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NOSDA HIGHLIGHTS HOMELESSNESS IN NORTHERN ONTARIO

The Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association has recently completed a study of Homelessness across Northern Ontario. Persons with mental health problems and addictions, victimized and displaced youth aged 16 to 18 that 'fall through the cracks' and the over-strained shelter system were all identified as issues. The demographics of Northern Ontario's homeless population was broken down and analyzed, utilizing information gained through the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS). This information has been depicted in a clear, easy-to-understand format.

NOSDA President Gary Scripnick stated: "In light of other recent news items about displaced and homeless persons, we felt it important to share as widely as possible, the results of our study. This project clearly demonstrates that homelessness is an important issue in Northern Ontario. It also shows the importance of homelessness information systems in collecting and monitoring data on this issue across the North. Without this information, it's difficult to plan for the services necessary to meet the needs of those who, for whatever reason, find themselves homeless."

Nipissing DSSAB Acting CAO David Plumstead added: "Breaking down information in this way really helps expand both public and stakeholder understanding of the barriers we face in Northern Ontario in terms of homelessness prevention."

The depiction represents the changing face of homelessness in NOSDA's Districts, including youth and working families, as well as stating the main reasons why populations use shelters and the average amount of time they spend there. Common themes such as a lack of housing resources, problems with addictions and mental health issues, as well as the impact of high energy costs are outlined by area, with an emphasis on statistical information gained throughout the study. The top reason stated for using a shelter is lack of housing, at 35% of shelter admissions. Also, shelters that participated in the study have a 90% average occupancy rate. This number demonstrates the strain on social housing programs and shelter systems in the North.

The Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association (NOSDA) is an incorporated body that brings together Northern Ontario's 11 Municipal Service Managers. All eleven are responsible for the local planning, coordination and delivery of a range of community health and social services that the Province of Ontario has divested to them to locally manage, including social housing, child care, Ontario Works and emergency medical services (EMS).

For more information on NOSDA's Homelessness Infographic, please contact:

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