



Virtual Chiefs Update

March 11, 2024

Description

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) is working with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), and Infrastructure Canada (INFC) to pressure the federal government to fulfil its commitment to Close the Infrastructure Gap (CTIG) by 2030 which includes seeking a long-term federal investment of \$135.1 billion to close the housing gap. AFN has commissioned preliminary research that shows the total borrowing limits of First Nations to cover capital costs for construction and renovations, and that therefore the vast majority of the investment must come from the federal government.

Additionally, AFN is leading the co-development of the First Nations-exclusive urban, rural, and northern national First Nations (URN) housing strategy. The national First Nations URN strategy will complement regional housing approaches and strategies and it will expand the existing National First Nations Housing and Related Infrastructure Strategy (2018). The AFN's advocacy on CTIG and URN will be complemented by the recently adopted National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan (Resolution 75/2023). The AFN is working to identify resources to support the implementation of the National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan as well as working with INFC to ensure First Nations distinctions-based homelessness funding for First Nations is allocated through a regional First Nations-led approach.

Key takeaways:

- The AFN is actively working with federal partners to create high-profile, government-private sector-First Nations strategic committee to press the federal government to incentivize the construction sector and banks to commit to doing their share to provide the necessary capital, materials and labour to CTIG by 2030.
- The AFN was successful in December 2023 in advocating for a distinct First Nations strategy on urban, rural, and northern (off-reserve) housing rather than a pan-Indigenous approach favored by some Indigenous groups. A short-term goal is to influence Treasury Board on its allocation of the \$4 billion over 7 years announced in the 2023 federal budget for all URN Indigenous housing.
- AFN is calling for assurances from the responsible ministers that First Nations rights and interests receive priority attention at least equal to that received by housing developers incentivized by Canada's Housing Action Plan (Sept. 2023) to build mainstream affordable housing.
- The AFN is also working with Infrastructure Canada (INFC) on a regional approach to allocating \$72 million in funding to 2028 under the *Reaching Home* program. Many regions are currently negotiating agreements to access and administer this funding before the end of the 2023-24 fiscal year.



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Speakers

- Grace Martineau, Director
- Dan Gaspé, Senior Policy Advisor, Housing
- Jordan Fischer, Senior Policy Analyst, Homelessness

Background

In 2018, the AFN in collaboration with Canada developed the National First Nations Housing and Related Infrastructure Strategy. AFN subsequently estimated the costs of First Nations' full infrastructure needs, including housing. The federal commitment to close the infrastructure gap by 2030 set a significant goal, but current investments, including the close to \$3 billion over five years for on-reserve housing announced in federal budget 2022 is seen as an initial step or down payment towards a much larger required investment. The AFN estimates a need for \$349.2 billion, with \$135.1 billion specifically for on-community housing, to close the gap by 2030. In 2023, AFN advocated successfully for a First Nations-exclusive urban, rural, and northern housing strategy. AFN is advocating that a significant portion of the \$4 billion over seven years for URN Indigenous housing from budget 2023 be dedicated exclusively to First Nations to implement the First Nations URN strategy currently under development.

The AFN is committed to implementing the National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan, approved by the First Nations-in-Assembly, to enhance service delivery and secure continuous funding for First Nations to address homelessness impacting their citizens no matter where they live. The Action Plan aims to address the overrepresentation of First Nations in the unhoused population by advocating for immediate and sustainable funding and supporting the creation of governance models for First Nations-led management of housing and homelessness services. Additionally, the AFN is actively working to close significant data gaps to better understand the extent of homelessness among First Nations, both within communities and in urban settings.

Supporting Documents

- Approval and Implementation of a National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan (75/2023)
- AFN URN Housing Resolution (66/2023)
- First Nations Housing Fact Sheet