

ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS



TECHNICAL BULLETIN

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Draft Policy Reform Framework Toward a First Nations Housing and Infrastructure Strategy

The Assembly of First Nations issues regular updates on work underway at the national office. More information can be found at www.afn.ca.

This Bulletin is an update from the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) on the Draft Policy Reform Framework Toward a First Nations Housing and Infrastructure Strategy.

First Nations Care and Control of Housing and Infrastructure are the guiding principles. First Nations must lead the development of a First Nations Housing and Infrastructure Strategy to ensure that the transformative change of housing and infrastructure is envisioned from First Nations perspectives.

First Nation leaders (Chiefs) from coast to coast to coast direct the work of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) through resolutions passed at Chiefs Assemblies held at least twice a year. The AFN is mandated pursuant to but not limited to resolutions, 70/2015, 74/2015, 96/2016, 98/2016, 27/2017 passed by the Chiefs-in-Assembly, to engage with the Federal Government on housing and infrastructure.

In accordance with AFN Resolution 27/2017, a joint Housing and Infrastructure Working Group has been established with members from the Chiefs Committee on Housing and Infrastructure (CCoHI) and Regional Housing Technicians, AFN, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), and Health Canada (HC).

AFN Resolution 27/2017 further directs the AFN to call upon the Government of Canada that any drafting of legislation, regulations and policy instruments (such as a Memorandum to Cabinet) related to the proposed First Nations National Housing and Infrastructure Strategy be co-developed with the AFN and CCoHI, and any resulting legislation be ratified by the Chiefs-in-Assembly before being introduced into the federal House of Commons with a commitment to long-term investments for the work ahead.

INAC is leading the development of a Memorandum to Cabinet (MC) related to an Indigenous National Housing Strategy that will present three separate strategies including First Nations, Inuit and Metis. The MC is a government process which allows a Minister to propose, explain and seek Cabinet approval on a proposed initiative.

The Working Group co-developed a Draft Policy Reform Framework that will be attached as an Annex to the MC. Working Group members are working collaboratively to ensure the story reflects First Nations perspectives and vision on transitioning to First Nations care and control for housing and infrastructure. This is an opportunity to tell and share our version of our story to Cabinet.

Draft Policy Reform Framework Highlights

The Draft Policy Reform Framework will lay the ground work for fundamental reform to federal housing and infrastructure programming, and will feed into the development of the First Nations Housing and Infrastructure Strategy.

This transformative change must be envisioned from a First Nations perspective in order to transition to true First Nations care, control and management of housing and infrastructure. A phased approach to

housing and infrastructure reform is required where First Nations must lead the transition at a pace that suits them. A one size fits all approach will not work but rather it needs to incorporate a suite of local and regional approaches that each community can tailor to improve their housing and infrastructure. First Nations require the opportunity to determine their own needs, how to meet those needs and the way forward to accommodate their various levels of readiness.

A successful strategy will be dependent on the Federal Government's commitment to provide adequate time and resources for First Nations to establish short, medium and long-term strategies. The scope of the Strategy will need to ensure off-reserve housing is included to address the needs of First Nations community members living away from home.

This Policy Framework for reform is a first step to reversing the past direction of colonial policies. It's time to move towards building housing and infrastructure successes in First Nations communities, including off-reserve housing.

Considerations to Support the First Nations Housing and Infrastructure Strategy Development:

- Engage with First Nations leadership, communities, technical experts, regional organizations, and underrepresented groups, etc., on strategic considerations of what incremental steps can be taken now, during and after transition;
- Acquire standardized data and confirm existing data on physical housing and infrastructure stock, population-based needs and projections, and on the skills and capacity gaps to inform planning efforts;
- Develop new models for funding self-sufficiency in housing and infrastructure which will increase financial, human resources and organizational capacity for First Nations in order to meet the continuum of housing and relevant infrastructure needs;
- Review a range of governance models to support the establishment of self-determined governance systems that are sustainable and effective in managing housing and infrastructure;
- Consider the development of First Nations led organizations to build and mobilize skills and capacity, and to provide coordination and oversight for existing services to support home occupants, housing and infrastructure personnel and larger community groups and Tribal Councils;
- Explore innovative and alternative First Nations' financial instruments to leverage investments and First Nations community's own source revenue;
- Explore the potential economic benefits of housing and infrastructure; and
- Establish relationships with urban housing providers to ensure seamless delivery of housing services to First Nations living away from home.

Next Steps

1. The Draft Policy Reform Framework will be presented at the Special Chiefs Assembly for support and endorsement on December 5-7, 2017.
2. An AFN Resolution will seek support for including this Draft Policy Framework as an Annex to INAC's Memorandum to Cabinet (MC).
3. A Strategy and Dialogue session on housing and infrastructure will take place at the upcoming Special Chiefs Assembly on Wednesday, December 6, 2017. This is an opportunity to have further dialogue and input on the Draft Policy Reform Framework.
4. There is a short window of opportunity to influence the story to Cabinet as INAC will be presenting their MC in December 2017.

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