
Assembly of First Nations

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Assemblée des Premières Nations

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Special Chiefs Assembly
December 7, 8, 9, 2021, Ottawa (Ontario)

Resolution no. 26/2021

TITLE: Support for Closing the Infrastructure Gap by 2030

SUBJECT: Infrastructure

MOVED BY: Chief R. Don Maracle, Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, ON

SECONDED BY: Chief Lance Haymond, Kebaowek First Nation, QC

DECISION Carried; 1 objection; 2 abstentions

WHEREAS:

- A. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) states:
- i. Article 18: Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures, as well as to obtain and develop their own Indigenous decision-making institutions.
 - ii. Article 19: States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the Indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.
 - iii. Article 23: Indigenous Peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, Indigenous Peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.
- B. In the most recent Speech from the Throne, Canada re-iterated its commitment to eliminating the infrastructure gap between First Nations and the rest of Canada by 2030.
- C. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the significant gaps in First Nations infrastructure, such as overcrowded housing, poor connectivity, and lack of access to safe, clean and reliable drinking water, which makes preventative measures to avoid infection impossible in some First Nations.
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ROSEANNE ARCHIBALD, NATIONAL CHIEF

26 – 2021
Page 1 of 3

- D. In Budget 2021, the federal government identified distinctions-based investments of \$6 billion over five years, starting in 2021-22, with \$388.9 million ongoing, to support infrastructure, including housing, in Indigenous communities.
- E. The 2016 Canadian Council for Public Private Partnership report *P3's: Bridging the First Nations Infrastructure Gap*, states "The infrastructure deficit across First Nations in Canada has been estimated by some experts to be between \$25 billion and \$30 billion (with some citing even higher figures)".
- F. The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) continues to advocate for urgent investments to address the backlog of infrastructure, including housing, in First Nations to ensure First Nations' overall health and wellbeing. The AFN also continues to urge the federal government to commit to sustained long-term funding over the next five to fifteen years to bring infrastructure and housing in First Nations up to the same level as the rest of Canada.
- G. Closing the housing and infrastructure gap in its entirety is essential to moving forward towards First Nations care and control of housing and infrastructure.
- H. First Nations must define their infrastructure needs and future investments must take into account all infrastructure and housing, as well as operations and maintenance costs.
- I. The AFN also continues its work on the National First Nations Infrastructure Assessment, which will gather essential data and identify current First Nations assets and prepare an analysis of current and future infrastructure needs.
- J. ISC has committed to engaging with First Nations on closing the infrastructure gap. The AFN continues to urge the federal government to ensure that all regions are given sufficient resources for regional First Nations organizations, Tribal Councils, and First Nations to be prepared to engage fully with the federal government on closing the infrastructure gap.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Chiefs-in-Assembly:

1. Direct the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to support regionally led engagement and regional priorities, working in partnership with Canada to support meaningful First Nations participation in engagement sessions.
2. Direct the AFN to advocate to Canada for adequate funds to support sustained and meaningful engagement regarding closing the infrastructure gap with all First Nations.

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ROSEANNE ARCHIBALD, NATIONAL CHIEF

26 – 2021
Page 2 of 3

**Special Chiefs Assembly
December 7, 8, 9, 2021, Ottawa (Ontario)**

Resolution no. 26/2021

3. Direct the AFN to call on Canada to work in full partnership and engage meaningfully with First Nations on First Nations-defined infrastructure needs, including a dedicated investigation into true housing and infrastructure needs and the co-development of an infrastructure plan to support closing the gap.
4. Direct the AFN to urge the federal government to make long-term and sustainable funding commitments to First Nations community infrastructure and housing, including but not limited to: water, wastewater, modernized operations and maintenance funding with escalators, connectivity, roads, educational facilities, health facilities, community buildings, and asset management programs.
5. Direct the AFN to ensure that this initiative does not delay existing endeavors, including First Nations-led processes and advocacy on both the National First Nations Infrastructure Assessment and the National First Nations Housing and Related Infrastructure Strategy.

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26 – 2021
Page 3 of 3