



ATLANTIC POLICY CONGRESS
OF FIRST NATIONS CHIEFS SECRETARIAT

Pre-Budget Submission to the House of Commons
Standing Committee on Finance
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Pre- Budget Submission

Fiscal Sustainability & Growth

In the coming years, it will be of critical importance to balance the budget and ensure no further negative adjustments have implications to increase the levels of poverty in First Nations communities across Canada. The economic contributions of this growing and expanding population will be critical as shortages in skills grow across the economy from coast to coast. Continued effort toward the elimination of set real or perceived barriers to allow increased access and participation of First Nations and all Aboriginal people into the broader economy is critical for the continued economic prosperity of Canada and each of the regions. In particular, in Atlantic Canada as the continued skill shortages growth in sectors and the demands for skilled and educated workers heats up, the importance of Aboriginal people will be clearly apparent and all employers must have targeted specific strategies and incentives to propel the growth of the Aboriginal workforce to new levels of participation and growth which is being anything in the past. The economy and the economic future demands this to ensure Aboriginal youth, young adults and their families become increasing participants in all key sectors of the economy. Our Chiefs continue to focus proactively on the continued elimination of barriers to training, employment or education as well as improved access and business partnerships with willing businesses to create training opportunities, jobs and life long careers. Sound fiscal management in the coming years is critical and will allow the Canadian economy to help create much needed economic and employment opportunities for Aboriginal people as they match up with the ever increasing demands for skilled and educated workers by employers.

Aboriginal Employment

On training, continued innovative partnerships efforts like the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw Economic Benefits Office direct efforts with the private sector must be continued and grow to produce increasingly more tangible outcomes for economic participation through strong supports and tracking outcomes in opportunity identification, training, jobs and careers. In essence, our First Nations schools, our provincial community colleges and all our universities must help ensure the students have all the needed supports, knowledge and skills to be able to make the transition from school to work and for First Nations the transition from the community to the cities. Unless consistent significant systematic efforts are made to ensure all these transition measures are successful and that employers, governments and all our First Nation communities must all track the progress of each person to ensure a long term positive outcome or results. Helping those individuals to make the transition from school to work is critical to ensure the people which do get training and employment stay with the opportunity for the job opportunity to become a

career and allows economic prosperity and wealth for themselves and their families. There is a very strong need for continued and new investments of 500 million over 5 years in Business Sector/Aboriginal training partnerships programming in all key economic sectors. All Aboriginal people must become part of the overall economic future of the region which they reside and for Atlantic Canada, the careers created must remain in the Atlantic Provinces if at all possible. The continued relocation and migration of people and families to the west for prosperity and employment opportunities has had a social cost for families in Atlantic Canada who strive to make a decent living to ensure all communities maintain their survival and economic sustainability.

First Nation Community Funding Sustainability

In terms of long term sustainability, the growing demands and needs for basic services in our First Nations communities is paramount. The fiscal transfers to First Nation governments must grow at a rate consistent to inflationary costs and population increases and growing demands for core basic services such as governance, education, health services, housing and infrastructure. Over the past few years, the decreased growth levels of government funding as well as reduced flexibility for the provision basic services provided equal to all Canadians has continued and the poverty conditions which continue to exist on many First Nations communities. The levels and pace of changes required to allow for transformation are efforts which must have increased the levels and range of accountability and transparency. Most recently, the passage into law of the optional First Nations Election Act allows communities to set a new path for solid governance and accountability as well as make many improvements to the existing election process including election terms of 4 years. Such changes will and can allow communities themselves to set the plan forward for change and improve the way governance works and basic service delivery in First Nations communities. Many efforts underway to improve and strengthen governance and accountability allow each the communities to develop a viable economic future with a plan which is consistent with the community vision, values and aspirations. Unlocking potential the young Aboriginal people will help ensure prosperity for both the First Nations and Canada as a whole. As such, it is a requirement for First Nations that the federal government provide new longer term funding agreements of 15-25 years with appropriate funding including cost and volume escalators for the provision sustainable basic services provided to those interested First Nations communities.

Access to Capital

A significant challenge which also continues to exist in many First Nations is the access to long term capital. As communities continue to grow the gap between available financial capital from government, bank indebtedness and from First Nation own source revenues will not be adequate to fill the fiscal gap which exists today and will not be able to address the growing basic needs of many of the First Nations communities. Growth and expansion are a must and an urgent need for First Nations to access capital markets for long term financing which must become a viable reality sooner than later. Innovative and substantial efforts of the First Nations Financing Authority which now has 124 first nation members of 633 First Nations must continue to grow and be expanded to ensure a growing number of First Nations at least 300 First Nation communities have direct access to long term capital for periods of at least 30 years so long term planning can be carried out for those communities over the next five years. It is very important to provide direct financial support and appropriate incentives to support any First Nation community to empower them to get certified under the First Nation Financial Management Board with a Financial Performance Certificate and move to become a borrowing member of the First Nation Finance Authority under the First Nations Fiscal Management Act.

Today, there is a growing need to upgrade and expand all community infrastructure in all our First Nations and the needs for capital are in excess of 500 million.

First Nations Clean Water

Based on the Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act adopted on June 19, 2013, the development of clear and comprehensive regulations is paramount and must be carried out in a timely manner to ensure all First Nations clearly know and understand the steps and obligations required to ensure First Nations have the same health and safety protections for drinking water as all other Canadians. Over the next year it will be very important to look at new and innovative approaches for the provision of these vital services to all our communities. In Atlantic Canada, our Chiefs are working closely with AANDC and Public-Private Partnerships Canada (PPP Canada) to examine a regional approach for development of a First Nation Water entity that would manage and operate all water and wastewater infrastructure for all First Nations communities across Atlantic Canada. Such a project will provide invaluable lessons and opportunities for development and creation of innovative solutions to Infrastructure in First Nations communities which may be applied in other regions of the country. Our Chiefs continue to see safe water and the protection of our communities as a vital public safety issue which must continue to be a focused effort to ensure a positive outcome. The detailed costs will be developed as part of ongoing engineering work and development of a formal Business Case for

consideration of all our First Nation Chiefs and the federal government to provide a 30 year potential solution to water and waste issues for First Nations in Atlantic Canada.

Conclusion

Over the next year it will be critical for the government and First Nations to work in partnership on these many very important efforts which will and can benefit all First Nations and the economy as a whole. Economic and social stability of Canada is directly tied to the future of all are First Nations. Together innovations and vision to produce desired results must prevail.