

# Home on Borrowed Land

## Geographies of Land Leasing and the Impacts of Colonial Land Policy on Housing in the Northwest Territories

### BRIEF SUMMARY

Through the lens of settler colonialism, this research considers the impacts of government land policy and the prevalence of leasing residential land from the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) on access to housing in the Northwest Territories (NWT). Using a novel mixed-methods approach, the study illustrates the practice of residential land leasing and the evolution of land policy in the territory, before describing the role played by both in the NWT's challenging housing landscape. This research highlights the barriers the territory's present, imposed land policy framework presents to improving housing outcomes in the NWT, particularly in predominantly Indigenous communities outside the regional centres.

### KEY FINDINGS

- ❑ About 1 in 3 homeowner households outside of the five largest communities in the NWT sits on a GNWT land lease, compared to just 0.4% of homeowner households within the five largest communities. This means that GNWT land policy must be developed from the lens of the territory's smaller communities, not the other way around.
- ❑ More than \$450,000 is charged annually for residential land lease fees throughout the NWT.
- ❑ There are significant inter- and intra-regional disparities in the prevalence and characteristics of residential land leases in the NWT.
- ❑ A higher percentage of community households under a residential land lease is correlated with both higher percentages of Indigenous population, and higher rates of housing inadequacy (a need for major repairs).

- ❑ Communities within a settled land claim have, on average, a greater percentage of households under a residential land lease from the GNWT than those in unsettled land claim regions.
- ❑ Fort Providence (pop. 711) is home to the most residential land leases, with 94, while Enterprise (pop. 121) has the highest percentage of households under a land lease, at 69%.
- ❑ Though the GNWT's land policy framework has seen some notable shifts in recent years, it has remained fundamentally unchanged for more than 30 years.
- ❑ Post-Devolution policy shifts have shown an incoherent vision around the role of the GNWT in land administration.
- ❑ GNWT land policy constrains access to housing in the NWT through financial, administrative and temporal impacts.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study, some of the key recommendations offered include:

- ❑ Interdepartmental collaboration to address housing barriers, including land policy, is imperative.
- ❑ Policy amendments are needed to facilitate Indigenous organizations' access to land in the short-term.
- ❑ The elimination of residential land lease fees in the NWT's smaller communities deserves serious consideration.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

This full thesis/major research paper can be accessed online at <https://hdl.handle.net/10214/28232>.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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