<u>**Issue Update**</u>

Sector: Housing and Homelessness

Issue: Homelessness

History

In 2019, First Nations-in-Assembly passed Resolution 79/2019, *Action Plan for First Nations Homelessness On- and Off-Reserve*, mandating the AFN to develop a National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan to improve the delivery of federal government programs as well as the related social and fiscal mechanisms to address homelessness for First Nations.
The Action Plan will advocate for a comprehensive, multi-partner approach to reducing, preventing, and ending First Nations homelessness. This work aligns with the AFN's National First Nations Housing and Related Infrastructure Strategy and the goal of transitioning First Nations housing and related infrastructure to First Nations management, control, and care.

AFN's recent advocacy

To date, the AFN has completed significant research and engagement to ensure that the Action Plan is supported by evidence and reflects First Nations' needs and priorities related to homelessness. This includes three research projects: a literature review, an environmental scan, and a systems map. AFN has also completed a national survey, 16 regional engagement sessions, and conversations with homelessness service providers.

A draft of the National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan is currently being developed based on all research and engagement conducted to date. This draft will be brought forward to First Nations-in-Assembly at the December 2023 Special Chiefs Assembly for approval and to seek a mandate to proceed with implementation.

AFN and Infrastructure Canada (INFC) hold regular meetings as a Joint Technical Working Group (JTWG) to guide the development process for homelessness initiatives, including First Nations distinctions-based funding under *Reaching Home*. AFN Housing and Homelessness staff are currently working with Regional Housing Technicians to identify the process to administer this funding in each region. AFN is advocating for this funding to roll out expediently and without further delay, as many regions have already determined how funding should be administered within their region and are ready to proceed with an agreement with INFC as soon as possible.

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Next Steps

Ahead of bringing forward a draft Action Plan for approval from First Nations-in-Assembly in December, further engagement will take place to allow First Nations to review and provide input and direction on the draft Action Plan as it is being finalized. A resolution from First Nations-in-Assembly formalizing the adoption of an Action Plan will give the AFN a renewed mandate to continue to advocate for program and service reform, immediate and long-term funding, as well as the urgent action required to address and end homelessness for First Nations based on the Action Plan.

The AFN will continue to advocate for immediate and urgent responses to homelessness, recognizing that long-term funding and policy reform fall short of addressing the immediate needs of First Nations citizens currently experiencing homelessness. To that end, AFN is working with INFC, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), and Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) to identify possible sources of funding to address urgent First Nations homelessness needs and priorities.

To help address knowledge and data gaps on homelessness within First Nations communities, the AFN is developing a methodology to support First Nations in gathering their own data on homelessness, in line with the First Nations Principles of OCAP® (Ownership, Control, Access and Possession). The intention is for this data to be owned and controlled by First Nations so that it can be used by First Nations for their own advocacy, funding proposals, and service delivery, as well as for AFN to develop a framework to analyze this data nationally to help fill data gaps on First Nations homelessness. A prototype of the methodology is currently being finalized, and AFN will work with regions to begin testing it through a pilot project to seek further input and refine the methodology.

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