

## Issue Update

**Sector: Housing and Homelessness**

**Issue: First Nations Housing**

### **History**

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The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Housing and Homelessness Sector continues working jointly with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to resolve the housing crisis by implementing the National First Nations Housing and Related Infrastructure Strategy (the Strategy). Activities have included supporting the national housing portfolio holder, Regional Chief Cindy Woodhouse, in her meetings and letters that remind federal ministers of the First Nations' rights and Treaty rights to housing, federal obligations thereto and the overall expectations of Chiefs as expressed through resolutions.

Other 2022-23 initiatives included requesting, through the federal pre-budget consultation process, a federal housing investment of \$60 billion; collaborating with AFN's Infrastructure Sector in the development of the Closing The Infrastructure Gap by 2030 (CTIG) costing report; continued research to support the Strategy's implementation such as the proposed creation of the National First Nations Housing Policy and Research Centre; the development of partnerships with entities like the Federal Housing Advocate; and encouraging and supporting the Chiefs Committee on Housing and Infrastructure to undertake a series of related advocacy activities.

### **AFN's Recent Advocacy**

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AFN is proud to have influenced the Federal Budget announcement in April 2022 of almost \$3 billion over five years for First Nations housing. That investment contrasts with the result of the CTIG by 2030 report, which revised the estimate to close the housing gap by 2030 to \$135.1 billion.

No funding was announced for First Nations on-community housing in the Federal Budget 2023. However, the 2023 federal budget announced \$4 billion over seven (7) years for urban, rural and northern off-community Indigenous housing. In late 2022, the First Nations-in-Assembly directed the AFN through Resolution 60/2022, *First Nations Involvement in the Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy*, to co-develop the First Nations distinct portion of the federal government's Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy (URN) expected in late 2023. ISC offered AFN participation in a pan-Indigenous process to influence the allocation of \$281.5 million it committed in 2022 for urgent off-community housing. AFN declined and counter-offered that ISC works with AFN through a pre-existing distinctions-based joint committee. ISC has so far ignored the AFN's proposal, and in April 2023, it authorized a new national pan-Indigenous organization to allocate the funds.

Meanwhile, AFN is coordinating regional input and working closely with CMHC to develop the URN Strategy jointly. The allocation of \$4 billion for URN housing has yet to be decided. The AFN also submitted housing-related proposals to be included as federal commitments in the Action Plan to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

## Next Steps

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Our priority is to advocate for First Nations' access to the required capital identified in the CTIG by 2030 costing report through a combination of multi-year federal grants and improved access to loans. That access to capital is coupled with activities to implement dual governance and management objectives: to improve the ISC policy to gradually transfer control of housing services to First Nations and to jointly develop new programs and improve existing ones through which the 2022 federal investment will flow to First Nations.

The AFN will also continue to press ISC to co-develop a distinctions-based First Nations portion of the federal Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy (URN). Advocacy in housing will also include input into and alignment with the National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan, the need for matching community infrastructure investments, securing additional lands on which to build, ways to reduce the exceedingly high housing insurance requirements, housing supports to the Dene Nation, the development of a First Nations housing performance measurement framework based on community well-being, more flexible options regarding CMHC's bonding requirements for First Nations housing contractors, increased awareness and response to federal accessibility requirements and improved ISC and CMHC openness and transparency in accessing its housing information.