



HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE: CMHC ON-RESERVE PROGRAMS AND TECHNICAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

OVERVIEW

Despite First Nations opposition, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) made a unilateral decision in 2015 to change its delivery service and awarded a national contract to a single service provider called OZHI First Nations Professional Services (OZHI), which would provide progress and physical condition reviews for CMHC's on-reserve programs.

This meant that the services provided previously by First Nations, Tribal Councils and Technical Service Providers were no longer required. First Nations expressed concerns with the selected contractor's readiness, responsiveness and capacity to carry out the work in a manner that meets the required service standards and program deadlines as was previously provided by First Nations Technical Service Providers.

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Resolution 28/2017, *Restore Technical Services back to First Nations for CMHC Housing Programs*, passed by the Chiefs-in-Assembly, called for the contract with OZHI to be rescinded and to restore the technical services provided by First Nations, Tribal Councils and First Nations Technical Service Providers.

As a result of the many letters issued by First Nations and their regional organizations and the advocacy work by the AFN, supported by the Chiefs Committee on Housing and Infrastructure, CMHC is near completion of its transfer of technical services back to First Nations technical service providers in all regions.

UPDATE

Since fall 2018, CMHC has signed a total of six contracts which are now in force in the Atlantic, Québec, Ontario, Saskatchewan (two contracts in Saskatchewan), and Alberta regions. These contracts have replaced the single national contract the CMHC had for the technical services.

CMHC's remaining challenges are to transfer technical services contracts back to First Nations entities in two regions, Manitoba and British Columbia (BC). CMHC received a

proposal in late January 2019 from Manitoba and is assessing it. However, CMHC's rigid, one-size-fits-all approach for all regions that failed to take into account high-level talks with BC's First Nations Housing and Infrastructure Council's (BC-HIC) on the transfer of control of housing to First Nations, created difficulty in arriving at a quick solution in BC. BC-HIC's forward-looking proposal contemplated a staff hiring model that CMHC would not accept. Lobbying efforts by BC-HIC, supported by the

ISSUE UPDATE

March 2019

AFN, forced CMHC and its other federal partners, Indigenous Services Canada and the Privy Council Office, to commit to find a solution that addresses the implementation of BC-HIC's vision for housing. CMHC was admonished for its "colonial reflex" by initially

issuing a Request for Proposal in BC in early 2019, without giving BC-HIC advance notice, when it would not accommodate BC-HIC's proposal. Talks continued at the time of this writing.

NEXT STEPS

- In mid-February 2019, CMHC is assessing Manitoba's proposal. In the meantime, the contract with the company CMHC chose several years ago which caused the AFN to launch its counter campaign remains in place in Manitoba until an agreement is in place, expected in 2019.
- It is also expected that an agreement between BC-HIC and CMHC, and perhaps other federal partners, will be concluded soon.
- 2019 should see the completion of a coordinated campaign, started in 2015 by the AFN, regional First Nations organizations, tribal councils, and First Nations, to end CMHC's control of technical services on First Nations. The success in this matter demonstrates the ongoing need for collective and coordinated First Nations action on common causes.

