



ON-RESERVE INCOME ASSISTANCE PROGRAM & ASSISTED LIVING PROGRAM

OVERVIEW

The On-Reserve Income Assistance Program (IAP) and Assisted Living Program (ALP) are social programs funded by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC). The IAP provides income assistance to eligible persons living on a First Nation to meet their basic needs. The IAP also employs an active measures approach, known as Pre-Employment Supports (PES), which provides programming to help individuals move from income assistance to education and employment. The ALP provides non-medical social support services to help eligible First Nations persons maintain their independence.

In 2017, ISC announced that it was going to be making changes to the IAP and ALPs. ISC conducted engagement on these changes with First Nations between October 2017 and April 2018. The results of this engagement informed the changes made to the Data Collection Instrument (DCI), which are now being implemented in First Nations.

At the December 2017 Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Special Chiefs Assembly, in Gatineau, Quebec, the AFN Chiefs-in-Assembly passed Resolution 108/2017, *Case Management Services for Income Assistance Recipients*. This resolution speaks to the PES component of the IAP, directing the AFN to urge ISC to extend funding for IAP case management services. It also urges ISC to engage First Nations to understand best practices and hear more about how the IAP

should be reformed to better meet the needs of First Nations clients.

Following the passing of Resolution 108/2017, Canada announced in Budget 2018 that it was going to provide \$78.4 million over two years (2018/19 and 2019/20) to continue supporting PES. In Budget 2018, Canada also announced that it would provide \$8.5 million over two years (2018/19 and 2019/20) to fund engagement processes to improve the IAP and make it more responsive to the needs of First Nations. Engagements began in October 2018 and ended in April 2019. ISC will be releasing a “What We Heard” report in early 2020. Finally, Budget 2019 allocated an additional \$39 million in 2020/21 for case management to support individuals to transition from income assistance to employment and education.

At the July 2018 AFN Annual General Assembly in Vancouver, British Columbia, the AFN Chiefs-in-Assembly passed Resolution 28/2018, *Support for the Establishment of a Technical Working Group on Social Development*. This resolution calls upon the AFN to support the creation of a Technical Working Group on Social Development (TWGSD) and asks the AFN Regional Chiefs to appoint a representative to the TWGSD. The TWGSD meets regularly to discuss issues pertaining to Social Development policies and programs, including the IAP and ALPs, with the most recent meeting taking place in Ottawa, Ontario, on September 26-27, 2019.

UPDATE

In September 2019, the AFN submitted a proposal to ISC to host the Third Annual National Forum on First Nations Income Assistance in early 2020. The proposal ensures the Forum will place an emphasis on producing tangible outcomes for attendees through professional development workshops.

The TWGSD met in Ottawa on September 26 and 27, 2019. The agenda for the meeting included updates on the Income Assistance

Program, brainstorming for the next National Forum on Income Assistance, and presentations from other AFN sectors on cross-cutting topics like social innovation, accessibility, and child poverty. The TWGSD resolved to push forward on the income assistance and poverty reduction files by developing a document of issues and potential solutions which can be used by members and leadership to encourage ISC to address these issues.

NEXT STEPS

The AFN Social Development Sector will continue to advocate for improving the social conditions of First Nations. This includes helping organize opportunities for the TWGSD to meet with ISC, as well as providing support to First Nations regions and communities.

The Social Development Sector is currently supporting the TWGSD in raising the profile of the IAP, including by developing an “issues and solutions” table informed by numerous TWGSD discussions. Attention and priority from leadership and technicians needs to be given to the IAP to encourage ISC to continue reform and positive change.

The Social Development Sector is currently waiting to hear back from ISC regarding the

proposal to host the Third Annual National Forum on First Nations Income Assistance. The previous National Forums on Income Assistance, held in 2018 and 2019, were highly successful and a third National Forum has been requested by many attendees. The purpose of the National Forum is to create space for participants to gather to share best practices, network, hear updates and provide input directly to and from ISC, as well as pursue professional development opportunities and bring useful tools back to their communities. The next National Forum is tentatively scheduled for early 2020.