



## What is the history of this issue and how does it impact First Nations?

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the gaps in infrastructure that First Nations experience, making clear the impacts of inadequate infrastructure and the importance of clean water in responding to a pandemic or health crisis. The pandemic has also caused a significant rise in demand for construction materials for housing and construction projects. This has signalled the need for urgent investments, funding adjustments and political action on the side of the federal government.

Prime Minister Trudeau committed to closing the infrastructure gap in his September 2020 Speech from the Throne, and the AFN Infrastructure sector continues to advocate for major investments to critical infrastructure, which are particularly important in the context of this pandemic and for First Nations overall health and wellbeing. Urgent investments are needed now to address the backlog of infrastructure in First Nations as are sustained investments to close the infrastructure gap.

## How has the AFN's recent advocacy affected this area?

The AFN Infrastructure Sector continues to advocate for major federal government investments in critical infrastructure, as well as for federal government support for the creation of First Nations-led policies and solutions related to the access of safe, clean drinking water and adequate infrastructure. The First Nations-in-Assembly mandated the AFN through Resolution 12/2020 *Infrastructure Stimulus Funding for First Nations* to urge the federal government to proactively inform First Nations of financial matters and involve First Nations in all decisions relevant to closing the infrastructure gap in communities. It also called on the AFN to urge the federal government to make long-term funding commitments towards all First Nations community infrastructure and to change the current infrastructure process, towards the co-development of a new Indigenous infrastructure bank.

As a result of sustained advocacy, the federal government has agreed to work with the AFN towards the co-development of a new Operations and Maintenance (O&M) policy reform, which has been mandated by the First Nations-in-Assembly through Resolution 82/2019. This work is a high priority towards funding reform of First Nations Infrastructure Assets. To support the identification of First Nations overall infrastructure needs, the Infrastructure Sector has embarked on a National First Nations Needs study. The results of this study will inform Canada of First Nations infrastructure needs for the next 20 years. Furthermore, capacity development of a holistic Asset Management Plan standard for all First Nations infrastructure and assets is also planned for 2020-21. This collaboration has also resulted in Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)



announcements in O&M funding for water and wastewater from Budget 2019, the Fall Economic Statement and \$1.7 billion in Budget 2021.

Additionally, recent program announcements by Infrastructure Canada (INFC), which can now be accessed directly by First Nations without having to go through provinces or territories, signaled a shift away from the systemic discrimination in government programs and policies. Further collaborations with INFC will inform the Department of the importance of ensuring First Nations partnership in program development. The Infrastructure Sector has been facilitating information sessions with INFC and First Nations and First Nations organizations on these programs.

### Where do we hope to go in the future?

---

The AFN Infrastructure Sector continues our work in 4 main areas:

#### 1) O&M Policy Reform

- ISC's current O&M Policy for funded assets on First Nations is an outdated policy and does not adequately address asset repairs and maintenance costs.
- Our advocacy work on O&M Policy Reform is a high priority towards funding reform of First Nation Infrastructure Assets, as well as addressing the 2020 Speech from the Throne commitment to close the First Nations infrastructure gap by 2030.

#### 2) Asset Management Planning (AMP)

- The AFN Infrastructure Sector works towards developing a First Nations-led Asset Management Planning (AMP) approach, building on past commitments, and increasing and expanding our collective awareness and knowledge of asset management and the role that AMP plays in decision-making in asset funding. In 2021, the Infrastructure Sector hosted AMP Train the Trainer sessions for regional technicians.

#### 3) National First Nations Infrastructure Assessment.

- The infrastructure gap in First Nations must be defined to understand what this challenge looks like. The National First Nations Infrastructure Assessment will gather data, identify current First Nations assets, and prepare analysis of current and future infrastructure needs.
- The sector continues to work with the federal government to set about identifying infrastructure needs for First Nations in all areas that are required immediately and for the future, which includes operations and maintenance needs to fully protect all assets.

#### 4) Closing the Infrastructure Gap by 2030.



**SECTOR UPDATE**  
**BRANCH: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE**  
**SECTOR: INFRASTRUCTURE**  
November 2021

- The 2020 Fall Economic Statement committed \$25.9 million to “accelerate the government’s ten-year commitment to close the infrastructure gap in Indigenous communities by supporting the co-development of infrastructure plans with Indigenous partners, which will help pave the way to address critical needs in First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation communities.”
- The AFN has concerns on how ISC plans to move forward with the development of this Strategy which is to be established by 2022 and presented to the Department of Finance by spring 2023. We will continue to work with ISC to ensure engagement reflects and respects the mandates provided by the First Nations-in-Assembly.