



# **ADVOCATING FOR NEW INVESTMENTS FOR FIRST NATIONS INVOLVEMENT IN THE ECONOMY**

## **OVERVIEW**

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There are many First Nations whose economic priorities remain under-funded or unfunded. The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Economic Sector is focused on advocating for new investments for First Nations employment and economic involvement.

This includes advocating for improved economic development programs, services and incentives, new trade supports, equipping our labour force and human resources development, involvement in energy and resource projects, improved federal procurement programs and support, and a clearer strategy to involve other sectors such as agriculture, connectivity, cannabis, tourism and other parts of the economy. In addition, these efforts include advocating for supports for First Nations citizens facing greater circumstances of poverty and disabilities to access jobs and the economy. However, in almost all these instances there is a shortage in the required investments in programs to see the necessary changes.

Some of the most recent resolutions providing instruction include:

- AFN Resolution 55/2017, *First Nations Energy Strategy*, calls for the development

of a First Nations Energy Strategy and calls on Federal/Provinces/Territories (FPT) to fully engage and include First Nations in energy strategies and planning processes.

- AFN Resolution 02/2019, *Advancing First Nations Clean Energy Leadership for Economic Development and Action on Climate Change* to advocate for policy, fiscal, and program reforms that facilitate and empower First Nations involvement in clean energy projects and economies.
- AFN Resolution 38/2019, *Increasing First Nations Procurement Opportunities and Benefits*, supports recommendations to inform policy approaches on First Nations procurement opportunities and benefits.
- AFN Resolution 32/2018, *Strengthening On-Reserve Connectivity*, to advocate to support First Nations, and for information and communication infrastructure to support First Nations.

The Chiefs Committee on Economic Development (CCED) and the Chiefs Committee on Human Resources Development (CCHRD) provide recommendations to the AFN on the economic sector portfolios and national resolutions.

## **UPDATE**

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### **Energy and Resource Development**

There are a growing number of First Nations interested and/or presently leveraging the

benefits of energy and resource development. First Nations, as rights holders and as owners, are poised to shape and grow participation

levels in the natural resources resource sector. Respecting First Nations inherent rights and title, and Treaty rights, however, is essential for inclusive economic strategies and increased economic certainty.

Based on Chiefs-in-Assembly resolutions and discussion at an AFN hosted First Nations and the Energy Economy session, the AFN prepared a summary paper, *First Nations, the Energy Economy and a Dialogue on the Generation Energy Process* that explores First Nations perspectives and priorities on energy development and clean growth, including natural resource development projects. The CCED has considered the paper and has recommended continued dialogue is necessary to move toward meaningful engagement, collaboration and discussion between the Government of Canada and First Nations representatives around First Nations priorities.

With the guidance and advice from the CCED and technical advice of First Nations economic organizations, the AFN is currently finalizing an evergreen paper, *First Nations and the Natural Resource Economy: Developments, Perspectives and Priorities*, that outlines some of the key developments, perspectives and priorities as insight into the various issues that related to First Nations engagement in and with the natural resource economy. The AFN is working with Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) officials to support First Nations and their development objectives.

### **Procurement**

Improved access to federal, provincial/territorial (FPT), and private sector procurement, new trade opportunities, and support for First Nations businesses represents a significant growth opportunity for First Nations businesses. With the guidance and advice from the CCED and technical

representatives of First Nations economic organizations, the AFN has developed an evergreen discussion paper, *Procurement in Canada: Possible Actions to Increase First Nations Opportunities and Benefits*, that considers the options to increase First Nations economic opportunities and benefits through procurement.

The Government of Canada, through Indigenous Services Canada/Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs (ISC/CIRNA) is currently reviewing the federal approach to Indigenous participation in procurement, including the modernization of the Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Business (PSAB). The AFN discussion paper will be submitted to ISC/CIRNA to inform the PSAB modernization process.

### **Connectivity**

The AFN focus on connectivity includes advocating for increased access and support for First Nations Information and Communications Technologies (ICT). The most recent AFN Resolution, 32/2018, calls on the AFN to identify current gaps and obstacles for First Nations in participating and reaping the benefits from the ICT Sector. It also calls on Innovation, Science, and Economic Development (ISED) Canada to develop a comprehensive rural broadband strategy in collaboration with First Nations.

The AFN continues to participate in connectivity discussions to provide First Nations perspectives and considerations.

### **Cannabis**

The AFN's Legal Affairs and Justice Sector leads the Cannabis file and the coordination of activities related to the Chiefs-in-Assembly resolutions for the AFN, with the assistance of the Economic Sector in areas related to economic development.

# ISSUE UPDATE

## November 2019

First Nations continue to seek ways to capitalize on opportunities in the cannabis industry . The AFN is currently updating the paper *Preliminary Research: Cannabis Legislation and First Nations Economic Considerations* to reflect the current state of

the cannabis industry and the implications for First Nations.

More detailed economic portfolio issue updates are provided separately on trade relations, agriculture, social innovation and social finance, accessibility, and the labour market.

### NEXT STEPS

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- Continue to update the AFN Executive Committee, the CCED, the CCHRD, and First Nations leadership on options to improve investments and federal economic strategy supports for First Nations economic involvement, business development including procurement and access to jobs.
- Renew efforts to enhance business equity funding and access to capital for First Nations businesses, including for women and youth.
- Advocate for funding for First Nations clean energy projects, sustainable technology, and renewable resources.
- Support leadership efforts to be included in FPT processes, discussions for revenue sharing, and other systems aimed at helping First Nations involvement in the economy.
- Continue dialogue with ISC, NRCan, ISED and other federal officials to seek new economic investments and improved program supports.
- Continue to advocate and consider policy options for closing the connectivity gap between First Nations and Canada.
- Finalize research and economic papers.

