



Aboriginal Housing Management Association
Celebrating 25 Years

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Indigenous housing advocates in BC watch as Feds fail to deliver on housing

Safe, affordable housing is a key component to ending cycles of poverty and improving health outcomes for Indigenous families but the wait for federal funds continues.

Unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, Vancouver BC (March 29, 2023) – Housing advocates, policymakers, community leaders and frontline housing providers have been waiting to see what the Canadian government will roll out in the face of our current housing crisis. They will be waiting even longer for investments that can even begin to meet towering community needs.

“There is some recognition in the budget that dedicated housing for Urban, Rural and Northern or ‘URN’ Indigenous people is needed,” said Margaret Pfoh, CEO of the Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA). “But the funds announced in budget 2023 are only a fraction of what’s needed and not even slated for release until 2024! This delay is unfathomable considering that we have families coping daily with housing precarity and homelessness across the country.”

Urban, Rural and Northern or ‘URN’ is a way of describing those who are Indigenous but not living on reserve lands or in connection with our cultural home communities due to colonial displacement and dispossession. “We make up 80% of the entire Indigenous population in Canada,” said Pfoh. “Indigenous people living in urban, rural, and northern areas face unique challenges accessing adequate housing, and do not qualify for the support that is provided to Indigenous people living on reserve.”

In 2022, the National Housing Council released a report calling for \$6.3 billion of funding for URN Indigenous Housing over 2 years from 2022 – 2024. Following this report, the 2022 federal budget allocated only \$300 million over a five-year period for all of Canada, which is only 1% of what the government’s own council stated was needed to address the housing needs of URN Indigenous people. Now, the 2023 federal budget commits \$4 billion, over seven years, starting in 2024, to implement a co-developed Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy. “Once again, you can see that this falls far short of the evaluated need, which, due to the ongoing and worsening housing crisis, is now at \$56 billion over the next 10 years,” said Pfoh.

To leverage the overdue federal funds, National Indigenous Collaborative Housing Inc. (NICHl), an Indigenous-led organization with proven expertise in delivering housing solutions for URN Indigenous people has begun the work to put federal funding into action. “NICHl is well positioned to play a vital role in achieving far better outcomes for Indigenous housing in Canada than what we have seen in the past, but the issue of inadequate funding continues,” said Justin Marchand, NICHl board member.

“An equity-based approach to housing centers Indigenous rights and Indigenous leadership,” says Pfoh. “I am confident that NICHl will bring the holistic, culturally supportive, trauma-informed lens to URN Indigenous housing that has long been needed in Canada.”

Large bodies of evidence demonstrate that access to safe, culturally supportive, and affordable housing is critical to ending the ongoing cycles of poverty that are impacting Indigenous families across Canada. The Federal government itself admits that housing is a key factor in promoting better health and social outcomes for Indigenous women and ensuring a better future for Indigenous communities and children.

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AHMA response to other sections of the federal budget:

The budget also includes modest investments in health, including mental health and addictions, anti-racism efforts, and Indigenous-led healing.

“These funds can help meet some of the baseline needs in the community but what is not accounted for is the loss in housing and health that have grown over time and URN Indigenous people are disproportionately overrepresented in every area of socio-economic concern,” adds Pfoh. “From corrections, to child apprehension, to homelessness, poverty, and poor health outcomes, Indigenous people are currently suffering the effects of 200 years of oppression.”

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AHMA is a grassroots organization made up of 55 members that represent over 95% of Indigenous Housing and Service providers in BC. AHMA members support almost 10,000 Indigenous families living in urban, rural, and northern regions of BC. Created for Indigenous Peoples by Indigenous Peoples, AHMA has 25 years of experience and expertise as the first Indigenous Housing Authority in Canada.