



ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY
July 9, 10, 11, 2024, Montreal, QC

Resolution no. 54/2024

TITLE: Income Assistance Program Reform and Poverty Reduction for First Nations

SUBJECT: ISC Income Assistance Program including Disabilities Supports

MOVED BY: Chief Leroy Denny, Eskasoni First Nation, NS

SECONDED BY: Chief Roderick Gould Jr., Abegweit First Nation, PE

DECISION Carried by consensus.

WHEREAS:

- A.** *The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration)* states:
- i. Article 21(1): Indigenous Peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security.
 - ii. Article 21(2): States shall take effective measures and, where appropriate, special measures to ensure continuing improvement of their economic and social conditions. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of indigenous elders, women, youth, children, and persons with disabilities.
 - iii. Article 22(1): Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities in the implementation of this Declaration.
- B.** Canada has committed to implementing the United Nations' 2020 Agenda for Sustainable Development's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including:
- i. SDG1: No Poverty: End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
 - ii. SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities: Reduce inequality within and among countries.
- C.** *An Act respecting the reduction of poverty*, S.C. 2019, is intended to meet Canada's international human rights obligations, including under the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights,

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the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

- D. Canada's Budget 2024 failed to meet the First Nations-developed policy recommendations that were endorsed via Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Resolution 07/2022, *Reform of the On-reserve Income Assistance Program*, including: higher income assistance (IA) rates to meet the needs of First Nations, increased case management, pre-employment and administrative supports, and strengthened wrap around supports for IA clients and families with special and additional needs.
- E. AFN Resolution 85/2023, *Support for the Technical Working Group on Social development to Continue Income Assistance Program Reform*, called on Canada to continue to provide ongoing inflation relief benefits for IA clients, until the IA Program rates are reflective of the cost of living in northern and remote areas.
- F. In 2023, the AFN advocated for an investment of \$2.34 billion over 5 years to continue inflation relief benefits and account for population growth and inflation, to provide First Nations IA clients with additional financial support to cope with the financial pressures of rising inflation and the higher cost of living on-reserve.
- G. Current poverty reduction measures, like the Market Basket Measure (MBM), do not account for the unique circumstances experienced by First Nations, such as remoteness. Additional work to develop a First Nations-specific, needs-based funding model for the IA Program is required to determine a basic standard of living for persons and families, with special attention to persons with disabilities living on-reserve.
- H. Reducing First Nations poverty requires meaningful investments into the First Nations social safety net. Social housing and appropriate shelter allowances should be considered a key income assistance program component, among other poverty reduction measures identified by First Nations.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the First Nations-in-Assembly:

1. Direct the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Income Assistance Secretariat to initiate immediate discussions with Indigenous Services Canada to determine why Budget 2024 did not invest in the First Nations-endorsed policy recommendations for Income Assistance (IA) Program reform and report back to First Nations-in-Assembly by December 2024.
2. Call upon Canada to provide an immediate top-up benefit to IA clients, with particular attention to persons with disabilities, until ongoing work to develop an evidence base to inform budget advocacy can be completed.
3. Direct the AFN to work with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) to co-develop a First Nations-specific on-reserve poverty reduction strategy, using the First Nations recommendations for IA Program reform and the First Nations-specific indicators of poverty and wellbeing, with recommendations for Canada to uphold its commitment to reducing First Nations poverty and report back to First Nations-in-Assembly by December 2025.
4. Call upon the Government of Canada to fund the AFN to conduct an analysis of First Nations priorities and considerations for a First Nations-specific on-reserve poverty reduction strategy. This will include regional

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considerations and recommendations for adapting the strategy for First Nations with varying socio-economic realities.

5. Call upon the Government of Canada to use and implement the co-developed on reserve poverty reduction strategy and plan to support future federal Budget investments and increases to the national income assistance program, with particular attention to persons with disabilities.

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