Human Development

Council reported nearly 199 individuals experiencing homelessness in Fredericton, most of whom were chronically unhoused, living rough for longer than six months.

Figure 10: Homelessness Fredericton in June 2025. Source: Human Development Council. This dashboard is compiled with data from both the Homelessness Individual and Family Information System (HIFIS) using the Reaching Home Community Outcomes Report, which is a real-time list of all people known to be experiencing homelessness in the community.

As of June 2025, Fredericton reported 342 individuals experiencing homelessness for at least one day during the month, including 182 people identified as chronically homeless. The system recorded 31 individuals newly entering homelessness and 11 individuals returning after facing previous homelessness, indicating both continued inflow and ongoing instability. [xxxii] These numbers are particularly concerning given the overrepresentation of individuals with complex health, mental health, and substance use needs, many of whom face significant barriers to accessing appropriate housing and support services.

Shelter capacity has struggled to keep pace with this growing demand. In 2023, Fredericton Homeless Shelters served 378 unique individuals and recorded over 13,600 bed-nights, yet reports indicate that up to 100 people remained unsheltered during the winter months. Among those served, youth aged 18 to 24 and seniors over the age of 65 represented a significant portion, highlighting the vulnerabilities of both age groups in the current housing landscape. Despite having approximately 175 shelter, transitional, and supportive housing beds available, service providers report consistently operating at or over capacity. These pressures have underscored the need for not only increased shelter space, but also long-term supportive housing solutions tailored to the needs of specific populations.

> "Appropriate, affordable housing and appropriate adequately paid support services is needed for the province to address the growing homelessness crisis."
>
> --- *April McEachern, Outreach Worker of Fredericton's John Howard Society*

While recent increases in housing production, stabilizing construction costs, and moderating population growth offer a glimmer of hope, the challenges facing Fredericton's housing system

remain deep and structural. The city's homelessness response is thus increasingly shaped by the need for integrated, wraparound supports that address both housing and health-related challenges.

4.1.2   Governance and Strategic Policy

Fredericton's homelessness strategy is anchored in "The Road Home," a 2015 strategic roadmap developed by the Community Action Group on Homelessness (CAGH), which is a multi-sector coalition of over 30 nonprofit agencies, government partners, and community leaders. CAGH also serves as the city's Community Advisory Board under the federal Reaching Home program. CAGH acts as both planner and oversight body, guiding the community's overall homelessness response and overseeing the coordinated implementation of **Housing First** programming. According to Canada's Homelessness Strategy, Housing First involves 3 kinds of service supports[xxxiii]:

- housing with supports to help clients find housing, move in and maintain that housing
- clinical supports providing or facilitating access to health and social care to clients to help them achieve housing stability and encourage well-being; and
- complementary supports, such as assistance with finding employment, volunteer work and accessing training offered on a case-by-case basis to help clients improve their quality of life, integrate into the community and, to the extent possible, achieve self-sufficiency.

Operational delivery is managed by core partners, especially like Fredericton Housing First Services (FHFS), the John Howard Society, and Fredericton Homeless Shelters, in collaboration with clinical services like Capital Region Mental Health & Addictions. Importantly, FHFS is a locally coordinated framework led by the CAGH on Homelessness that brings together housing providers, health and mental health services, social agencies, and municipal partners to implement Housing First principles across the city. FHFS operates through coordinated access, real-time by-name lists, and standardized assessment tools to prioritize individuals with the greatest needs, ensuring client-centered, trauma-informed, and culturally relevant supports. This system is central to delivering Fredericton's homelessness strategy, enabling cross-sector collaboration and responsive service delivery tailored to vulnerable populations. Together, these partners deliver rapid rehousing solutions, coordinated access, and individualized wraparound supports, in line with Housing First principles that prioritize immediate, permanent housing and integrated health and social supports without preconditions.

Recognizing the systemic and individual barriers faced by unhoused populations, the Road Home focuses on improving interagency coordination, leveraging data to inform service delivery, and investing in supportive and affordable housing development. This has been supported by zoning reforms, land use changes, and targeted funding initiatives. [xxxiv] The strategy is further reinforced by the Mayor's Task Force on Homelessness, which issued recommendations to streamline municipal involvement and address public perceptions of supportive housing. The plan outlines three overarching strategies:

- **System Planning & Coordination:** The strategy emphasizes the creation of a coordinated access and assessment process to ensure individuals are matched with the right services at the right time. It promotes the widespread adoption of the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) among service providers to improve data sharing and case management, while also calling for improved collaboration with public system partners in health, justice, and social services.
- **Housing & Supports:** This pillar commits to increasing the supply of both scattered-site and place-based supportive housing units, expanding Housing First programs, and enhancing shelters' roles within the broader housing system. Priority is placed on tailoring interventions to meet the distinct needs of youth, seniors, Indigenous peoples, and those with complex health needs. Prevention is also a key focus, with measures aimed at stabilizing households before they fall into homelessness; and
- **Leadership & Engagement:** It outlines a collaborative governance model, leveraging research and policy advocacy, and identifying a lead agency to oversee implementation.

FHFS and the John Howard Society offers immediate access to permanent housing and is supported by a multi-disciplinary team that includes housing specialists, intensive case managers, peer support workers, and outreach coordinators. All incoming referrals undergo triage using standardized tools like the VI-SPDAT and SPDAT to assess acuity and service needs.[xxxv]

COMMUNITY ACTION GROUP ON HOMELESSNESS

Once housed, clients receive the necessary wraparound supports including tenancy advocacy, life-skills coaching, mental health and addictions counseling, and both short- and long-term case management. This approach prioritizes consumer choice, individualized planning, recovery orientation, and community integration. Approximately 180 individuals have been housed through this model in recent years, demonstrating its scalability and effectiveness for individuals with complex needs.

Fredericton has also implemented robust prevention and diversion strategies at its emergency shelters. Prospective shelter users are screened by Prevention and Diversion Specialists who assess whether individuals can remain safely in their current situation with targeted supports, like food boxes, rental assistance, or landlord advocacy. This diversion model successfully prevented shelter entry for approximately 26% of those seeking services in 2023, reducing strain on limited emergency capacity.

Building on these foundational actions and frameworks, Fredericton's 2022 Affordable Housing Strategy broadens and deepens the City's commitment to expanding focus beyond emergency shelter to include a full spectrum of affordable, supportive, and transitional housing solutions. The strategy prioritizes growing the capacity of community and non-profit housing organizations to better serve vulnerable groups, and supports their development through networking, funding, and resource guidance. It introduces steps to incubate and accelerate community housing projects, streamlining project development with municipal expertise and

early-stage support, and recommends establishing a dedicated, mission-driven housing entity to manage, acquire, and protect affordable housing and work closely with community partners.

To accelerate affordable housing development, the strategy advances innovative land-use policies, including permitting four-unit dwellings in traditional single-family zones, densification initiatives, and transit-oriented housing, along with supports such as planning fee grants, municipal land access, and leveraging the CMHC Housing Accelerator Fund for modular and rental housing.[xxxvi] Broader systemic measures include securing municipal land for projects, advocating for legislative and tax reforms, enhancing renter protections, and coordinating with senior governments for ongoing funding and policy alignment. Continuous monitoring and periodic needs assessments ensure the strategy remains adaptive and effective in addressing Fredericton's evolving housing challenges.

Additionally informing the approach to homelessness and food security for New Brunswick, the Local Food and Beverage Strategy (2021–2025) marks a turning point for the province in recognizing food security as a serious public health and social concern. This strategy embeds community-driven food networks into the provincial agenda and promotes local resilience.

4.1.3   Supports for Priority Populations and Community Partnerships

Addressing the complex issue of homelessness requires the participation of all levels of government, community partners and the public. The community partnerships in Fredericton have played a foundational role in advancing homelessness solutions.

Much of the frontline response, such as shelter operations, outreach programs, and transitional housing, is coordinated through nonprofit agencies and volunteer-led efforts, including those organized by the CAGH and the John Howard Society. Their strategy focusses on the programs and resources for specific priority groups, coordinating both service delivery and prevention measures across the housing and social support spectrum, including:

- **Youth:** Fredericton's supports for youth are delivered through a coordinated mix of outreach services and dedicated housing programs. The Youth Connections initiative, led by the John Howard Society in partnership with the Fredericton Police's Community Integrated Services, engages youth aged 12 to 25 in street-level outreach to assess need, provide referrals, and help youth connect with services, including education, mental health care, and housing placements, often through referrals to Chrysalis House's Youth in Transition residential program, which offers supported living, life skills development, and a nurturing environment for young people in crisis.[xxxvii] Shelter diversion efforts are particularly significant for youth, with prevention coordinators screening potential clients and matching them with supports like family-based temporary placement, rental assistance, or service referrals, successfully diverting approximately 26% of youth applicants from emergency shelter in 2023.
- **Individuals with Complex Health Needs:** Fredericton relies on wraparound supports embedded within its Housing First model and coordinated through Capital Region Mental Health & Addictions, the Downtown Community Health Centre, and

organizations like River Stone Recovery Centre. This includes harm reduction services, clinical supports such as injectable opioid agonist therapy (iOAT), ongoing case management, and integration with crisis response partners. These services are trauma-informed, recovery-oriented, and specifically adapted for people with co-occurring conditions who remain chronically or episodically homeless (roughly 60 of whom are identified as high-acuity on the city's by-name list).

- **Chronically homeless seniors, or those at risk of displacement:** Seniors are supported through age-friendly permanent housing aligned with FHFS and community partners. While not always separated programmatically, seniors are prioritized on assessment tools and benefit from the same coordinated tenancy and healthcare linkages as high-need individuals. The modular tiny-home community built by 12 Neighbours also offers accessible, low-rent housing that may be appropriate for older adults exiting rough sleeping or shelter environments.

Taken together, these measures support a continuum of accessible, data-informed, and person-centred homelessness interventions.

While these organizations are central to Fredericton's Housing First framework and offer invaluable on-the-ground expertise, the ongoing reliance on volunteerism and short-term project funding raises concerns about long-term stability, service continuity, and staff burnout. There is growing recognition that municipal and provincial actors must assume a more proactive leadership role, not just as funders or conveners, but as strategic partners in system-level planning and accountability.

Ensuring the durability and effectiveness of Fredericton's homelessness response will require strengthened cross-sector collaboration and predictable funding mechanisms. Existing successes, like the integration of housing and health services through FHFS and the 12 Neighbours community, underscore the importance of multi-agency collaboration, but also point to the limitations of fragmented funding streams and siloed governance structures.

Moving forward, aligning municipal priorities with federal and provincial homelessness strategies, investing in capacity-building for community agencies, and pursuing long-term funding agreements will be critical.

4.1.4   Fundings and Outcomes

Fredericton's homelessness strategy is supported through a diverse blend of federal, provincial, municipal, philanthropic, and private funding sources.

At the federal level, the city benefits from Canada's Reaching Home program, which provides annual allocations to designated communities to support coordinated homelessness responses[xxxviii]. As mentioned, the CAGH serves as the Community Advisory Board, which can direct these federal funds toward frontline services such as shelter diversion, case management, and housing placements. These resources are vital for sustaining core components of the city's Housing First framework and for enabling coordinated access across service providers.

Provincial and federal housing investments also play a critical role. Through bilateral agreements such as the Affordable Rental Housing Program, the Province of New Brunswick and the Government of Canada provide financial incentives. In 2022, several nonprofit and private developers received forgivable loans, typically around $160,000 per project, to build or renovate affordable rental units including those integrated into Housing First models targeting individuals with disabilities and those facing homelessness. [xxxix] In recent years, new capital contributions were directed to Housing First developments and units targeting individuals with disabilities or chronic homelessness. These programs are complemented by federal tools like the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's (CMHC) Housing Accelerator Fund, which Fredericton leverages to unlock municipal land and streamline development processes.

> "By investing in more affordable housing, we are helping more Canadians access affordable and quality homes in vibrant and welcoming communities. This is one of the many ways our government's National Housing Strategy will ensure that no one is left behind."
>
> --- *The Honourable Ahmed Hussen,*

In addition, philanthropy has also emerged as a cornerstone of Fredericton's funding ecosystem. The Fredericton Housing First Fund, a joint initiative of United Way Central New Brunswick and the Fredericton Community Foundation, provides targeted capital grants (approximately $25,000 per unit) to support the construction of permanent supportive housing. The fund also aims to establish long-term sustainability through an endowment model that helps cover maintenance and ongoing service costs. Similarly, the 12 Neighbours Community further exemplifies how large-scale philanthropic investment – complemented by over $13 million in public funding – can drive innovative housing solutions with wraparound supports.

These funding mechanisms form the financial foundation for Fredericton's homelessness response, enabling the city and its partners to pursue long-term, systems-based solutions tailored to the needs of vulnerable residents.

4.1.4.1   Outcomes

The Road Home set ambitious system-level targets for 2018–19, including housing 267 individuals, providing 78 new supportive housing units, stabilizing over 1,000 households, and delivering rent supplements and rapid rehousing supports to more than 800 households. The plan also aimed to cap the maximum duration of homelessness to 10 days.

Early progress suggests snap successes. The pilot supportive housing placements achieved over 90% six-month tenancy retention, and community reports showed a sharp 31% decline in unique shelter users between 2010 and 2015, despite a 39% increase in total admissions, indicating more episodic encounters rather than prolonged stays.[xl]

More recent point-in-time data also reflects escalating need. Despite structural system improvements, homelessness in Fredericton surged by 63% between 2021 and 2023. This spike reflects tight rental vacancy rates (below 1%), escalating rents, and growing income vulnerability. The 2025 Housing Needs Assessment projects the city will need nearly 20,000

new housing units by 2044, including 6,010 affordable units, to meet growing demand and stabilize vulnerable populations.

While some targets aligned within suite range, full realization required sustained federal and provincial funding as well as system maturation.

4.1.5 Key Takeaways

The City of Fredericton offers valuable insights for communities like Miramichi seeking sustainable, community-driven solutions to homelessness. The following key lessons can inform the design and implementation of future local strategies:

- **Integrated Governance is Crucial for Systemic Change:** Fredericton's success hinges on a coordinated governance structure anchored by the Community Action Group on Homelessness (CAGH), which serves both as a strategic planner and oversight body. This model promotes cross-sector collaboration between housing providers, clinical supports, municipal authorities, and non-profits under a unified vision. The integration of coordinated access, shared assessment tools, and a centralized by-name list enables a truly system-level response, demonstrating that homelessness strategies are most effective when they are not fragmented, but rather rooted in collective leadership and shared accountability.

- **Housing First Must Be Matched with Wraparound Supports:** The city's implementation of Housing First is not just about rapid housing placement, but also involves intensive, personalized case management, mental health and addictions care, tenancy support, and skill-building. This wraparound approach is especially vital for high-acuity populations, including youth, older adults, and individuals with complex health needs. Fredericton's experience shows that secure housing alone is insufficient for long-term stability without embedded health and social supports tailored to individual needs.

- **Diversified and Predictable Funding Enables Innovation and Scale:** Fredericton demonstrates how a multi-pronged funding strategy, blending federal streams like Reaching Home, provincial rental supports, municipal incentives, and philanthropic capital, can build financial resilience and allow for the scaling of creative housing solutions. Notable examples include the 12 Neighbours Community and the Fredericton Housing First Fund, both of which combine public and private investments. This highlights the importance of diversifying funding sources and pursuing long-term sustainability mechanisms (e.g., endowments or land trusts) rather than relying solely on short-term project grants.

- **Targeted Strategies for Priority Populations Improve Equity:** Fredericton's programs explicitly prioritize vulnerable groups who often fall through the cracks seeking help through traditional programs, like youth in crisis, chronically homeless seniors, and individuals with substance use and mental health challenges. Specialized programs like Youth Connections and integrated health responses (including harm reduction and iOAT services) show how tailoring services based on age, health profile, and life stage improves accessibility and outcomes. A one-size-fits-all approach to homelessness is

insufficient; systems must adapt their interventions to the distinct needs of subpopulations.

- **Data-Driven Planning Drives System Effectiveness:** The use of real-time data tools like HIFIS, the By-Name List, and coordinated assessment instruments has strengthened Fredericton's ability to plan and respond. Outcomes like a 31% reduction in unique shelter users (despite increasing admissions) suggest that data-informed strategies have real impact. Ongoing tracking of inflow, chronicity, and service utilization allows for evidence-based decision-making and helps identify gaps before they widen. Communities aiming to enhance their homelessness responses must prioritize data infrastructure as a foundation for action and continuous improvement.

5 Gaps, Conclusions, & Key Takeaways

The case studies and jurisdictional scan presented in this report reveal both the potential and limitations of current responses to homelessness in small urban and rural settings. While Fredericton offers a mature system anchored by Housing First principles and strong governance, significant gaps remain across the region, particularly in upstream prevention, youth and senior-specific services, and sustainable long-term funding. The UPRC and 12 Neighbours cases demonstrate how community-driven models can fill critical service gaps, yet they also underscore the fragility of approaches heavily reliant on volunteers, private philanthropy, and ad hoc funding.

A consistent lesson is the urgent need for strengthened policy and institutional leadership at the local level. Fredericton's progress has been driven by a central planning body with the authority to align funding, coordinate services, and set shared goals. In contrast, communities without a central actor often face fragmented service delivery and duplication of effort. Local governments and community stakeholders in Miramichi and similar regions can take a more proactive role by championing systems coordination, supporting data infrastructure, and fostering shared accountability among service providers.

Sustainability remains a central concern. While volunteer-dependent programs like the Fredericton Community Kitchen provide vital daily support, they are inherently limited by workforce burnout, inconsistent funding, and a lack of integration with broader housing or healthcare strategies. The long-term viability of homelessness responses requires professionalized service delivery models, stable staffing, and investment in organizational capacity. This also includes mechanisms to ensure the continuity of services as community needs evolve.

Partnerships and diversified funding are essential. Across all case studies, the most impactful programs leveraged a mix of public, private, and philanthropic resources. Initiatives such as the 12 Neighbours Community Program demonstrate the scale that becomes possible when capital funding is combined with operational support and service integration. Jurisdictions aiming to replicate these successes must prioritize robust cross-sector collaboration, multi-year funding commitments, and flexible financing models that allow for innovation.

In conclusion, the path forward lies in building coordinated, data-informed, and equity-focused systems of care. Municipal leadership, institutional support, sustainable funding, and inclusive community engagement are foundational to ending chronic homelessness and fostering housing stability for all.

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Appendix B – What We Heard Report

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Acknowledgements

- Affordable Housing Working Group
- AIDS NB
- Bathurst Shelter
- Capital Family Services
- Chaleur Regional Service Commission
- Dining with Dignity
- Genesis Village for Hope
- Greater Miramichi Rural District
- GMSC Housing Authority Staff
- GMSC Management Reps
- GovNB Department of Social Development
- Habitat for Humanity
- Horizon Health Network
- Inclusion NB
- Jeremy's Mission

- John Howard Society
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- Migmaq Justice
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- Miramichi Housing Solutions Board
- Miramichi Regional Multicultural Assoc.
- Miramichi School Board
- Natoaganeg First Nation
- New Brunswick Community College
- New Tide Counselling & Consulting
- North Shore Mi'kmaq Tribal Council
- Shannex (Seniors Living)
- United Way
- YEP

For additional organizations that were consulted as part of the engagement process, please see Appendix A.

Key Findings

Homelessness in Miramichi has evolved into a visible, urgent crisis affecting a widening circle of community members, including working families, seniors, Indigenous peoples, newcomers, and individuals with complex needs. Substandard housing, growing waitlists, and rising costs have left many one crisis away from losing their homes.

Emergency shelters and community organizations do heroic work, but without a unified strategy, sustainable funding, and public will, the cycle continues. Real solutions require inclusive leadership, integrated supports, and bold action to move from crisis response to long-term stability for all residents. The time for coordinated, systemic action is now.

Current Condition of Homelessness in Miramichi

Homelessness in Miramichi has reached a crisis, marked by a severe shortage of affordable and accessible housing, rents far outpacing supports, and a growing divide between need and available services. Marginalized groups face compounded barriers such as documentation requirements, stigma, and systemic gaps in healthcare, mental health, and addiction supports. Despite limited funding, grassroots organizations, driven mostly by volunteers and donations, provide essential services where formal systems fall short. Hidden homelessness is on the rise, with people couch surfing and living in unsafe conditions, while rental options are often substandard or unaffordable.

Local progress exists (e.g., community hubs, expanded shelters) but is hampered by the lack of a coordinated strategy, capacity constraints, and ongoing public resistance in the form of "Not in my Backyard" attitudes (NIMBYism). Fragmented systems, limited regional planning, restrictive policies, and entrenched stigma continue to perpetuate instability and hardship, leaving individuals in precarious housing or at risk of eviction. Real systemic change and significant investment are urgently needed to address these entrenched challenges comprehensively.

Summary of Potential Solutions to Homelessness

The path forward involves evidence-based, person-centered, and integrated responses that move beyond emergency aid to prevention and stability. Sustainable solutions include developing wraparound supports – housing plus coordinated health, addiction, and life skills services – to address root causes and prevent returns to homelessness. Building an affordable, accessible housing supply and streamlining access to supports is essential, as is challenging stigma through public education led by individuals with lived experience. Coordination across sectors, upstream investment, and local, Indigenous, and grassroots leadership are key. Elimination of bureaucratic hurdles, fostering partnerships across government and community organizations, and implementing proven models (such as supportive and harm-reduction housing) will allow for flexible, community-driven solutions capable of turning the tide on homelessness.

Summary of Recommendations for the Homelessness Community Advisory Board (CAB)

✓ **Champion and Coordinate a Regional Homelessness Strategy:** The CAB should coordinate partners from municipal, Indigenous, provincial, community, and private sectors to create a regional homelessness strategy. This includes mapping existing resources, holding joint meetings, and ensuring services are aligned to prevent duplication and service gaps. Such coordination is essential for moving beyond short-term responses to solutions that address root causes of homelessness.

✓ **Governance, Leadership, and Accountability:** To function effectively, CAB should have clear roles, defined membership, and transparent decision-making processes. There must be systems in place for monitoring progress, evaluating initiatives, and transparent reporting so that strategies remain effective and commitments are fulfilled, even as staff or leadership change.

✓ **Policy Advocacy and Sustainable Funding:** CAB should advocate for policy updates at all levels of government. This includes pushing for funding models that support prevention, revising restrictive bylaws that criminalize survival, and expanding access to affordable housing and wrap-around supports. Securing "designated community" status under federal programs will help unlock sustainable, long-term resources tailored to Miramichi's needs.

✓ **Operational Support and Capacity-Building:** CAB should support grassroots and smaller non-profits by facilitating funding opportunities, helping with grant applications, sharing back-office resources, and serving as an umbrella agency or connector to registered charities. This approach can expand the community's capacity for targeted, innovative interventions with reduced administrative burden.

✓ **Improve Communication and Outreach:** Participants stressed the need for the CAB to clearly communicate its mandate and available services, both within their community and to external partners. Proactive outreach and engagement with all relevant stakeholders, including those currently "outside the loop", was identified as a key improvement.

Key Findings

Summary of Recommendations for the Homelessness Community Advisory Board (CAB) (continued)

✓ **Action-Oriented Coordination:** CAB is encouraged to prioritize models that produce direct, visible results – such as holding regular "real-time" meetings where landlords, outreach staff, and housing coordinators actively match available units to people on the by-name list. In addition, maintaining a system for ongoing data collection for local housing stock, needs, and instances of homelessness will help guide decisions and demonstrate real progress to partners and the community. This action-focused approach will help maintain momentum and build trust among all stakeholders.

✓ **Regional, Rural, and Indigenous Inclusion:** Solutions must reach Miramichi's surrounding communities, including rural areas and all local Indigenous nations. CAB should engage these partners as core participants in planning and implementation, adapting supports to cultural, geographic, and demographic needs. Regional Service Commissions can support broader service integration and shared initiatives, while Indigenous partners can help to ensure solutions are equitable, unified, and culturally responsive. CAB could also work with municipal and rural governments to promote land use and planning reforms that make it easier to develop affordable housing outside city centers.

✓ **Center Lived Experience Voices:** Ensure people with lived or living experience of homelessness play active roles in decision-making, program leadership, and evaluation. The CAB has the ability to go beyond consultation, offering meaningful opportunities for direct involvement and leadership development.

✓ **Community Engagement and Stigma Reduction:** Ongoing public education and storytelling initiatives addressing misconceptions about homelessness can build trust with community stakeholders. CAB should use transparent, two-way communication – through public meetings, focus groups, surveys, and accessible feedback channels – to shift public attitudes and secure community buy-in for needed changes.

Introduction & Methodology

Project Purpose & Scope

The Greater Miramichi Service Commission (GMSC) engaged MQO Research and ATN Strategies to develop and lead a robust stakeholder engagement process focused on homelessness, housing challenges, and the work of the Homelessness Community Advisory Board (CAB) in Greater Miramichi. The initiative was designed to capture meaningful, community-driven input to inform the CAB's future strategy, work plan, and regional priorities.
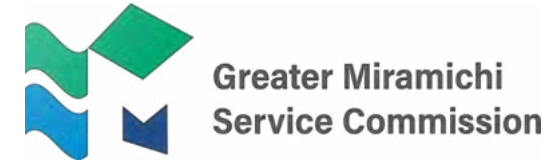
A participatory approach was adopted in the execution of the project, with inputs from a diverse cross-section of the community including individuals with lived experience of homelessness, community organizations, Indigenous communities, service providers, local government, and other relevant partners. Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) was used as a key tool in the data collection, analysis, and reporting of this project.

Key Project Objectives

1. Facilitate a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process to gather input from individuals, organizations, and communities with diverse perspectives on homelessness in Greater Miramichi.
2. Ensure representation and accessibility in all engagement activities, with sensitivity to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) principles.
3. Collect, analyze, and summarize feedback to clearly present common themes, service gaps, challenges, and proposed solutions.
4. Provide an evidence-based summary of stakeholder input to directly inform the CAB's strategic planning and regional decision-making.

Engagement Efforts

MQO and GMSC co-developed an integrated engagement plan to ensure relevant stakeholders had diverse opportunities to provide input and insight into the engagement process.

Online Survey

Engagement Sessions

Interviews

Voice Memos

Emails

EDI / GBA+ Lens

Online Survey
- A public survey was launched from July 24th – August 11th.
- Topics included concerns about homelessness, perceptions of its causes, and potential solutions.
- A total of 373 survey responses were received.

Engagement Sessions / Interviews
- 11 engagement sessions completed, with 47 attending
- 8 in-person interviews and one virtual session completed with 12 individuals with lived/living experience of homelessness or housing challenges
- 59 attendees in total

Supplemental Engagement
- Voice memos (4)
- Emails / Electronic submissions (3)

GENDER-BASED ANALYIS PLUS (GBA+) LENS

GBA+ is an analysis technique that adopts an intersectional approach, going beyond gender, to consider other identity factors such as race, ethnicity, religion, age, mental and physical disability. Widely used by the Government of Canada as a best practice analytical technique, GBA+ encourages the consideration of diverse perspectives and experiences through challenging assumptions and identifying potential impacts.

What We Heard

This section presents a summary of the feedback and perspectives shared during our engagement process with the following key stakeholder groups*:

- Community Organizations
- Municipal Government
- Provincial Stakeholders
- Indigenous Groups
- Individuals with Lived or Living Experience
- GMSC Internal Stakeholders & Partners
- Homelessness Community Advisory Board (CAB)

Methodology Note

This report is a summary of 'what we heard' and reflects the perspectives and feedback received during our consultations. The information presented here will serve as just one input to inform the development of the Greater Miramichi Homelessness Community Advisory Board's (CAB) future strategy, work plan, and priorities.

Please note that comments have been recorded as communicated to us. No attempt was made to verify the factual accuracy of individual statements. For example, if a participant stated that a specific program does not exist when it does, we did not conduct fact-checking. However, such feedback is valuable as it may highlight potential areas for improved communication or education regarding available programs, and may inform recommendations in subsequent action plans.

Please note that while local businesses and landlords were invited to participate, none were available to engage during this process (see Appendix A for a full list of organizations consulted).

Community Organizations

Current Condition of Homelessness in Miramichi

Barriers to Affordable, Accessible Housing: : There is a severe shortage of affordable, inclusive, and accessible housing, especially for marginalized populations (e.g., people with disabilities). Even where subsidies exist, barriers in access, including delays from government and stigmatization by landlords, limit effectiveness and cause people to lose out on housing.

Identified Gaps in Current Supports: There are acute challenges supporting people with combined or overlapping needs – such as addiction, FASD, developmental disability, or serious mental illness – because local resources are not equipped for fully integrated care. Many marginalized groups, including but not limited to Indigenous people, those aging out of care, or individuals leaving prison, face especially daunting obstacles.

Barriers to Accessing Services: Administrative hurdles, such as the need for documentation (i.e., permanent address, ID), age requirements, and difficulty acquiring phone/internet access, prevent those in need from obtaining housing and income supports. Long waitlists and rigid funding requirements exacerbate delays and discourage engagement. Outdated bylaws and policies work to criminalize aspects of homelessness, such as banning tents in parks, while some funding structures create unnecessary hoops for those seeking help. Such measures perpetuate harm and instability.

Grassroots Support & Gaps: Many effective frontline supports are grassroots efforts (e.g., Jeremy's Mission, Dining with Dignity) that are largely unfunded by government, driven by volunteers, and heavily reliant on community donations. These organizations often face operational uncertainty and burnout due to a lack of formal support.

Stigma and Misconceptions: There is significant stigma attached to the unhoused in Miramichi, and misconceptions persist about the causes of homelessness, including assumptions about drug use and the visible characteristics of homelessness, and myths about transience, choice, and laziness, all of which shape unhelpful public attitudes and "Not in My Backyard" perspectives (NIMBYism) .

"When you are trying to access subsidized programs to get into housing, it's also hard to find landlords... It can be very stigmatizing because you have to disclose your income... delays with government... as a result, people lose out on housing options."

"When I say grassroots, I mean two ladies pulling up in vehicles and serving breakfast sandwiches and supper. There's no government funding... little to no support from any level of government."

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Current Condition of Homelessness in Miramichi (continued)

Precarious Housing Among the Working and Vulnerable: Participants consistently highlighted an alarming increase in precarious housing, not only among those traditionally viewed as "at risk," but also among the working poor, seniors, students, and newcomers. Many highlighted that even those with health benefits or decent employment are feeling on the edge of losing their housing.

Vulnerability Among Seniors, Widowers, and Isolated Residents: Seniors and especially widowers, or retirees with no nearby family, are vulnerable to isolation and unable to maintain or adapt their homes as their health and mobility change. Aging-in-place presents unique barriers – many homes cannot be made accessible, home care is costly, and social support is often absent. Seniors are often found in aging homes with no maintenance, struggling with basic utilities such as heat and water.

Substandard Rental Properties: Rental properties range from substandard to unsafe, with tenants facing high heating costs, mold, and poor conditions. International students and newcomers often arrive to find insufficient or entirely lacking housing, sometimes ending up in dire living situations.

Hidden Homelessness: There is a significant issue of "hidden homelessness," where people are couch surfing, living in vehicles, or staying in inadequate conditions that are not immediately visible to the wider community.

"We have seen situations where people arrive for a job or for whatever reason and then are unable to find housing and are stuck and their vehicles or other things."

"Feeling precariously housed while gainfully employed is almost a contradiction, but it's the reality."

"People are paying significant money for buildings that are very unsafe... The standards of living are suffering."

Overview of What We Heard on Solutions to Homelessness

✓ **Wraparound, Person-Centered Supports:** Housing stability requires more than apartment placement; ongoing life skills, financial management, and mental health/addiction support are essential to prevent eviction and nurture independence. There's a significant gap in services that teach these foundational skills.

✓ **Public Messaging & Destigmatization:** Participants see a need for more nuanced, positive public messaging around homelessness that highlights real experiences. Community education campaigns that include insights from those with lived experience can help reduce stigma around homelessness and low-income neighbourhoods. When individuals are given an opportunity to comfortably and safely share their stories, it can lead to increased empathy and community understanding.

✓ **Building Partnerships and Political Commitment:** Miramichi's relatively tight-knit community is seen as an opportunity for holistic, tailored approaches: "getting it right" could set an example for other rural areas. There is willingness among some local businesses and other community representatives to be part of the solution, but broader buy-in and committed government leadership are required.

✓ **Prevention & Diversion:** Successful models in other areas (like Moncton) include prevention/diversion funds to keep people housed (e.g., helping with rent arrears or move-in costs). Such a fund could address immediate risks of eviction and support stability.

✓ **Collaboration & Amplification:** Effective responses need coordination:
   o Grassroots groups should be supported but not overburdened with bureaucracy or administrative requirements.
   o Partnerships between nonprofits, housing providers, government, and persons with lived experience are essential for viable, long-term solutions

"If you want to do affordable housing with supports, suddenly it got a lot more political and challenging ... dealing with multiple departments."

Community Organizations

Overview of What We Heard on Solutions to Homelessness (continued)

- ✓ **Policy Focus & Advocacy:** Systemic change requires government accountability, policy and procedure reform, and a shift toward person-centered, rather than policy-centered, support.

- ✓ **Transportation Solutions:** Volunteer driver programs and other low-cost mobility supports were suggested as practical interventions to improve access for people with limited resources.

- ✓ **Stable, Upstream, and Proactive Funding:** Funding is often reactionary and appearing only at the very end of fiscal years, which limits proactive, year-round solutions. Participants advocated for prevention-based models, where small investments early on keep people housed or prevent them from entering homelessness. Such support for rural and community-based organizations is necessary, both to maintain innovation and to avoid burnout among volunteers and staff.

- ✓ **Community Response and Bright Spots:** Community members show strong support and generosity, rapidly pooling resources to help those in crisis. Local initiatives such as Nursing Homes Without Walls, food security programs, and new community hubs are celebrated as effective models worth expanding. Funding and partnership should prioritize established organizations that are already effective, rather than "reinventing the wheel."

"A dollar to prevention saves us seven dollars down the road."

"Within hours of a call, people respond. It's the community; that's probably our biggest asset."

"If they had the extra [funding], they could do even more than someone starting a new organization."

Recommendations for CAB

1. **Coordinating Partnerships and Strategy:** Community partners felt that the CAB's role was central to bring partners together (including from community, government, grassroots organizations, landlords, and persons with lived experience) to drive strategy and advance progress of evidence-based recommendations and actions. The CAB can also map existing resources to avoid duplication and ensure efforts are complementary.

2. **Leadership & Policy Advocacy:** CAB should take a lead role in advocating for policy change at municipal, provincial, and federal levels. This includes spearheading efforts for bylaw reform (such as the decriminalization of survival activities like tenting), and pushing for flexible, person-centered funding models. The group should also work towards attaining special designations from federal programs (such as "designated community" status under Reaching Home) to secure stable, long-term resources. CAB's leadership can amplify community voices and use data and local stories to influence decision makers and build public and political support.

3. **Embracing Lived Experience & Grassroots Input:** CAB must ensure continual, meaningful engagement of people with lived experience of homelessness. This means more than token consultation; people with lived experience should have opportunities for direct involvement in decision-making, priority-setting, and evaluating programs (using a "nothing about us without us" approach). CAB should also actively seek input from grassroots service providers, such as volunteer-run programs, and support their input with minimal bureaucratic or reporting requirements. Advisory or consultative roles may be more appropriate than formal CAB membership for these groups to avoid regulatory burden.

4. **Operational Support & Funding Access:** CAB can actively support grassroots and smaller non-profit organizations in accessing funding by acting as an umbrella agency or facilitating partnerships (for example, connecting new organizations with registered charities or faith groups to qualify for grants). CAB can provide guidance on application processes, help organizations prepare proposals, and create shared back-office supports to ease administrative pressures. This expands the community's capacity to support innovative and targeted interventions.

"To really deeply understand the mandates and skill sets that are in the existing organizations... to better coordinate or advocate for direction of funding."

Recommendations for CAB (continued)

5. **Action-Oriented Coordination:** CAB is encouraged to prioritize models that produce direct, visible results – such as holding regular "real-time" meetings where landlords, outreach staff, and housing coordinators actively match available units to people on the by-name list. Strategic planning is essential, but CAB's emphasis must be on putting plans into action and regularly reviewing outcomes. This results-driven approach will maintain momentum, build trust with partners, and demonstrate real progress to the community.

6. **Community Engagement & Communication:** The CAB should maintain open, consistent communication with all stakeholders, including holding regular public meetings, hosting focus groups, distributing surveys, and offering easy channels for feedback (e-mail, online forms, voice memos). CAB should encourage broad participation, especially from marginalized voices, and ensure findings and decisions are reported back to the community clearly and transparently. Engaging a wide variety of groups (including government, non-profits, frontline workers, landlords, and people with lived experience) will ensure strategies remain relevant, legitimate, and grounded in the real needs of Miramichi.
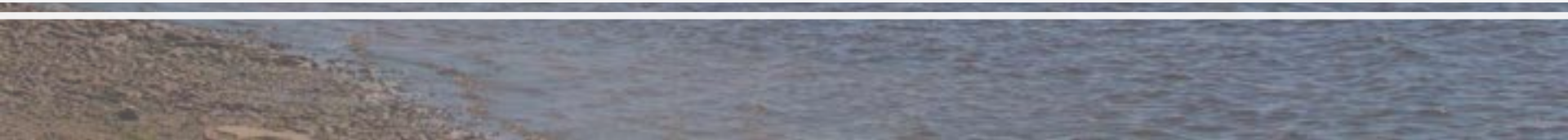
"Facilitate meetings where landlords, outreach workers, and housing coordinators match available units to individuals on the by-name list in real time."

"Let's coordinate, but then let's also do stuff!"

Municipal Government

Current Condition of Homelessness in Miramichi

Progress but Ongoing Gaps: The Miramichi region has witnessed incremental progress in addressing homelessness over the past several years. Participants recalled a time when local options were limited to a small emergency shelter and a handful of services. Since then, community organizations such as Miramichi Housing Solutions, the municipality, and devoted volunteers have introduced a range of supports, including expanded shelters, warming/cooling centers, and a new community hub with day-time drop-in services. These efforts have improved conditions, but the landscape remains heavily dependent on charity-driven initiatives, small organizations, and the dedication of a limited number of individuals. The lack of a stable, overarching provincial or municipal homelessness strategy means these improvements, while meaningful, are not fully integrated systemically.

Chronic Housing Shortage: Vacancy rates have been reported at or below 1%. While private housing developments have occurred, genuinely affordable or social housing options are still very limited. Rents (approx. $1,400/month) outpace income supports (approx. $600/month for a single adult). Working individuals, seniors, and families are among those affected. Importantly, this is no longer an issue restricted to specific demographics or to those with visible addiction or mental health issues. Cases of "hidden" homelessness are increasing, with people doubling up, staying in vehicles, or living temporarily in unsafe locations.

Regional and Systemic Pressures: Miramichi acts as a catchment for the wider North Shore. Closures in neighboring areas (e.g., Bathurst) increase demand locally. Rural communities have limited to no homelessness supports; those who become homeless in rural areas generally migrate to Miramichi or Moncton for services. Lack of discharge planning means people exit detox, hospitals, or the justice system into homelessness, sometimes directly into shelters or onto the streets.

"We're still relying on a lot of charitable enterprises, involving just a few individuals... so there's a lot of work to do. But I would say, guardedly, things are improving... we haven't really had a lot of choice because there's not really been an overall strategy from the province."

"I run the rural district... and we're on the outskirts. Now, do we see homelessness out there? No, we don't because if they do become homeless or they do become addicted, they're moving to the city. I've got nothing out there for them. So then it becomes the city's problem."

Overview of What We Heard on Solutions to Homelessness

✓ **Need for Strategy and Coordination:** Participants stressed the absence of a comprehensive, regional or provincial homelessness strategy, leading to gaps, inefficiencies, and missed opportunities. Municipalities have led out of necessity but require a clearer mandate, particularly with political changes looming (e.g., upcoming local elections).

✓ **Service Integration and Specialized Supports:** There is broad support for more integrated, wrap-around services (housing + mental health + addictions + outreach). Specific gaps include transitional and specialized care for people with cognitive disabilities, brain injury, autism, and those with concurrent addictions – currently, there are no options for those unable to maintain sobriety or who need high acuity care. Calls have been made for systems approaches, such as regular inter-agency meetings (similar to "Blue Light" models), better discharge planning, and shared information systems.

✓ **Tackling NIMBYism and Expanding Supply:** Rural "Not in my Backyard" (NIMBY) attitudes and restrictive land-use planning make it hard to expand services or build new housing/shelter options outside city centers. There is potential in reviewing and reforming rural land-use policies to better accommodate supportive/secondary units and community housing, preempting misinformation and opposition.

CAB's Role and Current Impact

• The CAB was established out of a need for structure following legal action related to sheltering, intended to bridge gaps between service providers, government, business, and those with lived experience. While seen as necessary and containing potential for major impact, the CAB's current influence is limited by the lack of provincial strategy and uneven engagement by stakeholders. Many participants were only vaguely aware of the CAB's mandate and activities, with more awareness among those most directly involved.

"I think everyone understands the necessity of [the CAB]. But, you know, it's hard to work outside of strategy, right? Especially when you don't have that kind of guiding north star and you have folks that are coming with different experiences and different opinions."

Recommendations for CAB

1. **Champion and Coordinate a Regional Homelessness Strategy:** There is a clear gap in a unified, long-term plan for homelessness in the Miramichi region. While municipalities and non-profits have stepped up to provide more services, these have generally evolved in response to immediate needs rather than being part of a coordinated, preventative approach. The CAB should take the lead in bringing together municipal, provincial, Indigenous, and community partners to develop and maintain a comprehensive regional strategy. This will help ensure investments and programs reinforce each other, promote prevention, and remain sustainable regardless of changing administrations or short-term pressures.

2. **Facilitate Relationship and Skill-Building Across Sectors:** Collaboration between organizations and sectors is inconsistent, often limited by siloed working cultures, changing staff, and a lack of dedicated forums for relationship and skills development. Direct service staff, executives, business, and Indigenous partners sometimes interact only in "rotating" or improvised groups, making it difficult to sustain trust or push shared priorities forward. The CAB can improve cooperation by organizing regular meetings, cross-sector training, and collaborative forums. This groundwork will build a common language, help address misunderstandings, and ensure that new partnerships – especially those needed for coordinated access and wrap-around services – have a solid foundation.

3. **Advocate for Specialized Housing and Support Models:** The system currently lacks appropriate housing and care options for people with complex needs, such as those with cognitive disabilities, concurrent addiction or mental health issues, or who require support beyond what standard shelters or housing can provide. As participants noted, "there's just no options"– not even a bottleneck, simply a total gap. The CAB should advocate with all levels of government for the creation of new supportive housing and transitional care that reflect the needs of these groups. This approach will help prevent the most vulnerable residents from cycling between street homelessness, shelter, hospitals, or even long-term institutionalization without any stability or progress.

"We've all kind of been doing our own little bits for years and plugging holes in dams as much as we can and so on... that's resulted in differing approaches that don't always get along... it's siloed working... there are gains that could be had from a more collaborative system."

Recommendations for CAB (continued)

4. **Promote Rural Land Use and Planning Reforms:** Rural communities face stiff resistance (NIMBYism) and outdated zoning policies that restrict supportive housing development, even though many people experiencing homelessness originate from these areas. Participants highlighted the need to "get ahead of the NIMBYs" with clear, proactive planning and land use policy updates. The CAB should work with partners and decision-makers to push for reforms that make it easier to build secondary units, non-market housing, and support services throughout both urban and rural areas. This will expand the supply of safe, appropriate housing options and reduce pressure on core urban centers.

5. **Clarify CAB Membership and Leadership Expectations:** The CAB's effectiveness is held back by unclear roles and an inconsistent presence of executive decision-makers and stable staff from key organizations. Stakeholders described issues with a "rotating door" of staff or with passionate, front-line representatives filling seats while those with organizational authority to drive change do not participate. The CAB should define membership criteria that distinguish between operational (front-line) and executive/strategic participation, ensuring all necessary perspectives are present and that plans can move efficiently into implementation. This could include tiered meeting structures or working groups – one for strategy, one for on-the-ground coordination.

"What we're seeing in this conversation is ...the executive director not appearing for any of these conversations... and then we see kind of a rotating door of staff members that are coming through... so I think there needs to be some critical thoughts into what membership looks like for the organizations involved."

Provincial Stakeholders

Current Condition of Homelessness in the Province

Growing Demand, Fragmented Services: Participants described increasing demand for homelessness-related services across similar regions. The homelessness response is often fragmented, with different organizations providing individual pieces of support, but little coordinated case management or system navigation. No formalized continuum currently exists for individuals to move from crisis to stability, leaving the entire homelessness population underserved.

Lack of Resources & Underserved Populations: A core challenge is a lack of housing options, from emergency shelters through to supportive and affordable housing. Wraparound supports such as mental health care, addictions treatment, health care, and life skills are inconsistently available or accessible. Some people, such as those with complex mental health needs, often do not "fit" in existing housing or support models (e.g., seniors' homes) and are left without adequate options.

Overview of What We Heard on Solutions to Homelessness

✓ **Need for Stronger Collaboration:** The role of municipal and regional governments is seen as crucial in the homelessness response, especially in fostering collaboration, breaking silos, and aligning on strategies. Regional service commissions (RSCs), while not mandated provincially to address homelessness, may play a valuable role in convening stakeholders and managing regional services, but the lack of a province-wide approach and inconsistent buy-in can be obstacles.

✓ **Regional Service Commissions as Potential Anchors:** RSCs can provide administrative support, act as funding recipients, and offer stability for community services. However, the responsibilities they assume are often voluntary and not equally distributed or defined across all regions. Barriers to collaboration include confusion around responsibilities and unclear lines of communication and information sharing between provincial, municipal, and regional levels. Additionally, some Service Commissions are navigating new mandates while still being treated administratively as not-for-profits, resulting in heavy reporting burdens.

"Everybody is underserved because there's a lack of services across the board."

"We need some supportive housing settings that are catered to [specific] population's needs, which currently don't exist."

"There has to be buy-in from the municipality... the ministers will go where communities are ready to move forward."

Recommendations for CAB

1. **Improve Communication and Outreach:** Participants stressed the need for the CAB to clearly communicate roles, mandates, and available services both within their community and to external partners. Proactive outreach and engagement with all relevant stakeholders, including those currently "outside the loop", was identified as a key improvement.

2. **Clarify Naming and Structure:** There was some confusion about the governance structure and naming conventions of the Miramichi CAB. Since federal funding designates official CABs specifically for urban centers (Moncton, Saint John, Fredericton, and Bathurst), using "CAB" in regions outside these cities, such as Miramichi, may cause confusion. Clear communication on the board's exact mandate, funding sources, and relationship to both regional and federal systems is recommended to prevent misunderstanding.

3. **Promote Regional Collaboration and Reduce Silos:** CABs can act as connectors and communicate key information on community needs to government, non-profits, service providers, and community leaders. Frequent cross-sectoral meetings and ongoing relationship building are recommended.

4. **Champion Community Education and Asset Mapping:** An early step should be to create an inventory of available services and providers in the region, coupled with ongoing education for both community members and stakeholders about what supports exist and how to access them. This sets a foundation for identifying gaps and building more effective pathways out of homelessness.

5. **Explore Adaptable Solutions:** Participants encouraged looking at models and successful practices from other regions, such as outreach programs managed by municipalities (e.g., Woodstock), police-based outreach (e.g., Edmundston), and regionally-coordinated shelter staffing (e.g., Sussex/Kings County) – but stressed that solutions must be tailored to local context.

"I think just communication and contact. I'll admit, I was kind of confused on who's who and what are they doing and all of that stuff. So I think putting themselves out there, having those conversations, collaborating with everyone around the table would be super, super important for moving forward if they're really taking a stake in the game."

Indigenous Groups

Indigenous Groups

Indigenous Perspective on Homelessness, Poverty, and Food Insecurity in Miramichi

Indigenous individuals experience homelessness at disproportionate rates, both in urban shelters and on reserves. Underlying some of the challenges faced by Indigenous individuals is the legacy of trauma and colonial policy, which drive both repeat homelessness and service barriers.

Indigenous communities require resourcing to provide culturally appropriate support and the ability to develop specialized treatment alongside housing programs, as many individuals specify the importance of remaining close to family or support systems. However, it is also vital to have culturally appropriate support available outside of reserves and within urban centers. Some Indigenous participants noted that they prefer to reside outside community, especially while receiving treatment or accessing support services. Whether this is due to a desire to be discrete or feeling like they'll benefit from a change in scenery, the point was made that provincial and municipal supports should be accessible to all regardless of whether specific Indigenous supports are available directly from community. Vitally, the choice to stay or leave community should be up to the individual to exercise their autonomy.

Current Condition of Homelessness in Miramichi

Rising Numbers and Hidden Homelessness: Indigenous people in the Greater Miramichi area are increasingly experiencing homelessness, with only a small number "visibly" unhoused, while many more are couch surfing, living in overcrowded homes, or are at risk of eviction. The issue is growing, especially among adults over 30, young mothers, and young adults.

Barriers to Shelter Access: Existing shelters are often full, seasonal, or require advance booking. Many people do not have access to phones to reserve beds. Transportation is also a challenge, making it hard for people to reach available shelters.

Unaffordable and Inadequate Housing: Rental costs are surprisingly high for a small city, with $1,500–$1,800/month being common for a two-bedroom. There is a short supply of genuinely affordable units, with some landlords designating only a token 'low-income' unit in otherwise unaffordable buildings. Subsidized housing is increasingly hard to find as corporate owners take over existing apartment stocks.

Intersection with Justice and Demographic Pressures: A shortage of housing contributes to people being held in custody as release from jail is often denied if no stable housing exists. Family clustering is common, with young parents and multiple generations living together due to a lack of independent affordable housing options.

Underlying Drivers: Participants emphasized connections between homelessness and generational trauma, historic and ongoing effects of colonization, mental health, substance use, and lack of employment.

"Some people are paying $1,800 for a two-bedroom… even two, three jobs are still struggling."

"Our families are all living together because there is no housing for folks."

"Through colonization and Indian residential schools and all the trauma … most people that are experiencing homelessness, there's trauma involved. And what happens when you're in pain, you try to numb the pain and what numbs the pain is substance misuse … it's a scary thing and it all relates to trauma."

Overview of What We Heard on Solutions to Homelessness

✓ **Supportive, Harm-Reduction Housing Models:** Initiatives like supportive housing units in Natiwahinek are meeting people where they're at – clients are not required to abstain from substance use to access housing, and receive integrated care including harm reduction education, activities, and counseling.

✓ **Year-Round, Full-Service Shelters and Culturally Safe Supports:** Participants called for 24/7, fully staffed shelters modeled on best practices from other regions (e.g., John Howard Society shelters, "12 Neighbours" in Fredericton), including spaces for families, single mothers, and culturally-appropriate supports that acknowledge the intergenerational trauma of colonization, residential schools, and displacement, as well as incorporate trauma-informed approaches.

✓ **Community Outreach, Education, and Reducing Stigma:** Participants described the critical importance of city-wide and targeted information campaigns, awareness sessions, and communications to reduce stigma (including NIMBY attitudes), promote harm reduction, and build public understanding of the root causes of homelessness and substance use.

✓ **Integrated Wraparound Services:** Support for housing initiatives should be combined with addiction supports, mental health care, basic skills/life-skills programs, and employment support for those experiencing homelessness.

✓ **Data-Driven and Collaborative Approaches:** More accurate, regularly collected data is needed on both housing conditions and the actual scale of homelessness (suggesting a point-in-time count). There is a need for Housing Navigators to gather and update this information and match clients to available resources.

✓ **Skills Development and Youth Engagement:** Participants suggested greater efforts to connect Indigenous youth to construction/housing projects, working with local colleges to train and hire youth in the trades as part of addressing long-term housing capacity needs.

"We need to bring more awareness and more understanding, more education, then maybe we can start getting somewhere."

CAB Structure - Opportunities and Barriers:

- The CAB is broadly seen as the right structure to coordinate local action but currently faces major barriers: slow progress due to provincial/federal funding issues, internal dynamics such as including "box-ticking" Indigenous participation, and resistance or NIMBY attitudes at the community level – including in one community, an organized petition against the implementation of supportive housing.

Recommendations for CAB

1. **Enhance Indigenous Partnerships:** Expand partnerships with Indigenous communities beyond "token representation". Actively engage all local Indigenous communities (not just one or two) and invite meaningful, ongoing participation in planning and decision-making.

2. **Transparency and Visibility:** Hold regular information sessions for the broader community to introduce CAB members, explain current actions, and share barriers faced, using both in-person and social media outreach.

3. **Champion and Model Best Practices:** Learn from and replicate proven programs (e.g., "12 Neighbours" in Fredericton, John Howard Society), invite outside speakers, and commit to implementing what works elsewhere rather than reinventing approaches.

4. **Integrated and Community-Led Planning:** Ensure that housing solutions are developed in partnership with First Nations and local organizations, are non-profit driven, and that wraparound services are incorporated from the start for all new housing projects.

5. **Data and Long-Term Planning:** Establish ongoing systems for collecting and updating data on housing stock, needs, and homelessness, and use this data for advocacy and planning.

"They need to partner more with the Indigenous communities in the area... It's not just Natiwahinek, it's multiple nations."

Individuals with Lived or Living Experience

Individuals with Lived or Living Experience

Lived Experience Perspective on Homelessness in Miramichi

People who have experienced homelessness in Miramichi describe a relentless struggle to rebuild their lives amid overwhelming barriers. Many have hit "bottom" – through addiction, trauma, or economic hardship – and say it is nearly impossible to recover without consistent, hands-on help.

A powerful message resonating throughout first person engagement sessions was the importance and impact that support workers have had on the lives of those struggling with the aforementioned barriers. Some individuals attended the sessions with care workers they were close to, noting that they felt in some ways that they "owed their lives" to the worker sitting with them. A significant theme was the importance of human connection, trust, and the ability to rely on someone while still maintaining autonomy.

Stigma and feeling misunderstood by society are persistent challenges that undermine hope and healing. Exclusion from local businesses leads to an inability to fully participate in society, which can perpetuate and magnify feelings of isolation and "othering". In some notable instances of conflict, individuals experiencing homelessness were denied and ousted from local businesses while attempting to pay full price for services. This indicates a significant and vital need for empathetic messaging and reframing of homelessness within the community – highlighting not only the realities of homelessness and poverty, but the benefits and impacts of inclusive community-based support systems.

On the other hand, local business owners who have demonstrated kindness and hospitality toward individuals, regardless of their background, were spoken highly of by all, with many indicating that their acceptance and willingness to stop and chat helped give them a sense of belonging within the community.

"Peer-to-peer should be someone that's lived that experience... I would trust someone more and I strive to go towards someone that can relate to similar situations."

Contributors to Homelessness

Multiple Pathways and Root Causes
- **Trauma and Violence**: Experiences such as sudden violence, relationship breakdown, or family conflict are common entry points into homelessness.
- **Foster Care/Aging Out**: Many youth exiting the foster/group home system have few supports, facing high risk of homelessness as soon as they turn 18, with inadequate transition planning or aftercare.
- **Addiction and Crime:** Addiction is often a survival strategy that emerges during homelessness, not necessarily a cause. Criminal justice involvement commonly comes after housing loss, rather than before.
- **Cycles of Criminalization:** Discharge from jail (or detox) is abrupt and unsafe, sending people straight back into crisis. Short sentences or lockups for incidents driven by mental illness or poverty are common, yet these "solutions" are entirely ineffective at addressing root causes or preventing future harm.

Stigma, Survival, and Identity Loss
- **Persistent Stigma:** Homelessness is widely misunderstood and stigmatized. Stereotypes linking homelessness to addiction/crime are deeply entrenched, leading to ongoing discrimination even after an individual is housed. Many participants have experienced judgment and exclusion from the public, even from businesses where they were long-time customers or residents.
- **Survival Mode and Social Exclusion:** Living without stable housing is described as being in "survival mode" 24/7 and has long-term impacts on the nervous system. Loss of community, support, and meaningful connection is as damaging as lack of physical shelter.
- **Loss of Identity and Autonomy:** The experience of being under constant judgment – whether due to homelessness, foster care, or disabilities – erodes a person's sense of self-worth and individuality.

Many participants noted that homelessness was not a "choice" for them.

Individuals with Lived or Living Experience

Current Condition of Homelessness in Miramichi

Need for Better Housing Options: More sober/clean living spaces are needed. However, some stated that their need is not compatible with mass housing. There is skepticism about putting all people with similar challenges together. While some feel supported in this environment, others felt that it can reinforce negative cycles, highlighting the importance of option and choice.

System and Funding Failures: Programs that are promised to people often don't materialize or end up located elsewhere. Money is sometimes redirected away from front-line needs, which can break individuals' trust. The wait for mental health and addiction care is too long; programs like anger management and GED should be available locally and reliably, with funding staying in the community.

Barriers to Recovery and Reintegration: Healing from homelessness extends well beyond attaining housing – long-term emotional, social, and economic impacts persist. Major bureaucratic and practical challenges exist, such as obtaining identification, social supports, and wrap-around programs. Red tape and inconsistent access to support workers further slow recovery.

Impact on Marginalized Groups: Individuals with disabilities, mental health challenges, or other intersecting identities face additional hurdles and stigmas.

> *"Post- [homelessness] is just as bad as being in it… I know I'm worth it, I know I'm deserving of it, but why hasn't it happened yet? We need society to not just talk about homelessness… we need people in the forefront: 'This is me. This is what happened to me. But this is who I am and who I've become.'"*

> *"They're telling you [in detox] to stay away from places, people and things… [then] they drop you off at the things, places and people."*

> *"Stigma and stereotypes of homelessness - they are forever scarred… you'll be 80 years old, and we're still going to feel that.."*

Individuals with Lived or Living Experience

Overview of What We Heard on Solutions to Homelessness

✓ **Lived Experience is Critical:** Authentic, peer-driven support makes the biggest difference – being helped by someone who knows what's it like, who will be honest, consistent, and present during tough moments is irreplaceable, though often underfunded. Participants stressed the importance of honesty, not making false promises, and sticking by people in tough times. Real help means seeing a person as an individual, not a statistic. Genuine care, consistency, and relational trust are highlighted as the "work that matters." People most affected must be in the lead – designing, delivering, and evaluating services, not just consulted as an afterthought.

✓ **Addressing Stigma and Building Understanding:** Changing the narrative by providing education around the realities of homelessness (e.g., not caused by individual failings or inherent criminality) is critical. Public and service provider education is needed to understand that post-homelessness trauma and stigma persist for years, affecting daily life and well-being.

✓ **Individualized Wrap-Around Supports:** One-size-fits-all models are ineffective. Services must reflect the diversity of pathways and needs – different solutions work for different people. Housing alone is not enough. Supports must integrate addiction/mental health services, practical daily needs (ID, employment), personal autonomy, and opportunities for belonging.

✓ **Building and Sustaining Community:** Grassroots initiatives that are built and run by community members (e.g., Jeremy's Mission and Harvest House) are valued for meeting needs with dignity and flexibility, though often lack stable funding or institutional support. There is a need for services that create opportunities for connection, identity-building, and personal growth, especially for youth, those exiting care, or people with disabilities.

"Not all solutions are for everybody. What'll work for [name] is not gonna work for me. Everybody's is different."

"It does take a community to heal a community."

Individuals with Lived or Living Experience

Recommendations for CAB

1. **Center Lived Experience in Decision-Making:** CAB should ensure people with lived/living experience are empowered participants in decision-making, hiring, and program leadership, not just consultation subjects. Go beyond "tick-box" engagement – seek out, amplify, and support leadership within affected communities.

2. **Advocate for System Change:** Advocate for stable, long-term funding and recognize the key role of frontline, grassroots organizations and peer networks in supporting people at every stage of the homelessness journey. Lobby to streamline access to vital supports (ID, income, mental health resources) and reduce bureaucratic hurdles that slow recovery or reintegration.

3. **Ongoing Reflection and Learning:** Regularly revisit and refine CAB strategies and priorities based on ongoing, meaningful feedback from people with lived/living experience.

"The voices of people in the midst of it right now are probably just as important and more important than ours. They have a voice, but nobody's listening."

"There needs to be... there just needs to be more of us. So that way, maybe a group of us can make change, instead of leaving it to policy makers and leaving it to decision makers."

GMSC Internal Stakeholders & Partners

Current Condition of Homelessness in Miramichi

Systemic Barriers: Internal GMSC staff underscored the complexity of tackling homelessness and poverty, noting entrenched systemic constraints. Ongoing challenges include a lack of coordinated regionalism, as rural areas are often excluded or feel disconnected from urban-driven planning. The downloading of responsibilities without sufficient resources intensifies these challenges, often leaving service gaps in smaller, outlying communities.

Public Engagement and Advancing Understanding: Staff point out significant cultural gaps between government expectations and private sector realities. Bureaucratic processes are often misaligned with business timelines, discouraging private investment, especially in affordable and supportive housing. Misconceptions about poverty and homelessness are prevalent, including misunderstandings of impacts on the working poor and those living precariously – a reality not widely recognized.

Housing Market and Infrastructure Limits: The cost of building new housing is high and does not decrease outside urban centers. Non-market housing options are scarce, while projections indicate need for thousands of new units by 2040. Current efforts are insufficient to keep up with population changes or to meet needs as people arrive from other communities. Further, lack of investment in regional transportation, digital connectivity, and essential municipal infrastructure hinders access to services. Challenges in workforce development and lack of incentives for private investment in rural communities are noted as significant barriers.

System Navigation and Gaps: Lack of ID, no fixed address, substance use, and transportation challenges remain major barriers for people seeking supports. Despite frontline agency efforts and some productive relationships (notably with Service NB), the absence of a centralized or coordinated response creates uncertainty and gaps for both providers and service users. Funding and capacity limits continually undermine progress, rendering frontline agencies reactive and overburdened. A lag in provincial investment, policy inflexibility, and shifting service demands (including inflow from nearby cities) can complicate local planning.

Public Resistance, Stigma, and Messaging: Board participants reported strong public and stakeholder apprehension, ranging from traditional NIMBYism to outright resistance against new service locations or social infrastructure. Political and business stakeholders often express concern over perceived impacts on the local image and operation of local businesses. People experiencing homelessness face frequent exclusion from public spaces, businesses, and local services, making integration even more difficult. Community members commonly report feeling unsafe, contributing to "us vs. them" attitudes.

GMSC Internal Stakeholders & Partners

Overview of What We Heard on Solutions to Homelessness

✓ **Outreach Clinics and Community Hubs:** The creation and expansion of fixed-location outreach clinics and community hubs have led to dramatic improvements in the lives of the most vulnerable, providing a sense of community, harm reduction education, and direct supports like medical care, ID recovery, and food. These hubs allow people experiencing homelessness to have safer, more autonomous access to basic needs and seek help on their own terms, including opportunities for peer-to-peer support and volunteering.

✓ **New Approaches for Service Delivery and Prevention:** There is growing optimism about building community capacity, clarifying CAB's mandate, and strengthening actionable, sustained commitments across partners. Emphasis was placed on clarifying and mapping out roles among existing agencies to avoid duplications and gaps. Reactionary approaches and short-term funding limit what can be accomplished; therefore, closing gaps requires investment in upstream solutions, especially in transportation and regional infrastructure, and addressing hiring, training, and private-sector incentives.

✓ **Strengthening Collaboration and Addressing Public Attitudes:** Internal staff recognize the importance of genuine collaboration and elevating the human stories behind homelessness in communications, highlighting the need for public engagement and education to overcome misunderstandings and resistance. Sustainable investment and joint advocacy with other sectors are seen as necessary for lasting solutions.

"Just because I don't have my house doesn't mean [Miramichi] ain't my home. I grew up here 45 years."

Recommendations for CAB

1. **Governance, Mandate and Role Clarity:** Staff identified confusion over roles and responsibilities, both within the CAB and between different levels of government, noting that lack of clarity sometimes leads to tasks being overlooked, duplicated, or in gaps in service provision. The CAB should work with all relevant partners to clearly define and communicate roles and responsibilities, both within the board and with external partners across all levels of government. This could involve: establishing formal agreements or terms of reference; mapping out organizational mandates and decision-making authority; and setting up regular communication channels to ensure everyone understands their tasks and how they contribute to shared goals. Clarifying the CAB's overall mandate will also contribute to a shared vision.

2. **Accountability and Monitoring:** Participants noted that effective plans are only as valuable as their implementation and follow-up. There is concern that actions may be neglected or stalled without designated ongoing monitoring. There is a need for someone to hold "the hammer" to ensure partners fulfill their commitments and that progress does not stall with any future staff or leadership changes.

3. **Community Engagement and External Partnerships:** Staff and board members recommend elevating public education and engagement, addressing local misconceptions, and building trust with business and political stakeholders. Genuine collaboration, through recognizing and amplifying the strengths of community organizations and centering lived experience, is essential.

4. **Advocate for Sustainable Investment:** CAB should advocate for sustained, multi-year funding and investment in critical infrastructure, with a focus on both immediate needs (e.g., wraparound and housing-first supports) and longer-term prevention, including transportation, digital access, and workforce development. They should also acknowledge ongoing barriers in working with the private sector and higher levels of government, and seek to advance multi-sector partnerships aligned with local realities.
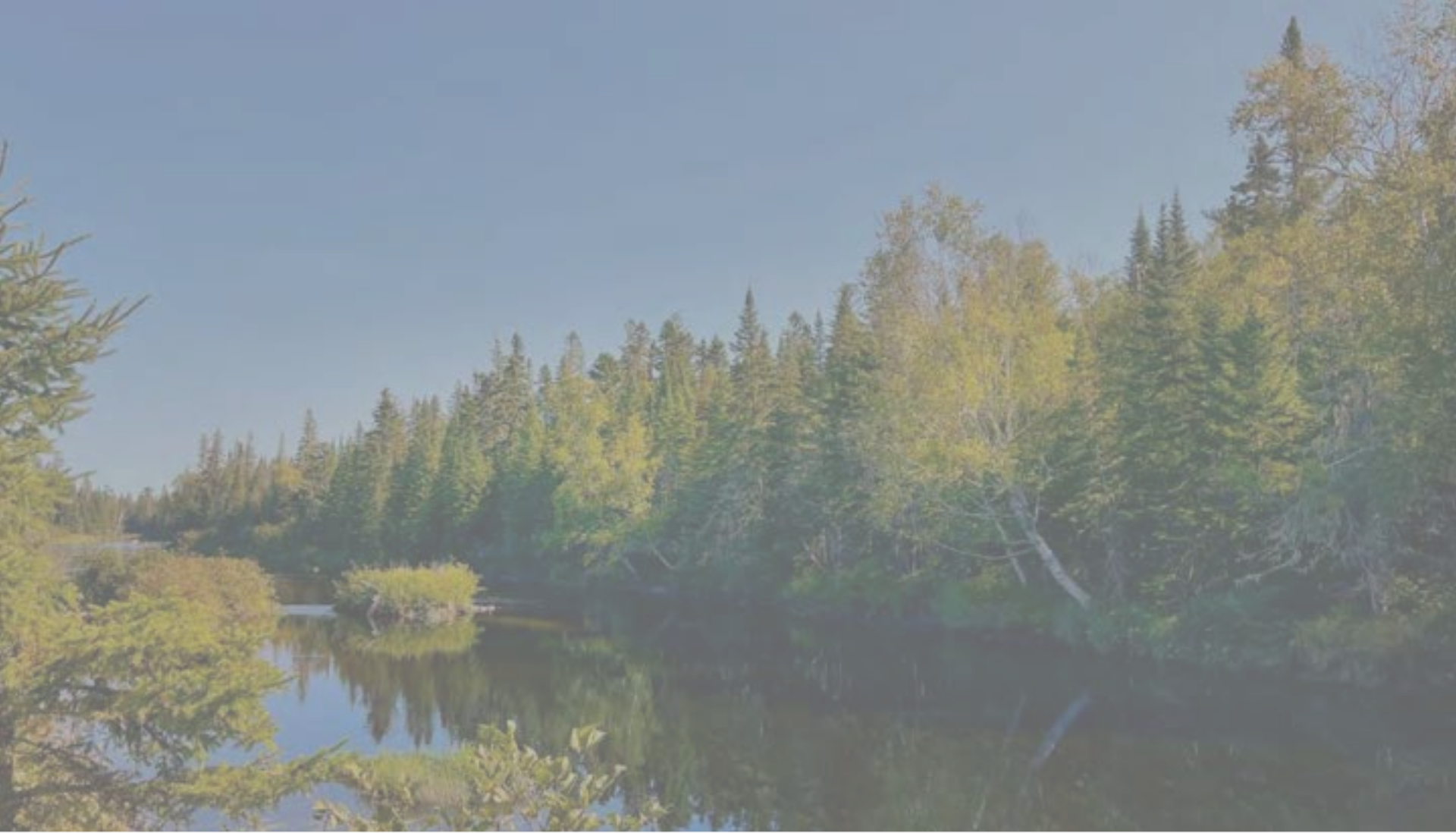
Feedback from the CAB

Feedback from the CAB

The strategy session with the Miramichi CAB revealed a strong sense of shared purpose, anchored in community values and the recognition of homelessness, poverty and food insecurity as pressing, interconnected issues. The CAB expressed a desire for greater clarity around the group's role, structure, and the boundaries between municipal, provincial, and community action. Persistent themes included the need for meaningful advocacy, a stepped care approach, wraparound supports, ongoing education to reduce stigma, and practical action planning. While participants value Miramichi's close-knit community strengths, they also emphasized the challenges unique to small communities, resource limits, and the importance of maintaining dignity and inclusion at the forefront.

Community Values
- CAB members repeatedly referenced the 'why' underlying their purpose – emphasizing compassion, dignity, and inclusion as core motivators, and reinforcing that addressing homelessness is both a moral imperative and community expectation. Part of the mission is fostering a sense of belonging, understanding, and acceptance.

Role of the CAB
- Participants discussed the challenge of defining CAB's function, noting the potential for advocacy, resource-sharing, and public education, as well as acting as a trusted advisor to council and the regional service commission. There is both support and uncertainty about the right committee structure, and the CAB calls for ongoing clarity in roles and governance to avoid spinning tires on unprioritized tasks and ensuring they have secured the right committee structure.
- There is a recognized need for consistent and informed advocacy and input to government. The CAB is viewed as a potential hub for this work, ensuring advocacy is based on local realities rather than external frameworks, while also educating the public and countering NIMBY attitudes.

Community-Based Advocacy and Education
- Stigma and misunderstanding around addiction, homelessness, and poverty can derail programs (e.g., due to negative neighbourhood input) or limit acceptance. Immersive education and storytelling events were cited as powerful tools for shifting perceptions and building empathy.

Community Advisory Board (CAB)

Feedback from the CAB (continued)

Integration with Government
- Participants acknowledged that issues like mental health, addiction, and housing affordability require multi-level collaboration and cannot be managed by the municipality alone. However, the community expects action regardless of which government is technically responsible, and the municipality is still seen to play a key role in advocacy, facilitation, and leveraging local assets (like buildings and land).

Individuals with Unique Needs
- A growing segment of the unhoused population comprises youth and the working poor, as well as seniors. Solutions must be accessible for all, with attention to unique needs and transition stages (e.g., young adults, people aging out of care, or those recovering from addiction).

Identified Values:
- Dignity and respect for all.
- Inclusion and equity in every decision.
- Compassion, acceptance, and mutual support.
- Evidence-based action informed by lived experience.
- Trust through openness and accountability.
- Creativity, resilience, hope, and determination to in tackling challenges.

Strategic Priorities and Goals:
- Strengthen **collaborative systems** for wraparound and stepped care supports tailored to local needs.
- Advance **public education** and reduce stigma about homelessness, addiction, and poverty through creative, ongoing engagement.
- Advocate for **sustainable funding and evidence-based policy changes** across all levels of government.
- Ensure meaningful involvement and **empowerment of people with lived experience** in all planning and evaluation.
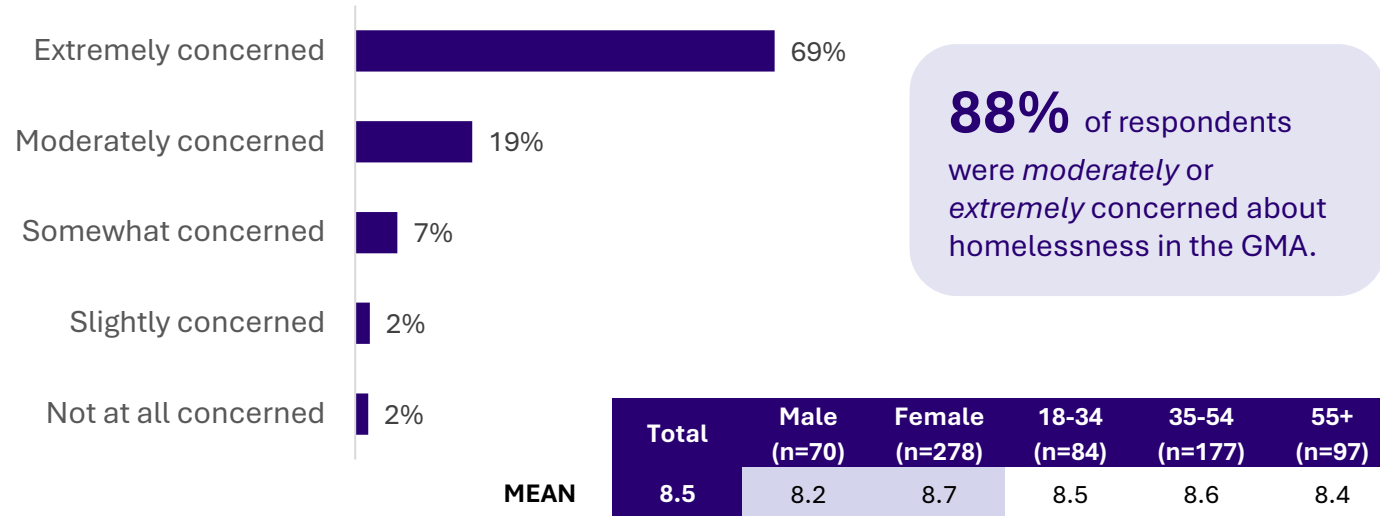- Focus on **addressing root causes** with proactive programs and accessible support pathways.

Appendix A:
Organizations Consulted

Organizations Consulted

The following organizations or groups were included in outreach during the project but did not provide a response or were unavailable to participate in engagement activities.

- Chatham Chamber of Commerce
- Chatham Public Library
- City of Miramichi
- CMHA of NB
- Downtown Newcastle Business Association
- Econolodge
- Elizabeth Fry Society of NB
- Esgenoopetitj First Nation
- Family and Early Childhood North Inc
- Family Resource Centre
- Glenelg Youth Alliance
- GovNB Department of Justice and Public Safety/Resiliency Committee
- Greater Blackville Resource Centre
- Hospice Miramichi
- MAWIW Council
- Mawlugutineg Mental Wellness
- Metepenagiag First Nation
- Mi'gmawe'l Tplu'taqnn Inc. (MTI)
- Miramichi AfroConnection
- Miramichi Boys and Girls Club
- Miramichi Chamber of Commerce
- Miramichi Emergency Centre For Women
- Miramichi Ground Search and Rescue
- Miramichi River Environmental Assessment Committee
- Miramichi Rural School
- Miramichi Safe Harbour Services
- Miramichi Sexual Health Clinic
- Miramichi Transit Committee

- Miramichi Physically Disabled & Handicapped Association
- Miramichi Youth House
- NBCC Miramichi Group
- National Alliance to End Rural & Remote Homelessness
- New Brunswick Housing Corporation (NBHC)
- New Brunswick Non-Profit Housing Association
- Newcastle Chamber of Commerce
- Newcastle Public Library
- North Shore Migmac DC
- Nursing Home Without Walls
- O'Donaghue's Irish Pub
- Percy's Place Hospice
- RCMP
- Regional Service Commission (RSC) Board
- Rotary Club of Chatham
- Royal Canadian Legion Veteran Services
- Rural Community of Alnwick
- Rural Community of Miramichi River Valley
- Rural Community of Upper Miramichi
- St. Andrew's United Church
- St. John Human Development Council
- Tenant and Landlord Relations Office (through Housing NB)
- The Point Church
- Vince's Opry Music Store
- Village of Doaktown
- Volunteer Miramichi
- YOU Turns

Appendix C:
Public Survey Results

Public Survey Results

Q1: How concerned are you about the issue of homelessness in the Greater Miramichi area? (n=373)

Response	%
Extremely concerned	69%
Moderately concerned	19%
Somewhat concerned	7%
Slightly concerned	2%
Not at all concerned	2%

88% of respondents were *moderately* or *extremely* concerned about homelessness in the GMA.

	Total	Male (n=70)	Female (n=278)	18-34 (n=84)	35-54 (n=177)	55+ (n=97)
MEAN	**8.5**	8.2	8.7	8.5	8.6	8.4

Q2: Have you noticed an increase in homelessness in the Greater Miramichi area over the past year? (n=373)

Response	%
Yes	92%
No	3%
Not sure	5%
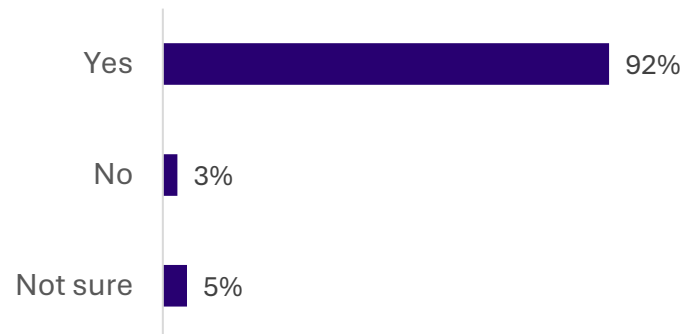
Q3: How adequate current affordable housing supply in Miramichi? (n=373)

Legend:
- ■ Completely Inadequate
- ■ Somewhat Inadequate
- ■ Somewhat Adequate
- ■ Completely Adequate
- ■ Don't Know
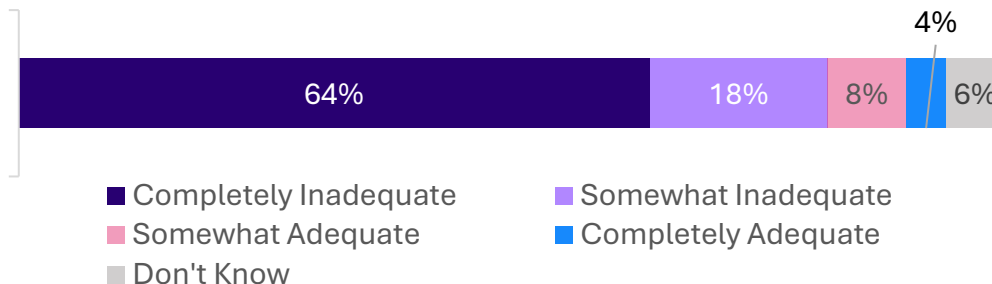
82% of respondents felt the current affordable housing supply is *somewhat* or *completely* inadequate.

	Male (n=70)	Female (n=278)	18-34 (n=84)	35-54 (n=177)	55+ (n=97)
Yes, completely adequate	7%	3%	2%	6%	3%
Yes, somewhat adequate	14%	5%	5%	7%	10%
No, somewhat inadequate	21%	19%	14%	20%	19%
No, completely inadequate	56%	67%	**79%***	61%	60%
Don't know/Not sure	1%	6%	0%	6%	8%

Statistically significant difference between respondents aged 18-34 compared to other ages who felt affordable housing supply was completely inadequate.

Public Survey Results

Q4: **Attitudes Toward Homelessness** (n=373)

Legend: ■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Stable housing should not be a prerequisite for accessing basic services	43%	33%	13%	6%	4%
Hidden homelessness, like couch surfing, is often overlooked	51%	37%	10%	3%	0%
I believe that housing is a human right	55%	25%	12%	6%	2%
I believe that housing is a prerequisite to overall health and well-being	58%	31%	7%	2%	2%
People experiencing homelessness are a part of our community	47%	34%	11%	5%	3%
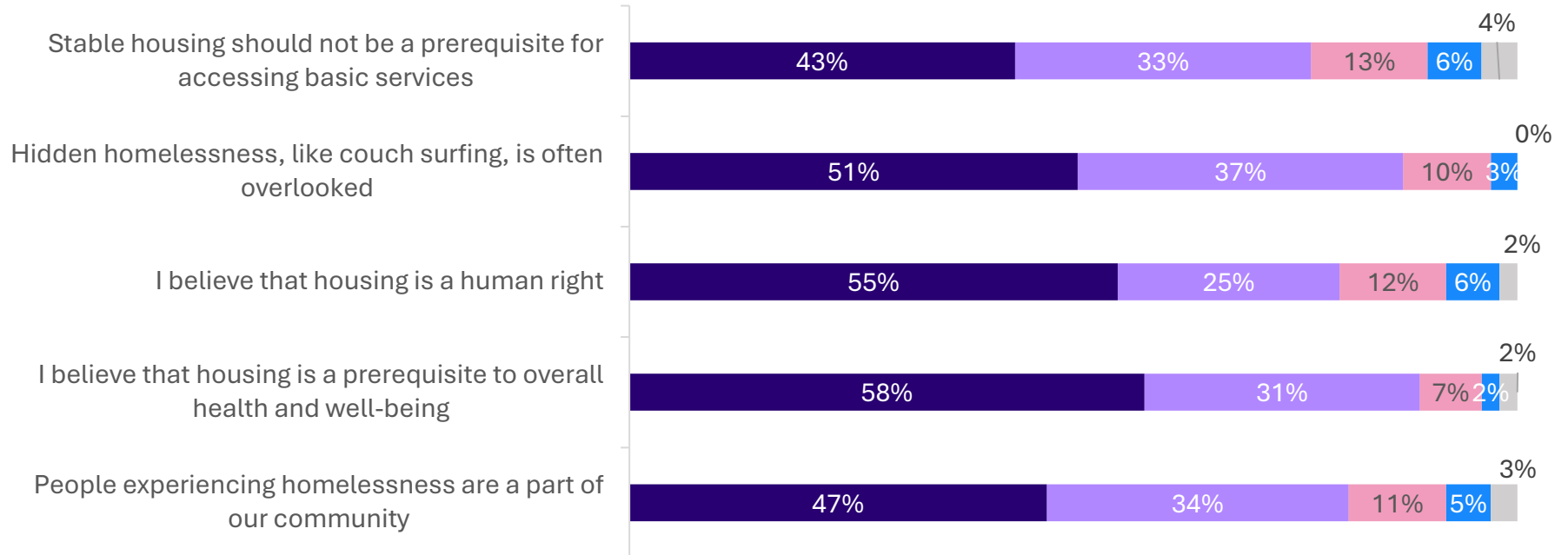
Q4: Attitudes Toward Homelessness (continued) (n=373)

Legend: ■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I avoid areas where I see tents or other temporary shelters	34%	24%	18%	16%	7%
I feel comfortable sharing public parks and spaces with people experiencing homelessness	15%	22%	18%	24%	21%
People experience homelessness due to systemic conditions beyond their control	27%	31%	24%	13%	5%
I believe if you are able to work, you do not have to be homeless	12%	17%	17%	35%	18%

Public Survey Results

Q5: **Which strategies do you believe would be most effective in addressing homelessness in Miramichi?** (n=373)

Top Mention

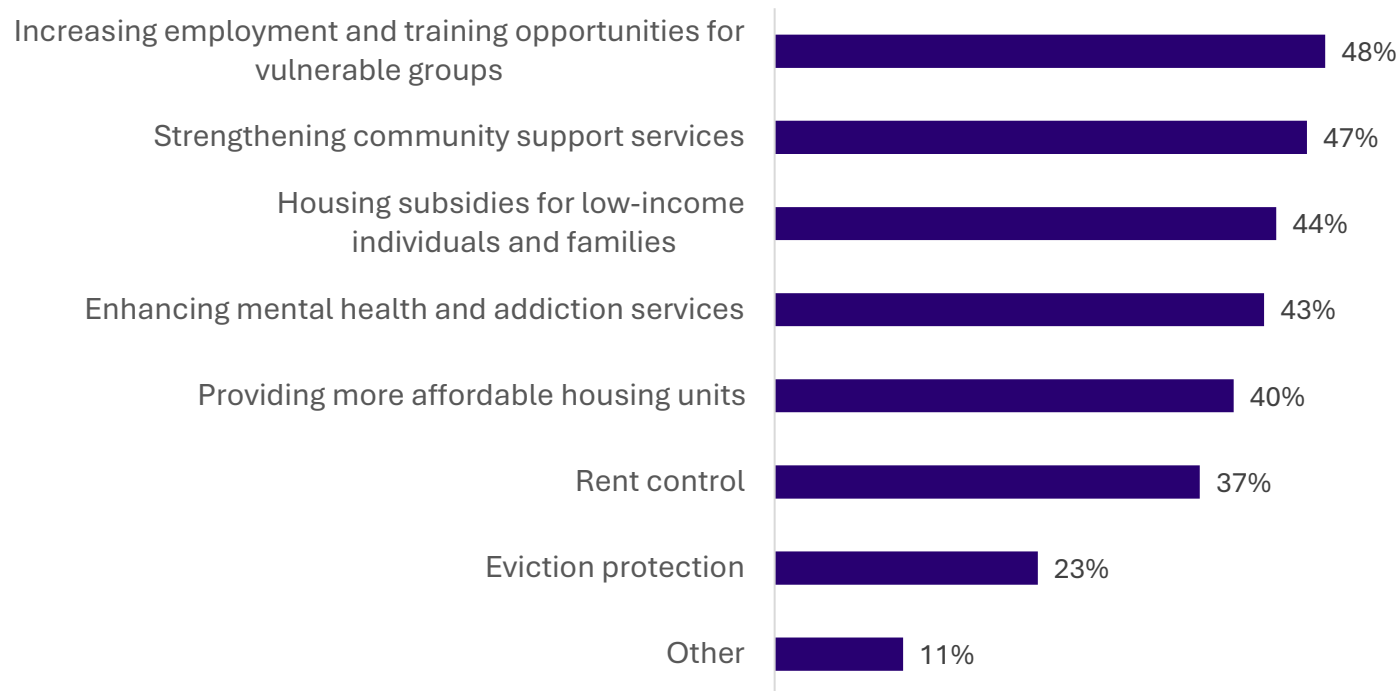| Strategy	Percentage
Enhancing mental health and addiction services	38%
Providing more affordable housing units	18%
Other	16%
Strengthening community support services	8%
Housing subsidies for low-income individuals and families	7%
Increasing employment and training opportunities for vulnerable groups	6%
Rent control	6%
Eviction protection	1%
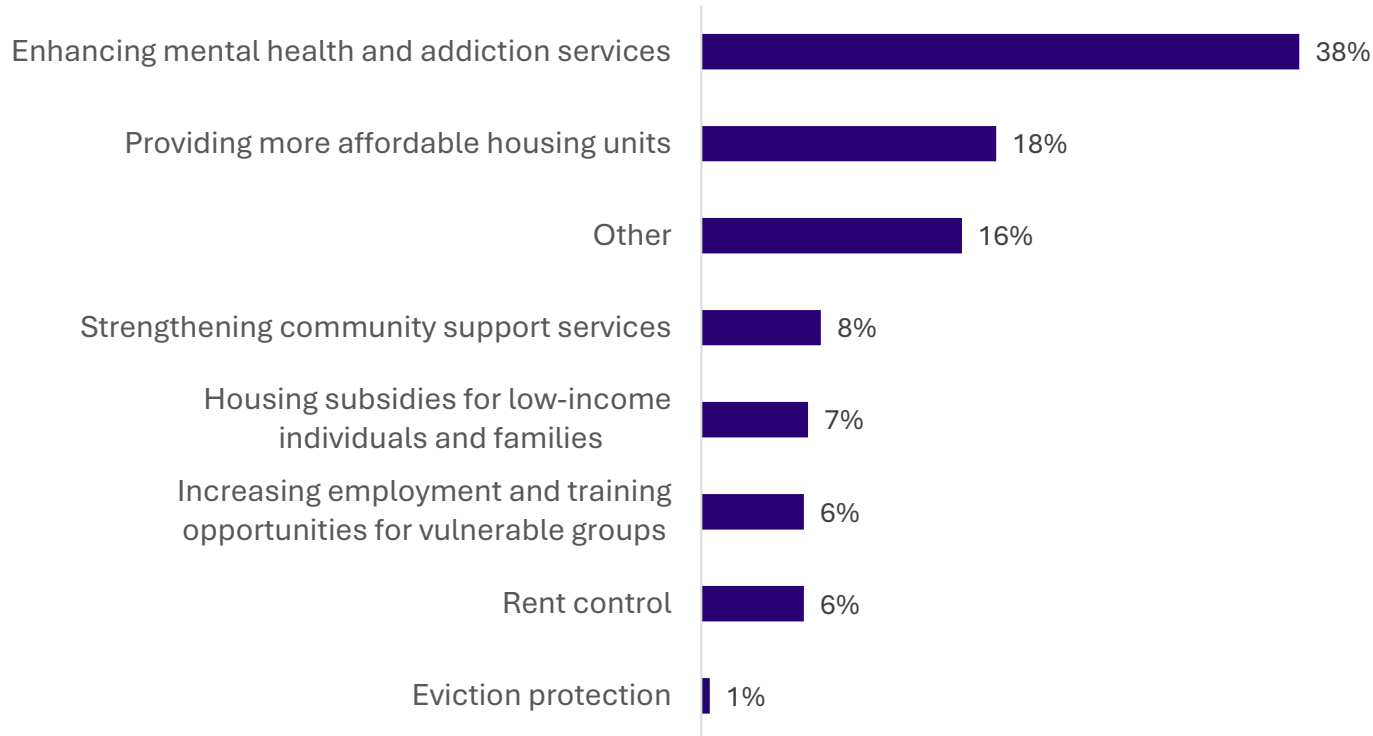
'Other' Mentions: Most "other" responses stressed that no single solution will address homelessness in Miramichi. Instead, they called for a combined approach: affordable housing, mental health and addiction supports, community services, and subsidies all working together. Some were frustrated at having to choose just one option, and pointed out that the issue is complex, with different causes and needs for each person. Other respondents want stricter conditions on support, while others highlight issues like drug use, public safety, and government spending. Overall, the consensus is that a multifaceted strategy is essential.
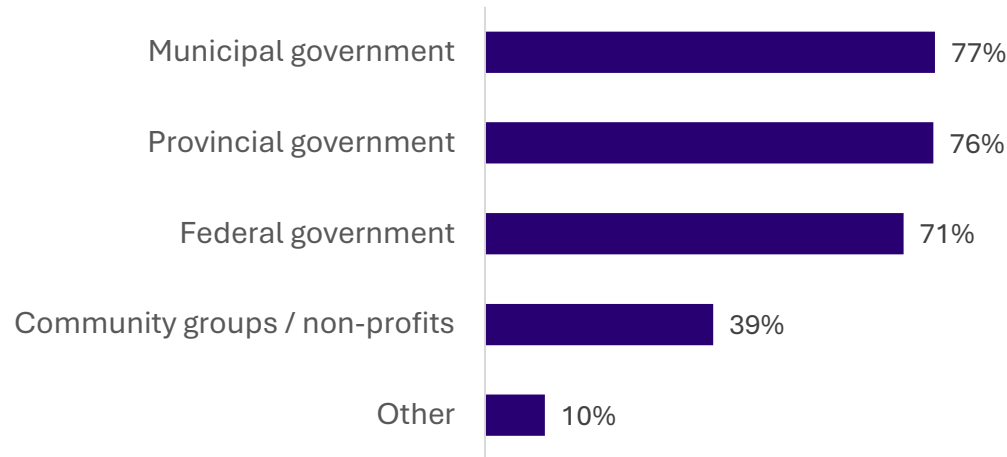
Public Survey Results

Q5b: **What other strategies do you believe would be effective in addressing homelessness in Miramichi?** (n=373)

Additional Strategies

Strategy	Percentage
Increasing employment and training opportunities for vulnerable groups	48%
Strengthening community support services	47%
Housing subsidies for low-income individuals and families	44%
Enhancing mental health and addiction services	43%
Providing more affordable housing units	40%
Rent control	37%
Eviction protection	23%
Other	11%

'Other' Mentions: Many respondents emphasized that homelessness in Miramichi is complex, with root causes such as addiction, mental health, cost of living, and gaps in services. Several called for a greater focus on mental health and addiction treatment, tighter controls on drugs, and more tailored, accountable support programs. There were also concerns about government policy, immigration, public safety, the need for affordable housing with fewer barriers, and stronger community input on housing locations. Overall, most agreed that no single strategy is enough; a coordinated, multifaceted approach is needed.

Public Survey Results

Q6: Who do you feel is responsible for addressing homelessness in Miramichi? (n=373)

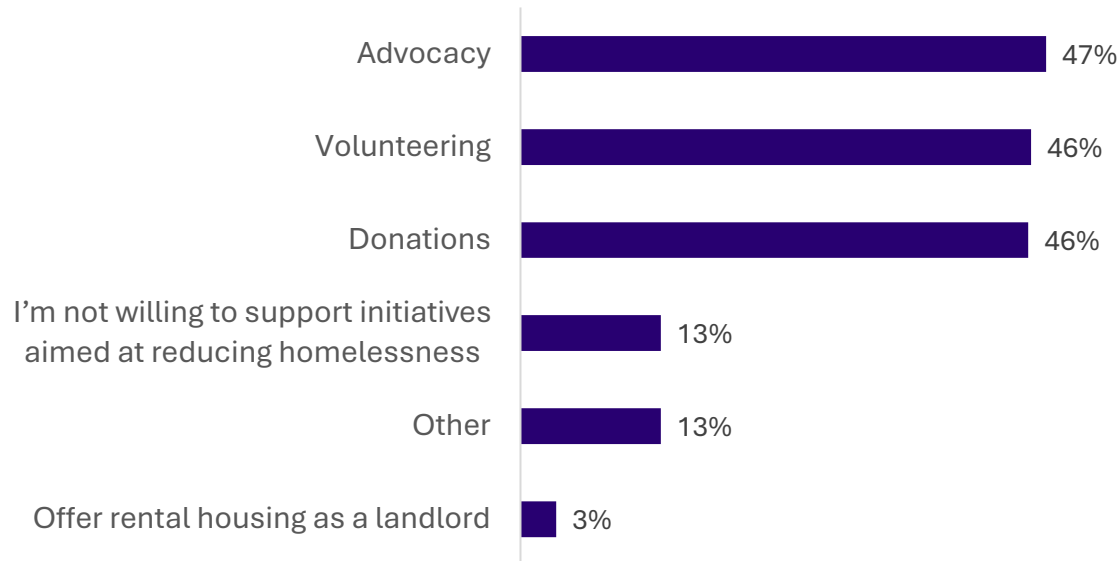| Category	Percentage
Municipal government	77%
Provincial government	76%
Federal government	71%
Community groups / non-profits	39%
Other	10%

Over 7-in-10 respondents believe that different levels of *government* are responsible for addressing homelessness.

Q6b: How do you feel they are doing at addressing homelessness in Miramichi? (n=373)

1%	3%	16%	42%	34%	4%

■ Very Good ■ Good ■ Acceptable ■ Poor ■ Very Poor ■ Don't Know
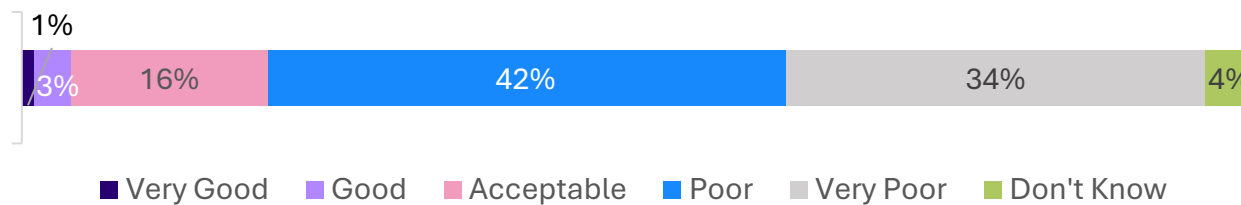
The majority of respondents (76%) feel that those responsible for addressing homelessness are doing a *poor* or *very poor* job.

Q7: Which of the following would you be willing to do to support initiatives aimed at reducing homelessness? (n=373)

Response	Percentage
Advocacy	47%
Volunteering	46%
Donations	46%
I'm not willing to support initiatives aimed at reducing homelessness	13%
Other	13%
Offer rental housing as a landlord	3%

Percentages may exceed 100% due to multiple response

'Other' Mentions: Several respondents noted being unable to help financially due to their own tight budgets, but would advocate, volunteer, or donate food and essentials where possible. Others wanted more accountability from people receiving support, suggested stricter measures for those dealing with addiction, or called for more job opportunities as solutions. Some showed skepticism about current efforts, while a few were willing to help with housing or practical skills, given more support and safeguards. Overall, financial limitations, concerns about effectiveness, and a desire for targeted, accountable approaches were common themes.

Q9: **What is your best advice on how to move forward in addressing homelessness in Miramichi?** (n=245)

- ✓ **Affordable Housing**: A large majority of respondents stressed the need for more affordable housing solutions. Many pointed to increasing rents, lack of rental options, and the high cost of living as primary drivers of homelessness. Some called for rent control, more government-owned housing, and rent subsidies. The provision of shelter beds and options like tiny homes were also suggested.

- ✓ **Expanded Mental Health and Addiction Services**: Mental health and addictions were repeatedly identified as underlying factors. Many respondents called for robust provincial or federal programs, more local services, and an integrated approach linking these supports with housing. Several explicitly stated that addressing mental health and substance use is essential to solving homelessness.

- ✓ **Collaboration Across Governments, Agencies & Community**: There was a clear call for municipal, provincial, and federal governments to work together, along with non-profits and community groups. Responses highlighted the need for better coordination, less competition among service providers, and engaging those with lived experience in decision-making.

- ✓ **Tackling the Drug Crisis**: Some respondents viewed the local drug crisis as central to the homelessness issue. Suggestions included more addiction treatment, stricter drug enforcement, and differentiation between homelessness caused by addiction and other causes.

- ✓ **Public Awareness and Reducing Stigma**: Numerous respondents said acknowledging the reality of homelessness and increasing public awareness are essential. Reducing stigma, seeing unhoused people as individuals with unique stories, and promoting compassion were seen as crucial steps.

"There needs to be more affordable housing. Most people are a cheque or two away from losing all."

"We have very little to no mental health support in our community and when those struggling come forward they're blown off, especially if they already struggle with addiction or homelessness."

"We need to educate those who are housed about homelessness. Most people still believe homelessness is a choice, and while it might be for some, for most that is not the case."

Public Survey Results

Q9: What is your best advice on how to move forward in addressing homelessness in Miramichi? (continued) (n=245)

✓ **Holistic, Wrap-Around & Tailored Services**: Respondents stressed that homelessness is a complex, multifaceted problem. Solutions need to be tailored to individuals, with wrap-around supports like job training, access to healthcare, and ongoing case management. The importance of listening to the homeless themselves was also raised.

✓ **More Government Leadership & Funding**: Many respondents called for increased investment, streamlined processes, and ongoing funding from all levels of government, not just periodic or crisis-driven support.

✓ **Enforcement, Structure & Accountability**: Some respondents advocated for more structure – such as bylaws, accountability, and regulated shelters – to address concerns around public safety, loitering, and detrimental impacts on the community.

✓ **Employment & Training Opportunities**: Some emphasized creating job opportunities, providing skills training, and supporting those who want to work as fundamental to breaking cycles of homelessness.

✓ **Community Support, Inclusion & Compassion**: Others urged the community to support one another, treat the homeless with dignity, and avoid "not in my backyard" attitudes, fostering a broader sense of belonging.

"Treat everyone with more compassion, even if they are not in a place to respond with compassion. We are all human and need to look out for one another."
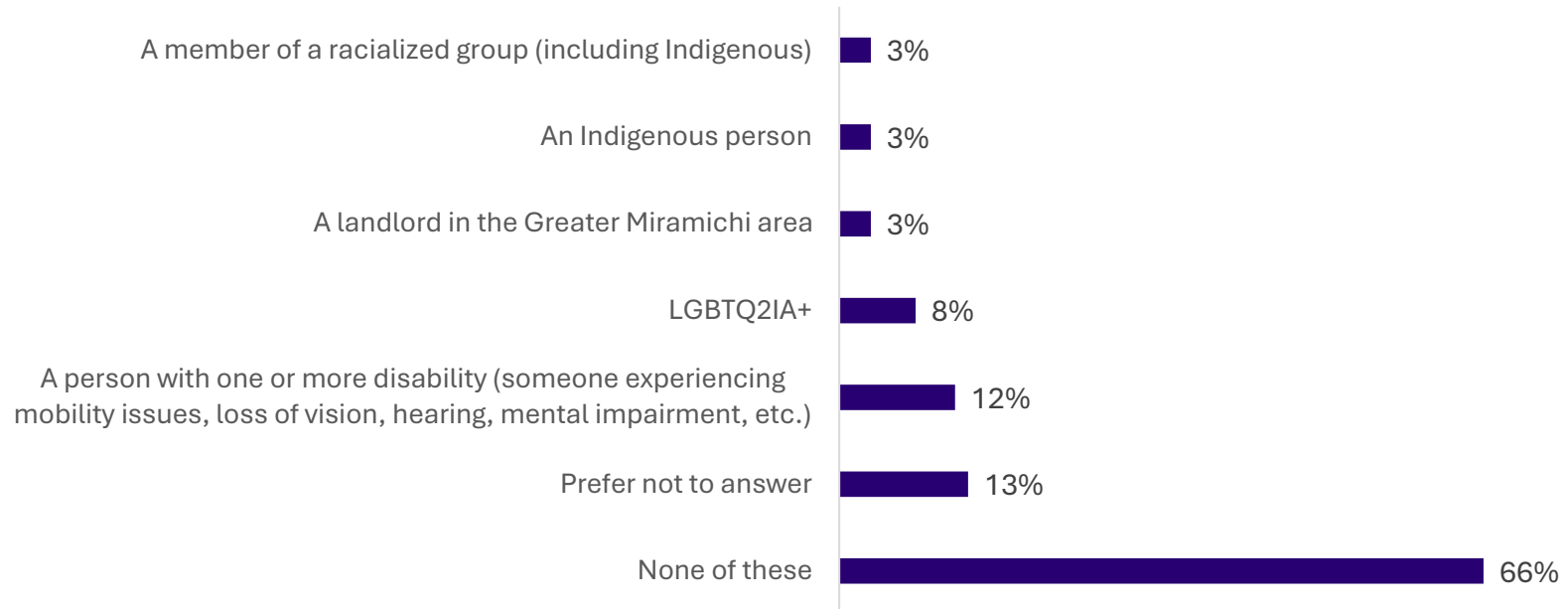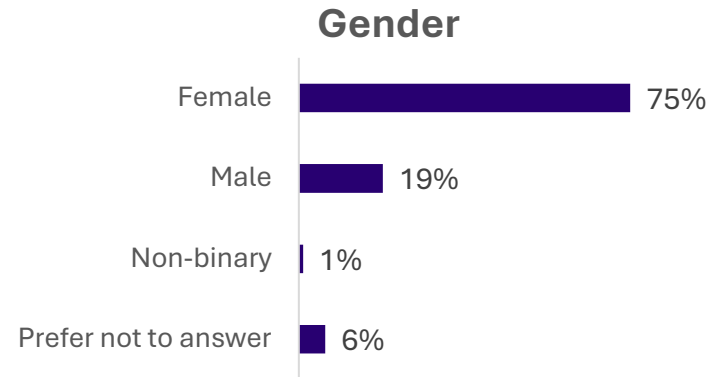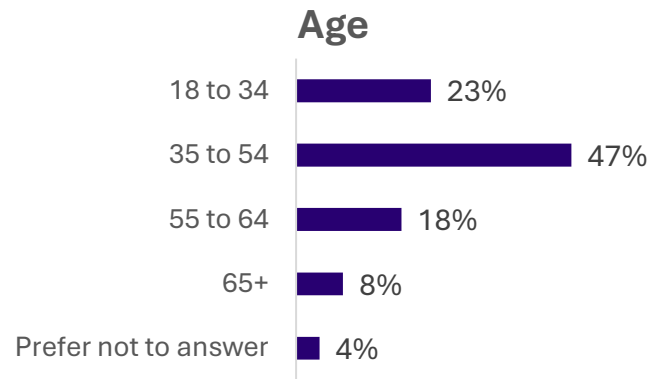
"Mental health, steady income, and community/social support are the foundations of addressing homelessness."

"Support from provincial and municipal government… more funding, more food programs and more meaningful initiatives for mental health and addiction."

"Stop doing performative stuff like 'awareness walks' and start funding housing, mental health services, and addiction support."
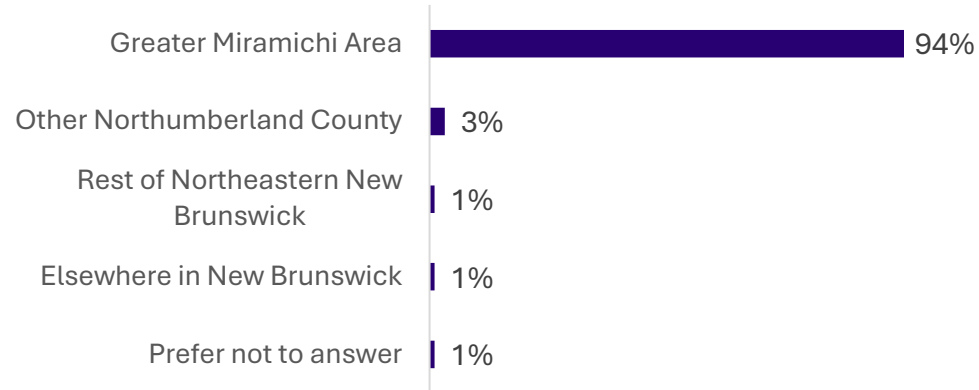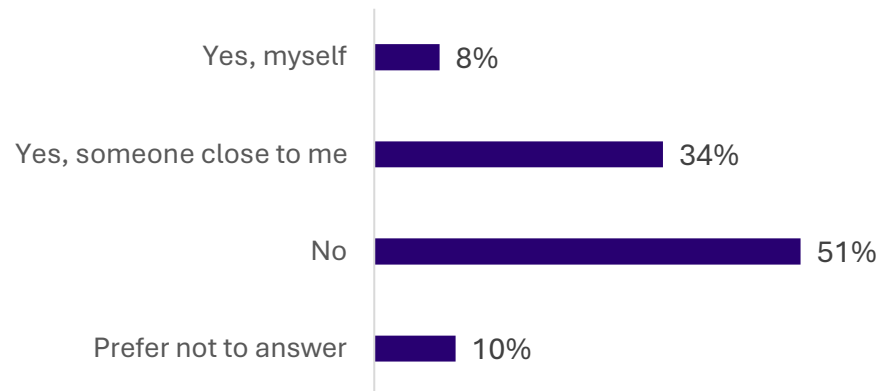
Profile of Respondents

Age

- 18 to 34 — 23%
- 35 to 54 — 47%
- 55 to 64 — 18%
- 65+ — 8%
- Prefer not to answer — 4%

Gender

- Female — 75%
- Male — 19%
- Non-binary — 1%
- Prefer not to answer — 6%

- A member of a racialized group (including Indigenous) — 3%
- An Indigenous person — 3%
- A landlord in the Greater Miramichi area — 3%
- LGBTQ2IA+ — 8%
- A person with one or more disability (someone experiencing mobility issues, loss of vision, hearing, mental impairment, etc.) — 12%
- Prefer not to answer — 13%
- None of these — 66%

Percentages may exceed 100% due to multiple response

Region

Greater Miramichi Area — 94%

Other Northumberland County — 3%

Rest of Northeastern New Brunswick — 1%

Elsewhere in New Brunswick — 1%

Prefer not to answer — 1%

Experience with Homelessness

Yes, myself — 8%

Yes, someone close to me — 34%

No — 51%

Prefer not to answer — 10%

Percentages may exceed 100% due to multiple response

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