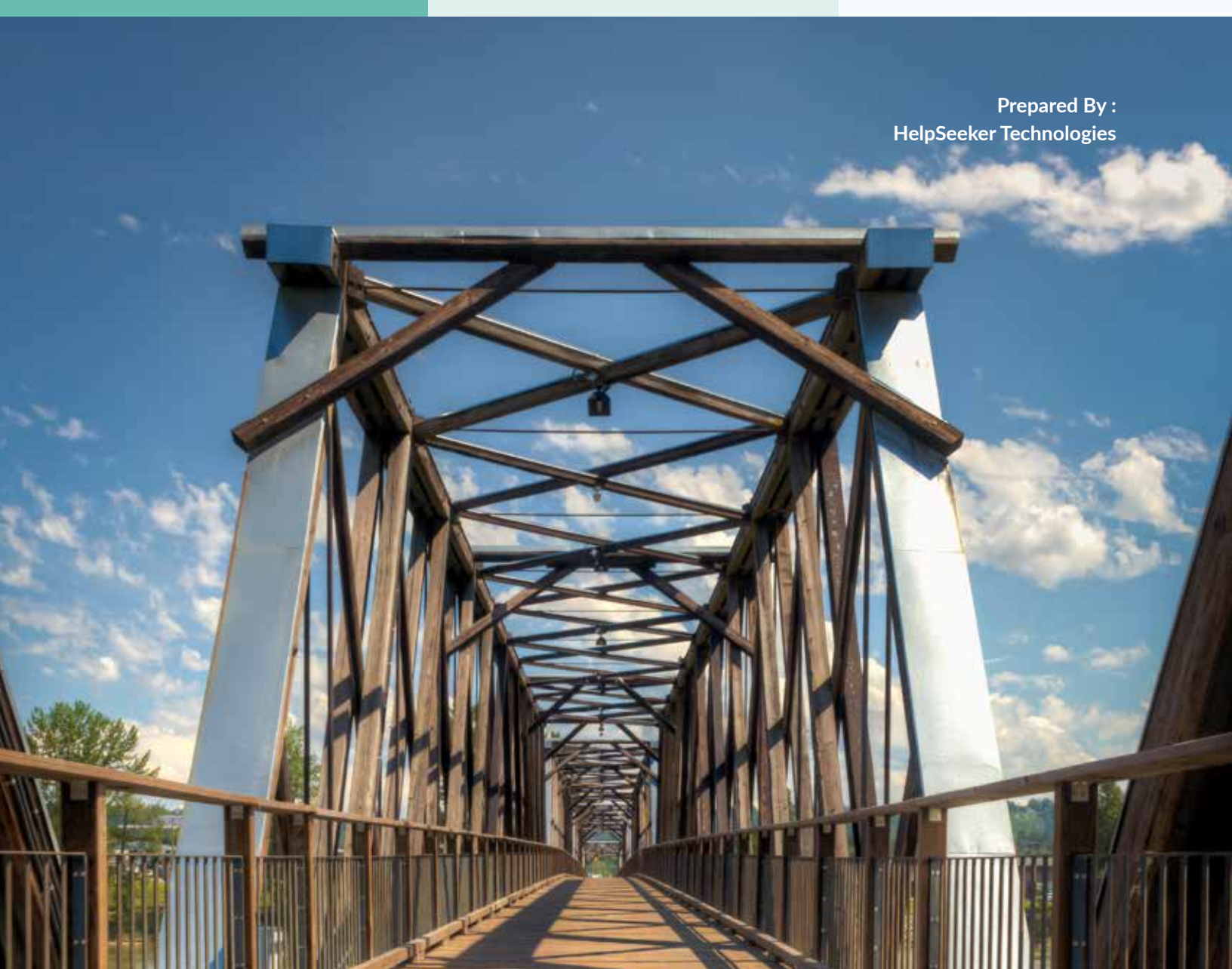


Prepared By:  
HelpSeeker Technologies



# Quesnel Service and Housing Options Review For Vulnerable Populations

Dec, 2023

Submitted to: City of Quesnel

## Recognition Of Territory

**HelpSeeker's team members live across Turtle Island in what is today known as Canada. We acknowledge that the places we call home today have deep ties to the Indigenous Peoples who have stewarded this land since time immemorial.**



We also acknowledge that colonial actors and institutions that perpetually deny Indigenous Peoples their rights to self-determination and sovereignty must be challenged. That is why we commit our organization to aligning our efforts to the advancement of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

We would like to acknowledge that the land on which we gather is the traditional unceded territory of the Lhtako Dene people and the traditional keepers of their land.

We are grateful for the traditional Knowledge Keepers and Elders who have guided us and those who have passed on. Our acknowledgement is an expression of reconciliation and appreciation to those who call this territory home, or to those who are visiting.



# Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Objective I: A Baseline of Service and Housing Options	6
Mental Health and Addictions Supports	6
Services and Housing for Vulnerable Populations	10
Provincial and Federal Programs	16
Strengths and Weaknesses In Quesnel's Support System For Vulnerable People	18
Objective II: Current and Projected Unmet Housing Need	20
Projections Of Need - General	21
Projections Of Need - Seniors	27
Projections Of Need - Youth	31
Objective III: Recommendations for Unmet Housing and Services Needs	36
Evaluation Of Current Housing And Support Models	36
Recommendations For Appropriate Housing and Service Models For Vulnerable Populations	41
Best Practices From Other Jurisdictions	43
Impediments To Setting Up And Operationalizing Resources Required For Housing and Support Services	50
Guidelines For Further Community Engagement	56



## Introduction

***This report aims to present a comprehensive analysis of housing and support services needed to address vulnerabilities faced by select populations in the City of Quesnel.***

These communities are Lhtako Dene Nation, Nazko First Nation, Lhoosk'uz Dené Nation, and ?Esdilagh First Nation, collectively referred to as the Communities. The purpose of this project is to explore the specific needs of these populations to develop targeted solutions that can effectively reduce the risk of homelessness. The approach is multifaceted, entailing a thorough evaluation of existing resources, an assessment of the current and future unmet needs, and the formulation of tailored recommendations to enhance the support infrastructure.

The report is structured around four primary objectives. Each objective encompasses specific deliverables, which may be expanded on by the consultant to ensure the goals of the project are comprehensively met. These objectives include the development of a baseline for current services and housing options, an estimate of the unmet housing needs for vulnerable persons, the provision of recommendations to address these unmet needs, and the supply of guidelines to the Communities for effective engagement and response to the challenges identified.

Through the strategic identification of gaps, evaluation of current models, and the assimilation of community feedback, this report seeks to offer actionable insights and guidelines that can foster a robust support system, mitigate the risk of homelessness, and lay the foundation for sustainable community-specific and joint initiatives.



**The outcomes are able to serve as an important resource for the Communities in their efforts to create a resilient and inclusive environment for all members, particularly the most vulnerable.**



Actionable insights  
and guidelines that  
can **foster a robust  
support system.**

## Objective I: A Baseline of Service and Housing Options

To improve community wellbeing and safety, there must be a detailed baseline of housing and service options available in the Communities. This is not just an inventory, but also the groundwork for strategic growth, allowing for informed decisions and effective resource allocation.

Mapping the community's assets lets us leverage our strengths and pinpoint urgent needs. Housing stability, crucial for public health, requires a thorough evaluation of facilities like shelters and assisted living to measure our preparedness for diverse resident needs.

A catalogue of services—from mental health to family support—offers a comprehensive view of our care capacity. This baseline reflects our current situation and guides future enhancements, spotlighting key areas where investment can improve community infrastructure.

### Mental Health and Addictions Supports

In the landscape of mental health and addiction services in Quesnel, BC, a network of specialized organizations works collaboratively to address multifaceted needs. This comprehensive approach is characterized by a synergy of services, each catering to specific aspects of recovery and wellbeing.

The Northern Health Authority's comprehensive health services, including specialized mental health and substance use programs, provides clinical support to ensure that medical and therapeutic needs are met. As part of Northern Health, the GR Baker Memorial Hospital offers acute care, intensive care, and emergency services. The hospital's mental health and substance use programs provide support for people facing various challenges. The services include inpatient care for acute mental health conditions, outpatient support, and specialized programs for substance use. In addition to hospital-based services, the Northern Health Authority runs community programs that address mental health and substance use issues. These programs aim to provide accessible care and support in the community, reducing barriers to treatment and ensuring ongoing support. This includes counselling services, support groups, and programs aimed at preventing substance use and promoting mental wellbeing. For integrated care, Northern Health's approach to mental health and substance use is integrated, meaning they aim to provide seamless care that encompasses physical, mental, and emotional health. This holistic view ensures that people receive comprehensive care that addresses all aspects of their wellbeing.

The Westside Mental Health and Substance Use centre is a comprehensive service provider addressing a wide array of mental health and substance use challenges. Their approach is multi-faceted, ensuring that people with diverse needs receive tailored support.

## Some of the supports they offer include:

### Opioid agonist therapy (OAT):

This therapy combines medication that reduces the urge to use opioids with counselling and behavioural therapies, offering a holistic approach to recovery. This program is pivotal in treating opioid use disorder.

### Counselling services:

Individual counselling sessions at Westside Mental Health are a cornerstone of their service. These sessions offer a safe and confidential space for people to explore personal challenges, discuss mental health concerns, and develop coping strategies. The counselling is aimed at providing support for a range of issues, from depression and anxiety to the psychological aspects of addiction.

### Mental health and addictions clinicians:

Specialist services are provided on a referral basis, allowing for more intensive and targeted care for those with specific mental health conditions or addiction issues. These clinicians offer expert guidance and treatment plans, ensuring that each person's unique needs are comprehensively addressed.

### Early psychosis therapy:

Early detection and treatment of the initial stages of psychosis can greatly improve long-term outcomes, offering strategies to manage symptoms and reduce the effect on daily life.

### Crisis support:

Urgent care and intervention for people in acute mental health distress. This support is vital for those experiencing severe mental health crises.

### Assertive community treatment (ACT):

The ACT team at Westside Mental Health offers a community-based approach to psychiatric treatment and rehabilitation. They provide a range of services for people with severe and persistent mental health conditions, including medical, social, and psychological support. The ACT model emphasizes personalized care in the community setting, reducing the need for hospitalization.

Given the serious drug overdose crisis in BC, intensified by the introduction of potent substances like fentanyl and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Quesnel has taken the important step of establishing two overdose prevention sites. These sites, operated by Quesnel Specialized Services and the Coalition of Substance Users of the North (CSUN), play a pivotal role in the community's response to the overdose emergency.

- **Quesnel Specialized Services overdose prevention site:** This site provides a secure and supervised environment for drug use, greatly reducing the risk of fatal overdoses. The presence of trained staff ensures immediate intervention in case of an overdose, and the facility acts as a crucial touchpoint for people to access broader health and support services. Also offers access to healthcare resources and counselling, and referrals to treatment programs.
- **CSUN overdose prevention site:** This site offers supervised consumption services, as well as acting as a hub for connecting people with essential support services, including mental health assistance, medical care, and addiction treatment options. CSUN's approach is grounded in understanding the unique challenges faced by substance users, providing a nonjudgmental and supportive environment.

These overdose prevention sites are essential to address to the rising number of overdose deaths in BC. With the increasing prevalence of fentanyl, a synthetic opioid far more potent than heroin that is cheaper to produce, the risk of overdose has increased substantially. These sites offer a safer alternative for consumption, along with immediate life-saving interventions and connections to ongoing support and treatment.

*The Quesnel Tillicum Society Native Friendship Centre* focuses on the Indigenous community, and brings an essential cultural perspective to mental health and addiction services. Their integration of traditional practices with contemporary societal needs ensures that support is both culturally relevant and respectful, addressing the unique challenges faced by Indigenous community members. It adopts a holistic approach that addresses both the practical and spiritual needs of Indigenous people, and facilitates their integration into the social, economic, and cultural aspects of the community.

**Acknowledging and addressing the unique experiences and needs of Indigenous community members is essential for their wellbeing and mental health resilience.**





*The Quesnel Community Action Team, part of the Community Action Initiative*, offers local, peer-led support and responses for mental health and substance use challenges. Their distribution of harm reduction supplies and provision of essential services like food and hygiene support directly address the immediate needs of those affected by the overdose crisis, a responsive and community-centric approach to health and wellness.

Also offering peer-led support is *Alcoholics Anonymous Area 79, along with Al-Anon and Alateen*, which play an important role in providing a supportive community for individuals and families affected by alcoholism. Their program structure, focused on peer-led sharing and mutual support, offers a foundation for people seeking to overcome alcohol dependency. The weekly meetings serve as a platform for sharing successes and struggles, fostering a sense of belonging and collective resilience crucial for sustained sobriety.

Complementing this, the *BC Region of Narcotics Anonymous* addresses drug addiction with their Essential Evolution Group meetings and hotline, offering immediate and ongoing support to help break the cycle of addiction, and a path toward a drug-free life through community support and shared experiences.

*The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) of Northern BC* provides a broad spectrum of mental health services, emphasizing individual empowerment. Through counselling, advocacy, and psychoeducation, they focus on developing coping skills and resilience. This individualized support offers tools and strategies for managing symptoms and improving overall mental wellbeing. In addition to counselling, the CMHA is actively involved in crisis intervention, offering immediate support to prevent harm and stabilize situations. The organization also runs various programs aimed at reducing the stigma surrounding mental health, including community outreach, educational workshops, and advocacy initiatives.

*Pearl Essence Therapy* introduces a more intimate dimension to counselling, blending professional expertise with a nurturing approach. This personalized care offers a safe space for exploration and growth.

**Together, these organizations form a dynamic support system in Quesnel, BC.**

*Their integrated approach to mental health and addiction services seeks to ensure that the Communities are equipped to support its most vulnerable members on their path to recovery and wellbeing.*



## Services and Housing for Vulnerable Populations

In the Communities, wraparound services and housing are important to support vulnerable populations, addressing fundamental needs, including mental-health care, substance-abuse treatment, employment assistance, and educational opportunities. These services are designed to meet people ‘where they are,’ providing tailored support that addresses multiple facets of their lives.

Equally important is the provision of stable and affordable housing, which forms the foundation of security and dignity for individuals and families. Stable housing is not just shelter, but also a platform for personal and community growth, enabling people to focus on rehabilitation, skills development, and integration into the community.

The following table details some of the housing options available for Quesnel’s vulnerable population.

*Table 1: Housing options for vulnerable populations*

Organization	Program	Capacity		Population Focus
Dalkelh Community Housing Society	Rural And Urban Native Program (Stepping Stone)	26 Houses (includes 3 accessible units)	56 people	Indigenous people
	Bc Homes Program (Milestone Manor)	31 houses (includes various unit sizes and wheelchair-accessible options)	73 people	All people
	Urban Native Program	33 houses	116 people	50% must be Indigenous No substance use
	Investment In Housing Innovation (Kikihnow Apartments)	38 apartments (includes mix of studio, 1-bed, 2-bed; includes 11 wheelchair-accessible suites)	43 people	All people Indigenous people Low-Income Families
	Homeless At Risk Program	26 apartments 1 house	29 people	Indigenous people
Quesnel Lions Housing Society	Silver Manor	30 units	No data	Seniors Persons with recognized disabilities ages 55+ and living independently
Quesnel Community Living Association	Racing Road Residence	No data	No data	Persons with diverse abilities
	Apartment Cluster Complex	4 Units	8 people	Applications via Community Living BC
	Hutchcroft House	No data	No data	Women with special needs

Park Place Seniors' Living	Maeford Place	36 1-bed suites	No data	Seniors
Redwood Residences Ltd.	Redwood Residence	11 Assisted Living Units	11 people	Seniors
Axis Family Resources	Specialized Supportive Housing	No data	No data	Mental health, substance use, or behavioural issues, developmental disabilities, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD) or other complex developmental and behavioural conditions, past or current trauma, or offending behaviours  Referral via Community Living BC or Ministry of Child and Family Development
Quesnel Shelter and Support Society	Bridges Supportive Housing	28 self-contained studio units  4 supportive recovery units (90-day stay only)	32 people	People with complex needs
	The Shelter and Support Society also offers support and recovery beds, shelter, beds, and transitional units via Seasons House. These are accessible via referral from a case manager. The units are not included in the table of housing units as these are emergency services, not long-term housing.			
Amata Transition House Society	The Amata Transition House Society offers transitional units for abused women and their children, along with referral services as needed. The units are not included in the table of housing units as these are emergency services, not long-term housing.			

In Quesnel, multiple organizations form a vital network of support for its vulnerable citizens. Many of the organizations serving vulnerable populations in Quesnel offer services that span multiple categories, reflecting the complex and interconnected needs of the community.

**While these entities are categorized for clarity, it's important to recognize that their contributions often extend beyond singular service areas, embodying a holistic approach to community support.**





## Housing, Shelters and Safety

*The Dakelh & Quesnel Community Housing Society* offers various housing options to accommodate different needs, including housing for low-income individuals, families, seniors, and people with disabilities. Their role includes providing these housing units as well as ensuring they are maintained and managed effectively to support long-term residency. This practical approach to housing provision plays a crucial role in ensuring that vulnerable members of the community, who would otherwise be at risk of homelessness, have access to safe and affordable housing.

*The Quesnel Shelter and Support Society* provides immediate shelter assistance to individuals and families in crisis, as well as a range of practical services designed to meet the basic and urgent needs of those in transition. Their services include the provision of daily meals and ensuring that residents have access to nutritious food, facilitating healthcare referrals for connecting residents with medical services and mental health support, and providing emotional support for residents dealing with stressful or traumatic circumstances. These services directly aid people to overcome immediate challenges and transition toward more stable living situations.

*Redwood Residences Assisted Living* provides specialized housing for seniors, with a focus on assisted living. They offer services that cater to the unique needs of the elderly, including health-care support and daily-living assistance, promoting independence and quality of life for their residents.



## Women, Children, and Families

*The Amata Transition House Society* offers safe shelter for women and children fleeing domestic violence in Quesnel. This shelter is more than a temporary residence, providing a secure environment where residents can find respite and safety from abusive situations. In addition to shelter, the society offers counselling services to help women and children process and recover from their traumatic experiences. They also provide legal advocacy, assisting clients with navigating legal challenges, such as obtaining restraining orders or handling custody disputes.

*The North Cariboo Aboriginal Family Program Society, also known as the Echen Healing Society*, is dedicated to serving Aboriginal families in Quesnel through culturally sensitive services. Recognizing the importance of cultural heritage in the healing and support process, they incorporate traditional practices and knowledge into their programs. These services include family counselling, support for children and youth, and community-based cultural activities.

*The Quesnel Women's Resource Centre Society* offers support to women in the community through counselling, advocacy, educational workshops, and practical assistance. Their counselling services address issues like domestic abuse and mental health, providing a confidential space for women to seek guidance. They advocate for women's rights, particularly in legal matters related to domestic violence and family law. The society also organizes workshops on topics like health, financial literacy, and career development, and facilitates support



groups for shared experiences and community building. They also assist women to find housing and access other essential services.

*Cariboo Youth and Family Resources* addresses the mental and emotional wellbeing of children and adolescents, as well as providing assistance to families in conflict. One of their services includes programs tailored to youth mental health, offering support and guidance to young people as they navigate the challenges of growing up. This can include one-on-one counselling, group therapy sessions, and other youth-centric mental health interventions. Cariboo Youth and Family Resources offers mediation and family counselling services for families dealing with conflict. They also provide programs that support the overall healthy development of children and adolescents, including activities and workshops that focus on building self-esteem, social skills, and resilience.

*Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Quesnel* provides mentorship programs that pair young people with adult mentors, to provide guidance and support that aids in emotional and social growth. These mentor-mentee relationships involve regular, meaningful activities, fostering essential life skills and a sense of belonging in the youth, especially beneficial for those experiencing challenges.

*The Quesnel & District Child Development Centre* focuses on early childhood development, offering developmental screenings and assessments to identify any delays in a child's growth. Based on these assessments, targeted interventions, such as speech, occupational, and physical therapies, are provided. Early learning programs and parental support groups are also available, ensuring children receive comprehensive support for their physical, emotional, and cognitive development during the critical early years.

## Supports for People with Disabilities



*Community Living British Columbia* offers a range of services designed to enhance the quality of life for people with developmental disabilities. This includes personalized support plans that cater to individual needs, helping to promote independence and integration into the community. Their programs may involve assisted living arrangements, employment support, and community engagement activities, all aimed at fostering independence and social inclusion.

*The Quesnel Community Living Association* focuses on providing support and resources to people with developmental disabilities. Their approach includes residential services, community inclusion programs, and family support. These services are tailored to empower people with developmental disabilities to live fulfilling lives as active community members.

*Dengarry Professional Services* offers residential care services, providing a stable and nurturing living environment for those who require continuous support. These residential settings are designed to be

homelike and comfortable, ensuring residents feel secure and valued. Dengarry also offers community inclusion programs, which help people integrate into the community. These programs focus on developing life skills, promoting independence, and facilitating participation in community activities.

## Food Security



*Two Rivers Church* operates a food bank program that offers essential grocery items to individuals and families in need. The church also organizes community meals, providing nourishment and a space for community connection and support.

*Victory Way Church* runs a food pantry and meal services, providing direct assistance to those facing food scarcity. Their programs often include nutrition education and support services, helping people make informed choices about their food and health.

*The Canadian Mental Health Association of Northern BC*, as part of its holistic approach to mental health, offers programs that assist people in accessing nutritious food, including education on healthy eating and assistance with obtaining food resources.

*The Green Hope Society* focuses on improving environmental health and sustainability in Quesnel by leveraging food that would otherwise be disposed of, distributing it to the community via hampers. Their work also includes community gardening projects, which both beautify the city and provide residents with access to fresh produce and green spaces.

## Inclusion and Advocacy



*The Quesnel Tillicum Society Native Friendship Centre* serves as a cultural hub for the Indigenous community, offering a range of programs and services. These include cultural events, educational programs, and support services, all aimed at preserving Indigenous culture and supporting the needs of Indigenous residents. One of its key services is cultural programming, which includes activities and events that promote Indigenous arts, languages, and traditions. The centre often organizes workshops, cultural celebrations, and educational events that are open to the entire community, promoting cross-cultural understanding and respect. In addition to cultural activities, the Friendship Centre provides support services such as assistance with finding housing and employment, navigating government services, and accessing health care.

*The North Cariboo Seniors Council* offers a variety of health and wellness programs specifically designed to meet the needs of the elderly. These programs include fitness classes, health education workshops, and recreational activities tailored to seniors. Additionally, the council organizes social activities and events, providing opportunities for seniors to engage with peers, maintain social connections, and

remain active in the community. The Seniors Advocacy Service advocates for the rights and needs of seniors in Quesnel, providing information, support, and advocacy services, and helping seniors navigate issues related to healthcare, housing, and other age-related concerns.

*The Quesnel Pride Society* is instrumental in advocating for 2SLGBTQIA+ rights and support. They organize events and provide resources that foster an inclusive and accepting community environment, promoting diversity and equality in Quesnel.

*The Coalition of Substance Users of the North (CSUN)* addresses substance use issues in Quesnel with a focus on harm reduction and supportive interventions. They advocate for approaches that minimize the negative consequences of substance use, such as providing access to safe consumption sites and clean needles. CSUN also offers peer support programs, creating a community of understanding and support for people struggling with substance use.

*The Northern Network of Peers for Equality* fosters an inclusive community through peer support and equality advocacy, offering a platform where people, especially those facing discrimination or social challenges, can find support and understanding from others with similar experiences. Additionally, they actively advocate for equality, working to address and reduce instances of discrimination and inequality in various community settings.

## Employment



*The WorkBC Centre in Quesnel* offers a comprehensive range of services designed to assist job seekers at various stages of their career journey. One of the primary services is job placement assistance, which includes helping people find suitable employment opportunities that match their skills and interests. For people facing barriers to employment, such as disabilities or lack of experience, WorkBC Centre provides specialized support services. This might include connecting them with employers who offer inclusive work environments or providing access to programs that assist with overcoming these barriers.

The centre provides resources for job searching, including access to job listings, assistance with resume writing, and interview preparation. WorkBC Centre also offers career counselling, providing guidance and advice to people looking to define or redefine their career goals. Counselors work with clients to identify their strengths, explore career options, and develop a personalized career plan. The centre also conducts various training programs and workshops which enhance job-related skills, such as computer literacy, communication skills, and industry-specific training.

## Provincial and Federal Programs

In addition to the wide range of local services and organizations dedicated to supporting the community of Quesnel, residents have access to provincial and federal programs. These programs, though not physically located in Quesnel, offer vital resources and support that extend their reach to the city's populace.

*Here 2Talk* is a provincial program providing post-secondary students in British Columbia, including those in Quesnel, with free, confidential counselling and community referral services. Accessible 24/7 via app, phone, or web, it ensures that students have round-the-clock access to mental health support.

*The Legal Services Society* operates provincially, offering legal aid to those who cannot afford legal representation. Residents of Quesnel can access information, advice, and representation for various legal issues.

*Moms Stop The Harm* is a network of Canadian families affected by harms and deaths related to substance use. It provides support, education, and advocacy for policy and practice reform, benefiting those in Quesnel facing similar challenges.

*The National Overdose Response Service* is a federal initiative offering a life-saving response service for people using drugs when they are alone. It's accessible via phone to Quesnel residents, providing an emergency response in case of an overdose.

*The Prince George and District Elizabeth Fry Society*, based in Prince George, extends its services to surrounding areas, including Quesnel. This organization supports women, youth, and children experiencing or at risk of experiencing legal issues, providing services like housing, counselling, and advocacy.

*Wellness Together Canada* offers a wide range of online mental health and substance use support to all Canadians. It provides resources like counselling, information, and self-directed programs for mental health and wellness.







Services that span multiple categories, **reflecting the complex and interconnected needs** of the community.

## Strengths and Weaknesses In Quesnel's Support System For Vulnerable People

Thoroughly examining the current landscape of services and housing options can help identify where enhancements are needed to fortify the social fabric of Quesnel, and provide robust support for its most vulnerable citizens.

Collective efforts to date in Quesnel have created a support system with various strengths. From comprehensive services addressing complex needs, to community-led initiatives rooted in cultural sensitivity, these strengths reflect a community that is both responsive and adaptive to the needs of its members.

Alongside these strengths are weaknesses to be addressed. These include infrastructure limitations, such as the shortage of affordable housing, as well as systemic issues like the centralization of services, resulting in limited services in outlying and remote areas.

### Strengths



**Comprehensive service range:** Organizations like Axis Family Resources and the Canadian Mental Health Association offer a broad spectrum of support services addressing mental health, substance use, and developmental disabilities.



**Cultural sensitivity:** Institutions like the Quesnel Tillicum Society Native Friendship Centre offer services that are attuned to the cultural needs of Indigenous populations.



**Community collaboration:** Organizations like the Green Hope Society and Quesnel Pride Society drive initiatives to support vulnerable demographics, including the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.








**Integrated support services:** Entities such as the Amata Transition House Society and Quesnel Shelter & Support Society provide not only housing, but also wraparound services that are essential for holistic support and empowerment.






**Educational and Employment Support:** Programs offered by Big Brothers/Big Sisters and the WorkBC Centre contribute to the personal development and economic stability of at-risk youth and job seekers.

### Weaknesses

-  **Inadequate housing supply:** There is a critical shortage of affordable housing, limiting housing stability for low-income residents.
-  **Geographic and transportation challenges:** The city's location and the inadequacy of public transportation create barriers to accessing services, especially for people in remote areas or those without personal vehicles. The concentration of services within the city limits of Quesnel is a challenge for those living in outlying areas, including reserves, leading to underuse of support systems by those in remote locations, further exacerbating their vulnerability.
-  **Dependency on non-profit organizations:** The system's heavy reliance on non-profit organizations suggests potential issues with long-term sustainability and a need for more robust government support.
-  **Service coordination needs:** The lack of a centralized system for service coordination may lead to inefficiencies and difficulties in navigating the available resources for those in need.
-  **Limited mental health and substance use treatment facilities:** The scarcity of long-term treatment centres for acute mental health and substance use needs is a serious gap in the current support structure.

### Additional Observations

-  **Demographic shifts:** The aging population may require an increase in seniors-oriented services, including medical care, assisted living, and targeted social support programs.
-  **Cultural and social inclusivity:** While culturally sensitive services exist, there may be a need for expansion and enhancement, especially support for the Indigenous population.
-  **Economic pressures:** The rising costs of living and housing, coupled with stagnant income levels, increases the risk of homelessness and economic instability for vulnerable populations.

## Objective II: Current and Projected Unmet Housing Need

Demand modelling is a method for understanding and anticipating the needs of a community, both now and in the future. This model starts with a detailed look at the current population. Key indicators like the percentage of people who are unsheltered, in extreme core housing need, or at risk due to mental health concerns and addictions are identified. These indicators rely on existing data from reputable national and provincial sources to establish a solid baseline.

From here, the model shifts its focus to future demand. By analyzing expected population growth rates using similar reliable sources, the model projects the future population and its associated housing needs. This dual focus ensures that planners and policymakers are equipped to address not just today's challenges, but also those that will arise in the years to come.

### Methodological Limitations

While demand modelling offers valuable insights, it is important to recognize its limitations:

#### Complexity of social issues:

Housing needs are affected by a wide range of factors like culture, economic status, and demographics, adding complexity that can be hard to quantify accurately.

#### Predictive limitations:

While the model uses past and current data to make projections, it can't account for unexpected changes, such as sudden economic downturns or substantial policy alterations.

#### Interpretation and application of results:

A model is only as good as its application. If the findings are not understood or used effectively, the resulting actions may not solve problems as intended.

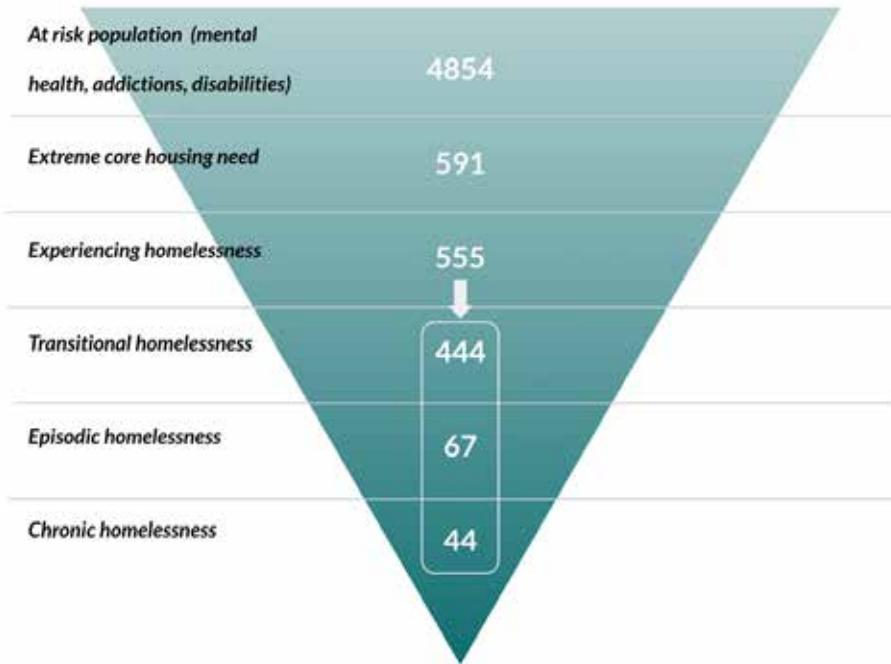
#### Methodological diversity:

Though the model we use has a proven track record in other contexts, there are various other methods to estimate demand, each with its own strengths and drawbacks.

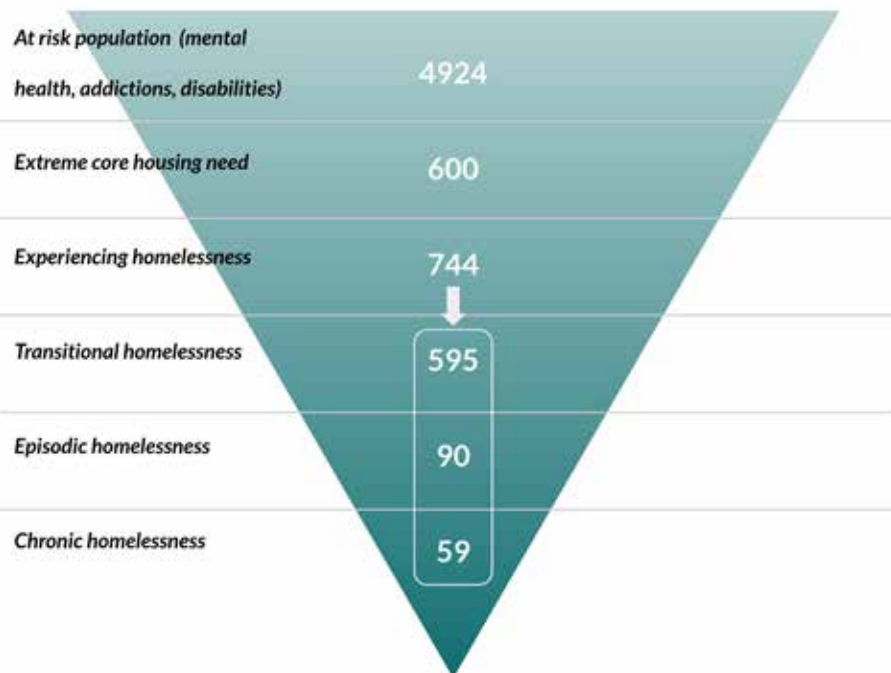


## Projections Of Need - General

Estimated Need, 2021



Estimated Need, 2028



In our housing demand model, the numbers presented for different categories of the population are estimates rooted in reputable sources and statistically sound assumptions. The figures are drawn from the most recent Canadian census conducted in 2021, and are projected to 2028 to provide a long-term view.

The at-risk population estimate is 21% of the total population, including those facing challenges related to mental health, addictions, and disabilities. This assumption is informed by multiple credible sources, including the Canadian Chronic Disease Surveillance System, the Canadian Mental Health Association, and the Department of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion. The growth rate for this at-risk group is anchored to Quesnel's overall growth rate between 2011 and 2021, as reported in the 2021 census.

For Extreme Core Housing Need, a metric that aggregates the severe housing challenges faced by both tenants and owners, the data is sourced directly from the 2021 Canadian census. The growth rate for this category also aligns with the community's growth rate from 2011 to 2021.

For the categories related to homelessness, the assumptions are consistent with general practices across Canada. For example, it's estimated that 2.4% of the total population experiences homelessness. In this homeless population, there are sub-categories: 8% are considered chronically homeless, people who experience long-term or repeated episodes of homelessness; 12% are episodically homeless, those who face shorter, less frequent bouts; and 80% are in a transitional state of homelessness, experiencing short-term homelessness, often for the first time. The growth rate for the population experiencing homelessness is assumed to be 5%. These specific percentages are based on nationwide assumptions corroborated by Statistics Canada and the federal government, and are consistent with general practices across Canada.

*Table 2: Actual and projected growth of housing vulnerability, 2021-2028*

	Population Growth Rate	2021	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Change 2023 - 2028
At-risk population (mental health, addictions, disabilities)	-1.3%	4,854	4,791	4,729	4,667	4,606	4,547	4,487	-6%
Extreme core housing Need	-1.3%	591	583	576	568	561	554	546	-6%
Experience homelessness	5%	555	583	612	642	675	708	744	28%
Transitional homelessness	5%	444	466	490	514	540	567	595	28%
Episodic homelessness	5%	67	70	74	78	81	86	90	28%
Chronic homelessness	5%	44	46	49	51	53	56	59	28%

Table 3: Housing vulnerability percentages used to calculate projections, and sources

Population	Assumption	Growth Rate	Source
At-risk population (mental health, addictions, disabilities)	21% of total population	Average population change over the last 20 years	Canadian Chronic Disease Surveillance System (CCDSS) / Canadian Mental Health Association / Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion
Extreme core housing need (ECHN)	Sum of ECHN for tenants and owners	Average population change over the last 20 years	Stats Canada
Experience homelessness	2.4% of total population	Assumption in Canada	Stats Canada
Chronic homelessness	8% of unsheltered	Assumption in Canada	Federal Government
Episodic homelessness	12% of unsheltered	Assumption in Canada	Stats Canada
Transitional homelessness	80% of unsheltered	Assumption in Canada	Stats Canada

This methodology enables us to make informed projections about housing needs, not just for the present, but also for the future—up to the year 2028 in this case.

**However, it is important to remember that while these numbers are based on solid data and reasonable assumptions, they are not immune to the limitations of predictive modelling, as discussed earlier.**



## Projections of Need by Support Type - 2028

Following the estimates of the population in need of housing support, this projection chart outlines anticipated housing needs for the year 2028. These projections rely on several types of housing and support services, including affordable housing, emergency shelters and intensive case management, among others. Using the data gathered on current population figures and their projected growth, educated estimates were made about how many people will require each type of housing or support in the future.

This method involves taking each category of need—such as affordable housing or emergency shelters—and applying projection numbers to forecast the likely demand for each category by 2028. By doing so, the city can identify where the most pressing needs will be, such as what kinds of housing spaces will require construction or expansion.

This future-oriented approach allows the City of Quesnel to align current resources with anticipated demand. By comparing the projected needs with the support currently available, any gaps that must be addressed can be pinpointed. This helps inform strategic decisions about where to allocate resources for maximum effectiveness, thus facilitating timely and effective social infrastructure planning.

*Table 4: Estimates of needed housing by category of housing vulnerability, 2028*

Support Type	At-Risk Population	Extreme Core Housing Need	Transitional Homeless	Episodic Homeless	Chronic Homeless	Total Spaces Needed
Affordable housing	150	300				450
Assertive case management	200			50	30	280
Emergency shelters					0	0
Intensive case management			200			200
Affordable homeownership	150	300				450
Permanent supportive housing	150			40	20	210
Homelessness diversion	100	100	150			350
Rapid rehousing	100		150			250
Transitional housing	200		100			300
Rent supports		400				400
Group homes or community residential services	200			10	10	220
Assisted living or residential care facilities	200					200
Rehabilitation programs	200			30	50	280
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,650</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>3,590</b>



This demand model helps us understand current and future housing needs by analyzing today's population, and using growth rates to project future needs. By comparing these projections to existing resources, the model guides resource allocation for more effective planning. The same approach will be applied to specific groups like seniors and youth in the following sections to tailor strategies to their unique needs.

These projections do not account for the potential construction or expansion of emergency shelter capacities in the community. Instead, they are rooted in a more holistic approach that emphasizes preventative measures, aiming to address the underlying causes and factors leading to the need for such shelters. This perspective prioritizes long-term solutions and community-based interventions over immediate but temporary fixes, reflecting a strategic shift towards sustainable and comprehensive support systems.

## Glossary of Support Types:

### **Affordable housing programs:**

These initiatives provide housing units at reduced or subsidized rates, ensuring residents allocate no more than 30% of their gross income on housing. It aims to cater to low- to moderate-income individuals or families, ensuring they have access to cost-effective housing options.

### **Emergency shelter programs:**

Serving as immediate housing facilities, these offer immediate shelter and safety to individuals or families facing homelessness. They're characterized by basic amenities, ensuring residents have access to necessities.

### **Affordable homeownership programs:**

Designed to aid low- to moderate-income families in acquiring their homes, these programs offer financial assistance. This can manifest as down payment aid, reduced interest rates, or other fiscal incentives.

### **Assertive case management programs:**

Adopting a proactive approach, these programs ensure people receive the services they require. They encompass consistent outreach and maintain a low client-to-case manager ratio for individualized attention.

### **Intensive case management programs:**

Tailored for people with intricate needs, this program focuses on offering comprehensive support services, assisting clients in achieving stability and independence through focused care.

### **Permanent supportive housing programs:**

Merging affordable housing with essential services, this is specifically for those with disabilities, mental health concerns, or extended periods of homelessness. The emphasis is on ensuring long-term stability, combined with consistent support.

**Homelessness diversion programs:**

With prevention at its core, these interventions help individuals or families avoid entering homeless shelters or systems. Resources or financial aid are provided to maintain current housing or locate alternative accommodations.

**Transitional housing programs:**

An intermediate between homelessness and lasting housing, these temporary solutions allow residents a set stay duration, during which they're provided with services to fortify their stability and independence.

**Group homes or community residential services:**

These residences offer a structured, shared living environment for small groups of people with similar needs. Integrated services are provided, emphasizing communal living and shared experiences.

**Rehabilitation programs:**

These programs assist people recovering from injuries, addiction, or mental health issues. This includes helping clients regain skills, improve their wellbeing, and reintegrate into society. Services include medical care, counselling, and skills training, targeted toward long-term recovery and reducing risk of relapse.

**Rapid rehousing programs:**

This program aids those facing homelessness to promptly find permanent housing. Also includes short-term financial assistance and vital services.

**Rent support programs:**

These programs assist individuals or families to manage their rent, including vouchers, landlord-directed payments, or general rent subsidies.

**Assisted living or residential care facilities:**

These residences offer a blend of housing, personal care, and healthcare for seniors or those with specific health requirements, supporting residents in their daily activities while ensuring they receive necessary medical care.

## Projections Of Need - Seniors

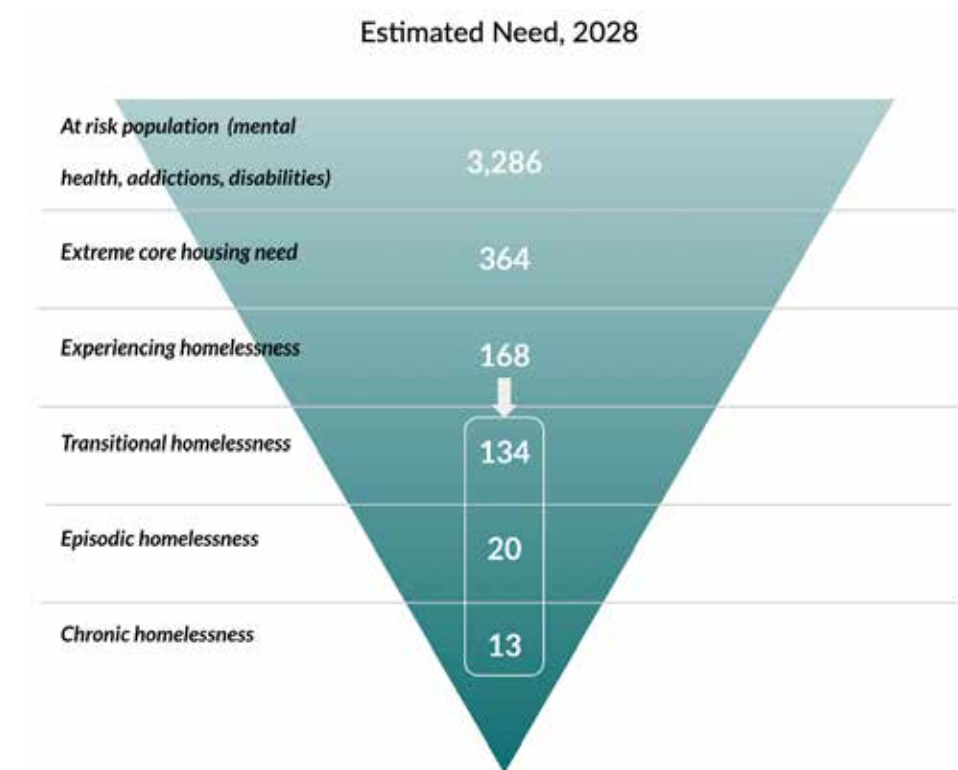
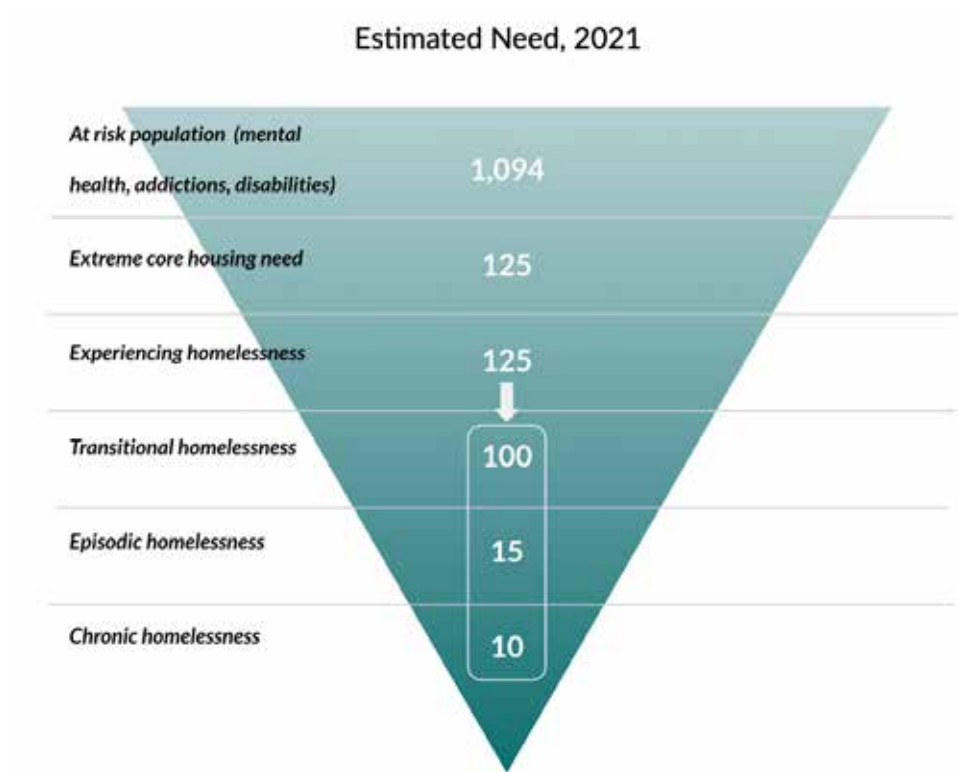


Table 5: Actual and projected growth of housing vulnerability for seniors, 2021-2028

	Growth Rate	2021	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Change 2023 - 2028
At-risk population (mental health, addictions, disabilities)	20%	1,094	149	179	213	255	305	364	144%
Extreme core housing need	20%	125	1,307	1,562	1,867	2,231	2,666	3,186	144%
Experience homelessness	5%	125	131	138	145	152	160	168	28%
Transitional homelessness	5%	100	105	110	116	122	128	134	28%
Episodic homelessness	5%	15	16	17	17	18	19	20	28%
Chronic homelessness	5%	10	11	11	12	12	13	13	28%

Table 6: Seniors' housing vulnerability percentages used to calculate projections, and sources

Population	Assumption	Growth Rate	Source
At-risk population (mental health, addictions, disabilities)	21% of total population	Average population change over the last 20 year	Canadian Chronic Disease Surveillance System (CCDSS) / Canadian Mental Health Association / Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion
Extreme core housing need (ECHN)	Sum of ECHN for tenants and owners	Average population change over the last 20 years	Stats Canada
Experience homelessness	2.4% of total population	Assumption in Canada	Stats Canada
Chronic homelessness	8% of unsheltered	Assumption in Canada	Federal Government
Episodic homelessness	12% of unsheltered	Assumption in Canada	Stats Canada
Transitional homelessness	80% of unsheltered	Assumption in Canada	Stats Canada

Table 7: Estimates of needed housing by category of housing vulnerability for seniors, 2028

Support Type	Chronic Homeless	Episodic Homeless	Transitional Homeless	Extreme Core Housing Need	At-Risk Population (MH, Addictions, Disabilities)	Total Spaces Needed
Affordable housing				300	150	450
Assertive case management	30	50			200	280
Emergency shelters	0					0
Intensive case management			200			200
Affordable homeownership				300	150	450
Permanent supportive housing	20	40			150	210
Homelessness diversion			150	100	100	350
Rapid rehousing			150		100	250
Transitional housing			100		200	300
Rent supports				400		400
Group homes or community residential services	10	10			200	220
Assisted living or residential care facilities					200	200
Rehabilitation programs	50	30			200	280
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>1,650</b>	<b>3,590</b>

## Glossary of Support Types:

### **Permanent supportive housing (PSH):**

This type of program provides long-term housing combined with supportive services. This can be particularly effective for older adults who have chronic health conditions or who have experienced homelessness for extended periods.

### **Home modification programs:**

As seniors age, they may require modifications to their homes to remain safe. These programs provide grants or loans to help seniors make necessary adjustments to their homes.

### **Respite care facilities:**

These facilities provide temporary shelter and services seniors experiencing homelessness who need medical care.

### **Senior outreach teams:**

Specialized teams that reach out to seniors living on the streets or in unstable situations, connecting them with essential services and housing resources.

### **Homelessness prevention programs:**

These programs provide emergency financial assistance, mediation, and case management to prevent eviction and subsequent homelessness.

### **Affordable housing programs:**

These are programs that offer housing at reduced rates for seniors, often based on income.

### **Tenant-based rental assistance:**

This provides subsidies for seniors to rent private market apartments.

### **Rapid re-housing:**

These programs quickly connect individuals and families experiencing homelessness to permanent housing through rental assistance and support services.

### **Emergency shelters with senior-specific services:**

Some shelters specialize or have specific sections dedicated to seniors, recognizing their unique needs.

### **Day centres:**

These facilities provide daytime shelter, meals, showers, and access to social and health services for seniors experiencing homelessness who need a place during the daytime hours.

### **Medical-legal partnerships:**

Lawyers partner with health care providers to address the legal issues that can lead to or exacerbate homelessness, such as unlawful evictions or benefit denials.



## Projections Of Need - Youth

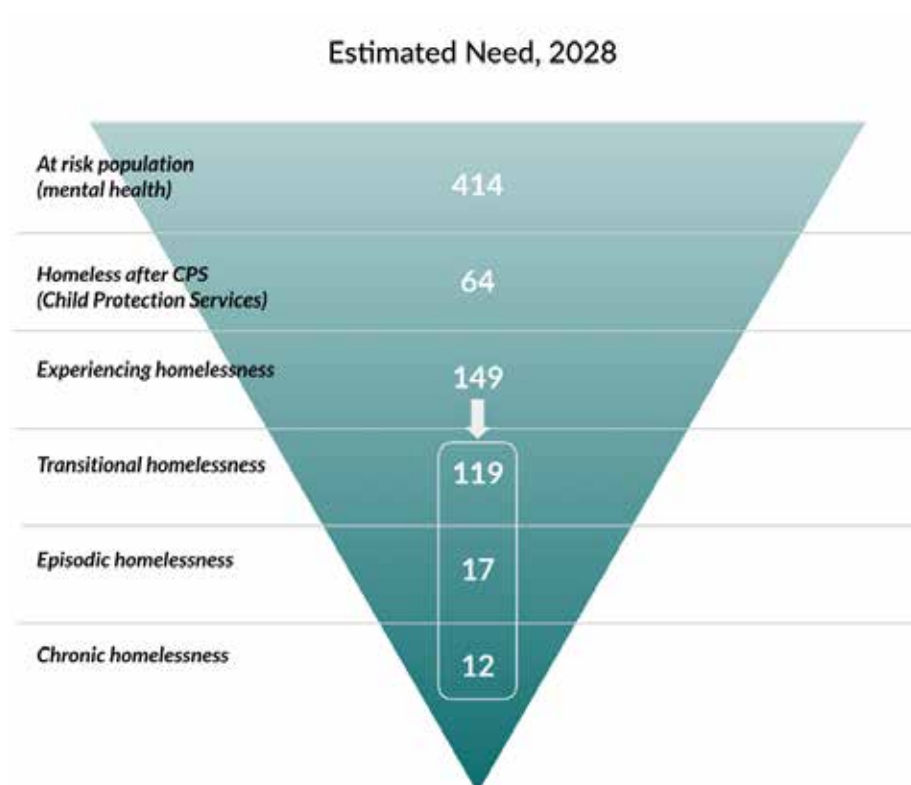
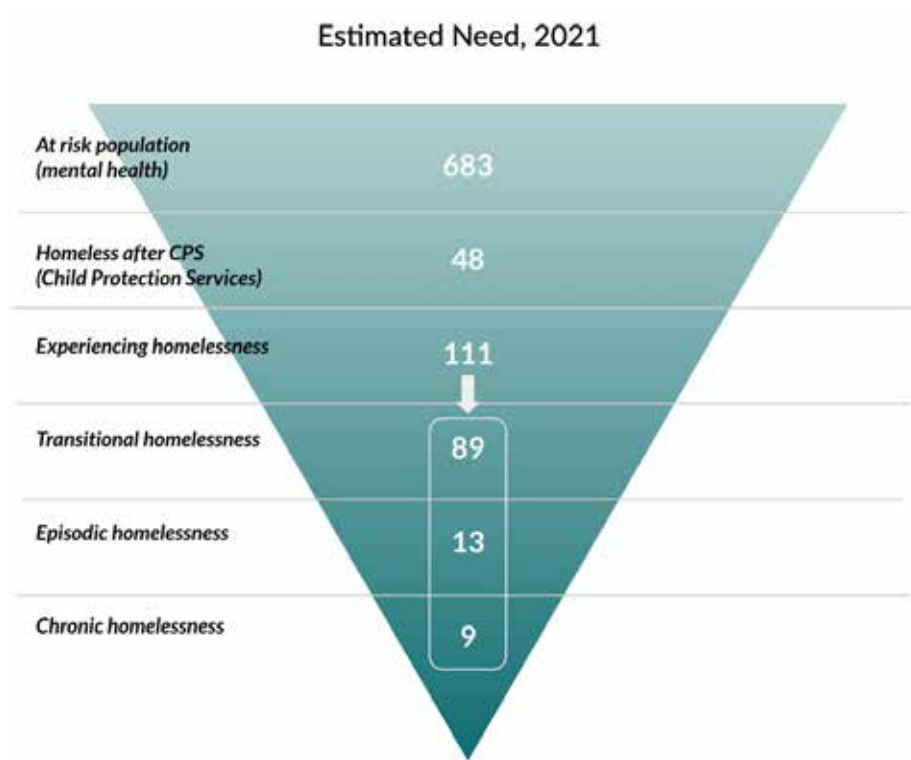


Table 8: Actual and projected growth of housing vulnerability for youths, 2021-2028

	2021	Growth Rate	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Change 2023 - 2028
Chronic homelessness	9	5%	9	10	10	11	11	12	28%
Episodic homelessness	13	5%	14	14	15	16	17	17	28%
Transitional homelessness	89	5%	93	98	103	108	114	119	28%
Experience homelessness	111	5%	117	122	128	135	142	149	28%
Reported youth homelessness after child protection services	48	5%	50	53	56	58	61	64	28%
Mental health	683	-8%	628	578	532	489	450	414	-34%

Table 9: Youth housing vulnerability percentages used to calculate projections, and sources

Population	Assumption	Growth Rate	Source
At-risk population (mental health)	14% of total children and youth population in BC	Average population change over the last 20 years	Canadian Mental Health Association
Homelessness after child protection services	43% of homelessness	Average population change over the last 20 years	Homeless Hub
Experience homelessness	20% of homeless estimates (previous models)	Assumption in Canada	Without a Home: The National Youth Homelessness Survey  (Stephen Gaetz, Bill O'Grady, Sean Kidd, Kaitlin Schwan)
Chronic homelessness	8% of unsheltered	Assumption in Canada	Federal Government
Episodic homelessness	12% of unsheltered	Assumption in Canada	Stats Canada
Transitional homelessness	80% of unsheltered	Assumption in Canada	Stats Canada

Table 10: Estimates of needed housing by category of housing vulnerability for youth, 2028

Support Type	Mental Health	Homeless after child protection services	Transitional Homeless	Episodic Homeless	Chronic Homeless	Total Spaces Needed
Transitional housing programs		10	5	5		20
Independent living programs		50	70			120
Education and training vouchers		60				60
Aftercare services		50				50
Youth shelter and crisis services		10		5	5	20
Rapid re-housing for youth		30		5	5	40
Mentoring programs	20	20	20			60
Job training and employment programs	20	15				35
Youth outreach teams	10	10		5	5	30
Drop-in centres	5	10		5	5	25
Foster youth to independence		20		5		25
Youth-specific medical-legal partnerships	10	20				30
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>515</b>

## Glossary of Support Types:

### **Transitional housing programs:**

These programs provide housing and supportive services to young people for a specified period—often up to two years—to help them transition to independent living.

### **Education and training vouchers:**

In the U.S., this program provides financial assistance to former foster youth to attend college or vocational training, recognizing that educational attainment can be a protective factor against homelessness.

### **Youth shelter and crisis services:**

Emergency shelters specifically designed for youth can provide immediate safety and support, connecting them with longer-term resources.

### **Mentoring programs:**

Mentoring can play an important role in the lives of youth exiting foster care, providing them with guidance, support, and connections to resources, including housing.

### **Youth outreach teams:**

These teams specifically engage with youth on the streets or in unstable housing situations, connecting them with shelter, services, and resources.

### **Foster youth to independence:**

In the United States, this initiative provides housing vouchers to young adults under the age of 25 who are in, or have recently left, the foster care system without a home.

### **Independent living programs:**

These programs offer training and resources to help youth aging out of foster care to develop essential life skills, such as budgeting, job hunting, and housekeeping. They might also provide financial support for housing.

### **Aftercare services:**

Some child welfare agencies provide aftercare services to support young people after they exit foster care. These might include case management, counselling, and assistance in accessing housing or other resources.

### **Rapid re-housing for youth:**

This approach focuses on moving youth into permanent housing as quickly as possible, often with rental subsidies and supportive services.

### **Job training and employment programs:**

By providing job training and employment opportunities, these programs can give youth the means to sustain their own housing.

### **Drop-in centres:**

Centres that offer immediate services such as meals, showers, and laundry. They often serve as an entry point for youth to access more extensive housing and support services.

### **Youth-specific medical-legal partnerships:**

Legal professionals collaborate with healthcare providers to assist youth with legal issues that might affect housing, such as emancipation or accessing benefits.



Rooted in **a more holistic approach** that emphasizes preventative measures.

## Objective II: Current and Projected Unmet Housing Need

### Evaluation Of Current Housing And Support Models

To evaluate the efficacy of current housing and support models, we analyze the system of supports using the following lenses:

- **Current strengths utilization:** Assessing how the strengths of the current system can be leveraged to address the projected demands.
- **Addressing current weaknesses:** Analyzing how the identified weaknesses of the system might affect its ability to meet future needs, and what strategies can be implemented to mitigate these challenges.
- **Demographic and social considerations:** Reviewing the effects of demographic shifts and cultural sensitivities in meeting these needs.

### Current Strengths Utilization

**Comprehensive service range and cultural sensitivity:** Organizations like the QUEST unit, Axis Family Resources, and the Canadian Mental Health Association offer a broad spectrum of support services. The presence of these organizations demonstrates Quesnel's ability to address diverse needs, including mental health, substance use, and developmental disabilities. This multi-dimensional approach is crucial, given the projected 21% at-risk population by 2028 due to mental health, addictions, and disabilities.

**Application:** *Scaling up these comprehensive services can help meet the growing demand, particularly for at-risk populations. The expansion should focus on the specific needs identified in the projection, such as assertive case management (280 spaces needed by 2028) and rehabilitation programs (280 spaces).*





**Community collaboration and integrated support services:** Community-driven initiatives by organizations, like the Green Hope Society and the Quesnel Pride Society, demonstrate strong grassroots involvement, while integration of housing and wraparound services by entities such as Amata Transition House Society and Quesnel Shelter & Support Society is a testament to the community's ability to provide holistic support. The presence of integrated support entities in Quesnel, including immediate mental health support from organizations like the CAT team, and Indigenous support services provided through organizations like the Dalkelh and Quesnel Tillicum Society Native Friendship Centre, showcases a holistic approach to care.

**Application:** *Strengthening these community collaborations will assist in effectively addressing the increasing demands for various types of housing and support, such as the projected need for 450 spaces in both affordable housing and affordable homeownership by 2028, as well as 210 spaces in permanent supportive housing.*

*Enhancing these integrated services can be pivotal in addressing the diverse needs of the community. For instance, the CAT team's model could be expanded or replicated to meet the growing demand for mental health services, in line with the projection that 21% of the population will be at-risk due to mental health, addictions, and disabilities by 2028. Similarly, the expansion of culturally sensitive services through organizations like the Dalkelh can help meet the projected needs for more inclusive and culturally competent care.*

*Other housing societies in Quesnel, such as the Quesnel Shelter & Support Society, provide essential housing and support services. Integration with other support mechanisms is key to addressing the projected increase in various categories of homelessness, including transitional (595 spaces by 2028), episodic (90 spaces), and chronic homelessness (59 spaces).*

**Educational and employment support:** Programs offered by organizations such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters and the WorkBC Centre contribute to personal and economic stability, important factors in preventing and addressing homelessness and housing instability.

**Application:** *Expanding these programs aligns with the need to support those experiencing transitional homelessness (595 spaces needed by 2028) and those in extreme core housing need (546 spaces), potentially reducing the pressure on housing resources.*



## Addressing Current Weaknesses

**Inadequate housing supply:** The shortage of affordable housing in Quesnel is a serious concern, especially given the projected 28% increase in the population experiencing homelessness by 2028, as well as the projected increase to 546 people in Extreme Core Housing Need. This inadequacy directly hinders the city's ability to provide stable housing for low-income residents and those experiencing homelessness, including the transitional, episodic, and populations experiencing chronic homelessness.

**Application:** *To address this, there's a need for a concerted effort to increase the supply of affordable housing and affordable homeownership options. The projected need for 450 spaces in both these categories by 2028 demonstrates the scale of expansion required.*

**Geographic and transportation challenges:** The centralization of services in Quesnel and lack of adequate public transportation create barriers for people without personal vehicles and residents in outlying areas, including reserves. These geographic and transportation challenges hinder access to essential services, potentially exacerbating the vulnerability of remote populations.

**Application:** *Implementing solutions such as decentralized service delivery, mobile support units, or enhanced public transportation could improve access. Additionally, expanding rent support programs (400 spaces needed by 2028) could help people in remote areas afford housing closer to essential services.*

**Dependency on Non-Profit Organizations:** Quesnel's heavy reliance on non-profit organizations for providing key services indicates potential sustainability issues, especially in the long term. This dependency raises concerns about the continuous availability and quality of services. Non-profits require sustainable funding in order to operate at the scale required by the community.

**Application:** *Strengthening partnerships with governmental bodies and exploring diversified funding sources could enhance the sustainability of these services. It's also crucial to ensure that programs like assertive case management (280 spaces needed) and rehabilitation programs (280 spaces) are adequately funded and supported.*



**Service Coordination Needs:** The absence of a centralized system for service coordination in Quesnel may lead to inefficiencies and make it difficult for those in need to navigate available resources. Without effective coordination, there can be overlaps or gaps in services, reducing the overall efficiency of the support system.

**Application:** *Developing a centralized or integrated system for service coordination, including but not limited to supportive housing, could streamline access and ensure more effective delivery of services like group homes or community residential services (220 spaces needed) and assisted living or residential care facilities (200 spaces).*

**Limited Mental Health and Substance Use Treatment Facilities:**

Quesnel currently lacks long-term treatment centres for acute mental health and substance use issues. The limited availability of specialized medical professionals exacerbates the challenge of providing comprehensive care for these issues. The at-risk population, which includes people with mental health and substance use challenges, is estimated to rise to 21% of the total population by 2028. The lack of long-term treatment options and specialized medical care could lead to unmet needs and increased pressure on other parts of the support system.

**Application:** *Establishing long-term treatment facilities within Quesnel or nearby regions, as well as attracting and retaining specialized medical professionals, including psychiatrists and addiction specialists, are essential. This development would align with the anticipated need for 280 spaces in rehabilitation programs and 280 spaces for assertive case management by 2028. Such facilities and services would not only provide direct care but also act as pivotal components in a comprehensive support system for people with complex health needs.*



**However, it is important to remember that while these numbers are based on solid data and reasonable assumptions, they are not immune to the limitations of predictive modelling, as discussed earlier.**



## Demographic and Social Considerations

**Aging population:** The aging population in Quesnel necessitates an increase in age-appropriate services, reflected in the projected need for 200 spaces in assisted living or residential care facilities by 2028. An aging population requires not just medical care, but also targeted social support programs and housing options that cater to their unique needs.

***Application:** Expanding and enhancing services such as assisted living, residential care facilities, and senior-specific affordable housing options, and integrating these services with existing community support systems, can provide a more comprehensive care network for the elderly.*

**Cultural and social inclusivity:** While culturally sensitive services exist, such as those provided by the Quesnel Tillicum Society Native Friendship Centre, expansion and enhancement may be needed to meet the growing and diverse needs of the community, including Indigenous populations. Given that 59% of the homeless population in the 2023 PiT count self-identified as Indigenous, compared to 13% of Quesnel's overall population, it is crucial to ensure that all segments of the population have access to services that are respectful and responsive to their cultural backgrounds and social contexts.

***Application:** Strengthening and expanding culturally sensitive programs and services, especially those aimed at Indigenous populations, aligns with the need for a more inclusive approach. This might include increasing the availability of Indigenous-led or culturally tailored programs in areas such as mental health, substance use, and housing.*

**Economic pressures:** The rising cost of living and housing, coupled with stagnant income levels, exacerbates the risk of homelessness and economic instability for vulnerable populations. This is particularly important given the projected growth in homelessness and extreme core housing needs. Economic pressures can lead to increased demand for affordable housing and support services.

The PiT count in 2023 identified economic struggles as the primary cause of homelessness, with 49% citing insufficient income as the key reason for their situation. Additionally, the reliance on income assistance and disability benefits among 93% of the homeless population points to economic vulnerabilities.

***Application:** Addressing economic instability involves expanding affordable housing options, increasing rent supports, and providing economic empowerment programs like job training and employment support. These measures can help mitigate the impact of economic pressures on at-risk populations.*

## Recommendations For Appropriate Housing and Service Models For Vulnerable Populations

Given the severity and complexity of the crisis facing vulnerable populations in Quesnel, a multifaceted and aggressive approach is necessary. Actions taken by the Communities should aim not only to address immediate needs, but also to tackle systemic issues contributing to these challenges.

### 1. Comprehensive Housing Strategy

- 1.1 Large-scale affordable housing development:** The major shortage of affordable housing necessitates a large-scale response. The Communities should seek to secure funding and partnerships for the construction of a substantial number of affordable housing units, prioritizing speed and scalability, possibly through modular housing solutions.
- 1.2 Targeted housing for high-risk groups:** The over-representation of Indigenous people and health concerns in the homeless population suggests a need for specialized housing solutions. We recommend that the Communities develop housing projects specifically designed for these groups, incorporating cultural and social sensitivity into their design and management.

### 2. Health and Social Services Enhancement

- 2.1 Establishment of a local treatment facility:** The lack of local, long-term treatment facilities for mental health and substance use is a serious gap. To best serve their vulnerable populations, the Communities should advocate for, and invest in, the establishment of a comprehensive treatment facility in Quesnel. This should offer a range of services from detoxification to long-term therapy and rehabilitation.
- 2.2 Mobile health and social services:** Geographic and transportation barriers limit access to services for remote populations. The Communities may deploy mobile units providing health and social services, including mental health support, to remote and underserved areas.

### 3. Cultural Competence and Inclusion

- 3.1 Culturally sensitive programs and services:** The high proportion of Indigenous people among those experiencing homelessness indicates a need for culturally competent approaches. The Communities should collaborate with Indigenous leaders and organizations to develop and deliver programs and services that are culturally appropriate and respectful.
- 3.2 Anti-racism and inclusion initiatives:** Addressing racism and promoting inclusivity are vital for a cohesive community. The Communities should implement community-wide anti-racism programs and inclusivity training, focusing on public services, healthcare providers, and law enforcement.

## 4. Strengthened Community Engagement and Collaboration

- 4.1 Collaborative governance model:** The Communities may consider establishing a task force comprising First Nations, municipal government, non-profit organizations, healthcare providers, community leaders, and affected people to ensure a coordinated and effective response.
- 4.2 Community awareness and participation:** Addressing community concerns of NIMBYism through community involvement is key to addressing the root causes of these issues. The Communities should consider launching awareness campaigns and community forums to engage residents in understanding and participating in solutions to these challenges.

## 5. Systemic and Structural Changes

- 5.1 Enhanced public transportation network:** Improving transportation options is essential for ensuring access to services and employment opportunities. The Communities may expand and enhance public transportation routes and schedules, particularly connecting outlying areas to central service locations. Methods they may consider are demand-responsive transport, community shuttle services, or partnerships with private transportation services.
- 5.2 Economic empowerment and job creation:** Economic instability is a major contributor to the crisis at hand. The Communities should develop comprehensive job training and placement programs, especially targeting vulnerable populations, as well as partnering with local businesses and industries to create job opportunities and support economic development initiatives.

The success of these recommendations to the Communities hinges on collaboration and collective action, as these principles form the bedrock of sustainable community transformation. Through collaboration, all partners—including local and provincial government, non-profit organizations, Indigenous groups, healthcare providers, and community members—can pool their unique perspectives, resources, and expertise.

This united front is essential for implementing complex strategies like demand-responsive transport, modular housing solutions, and tailored social services, ensuring they are not only effectively executed but also resonate with the diverse needs of the community.

**Collective action will also foster a sense of shared responsibility and community ownership over these initiatives,**

*creating a strong foundation for lasting change and resilience against the multifaceted challenges faced by vulnerable populations in Quesnel.*





## Best Practices From Other Jurisdictions

### Continuums of Support for Housing and Mental Health

In the Canadian context, an ideal housing continuum provides a wide range of housing options to accommodate the diverse needs of individuals and communities.

A generalized housing continuum is provided below. This continuum is ideal in that it includes a variety of housing options to meet the diverse needs of people at different stages in their lives and varying income levels. However, in practice, many communities face gaps along this continuum, particularly in areas like affordable rental housing and supportive housing.

To achieve this ideal, governments, non-profits, and private sector stakeholders must work together to invest in and develop housing solutions across the continuum. They need to consider local needs, housing market dynamics, and financial resources to ensure a balanced and comprehensive approach to housing provision and policy.

*Table 11: Types of housing available for vulnerable populations*



Similarly, defining a mental health and substance use continuum is important because it provides a structured framework for addressing diverse needs, guiding service providers and policymakers in creating a coordinated and comprehensive system that ensures people receive the right care at the right time. Without an understanding of what the continuum should look like, Quesnel runs the risk of failing to meet its residents' needs.

Best practices suggest the following for a continuum of mental health and substance use care, keeping in mind that cultural appropriateness and person-centred treatments should be at the heart of all points on the continuum.

*Table 12: Benefits of various interventions and supports*





Cultural appropriateness and person-centred treatments should be at **the heart of all points** on the continuum.

## Locating Supportive Housing

**Supportive housing facilities, often misunderstood and met with “Not In My Backyard” (NIMBY) attitudes, are essential for addressing societal challenges and should be welcomed rather than resisted.**

These facilities play an important role in providing stable housing and support services to vulnerable populations, such as people experiencing homelessness or with disabilities.

Having these facilities in a neighbourhood can contribute to the community in meaningful ways. For instance, they bring in resources and services that can benefit the wider area, promote diversity and inclusivity, and often lead to increased property values over time. Residents in supportive housing are also given the opportunity to integrate into the community, fostering a sense of belonging and reducing societal stigmas. Importantly, evidence shows that supportive housing leads to reduced homelessness and can decrease the demand on public services like emergency healthcare and law enforcement, ultimately benefiting the entire community.



Hence, rather than adopting a NIMBYist stance, residents should recognize the broader benefits and the crucial role these facilities play in strengthening the social fabric and promoting the wellbeing of all community members.

**When deciding where to locate a supportive housing facility, there are several important considerations to take into account.**



## These considerations include:

### Zoning and land availability:

Supportive housing apartment buildings can only be built where multi-unit zoning is in place, and land is often scarce and expensive, limiting the available options. Land that is zoned for higher density housing, mixed use, or approved for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) may prove important for Quesnel.

### Accessibility to services:

It is important to consider the proximity of the facility to essential services such as healthcare, mental health services, substance use treatment, and social support networks, to ensure that residents have access to the resources they need.

### Affordability:

Housing should be affordable, ideally requiring residents to pay no more than 30% of their income for housing costs. Other models for affordability include Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) housing, AKA subsidized housing.

### Safety and stability:

The location should provide a safe and stable environment for residents, helping them to achieve their goals and prevent homelessness, hospitalizations, and involvement in the criminal justice system. This may mean keeping a distance from environments in which people experience crises, such as an emergency shelter.

### Community engagement:

Engaging with the local community and addressing any concerns they may have about the facility are crucial in ensuring successful integration and acceptance of the supportive housing facility. This should include First Nations, local businesses, and homeowners in the areas being considered. Education may also be required to encourage an understanding of community wellbeing for all.

### Population to be served:

Consider the specific population that the facility will serve, such as people with mental illnesses, chronic health conditions, histories of trauma, or who are reentering society after incarceration, and ensure that the location meets their specific needs.

### Homelessness prevention:

Providing housing in areas where homelessness is prevalent can help prevent the exacerbation of substance use and mental disorders, making it an important consideration when choosing a location for a supportive housing facility.

By carefully considering these factors, decision-makers can make informed choices about the location of supportive housing facilities, ultimately contributing to the wellbeing and stability of the residents they serve.

To effectively involve the community, including First Nations, in decision-making for a supportive housing facility, meaningful engagement is paramount. This involves appreciating the wealth of knowledge, experiences, and creative insights that community members bring to the table. Recognizing and leveraging these assets is crucial in shaping decisions that resonate with their needs and aspirations.

Building an inclusive political coalition through community engagement practices encourages the implementation of strategies by elected officials, representing a diverse spectrum of voices and interests. This inclusivity not only bolsters the strategy's effectiveness, but also enhances trust in government, particularly in communities historically marginalized from decision-making processes. Such engagement strengthens the bond between city government and community groups, paving the way for more collaborative future planning.

### Attracting Medical Professionals

Creating an effective strategy for attracting medical professionals to rural areas like Quesnel requires a balanced approach that addresses both the barriers they face and the unique opportunities available in such settings.

Focusing on attracting culturally competent care providers and specialists in mental health and addiction treatment is especially pertinent.





Table 13: Barriers and strategies to attract medical professionals to rural areas

## Barriers for Physicians in Rural Areas

### Patient population challenges

- Care for an underserved, aging population
- Less healthy and less affluent patient base

### Workload and scope of practice

- Overlapping roles, potential for burnout
- Sole medical resource, isolation risk

### Access to specialized care

- Geographical distance from specialists
- Performing services outside comfort zone

### Professional isolation

- Lone medical resource in community
- Risk of burnout and isolation

### Educational and career opportunities

- Limited educational opportunities for family
- Career advancement concerns

### Cultural competence needs

- Requirement for culturally competent care
- Indigenous health care considerations

### Mental health and addiction treatment

- Need for long-term treatment specialists
- Limited access to mental health resources

## Strategies to Attract Medical Professionals

### Appeal to greater purpose

- Highlight the effect on underserved communities
- Emphasize strong doctor-patient relationships

### Promote rural practice benefits

- Showcase work-life balance, community impact
- Provide professional support networks

### Address potential concerns

- Assure access to technology, telemedicine support
- Develop local partnerships with specialists

### Community and staff involvement

- Involve community in welcoming, integrating doctors
- Foster peer support and professional development

### Support and resources provision

- Facilitate access to quality education, housing
- Offer career development programs, spousal support

### Specialized training and recruitment

- Provide training in cultural competence
- Recruit professionals with experience in Indigenous health

### Focus on specialized care needs

- Highlight the community's specific needs
- Offer incentives for specialists in mental health, addiction



## Impediments To Setting Up And Operationalizing Resources Required For Housing and Support Services

Implementing the comprehensive recommendations outlined for addressing homelessness and related issues in Quesnel faces a range of impediments, which can be broadly categorized as follows:

### 1. Funding and Financial Constraints

The implementation of key initiatives aimed at alleviating homelessness and related issues in Quesnel faces serious financial challenges. Securing sufficient funding for the development of large-scale affordable housing is a primary concern, as it requires substantial investment not only in construction but also in the long-term management and maintenance of these facilities.

Similarly, the establishment of a local treatment facility for mental health and substance use issues presents a financial hurdle, given the high initial investment costs associated with building and equipping such a facility, as well as staffing it with qualified professionals. The proposal to enhance the public transportation network, while vital for ensuring community accessibility, incurs ongoing operational and maintenance costs that must be sustained over time. This is particularly challenging in smaller communities where the user base may not be large enough to offset these costs.

The initiative for economic empowerment and job creation, crucial for addressing the root causes of homelessness and poverty, also requires substantial financial resources. This includes funding for training programs and providing incentives for businesses to participate and support job creation efforts.

These financial challenges necessitate innovative funding solutions, partnerships, and sustained commitment from both public and private sectors to ensure the successful implementation and longevity of these initiatives.

### 2. Regulatory and Bureaucratic Hurdles

Addressing Quesnel's homelessness crisis involves navigating various regulatory and bureaucratic challenges. For the comprehensive housing strategy, this includes modifying zoning laws to allow for new affordable housing projects, ensuring that these projects comply with current building codes and safety standards, and streamlining permit processes to expedite construction.



In enhancing health and social services, the establishment of local treatment facilities and the deployment of mobile health units must adhere to stringent healthcare regulations and standards, which govern everything from facility operations to staff qualifications.

In addition, systemic and structural changes, such as expanding the public transportation network and fostering economic empowerment, require careful coordination with existing policies and legal frameworks. This entails not only navigating transportation policies for network expansion but also aligning job creation initiatives with current economic policies and labor laws, often advocating for policy changes to better support the community's vulnerable populations.

### **3. Community Resistance and NIMBYism**

Community resistance and NIMBYism (Not In My Back Yard) present major obstacles in operationalizing service and housing needs in Quesnel, particularly for targeted housing for high-risk groups. When it comes to developing specialized housing solutions for vulnerable populations, such as those experiencing homelessness, people with mental health issues, or Indigenous communities, local opposition often arises.

This resistance stems from various concerns, including fears of declining property values, increased crime, or changes in neighbourhood character. Overcoming these barriers requires addressing negative stereotypes and misconceptions about these groups.

Efforts to foster positive community engagement are crucial in this regard. Building community awareness, empathy, and understanding of the challenges faced by high-risk groups can help mitigate resistance. This involves not only transparent communication about the intended benefits and safety measures of such housing developments, but also active efforts to involve the community in the planning and implementation process, transforming potential opponents into allies.

By doing so, Quesnel can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for its most vulnerable residents, ensuring that service and housing needs are met in a way that is both effective and community-supported.

### **4. Logistical and Operational Challenges**

Logistical and operational concerns are pivotal in the effective implementation of services in Quesnel, particularly for initiatives like mobile health and social services, cultural competence and inclusion programs, and the collaborative governance model.

For mobile health and social services, the coordination and maintenance of mobile units pose a substantial challenge. These units need to be efficiently scheduled and routed to reach remote areas,

requiring robust logistical planning. Additionally, the maintenance of these units, both in terms of equipment and staffing, requires ongoing attention and resources to ensure they remain functional and effective.

For cultural competence and inclusion programs, the challenge is in developing and delivering programs that effectively address the diverse needs of the community, particularly the substantial Indigenous population. This requires a deep understanding of cultural nuances and sensitivities. Programs must be tailored to resonate with and meet the specific needs of different cultural groups, demanding a high level of expertise and continuous adaptation based on community feedback.

Building a collaborative governance model requires consensus among diverse participants, each with their own perspectives and priorities. This is a complex task, involving effective communication, negotiation, and often compromise. Ensuring that all voices are heard and valued, particularly those of marginalized groups, is key to creating a governance model that is truly representative and effective in addressing the multifaceted issues of homelessness and social services in Quesnel.

## 5. Capacity and Resource Limitations

Capacity and resource constraints present challenges for enhancing health and social services, and for strengthening community engagement and collaboration. These constraints make it difficult to effectively deliver essential services, and engage the community in meaningful ways.

Health and social services enhancement are impeded by the shortage of healthcare professionals and support staff. This shortage is particularly acute in areas such as mental health and addiction treatment, where there is a high demand for specialized skills. The lack of professionals in these fields limits the community's ability to provide comprehensive and continuous care to its vulnerable populations. The challenge of attracting and retaining skilled healthcare workers in rural settings like Quesnel further exacerbates this issue.

Strengthening community engagement and collaboration is limited by the availability of human resources to manage and execute various initiatives. Effective community engagement requires dedicated personnel to plan, coordinate, and implement activities, and to maintain communication with community members. Similarly, collaboration among different participants



requires people who can facilitate these partnerships, align interests, and drive collective action. The lack of sufficient staff or volunteers to undertake these roles can hinder the progress and effectiveness of community engagement and collaborative efforts.

These capacity and resource constraints underscore the need for strategic planning and investment in human resources, to ensure that these initiatives are sustainable and effective in addressing the needs of Quesnel's residents.

## **6. Cultural and Social Sensitivity Concerns**

Cultural and social inclusivity concerns affect the implementation of programs and services. These concerns highlight the need for a nuanced understanding of the community's cultural dynamics, and a commitment to addressing systemic biases and racism.

Ensuring authentic representation and input from Indigenous communities poses a challenge to building culturally sensitive programs and services. Given the over-representation of Indigenous people among the homeless population in Quesnel, it's important that any programs or services developed are not only culturally sensitive, but also co-created with meaningful participation from these communities. This requires active collaboration and partnership to ensure that the services provided are aligned with the cultural practices, values, and needs of the Indigenous population.

The primary obstacle to anti-racism and inclusion initiatives is effectively addressing deep-rooted societal biases and racism. This involves not only creating programs that promote inclusivity and diversity but also fundamentally changing attitudes and behaviors within the community. This requires sustained efforts in education, awareness-raising, and the implementation of policies that actively combat racism and promote inclusivity at all levels of the community.

## **7. Technological and Infrastructure Barriers**

The development of an enhanced public transportation network in remote or underserved areas is a complex endeavor. The primary challenge lies in establishing new transportation systems where existing infrastructure may be limited or non-existent. This includes not just the physical aspects, such as roads and vehicle maintenance facilities, but also the technological components like scheduling systems, digital ticketing, and real-time tracking for efficiency and user convenience.

In remote areas, the geographical spread and lower population density add to the complexity, making the cost-benefit analysis more challenging. Integrating new systems with existing modes of transport to create a cohesive network requires careful planning and substantial investment.

Access to technology and infrastructure plays a crucial role in developing economic empowerment and job creation. Ensuring that both the workforce and businesses have access to the latest technology and high-speed internet is essential for the success of any economic development initiative in today's increasingly digital world.

This is particularly challenging in remote areas where technological infrastructure might be lacking or outdated, requiring both installing the necessary hardware and software and also ensuring ongoing maintenance and upgrades. There is also a need for training and support to ensure that the local population can effectively use these technologies, which is vital for attracting new businesses and fostering an environment conducive to economic growth.

## **8. Political and Governance Issues**

To create the collaborative governance model, the primary challenge lies in aligning the diverse agendas and priorities of various community members, including governmental entities, non-governmental organizations, community groups, First Nations, and private sector participants. Each group brings its own unique objectives, cultural perspectives, and operational styles. For First Nations, whose perspectives are often rooted in distinct cultural and historical experiences, ensuring their voices are not only heard but also given due weight is essential.

Implementing systemic and structural changes will require alterations to existing policies and legal frameworks, which must be done in a way that respects and incorporates First Nations' rights, treaties, and traditional lands. Gaining political support for these changes demands effective advocacy, respectful negotiation, and a keen understanding of First Nations cultures and governance structures. Engaging with First Nations leaders, politicians, policymakers, and influential community figures requires a culturally sensitive approach, ensuring that proposed changes align with First Nations values and address their specific needs and concerns.

## **9. Sustainability and Long-Term Viability**

Initiatives such as the comprehensive housing strategy and economic empowerment and job creation programs are not just about immediate relief, but also creating sustainable, long-term solutions that will benefit the community for years to come.

The comprehensive housing strategy requires not only the construction of affordable housing units, but also considering factors like maintenance, management, community integration, and the evolving needs of the population. Sustainable housing solutions must cater to the diverse needs of the community, including the specific requirements of high-risk groups such as Indigenous people, who may need culturally sensitive designs and support services. They must also be designed to be adaptable,

environmentally responsible, and economically viable over time, and be resilient to economic shifts, and changes in population demographics.

Economic empowerment and job creation involves both providing immediate job training and placement, and fostering an economic environment that supports ongoing employment growth. It involves collaborating with local businesses, industries, and educational institutions to ensure that job training programs are aligned with the current and future needs of the job market. This approach helps in building a workforce that is adaptable and skilled in sectors that are likely to see sustained demand.

## 10. Data and Research Gaps

Addressing the various challenges and implementing effective strategies for Quesnel's social issues requires a robust approach to data and research. This involves recognizing and filling gaps in data collection, monitoring, and research across all initiatives.

For all initiatives, from housing to health and economic empowerment, there is a need for ongoing data collection and monitoring. This means not only gathering initial data to inform strategy development, but also continuously tracking progress, outcomes, and emerging trends. This is essential to understand the effectiveness of the initiatives, identify areas for improvement, and adapt strategies effectively in response to changing circumstances.

There is also a need for in-depth research to delve deeper into the root causes and complex dynamics of issues like homelessness, health disparities, and economic challenges in Quesnel. This research should aim to uncover the underlying systemic and structural factors that contribute to these issues, especially considering the specific context of the community, including its substantial Indigenous population.

Effective research and data collection should also involve the voices and experiences of those directly affected by these issues. Engaging with community members, particularly vulnerable groups, can provide valuable insights and ensure that strategies are grounded in the realities of those they aim to support.



## Guidelines For Further Community Engagement

The partnership between the City of Quesnel, Lhtako Dene Nation, Nazko First Nation, Lhoosk'uz Dene Nation, and ?Esdilagh First Nation—collectively referred to as the Communities—plays a crucial role in addressing the needs of vulnerable populations, particularly those who are unhoused. A cohesive, well-structured approach is necessary for effective results. This approach should include the following.

### Formation of a steering committee:

Establish a diverse steering committee to guide and oversee initiatives for homelessness and support for vulnerable populations.

- Recruit a diverse group of representatives from each community, ensuring cross-sector participation (e.g., healthcare, housing, social services).
- Define clear roles, responsibilities, and governance structures for the committee.
- Continue to organize regular meetings to monitor progress, address challenges, and adjust strategies as needed.

### Incorporation of cultural elements in policies and practices:

Ensure that policies and operational practices are deeply respectful of the cultural diversity and heritage of the Communities.

- Involve cultural authorities, such as elders and Indigenous knowledge holders, in the policymaking process.
- Embed traditional practices, languages, and customs in service delivery models.
- Conduct cultural competency training for staff across all communities involved.

### Development of a unified vision and strategy:

Craft a collaborative, culturally inclusive vision and strategy to address homelessness and enhance support services.

- Facilitate joint planning sessions to establish a shared vision, incorporating values and insights from all communities.
- Outline a strategic plan with both immediate and long-range goals.
- Implement a phased approach to strategy execution, with regular evaluations of outcomes and effectiveness.

### Resource sharing and collaborative projects:

Leverage shared resources and synergies through joint projects and initiatives.

- Identify and amalgamate financial, human, and material resources for collective initiatives.
- Seek grants and funding collaboratively, enhancing the scope and potential effectiveness of projects.
- Initiate combined housing, healthcare, and social service programs that serve the broader interests of all communities.



## Questions that the Communities may discuss are:

### **Strategic priorities and goals**

What are our main priorities and specific goals in addressing homelessness and supporting vulnerable populations?

### **Identification of key community members**

Who are the essential community members we need to collaborate with for effective implementation?

### **Resource allocation and budgeting**

How should we allocate our financial and human resources among the various initiatives?

### **Location for supportive housing and services**

Where should we locate supportive housing developments and associated services for optimal accessibility and community integration?

### **Design of supportive housing**

What design elements should our supportive housing include to meet the needs and preferences of our community?

### **Health and social service enhancements**

What enhancements or additions to health and social services are necessary for our targeted populations?

### **Community engagement and outreach**

What strategies should we use to engage the community and gain support for our initiatives?

### **Cultural competence and inclusivity**

How can we ensure cultural competence and inclusivity are integrated into all our programs and services?

### **Policy development and advocacy**

What policy changes or advocacy efforts are needed to support our initiatives and address systemic barriers?

### **Monitoring and evaluation framework**

How should we monitor the progress of our initiatives and evaluate their effect on the community?

### **Communication strategy**

What should be our strategy for communicating with community members and keeping them informed and engaged?

### **Partnership and collaboration opportunities**

What partnerships and collaborations should we explore to enhance the effectiveness of our initiatives?

### **Emergency response and contingency planning**

What plans do we need for emergency responses affecting our homeless population?

### **Sustainability and long-term planning**

How can we ensure the long-term sustainability of our initiatives, including ongoing funding and program evolution?

Submitted to: City of Quesnel

# Quesnel Service and Housing Options Review For Vulnerable Populations

Authored by :  
HelpSeeker Technologies



HELPSEEKER  
TECHNOLOGIES

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION  
OR DATA INQUIRIES CONTACT:  
[camilo@helpseeker.org](mailto:camilo@helpseeker.org)