



**Aboriginal Housing Management Association**  
*Celebrating 25 Years*

For Immediate Release:  
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**Indigenous housing expert in BC delivers urgent message to Ottawa**

*Reminding the federal government that safe, affordable housing is a key component to ending cycles of poverty and improving health outcomes for Indigenous families.*

**Unceded traditional territories of the x̱m̱əθḵʷəy̱əm (Musqueam), Sḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh (Squamish), and sə̱lilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, Vancouver, BC (Oct 16, 2023)** – Indigenous human rights are the biggest political, economic, and social shift we will see in our lifetime. For more than 25 years, AHMA has been a part of this shift and has led the advancement of housing rights for all Indigenous people living in BC and in Canada.

Home is where we learn who we are, but the reality is that almost 80% of Indigenous Peoples (Inuit, First Nations, Métis, and non-status) have been colonially displaced and dispossessed of their traditional homes. Habitability and suitability are additional issues that cause Indigenous people to leave their cultural communities in search of better housing. Urban, Rural and Northern or 'URN' is a way of describing those who are Indigenous but not connected with their reserve land or traditional home community.

The URN Indigenous population faces unique challenges accessing safe, affordable, culturally supportive housing, and does not qualify for the support that is provided to Indigenous people living on reserve, which is why expert organizations like the Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA) exist.

AHMA is an active participant when it comes to engaging in political processes, and collectively with our partners, we have formally called for the following:

1. Federal government to allocate resources required to implement year one of AHMA's Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy.
2. Federal government to create a Federal Acquisition Fund to support the community housing sector in acquiring rental housing properties to protect their long-term affordability.
3. Federal government to refresh the current approach to taxation and government revenue generation to reduce the financial burden on non-profit and cooperative housing providers.
4. Federal government to adjust the budget of the Co-operative Housing Development Program to account for the lost capacity due to higher interest rates and construction costs.

**Now that Parliament is just a few weeks away from returning for its fall sitting, AHMA wishes to reiterate the asks we put forward for Budget 2024, as well as highlight two additional considerations.**

Firstly, there is no doubt that Canada is in the midst of an extreme housing crisis, and it is vulnerable populations who experience the most severe consequences associated with this situation. On the ground, AHMA is seeing homelessness increase substantially and immense pressure on underfunded URN Indigenous housing providers. One step towards addressing this crisis of inequity in housing is the creation of the National Indigenous Collaborative Housing Inc (NICHI).

“AHMA is committed to supporting the work of NICHI,” says AHMA CEO Margaret Pfoh. “We are grateful for the initial funding announced by the federal government to support the design and delivery of a For-Indigenous, By-Indigenous national housing strategy.”

However, while NICHI is primed and ready to make progress with this crucial work, and the Government of Canada made a 2023 public commitment to provide long-term funding of \$4B over seven years, this investment has not yet been allocated to NICHI for the delivery of URN Indigenous housing. In light of this, **AHMA is calling on the Government of Canada to make a clear commitment to support NICHI and its goals to advance housing for URN Indigenous populations.**

“Reconciliation requires solutions and implementation to be led by Indigenous Peoples,” says Pfoh. “Advancing NICHI will help the government move towards reconciliation on housing, as the foundation of well-being.”

Secondly, AHMA notes that most of the budget initiatives announced in the 2023 Federal Budget largely focused on improving conditions for middle-income earners. While this is important, low-income earners are the most vulnerable population and continue to be pushed into increasingly precarious situations due to systemic failures.

“We are seeing the non-profit sector, especially Indigenous housing providers, suffer greatly due to rising costs and under enormous pressure to support those often forgotten about and disadvantaged due to inequitable and inefficient government processes, and policies,” adds Pfoh.

Low-income earners and vulnerable groups must be prioritized in the budget, especially in an environment where inflation is soaring, interest rates are high, the cost of living is growing, and housing is unaffordable even for those with higher means. Keeping our most vulnerable people safe and secure is a core government responsibility. Therefore, **AHMA and our partners want to see clear initiatives to support housing and wraparound supports for low-income and vulnerable populations, particularly URN Indigenous Peoples.**

Canada needs to strive for equity. Investments in housing also support better health outcomes. URN Indigenous people continue to be impacted by systemic racism and are disproportionately overrepresented in every area of socio-economic concern due to intergenerational trauma and the impacts of colonial oppression.

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

**We look forward to watching the Fall Economic Statement speeches and hearing what commitments the government will make in this space and wish to remind the Government of Canada of its obligations to support Indigenous housing solutions.**

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*AHMA is a For indigenous, By Indigenous (FIBI) 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. AHMA has 25 years of experience and expertise as the first Indigenous Housing Authority in Canada. Our strategy is broadly endorsed, seen as a national baseline, and celebrated as an international example of excellence in Indigenous research and approaches.*

### **Background: commitments and foundations for change**

#### ***United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act***

UNDRIP re-affirms the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples to self-determination, including the “right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions” (Article 4). Article 23 clearly states: “Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, Indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.”

#### ***Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action***

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was formed in 2008 to document the impacts and experiences of Canada’s residential school system on Indigenous peoples. In 2015, the TRC released 94 calls to action, which formally recognized UNDRIP as the “framework for reconciliation” between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. In addition, the MMIWG report mentions housing 299 times in protecting Indigenous women and preventing violence by providing safe shelter.

#### ***Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion Mandate Letter***

As per the December 2021 mandate letter, the Prime Minister has mandated the Minister of Housing to “With Indigenous partners, co-develop an Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy, a stand-alone companion to the National Housing Strategy, supported by dedicated investments, and create Canada’s first-ever National Indigenous Housing Centre. You will be supported in this work by the Minister of Northern Affairs.