

National Association
of Friendship Centres
Association nationale
des centres d'amitié

Federal Budget 2016 Submission of the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC)

The NAFC is a national association created by Friendship Centres in Canada in 1972 to be the voice of its members, nationally and internationally. The NAFC's membership is now comprised of 7 Provincial or Territorial Associations and Friendship Centres in 118 communities across Canada.

The NAFC has a long and unique relationship with the Government of Canada. For the past 30 years the NAFC has been the administrator of national programs delivered to Friendship Centres and other urban Indigenous organizations on behalf of the Government of Canada. Currently, the NAFC delivers \$43M of federal resources to over 250 community based organizations.

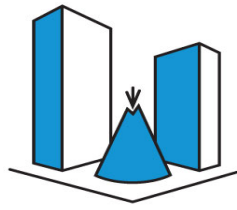
Since the 1950's Friendship Centres have become professional service delivery experts, with extensive experience, continual innovation and deep partnerships with provinces and territories, civil society and the private sector. These relationships have allowed Friendship Centres to leverage resources at a 7:1 ratio with approx. \$170M of programming delivered across the country every year. Friendship Centres are a significant part of the backbone of Canada's social infrastructure with more than 2 million client contacts annually, serving Canada's most vulnerable urban Indigenous populations. By creating a space for Indigenous people in urban settings, Friendship Centres have been catalysts for reconciliation in Canada since their earliest days.

Engagement Questions

1. In your opinion, how can we better support our middle class?

The middle class does not exist in the same way for Indigenous Canadians, as it does for the rest of Canada. There is a growing set of middle income earners in indigenous communities, however this is a relatively recent phenomenon and they





National Association
of Friendship Centres
Association nationale
des centres d'amitié

don't have the same inherent resource base as the average middle class Canadian. That being said, the indigenous population and its nascent middle class could best benefit from stable, predictable and equitable access to educational opportunity and funding supports, support for affordable housing, innovative and flexible financing mechanisms, including support for social innovation as a means of fomenting social change and social enterprise as a driver of job creation. This includes long-term and stable investments in programming for community based Indigenous institutions.

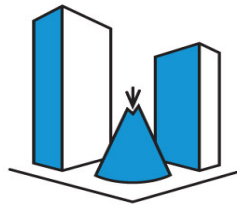
2. What infrastructure needs can best help grow the economy, protect our environment and meet your priorities locally?

The most effective short, medium and long-term investment for the economy and to address local needs is to reinvest in the social infrastructure in communities. Social infrastructure includes community based organizations (amongst others such as educational institutions, Friendship Centres, social housing, and the inter-connected social programs) that provide social services across a wide variety of sectors and have significant positive down stream cost savings for Canadian society (reducing use of government social services – eg. health care system, justice system, employment services system, social welfare system more broadly).

Investment in the social infrastructure sector can have immediate economic impacts through the revitalization/rebuilding/repair and environmental retrofitting of community spaces. The net result is immediate jobs in local communities, immediate investment and economic benefit. In particular, we advocate for the retrofitting, renovation and rebuilding, where required, of the 118 indigenous Friendship Centres in Canada. These organizations have long been pillars in the community and in many communities are the only safe physical spaces. Friendship Centres have gone decades without programs that allow capital costs. More than 88% of Friendship Centres own their own buildings (248 in total) and they serve as hubs for the community. Immediate local infrastructure improvement or building for Friendship Centres could prioritize the sourcing of local indigenous labour and materials, creating local employment and business activity. It is recommended that accessibility and a green retrofit component be a part of the overall initial investment.

Medium and long-term economic growth is further enhanced through stable and predictable social infrastructure program funding. Beyond the initial employment





National Association
of Friendship Centres
Association nationale
des centres d'amitié

benefit through the construction and trades sector, employment for youth and professional social services builds long-term economic wealth in communities as well as economic resilience. Generally, the investment is less significant upfront than hard infrastructure but pays social dividends over a much longer-period and is much more sustainable. In essence, the social infrastructure of programming is the perfect economic companion to hard infrastructure.

3. How can we create economic growth, protect the environment and meet local priorities while ensuring that the most vulnerable don't get left behind?

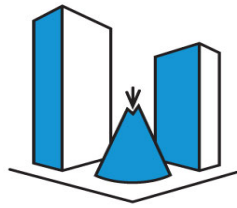
Social infrastructure speaks directly to the most vulnerable in Canadian Society. As we have seen over many years, no matter the indicator or measures used, it is the indigenous populations, both on and off-reserve, that continually occupy the bottom rungs. Investment directed at physical structures and programs that support this sector of Canadian society are badly needed and long overdue. Engagement of the existing networks and infrastructure is critical in quickly moving investment forward and ensuring the long-term benefits remain at the community level. Local communities are best situated to articulate local priorities, and through engagement of their networks (both on and off-reserve) economies of scale can be found.

It is also critical to think differently about investment in Canada. The NAFC and Friendship Centres are leading the burgeoning field of indigenous social innovation and social enterprise development in Canada. There are community based solutions to complex problems, involving new mechanisms of finance and new types of working partnerships with outcomes that go beyond strict profit. It is strongly recommended that the Government look at supporting social innovation/enterprise and turn to indigenous people to lead that effort. This also broadly supports economic and social resilience, and leads to long-term systems change with vulnerable indigenous populations in Canada.

4. Finally, is the implementation of these new priorities and initiatives realistic? Will it help us grow our economy?

The implementation of a social infrastructure investment of this nature including; a) a hard physical infrastructure investment in a network of organizations and structures that are or can easily be in a shovel ready position and; b) A longer term





National Association
of Friendship Centres
Association nationale
des centres d'amitié

investment in programs and services for vulnerable populations who use these facilities is easily achievable. Critical to note is that this infrastructure already exists, these are not new organizations and these are not “new builds”, with the requisite time and resources that would be required. Mobilization is relatively straightforward and relationships with other governmental bodies such as provinces and municipalities are pre-existing. The NAFC will work with other federal departments, including Indigenous and Northern Affairs, on how best to construct effective programming to support the broader social infrastructure piece but we can also use our network to facilitate coordinated action amongst our community based organizations. A multi-level approach that has short-term hard infrastructure investment – which supports a “green” retro-fit component, supports the local economy and labour pool, coupled with a long-term investment in programs and services that work to further individual and community resilience and builds in community skills and wealth will definitively grow the economy both immediately and over the medium-long term.

