



Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Bulletin

Education Infrastructure Capital and Operations and Maintenance Needs Assessment

Chronic Underfunding of First Nations Education Infrastructure Continues to Undermine First Nations Schools

Summary:

- The First Nations Education Infrastructure Capital and Operations and Maintenance Needs Assessment provides cost estimates for the total capital and operations and maintenance (O&M) needs for 395 schools and 1,222 teacherages located on reserve.
- This Assessment makes a strong case for closing the First Nations infrastructure gap, demonstrating that First Nations currently require \$550.3 million annually for O&M and will require \$19 billion over the next 20 years for education infrastructure capital projects.

Background

In July 2024, First Nations-in-Assembly passed AFN Resolution 51/2024, Chronic Underfunding in Education, which calls on the Government of Canada to fully address the chronic underfunding of First Nations education, including education infrastructure. This resolution builds on the principles outlined in AFN Resolution 46/2022, Education Infrastructure Capital Reform, which reaffirms First Nations' Inherent and Treaty rights to education and directs the AFN to co-develop policy or program changes related to First Nations education infrastructure. The AFN First Nations Education Infrastructure Capital and Operations and Maintenance Needs Assessment supports these resolutions by providing an updated, Canada-wide assessment of First Nations' capital and O&M needs.

Indigenous Services Canada's historical funding approach for school capital and O&M has proven vastly insufficient. Shortfalls in O&M allocations cause infrastructure assets to deteriorate, preventing them from reaching their maximum potential lifecycle. Consequently, First Nations education infrastructure tends to incur capital costs more quickly than provincial education infrastructure. Deferred maintenance can also cause health and safety hazards, putting students and staff at risk and undermining First Nations' right to provide safe and healthy school environments. Since 2024, Canada has not provided new capital funding to address First Nations education infrastructure needs. The 2024 federal budget allocated \$545.1 million for First Nations education capital, funding only 23 capital projects. This level of investment falls significantly short of the infrastructure needs identified through the AFN's current and previous Assessments.

Findings

The First Nations Education Infrastructure Capital and Operations and Maintenance Needs Assessment demonstrates that a growing number of First Nations schools require capital investments to meet Canada's own standards for First Nations schools. The Assessment estimates that 227 First Nations schools are overcrowded based on Canada's School Space Accommodation Standards, and an additional 77 require immediate replacement. This represents an increase of 25 overcrowded schools and 21 schools requiring replacement since 2021, according to the 2021 AFN First Nations Education Infrastructure Capital Needs Assessment.

Over the next 20 years, \$19 billion in capital investment in First Nations schools is required to align conditions in First Nations schools and teacherages with Canada's standards. Of this, an estimated \$16.8 billion will be needed for schools, and an estimated \$2.2 billion for teacherages. Within this amount, \$7.1 billion will be required over the next five years to plan, construct, and/or expand schools and teacherages on reserve. Additionally, First Nations currently require \$550.3 million in O&M funding annually for schools and teacherages. This includes an estimated \$418.6 million for schools, and an estimated \$131.7 million for teacherages. Over the next five years, First Nations will require \$2.2 billion to operate and maintain existing schools and teacherages.

The Needs Assessment makes a strong case for action and investments to close the First Nations education infrastructure gap. The AFN will continue to advocate for investments in education to ensure First Nations learners receive the same supports and opportunities as other students in Canada. The full report can be found [here](#).