



Congress of Aboriginal Peoples

Submission to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Urban Indigenous Housing Issues

Congress of Aboriginal Peoples
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The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) is one of five National Indigenous Representative Organizations recognized by the Government of Canada. Founded in 1971 as the Native Council of Canada (NCC), the organization was originally established to represent the interests of Métis and non-status Indians. Reorganized and renamed in 1993, CAP has extended its constituency to include all off-reserve status and non-status Indians, Métis and Southern Inuit Indigenous Peoples, and serves as the national voice for its 10 provincial and territorial affiliate organizations.

Regarding the Study:

“That, in recognition of the fact that nearly 80% of the Indigenous People’s in Canada live in Urban, rural and northern communities; be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study to investigate and make recommendations on the challenges and systemic barriers facing Indigenous People and indigenous housing providers in northern, urban and rural communities across Canada; that this study focus on urban, northern and rural providers and identify the gaps in the federal government’s current policies in addressing homelessness and the precarious housing crisis facing Indigenous People in urban, rural and northern communities across Canada and that pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Committee request that the government table a comprehensive response to the report.”

Recommendations:

- In budget 2020, allocate \$5 million over 3 years for strategy co-development with the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, and for \$100M annually in dedicated carveouts for affordable urban and rural Indigenous housing accessible to our off-reserve, non-status, Métis and Southern Inuit families.
- The creation of an off-reserve housing strategy to support Indigenous led, community-run housing programs.
 - Ensure that sufficient resources are available, to ensure high-quality and comprehensive wraparound supports
- Support for off-reserve and non-status Indigenous organizations to connect homeless, elderly, and vulnerable populations to appropriate housing services.
- Ensure that housing service organizations include:
 - Anti-discrimination training for providers
 - Mental health resources,
 - Integration with other institutions like release planning from prisons,
 - Dedicated resources for vulnerable populations.

Key Statistics

- 1 in 15 Indigenous people in urban centers experience homelessness. Only 1 in 128 people experience homelessness in the general population.
- 18% of Indigenous households are in core housing need compared to 12% of non-Indigenous households. Core housing need is a term used to describe households that are below one or more of three housing standards (adequacy, suitability, and affordability) and that would need to spend 30% or more of their before-tax income to access other housing in the same community that meets all three standards.

- In some cities like Yellowknife, NWT and Whitehorse, YT 90% of the homeless population is Indigenous. In Toronto, ON Indigenous people make up 15% of homeless people despite making up only 0.5% of the total population.
- 40% of Indigenous children live in poverty. The national average is 19%.
- Overcrowding is a more prevalent issue for Indigenous households than non-Indigenous households.
- Groups within Indigenous communities identified as the most likely to need housing supports include women, youth, elderly, and 2SLGBTQQIA+.

Key Challenges:

- Unlike non-Indigenous peoples, Indigenous homelessness is a direct result of “ongoing settler colonization and racism that (has) displaced and dispossessed” Indigenous peoples across Canada.
- The housing needs and homelessness of off-reserve Indigenous people remain largely unaddressed by existing federal housing policies and programs.
- \$1.5 billion of Indigenous “distinctions-based” National Housing Strategy (NHS) funding targets on-reserve communities, Inuit land claims areas and certain Metis groups, but lacks targeted support or Urban Indigenous communities and accessibility by the wider Indigenous community.
- Other funds face competitive bidding processes against non-indigenous organizations, exacerbating inequalities and the inability of indigenous groups to secure stable program funding.
- Some Indigenous peoples are especially likely to be in need of housing in order to escape harm and danger. This includes women, youth, the elderly, 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, and people with disabilities. These groups are also most likely to be unable to access existing social supports, and therefore in need of targeted supports that are culturally relevant to intersectional issues they are facing.
- Housing needs and homelessness are intricately tied the discrimination that Indigenous peoples face in society at large as a result of colonial policies and attitudes.
- Management of housing services by Indigenous communities themselves is essential for overcoming historical impacts of discrimination.

CAP Provincial and Territorial Organization (PTO) Housing Services:

The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples brings together 10 provincial and territorial organizations from coast to coast. Existing PTO housing programs demonstrate the widespread need for housing support in the off-reserve and non-status Indigenous population, as well as the capacity for managing programs and administering funding.

These programs have significant room for increased capacity, if adequate resources are provided. They are accountable to the populations they serve, ensuring that programs align with community needs.

CAP’s PTOs provide a range of housing services, including but not limited to:

- Alliance Autochtone du Québec - Housing Services
- Native Council of Nova Scotia - Rural Aboriginal Homelessness Program
- Native Council of Nova Scotia - Rural and Native Housing Group
- Native Council of Nova Scotia - Wenjkwom Housing Commission
- Native Council of PEI - Nanegkam Housing Corporation

- Native Council of PEI - Aboriginal Housing Commission
- NunatuKavut – Home Repair Program
- NunatuKavut – Infrastructure Program
- Aboriginal Congress of Alberta Association – Housing and Homelessness Supports

CAP Budget 2020 Recommendation:

For the 2020 budget, CAP drafted the following recommendation as a starting point for establishing long-term stable funding for Urban Indigenous housing supports. This recommendation is aligned with CAP's long-term goals of ensuring that off-reserve and non-status Indigenous peoples in Canada can access stable and affordable housing services.

Create a carveout for inclusive, affordable housing for Indigenous peoples in urban and rural communities

Budget 2017 allocated \$225 million over 11 years for affordable and culturally appropriate housing for Indigenous peoples living off-reserve. However, demand for supportive housing, affordable housing, social housing, ongoing subsidies and housing repairs significantly exceeds this amount.

Between 2011 and 2016, the number of off-reserve Indigenous households in Canada living in core housing need (CHN) increased from 95,870 to 118,500. 18% of all Indigenous households currently live in CHN compared to 12% of non-Indigenous Canadian households.¹ Among Indigenous households in CHN, 19% are non-status Indians.²

Affordability is the primary driver of CHN for the off-reserve Indigenous population_s with 42,000 households spending 50% or more of their income on shelter.³ The “depth” of core housing need – the difference between income and the cost of appropriate housing - is particularly pronounced for Indigenous subsidized renter households_s, where the median depth of housing need is 64% higher than non-Indigenous subsidized renter households.⁴

CAP is calling for a carveout of funding within National Housing Strategy (NHS) programs to protect and develop housing for Indigenous families in cities and rural communities. RCAP recommended support for off-reserve Indigenous people by reinstating and increasing funding for new social housing and mortgage subsidies through CMHC, providing greater autonomy and flexibility to Indigenous service deliverers and expanding rental subsidies (Recommendation 3.4.14).⁵

There are several NHS funds available for new construction financing, housing repair and renewal, rental construction financing. However, the competitive nature of NHS funding represents a systemic barrier to the housing needs of off-reserve Indigenous peoples. Organizations with resources to tailor applications to competitive processes are not necessarily the ones who are connected and accountable to local communities.

CAP is also seeking a federal commitment to co-developing an Urban/Rural Indigenous Housing Strategy. Indigenous housing solutions must be led by Indigenous communities. So far, the NHS has focused Indigenous strategy development through NIOs representing First Nations, the Métis Nation and Inuit, yet CAP is the only NIO mandated to represent our constituency. Community-driven strategy is required for assessing and meeting the specific housing needs of Indigenous people in rural and urban settings.

CAP calls for \$5 million over 3 years for strategy co-development with CAP and for \$100M annually in dedicated carveouts for affordable urban and rural Indigenous housing, accessible to our off-reserve, non-status, Métis and Southern Inuit families.

CAP AGA 2019 Housing Resolution:

CAP's 2019 Annual General Assembly included 2 new resolutions prioritizing housing issues for the coming year. These called on CAP to advocate for community-run housing programs for non-status and off-reserve Indigenous peoples, and to prioritize homeless services and outreach, to vulnerable members of the population.

Housing Resolution:

Whereas in December 2018, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples entered into a Political Accord with the government of Canada to build a renewed relationship based on rights, respect, co-operation and partnership,

And whereas the common goal is to close the socio-economic gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples,

And whereas through the signing of the accord, the government has committed to working on matters related to the rights, interests, and needs of their constituents,

And whereas safe and affordable housing is integral to the health and development of all peoples,

And whereas the 2019 research report, "Urban Indigenous Peoples – Not Just Passing Through" states that federal government continues to ignore the growing indigenous housing crisis, and has focused on reserve-based housing, and that households are in a severe housing need. These factors have resulted in a housing crisis and an increase in homelessness,

Therefore, be it resolved that the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples negotiate, under the December 2018 Canada-Congress of Aboriginal Peoples Political Accord, an off-reserve housing strategy to allow community-run housing programs;

Be it further resolved that the strategy allow for communities to set income levels and run the housing programs at the provincial levels;

Be it further resolved that there be adequate, acceptable funding levels attached to the strategy to ensure that off-reserve Aboriginal People's Housing needs are met.

Homelessness Support Resolution:

Whereas with implementation of the new Canadian National Housing Strategy, Canada has ratified under the United Nations *Universal Declaration on Human Rights* that housing is recognized as a human right;

And whereas urban Indigenous youth are disproportionately represented in the urban youth homeless population;

And whereas there was a resolution set forward at the 2018 Annual General Assembly by Joseph Wade White, Native Council of Nova Scotia and Micheal Hull, Native Council of Nova Scotia that requires further action in identifying a strategy to address the issue of off-reserve housing;

And Whereas in the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples' Final Submission to the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls one of the recommendations was to call for a specifically funded strategy led by off-reserve Indigenous organizations in present and future federal housing programs targeting Indigenous people living off-reserve;

Therefore be it resolved that the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and its provincial and territorial affiliate organizations seek funding and provide other resources that will assist urban Indigenous people in identifying emergency accommodations and affordable housing options for youth, elders, and vulnerable populations.