

DRAFT

10 Year First Nations National Housing and related Infrastructure Strategy

Co-Development Team

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) is mandated pursuant to AFN Resolution 27/2017, *Development of a First Nations National Housing and Infrastructure Strategy*, to jointly develop, with the Chiefs Committee on Housing and Infrastructure (CCoHI) and the federal government, a Terms of Reference for the establishment of a joint Working Group that will develop a First Nations National Housing and related Infrastructure Strategy, which will include housing both on- and off-reserve.

A Joint Working Group with representatives from the AFN, CCoHI, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) co-developed the Draft Strategy for discussion purposes.

July 4, 2018

1. VISION

- 1.1 Responsive innovative housing governance systems that support First Nations transition to care, control and management of housing and related infrastructure.¹

2. PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

- 2.1 To have a First Nations housing and related infrastructure strategy developed by First Nations for First Nations to ensure the strategy is based on First Nations perspectives and respects Aboriginal and Treaty rights. The Strategy is written in collaboration with the federal government in order to harmonize with government priorities.
- 2.2 The Strategy builds the environment and lays out a road map for the research, design and implementation of new housing systems that will lead to a complete federal government withdrawal and a full transfer of authority from the federal government to First Nations care, control and management over housing and related infrastructure.
- 2.3 The Strategy provides a long-term approach for First Nations housing and related infrastructure on-reserve as well as housing for First Nations who live in urban, rural, and northern areas.
- 2.4 The Strategy implements the AFN Resolutions passed by Chiefs-in-Assembly that support and promote the transfer of authority over housing and related infrastructure to First Nations care, control and management.
- 2.5 The Strategy is a significant step towards the federal government's goal that design and delivery of housing and related infrastructure services be led by Indigenous peoples for Indigenous peoples.
- 2.6 The Strategy draws from and builds on the feedback from engagement with First Nations and national forums with First Nations, the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (UN Declaration), the [2015 Senate Report On-reserve Housing and Infrastructure Recommendations for Change](#) and other sources.

¹ Related infrastructure refers to the infrastructure associated with the construction of residences which are public utilities: connection to drinking water, sanitary sewer, storm sewer, and street lighting (excluding water and wastewater treatment facilities).

There are, in general, 3 types of development in First Nations communities:

- a) urban (with paving, curbstones and underground storm drainage network);
- b) semi-urban (without street paving nor curbstones and with storm drainage ditches);
- c) rural (individual installations of water supply and waste water treatment).

The UN Declaration states the importance of housing in Article 21, “Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of...housing.” Article 23 states that “Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising [that] right.”

- 2.7** The Strategy is part of a broader initiative of First Nations care, control and management of housing and related infrastructure that includes the following building blocks:
- 1) The Policy Reform Framework Towards a First Nations Housing and Infrastructure Strategy (December 2017)
 - 2) Strategic Plan with short, medium and long-term goals and objective (Fall/Winter 2018)
 - 3) Regional Strategies and Plans (currently underway and on-going)

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1** The legacy of colonization has removed the opportunity for First Nations to meet their housing needs and has prevented them from accessing necessary financial instruments, developing capacity, and establishing appropriate housing governance systems, which has left them almost solely dependent on government programs. First Nations leadership has had the optics of control while being excluded from significant decision-making authority. As a result housing has become the cause of conflict and disruption in many First Nations.
- 3.2** Government programs and policies have failed to provide sustainable long term positive housing outcomes and have led to persistent substandard living conditions with negative impacts on health, education, economic development, and child welfare, etc. These substandard living conditions are felt more deeply by First Nations women and girls, seniors, youth, homeless, people with disabilities and First Nations people in the north.
- 3.3** First Nations housing delivery has been measured by how well it fulfills the government financial and program priorities rather than how well it addresses First Nations housing needs. As a result, there is an urgent need for improved housing and living conditions to better suit the First Nations populations across Canada.
- 3.4** First Nations housing has been delivered in fragmented ways across federal, provincial, municipal and territorial jurisdictions. This has caused a separation between on and off reserve housing delivery leaving many First Nations people to fall through the gaps. First Nations are changing the direction of housing and related infrastructure services from dependency-based to self-determined and governed by First Nations.

4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 4.1** The Strategy is guided solely by the aim of ensuring that all First Nations members living in or away from their First Nations will have access to housing that suits their needs.
- 4.2** The transition to First Nations care, control and management of housing and related infrastructure will:
- a) Respect regional approaches and treaty implications
 - b) Be transparent and accountable
 - c) Account for economic considerations and geographic locations
 - d) Respect cultural differences
 - e) Include a holistic approach to housing that is inclusive of all generations and all aspects of life
 - f) Have respect for individual First Nations' level of readiness and capacity
 - g) Align with community needs
 - h) Be based on feedback from First Nations engagement
 - i) Be First Nations led

5. TRANSITION PROCESS

- 5.1** The transition process from federal housing and infrastructure programming to First Nations care, control and management of housing and related infrastructure requires dedicated financial resources to implement the Strategy that include designing, developing and implementing regional and local strategies and plans.
- 5.2** An on-going commitment from the federal government and First Nations is required to support the transition process.
- 5.3** The transition process will rely on continued engagement with First Nations and leadership. During the transition period negotiations between First Nations and the federal government will respect a government to government relationship.

The Chiefs Committee on Housing and Infrastructure (CCoHI), through the AFN, will provide guidance on how the transition process will be implemented. The advice and guidance provided will respect other First Nations organizations and regional partners to implement their own processes.

- 5.4** Engagement with First Nations will inform short, medium, and long-term transition milestones that will respond to regional variances.
- 5.5** The Strategy will be reviewed in accordance with an evaluation process as outlined in the Strategic Plan.

6. GOALS AND ACTIONS

- 6.1** The Strategy has themes with supporting goals and actions related to: Governance and Delivery; Funding and Finance; Skills and Capacity and First Nations Information Sessions. These actions will be undertaken concurrently.

GOVERNANCE AND DELIVERY

- 6.2** The process of transitioning care, control and management to First Nations will not be a “devolution” of existing government programs and services. It will result in the creation of new systems, new housing institutions and new ways to deliver housing services to First Nations people.
- 6.3** Goal: Establish a First Nations Housing Policy and Research Institute. Its primary functions will be to design new housing delivery options and governance systems, develop new financing options and mechanisms and to function as a research centre and archive for housing information, tools, and best practices.
- a) Action: Develop a business case for the Housing Policy and Research Institute and acquire sufficient funding.
 - b) Action: Staff the policy institute with experts in the appropriate fields.
 - c) Action: Establish the mandate of a First Nations Housing Policy and Research Institute.
- 6.4** Goal: Establish national and regional housing and related infrastructure delivery frameworks to assist in the design of governance models that are independent from political influence.
- a) Action: Research existing international Indigenous housing and infrastructure models to support the design of governance housing systems.
 - b) Action: Develop strong governance systems, through engagement with First Nations that can respond to cultural variances and regional needs and priorities.
 - c) Action: Determine the relationship through engagement, between First Nations leadership and housing governance systems.
- 6.5** Goal: Coordinate housing governance delivery systems across all jurisdictions to better serve First Nations members living away from their community in urban, rural and northern areas.
- a) Action: Build relationships between First Nations and existing Indigenous housing service delivery agents for off-reserve housing.
 - b) Action: Determine the role of First Nations, Indigenous housing service providers, federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments on providing housing and related infrastructure delivery. In order to build a system where First Nations people no longer fall through the gaps between jurisdictions.

FUNDING AND FINANCE

- 6.6** First Nations must be in control of funding in order to address their needs and priorities. Funding and financing for a variety of different First Nations housing falls along a continuum of need, for example, shelters, social housing, housing for disabled community members, seniors' housing, rental units and rent to own, market based and private home ownership.

As a result of the new housing approach there is a need to access new financial instruments and additional government funding if First Nations are to improve housing and living conditions for people living in or away from their First Nation and to close the current housing and related infrastructure gap.

This will require:

- a) a financial commitment by all levels of government and innovative approaches;
 - b) identifying effective ways to leverage investments and finding new ways to finance housing;
 - c) increasing First Nations and individual First Nations peoples' financial commitment to their homes;
 - d) exploring the potential economic benefits of housing and related infrastructure including identifying revenue generating opportunities; and
 - e) research private sector investments.
- 6.7** Goal: The transition will require sufficient, sustainable and predictable funding to support First Nations and First Nations organizations to undertake the care, control and management of housing and related infrastructure.
- a) Action: Acquire funding for local, regional and national First Nations organizations to levels comparable to government and other relevant counterparts.
 - b) Action: Fund the implementation of the strategy. Results of national and regional studies will determine funding levels required.
- 6.8** Goal: Ensure the new First Nations driven housing systems have funding that is adequate, predictable and long-term that is geared to satisfying First Nations housing needs.
- a) Action: Identify funding needs, collect consistent and standardized data and review and analyze existing data in order to provide a comprehensive picture of housing and related infrastructure needs in First Nations.
 - b) Action: Secure funding to address the backlog of new units and related infrastructure, and renovation of existing units which includes different types of housing such as shelters and supportive care homes.
 - c) Action: Acquire dedicated funding for housing manager positions in First Nations.
 - d) Action: Reduce the competition for funds and proposal driven approaches for individual First Nations.

- e) Action: Develop new approaches to allocation of funds to regions and First Nations.
- f) Action: Fund proper planning and sound management of housing programs.
- g) Action: Adopt stronger service delivery models where program delivery is streamlined and simplified.

6.9 Goal: Develop ways to leverage government housing and related infrastructure investments to enhance financial opportunities.

- a) Action: Evaluate current financial mechanisms and tools that support housing and infrastructure.
- b) Action: Explore and develop other appropriate financial tools such as revolving housing loan funds.

6.10 Goal: Identify and develop new financial mechanisms for housing delivery.

- a) Action: Develop ways to leverage First Nations' own source revenues to enhance financial opportunities for housing.
- b) Action: Develop revenue-generating opportunities and ways to leverage funding to finance housing ventures.
- c) Action: Develop ways to increase individual First Nations people's financial commitment to their homes.
- d) Action: The Policy Institute will research ways for First Nations members to have access to home financing alternatives.

6.11 Goal: Maximize funding for housing delivery systems across all jurisdictions to better serve First Nations members living away from their local First Nation in urban, rural and northern areas.

- a) Action: Investigate and evaluate the funding mechanisms and accountability frameworks currently existing between Indigenous and other housing service providers and federal, provincial, and municipal governments.
- b) Action: Determine the funding and financing roles of First Nations, Indigenous and other housing service providers, federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments for housing and related infrastructure delivery.

SKILLS AND CAPACITY

6.12 The transition from federal control to First Nations care, control and management of housing and related infrastructure requires investments in skills and capacity as well as the flexibility to direct where and how the funding can be used to better support home occupants, housing and related infrastructure personnel, and First Nations organizations who serve them.

6.13 Goal: First Nations have the skills and capacity to exercise their responsibility, care, control and management over housing and related infrastructure.

- a) Action: Conduct a skills and capacity analysis on the needs at the local, regional and national level for managers, leadership, administration, housing management, community members, technical trades, and professionals.
- b) Action: Analyze current gaps and develop strategies to improve skills and capacity.
- c) Action: Establish and/or restore adequate capacity for Tribal Councils and technical service providers to deliver technical services to First Nations for the care, control and management of housing and related infrastructure.
- d) Action: Provide more access to relevant training and professional certification for housing and related infrastructure professionals.

FIRST NATIONS INFORMATION SESSIONS

6.14 First Nations fall along a continuum where some First Nations are ready to take on care, control and management of housing and infrastructure while other First Nations may want to first address the issues of the legacy of federal programs and clarify their treaty relationships.

6.15 Goal: Hold information sessions with First Nations leadership, communities, technical experts, regional organizations, and under-represented groups, etc., on strategic considerations of what incremental steps can be taken now, during and after transition.

- a) Action: Support regions on continued communications and information sessions on the goal and objectives of this Strategy.
- b) Action: Hold information sessions with urban, rural and northern Indigenous Housing Service Providers, provinces, territories and municipalities to coordinate services for housing.

7. RESULTS

The transition of care, control and management to First Nations organizations and housing service providers is expected to contribute to a greater range of housing choice for First Nations, including supportive housing, social housing, rental housing, and home-ownership. This will lead to improved housing conditions for First Nations, and create sustainable and healthy First Nations.