

Regional Tripartite Housing Committee (RTHC)

Minutes

Virtual meeting on June 2, 2022

Present:

AFNQL: Chief Lance Haymond, Guy Latouche

CMHC: Pierre Bélanger, Jean-François Samuel, François Sauvageau, Ina Wielinga

ISC: Bruce Labrador, André Dansereau, Éric Bouchard (FNIHB)

Absent:

ISC: Nathalie Spénard

1- Welcome (CMHC)

Pierre Bélanger welcomed everyone. He noted Ina's arrival on the RTHC and thanked François Sauvageau for his contribution to the committee. François will be retiring in the coming weeks.

The meeting was held on MS Teams.

2- Reading and approval of the agenda (CMHC)

The agenda was accepted as presented. There are no items under "Miscellaneous".

3- Follow-up on actions from the last meeting (all)

Action 1: CMHC presentation on the work of its team responsible for working with financial institutions, such as BMO, TD or Desjardins, in relation to Indigenous housing.

Considering that there is not enough specific information at this stage, this item will be on the agenda of a future RTHC meeting.

Action 2: Organize a meeting of the RTHC Operations Committee (RTHC-OC) to brainstorm opportunities to maximize the implementation of renovation budgets, including the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP).

CMHC's presentation on its renovation allocation today. With ISC's upcoming allocations, there is a desire for closer collaboration to maximize budgets. Discussion at a next OC meeting

Collaboration between CMHC and ISC is already well established to maximize regional budgets.

Action completed – to be removed in next meeting minutes.

Action 3: Make sure to promote and disseminate the results from the skills and capabilities of the Regional Housing and Infrastructure Strategy and, in turn, the RTHC Action Plan.

The RTHC is always looking for opportunities to disseminate and promote the results of its action plan in addition to using the means already known to do so (Housing Connection, annual report, regional housing meeting, Community of Practice on Housing, etc.).

Action completed – to be removed in next meeting minutes.

Action 4: Organize a RTHC-OC meeting to discuss the regional housing meeting, in terms of dates, budget, logistics and content, for a recommendation to the RTHC.

This meeting will take place over the next two weeks to effectively organize the 2022 Regional meeting.

The meetings have taken place.

Action completed – to be removed in next meeting minutes.

Action 5: Talk to Jean Vincent to learn more about the steps to expand ABSCAN's activities and, at the same time, about the visions for the First Nations Market Housing Fund. Settled

Mr. Vincent made a presentation at the last RTHC.

Action completed – to be removed in next meeting minutes.

Action 6: Plan a discussion with one or more key industry stakeholders to address the issue of home insurance, which remains a persistent issue.

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) recently held a meeting on the issue of flooding. A report is forthcoming. With global warming, forest fires and landslides will also be added as risks. Still relevant today.

The community of Matimekush–Lac John also reported significant issues with increasing insurance rates.

Action 7: Position statement and exploration of funding for the financial literacy project presented by the FNQLEDC in association with ABSCAN. Meeting scheduled very soon to move everything along.

Funding found with ISC.

Action completed – to be removed in next meeting minutes.

Action 8: Explore the possibility of using ISC's Info-com newsletter as an alternative to Housing Connection, Bruce L. will get back to us at the next meeting with more details.

Agenda item for today.

Action completed – to be removed in next meeting minutes.

Action 9: P. Bélanger will come back to the next RTHC meeting to describe how First Nations were involved in the implementation of CMHC's pilot project with some 20 FNs across the country.

Pierre informed us that the pilot was created following a consultation with the AFN.

Our team member Keith Kelly also gave a presentation to an AFN technical committee in April.

Action completed – to be removed in next meeting minutes.

Summary of the new actions identified at this meeting:

ACTION 1: Invite Candace Bennett, Executive Director, to come and make a presentation on the First Nations Housing Professionals Association to the RTHC.

ACTION 2: After the September regional meeting on housing, the RTHC Operational Committee is invited to start reflecting on the format of the regional housing meeting and to make one or more recommendations to the RTHC:

Save the ½ day in spring for information topics and keep in touch with FNs.

Meeting management by the FNs (for example, organized by the school council. Be mindful, as the panel also has a political dimension.)

ACTION 3: Ina Wielinga volunteered to coordinate the publication of Housing Connection. She will send an email to the members with a timeline to ensure publication by the end of November 2022.

Ina will explore with the communications division the idea of conducting interviews (through communications) with FNs or other Indigenous housing stakeholders and including them as inserts in Housing Connection (for example, the "housing circuit rider corner," or a word from the FNQLEDC–Financial Literacy).

ACTION 4: In 2022-2023, a decision will have to be made on the RTHC communication strategy (see page 7 of the 2021-2022 annual report "Continuation of initiatives already embarked upon").

4- Introduction to the RTHC for new members (AFNQL)

Nathalie Spénard joined us for this item.

A presentation was made to the new RTHC members (Ina, Nathalie and Éric) to enlighten them on the origin of the committee, its objectives, action plan, achievements, and functioning, as well as to explain the dynamics of Indigenous housing in Quebec and the role that the RTHC plays.

Although Nathalie and Éric have been members of the RTHC for some time already, for various reasons, this presentation had not been made when they joined the committee.

5- National and Regional Environments (all)

AFNQL

Nationally, two resolutions will be presented at the next AFN Annual General Assembly in July.

The first is a plea to bridge the housing gap. Despite the amounts announced in the 2022 budget, the funding level remains insufficient to eliminate the gap. The resolution urges the federal government to shift insufficient federal housing and infrastructure investment commitments from 5 to 10 years to long-term commitments of 25 to 30 years or more to provide ongoing, predictable and sustainable funding.

The second is on First Nations involvement in the development of the Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy. It urges the federal government to ensure that the Off-Community Indigenous Housing Strategy is aligned with the National Housing Strategy and related First Nation infrastructure and does not derogate from First Nations rights, jurisdiction and status as a nation. This resolution goes a long way, as it also urges the federal government to ensure that First Nations can easily choose to control the use of urban, rural and northern housing provider funds to serve their members/citizens.

Now for the regional plan. The regional summary report and individual reports containing the latest housing needs data were sent to each community this week. The reports contain an evolving picture of the situation between 2000 and 2018. We are already preparing for a future update.

A delegation of the AFNQL Chiefs met with several ministers in Ottawa on May 31 and June 1, including ministers Hajdu (ISC) and Miller (CIRNAC). Housing was one of the topics to be discussed. The Chiefs highlighted two specific issues:

1. Increased construction costs

Construction costs have risen dramatically in recent years. What has been happening for the past two years presents us with a great challenge. Even though cost estimation is an exercise that is taken seriously, we've entered a time where it's becoming very difficult to stay within the budgets of our housing projects. The price of construction materials has doubled, tripled or increased even more in some cases. Failures in supply chains and skyrocketing gas prices have contributed to this situation. The grants related to the projects do not at all follow the actual cost increase curve that First Nations deal with on the ground. In the current situation, communities are therefore confronted with major challenges. That is why the Chiefs have asked the federal government to index housing grants to a level that would allow First Nations to realistically deal with the inflation observed in construction.

2. Insufficient funding to eliminate the gap

We know the housing needs of First Nations in Quebec and Labrador. The 2022 Federal Budget includes additional investments for First Nations housing over the next five years. It's a step in the right direction. However, First Nations need long-term commitments of predictable and sufficient federal investments in community

infrastructure and housing, to bring quantity and quality up to minimum standards and to maintain them in the future. The Chiefs therefore call on the federal government to move from insufficient federal housing and related infrastructure investments to long-term commitments to provide ongoing, sufficient, predictable and sustainable funding.

Chief Haymond specified that the current construction cost conditions put individual homeownership out of reach for many First Nations people. He also mentioned that the housing investment in the 2022 Federal Budget is far from what was expected and that a third resolution will be presented at the AFN General Assembly in July urging the federal government to support community infrastructure needs as we enter the post-pandemic period.

ISC

- Pascal Dubé, former housing manager, is now the director of the Educational and Social Partnerships Branch. Michèle Ramsay is acting as interim manager until the end of June. The position has yet to be filled, but the hiring process is underway.
- Since the departure of the Regional Director General (RDG) of the Quebec Regional Office, Luc Dumont, Caroline Garon has been acting as interim RDG, leaving her delegated RDG position vacant. Bruce Labrador had accepted the position of delegated RDG for 6 weeks, ending June 5. He will then resume his duties as director of the Infrastructure and Housing Branch on Monday, June 6.
- The base capital budgets, originating from the 1996 Policy, for the nine First Nations that have annual agreements, have been updated. The exercise ended with retroactivity, adjustment and access to annual indexation.
- As of June 2, we have no further details on the breakdown of the \$2.4 billion (national) in Budget 2022 for Indigenous housing. We will soon have details on the regional budget and associated eligible activities.
- The work related to the inventory of infrastructure needs to close the gap has begun. In the Quebec Region, it will be conducted as an interview. ISC-QRO provided each community with a table containing the information from the databases. The exercise also includes FNs without land bases. The exercise should end around June 10 and be ready for submission at ISC's headquarters by June 30. Financial assistance of \$15,000 per community was provided to enable them to obtain support for the production or update of a five-year plan.
- We have no additional information/details on the home renovation component following the child and family court judgment.
- Correctional Service Canada has approached ISC and other partners, including Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples, Native Friendship Centres and CMHC for on-reserve and off-reserve transitional housing for reintegration purposes, but also so that recipients can access services and supports to ensure their successful reintegration.
- The official signing of the regional education agreement is expected in July. This agreement could include amounts to meet housing needs for education professionals.
- In terms of emergency measures: Flooding in the region is under control and preparations (preventive actions/training) are underway for the forest fire season.

- Official opening of the QRO after several renovations. The capacity now exceeds 460 workspaces (workstations, meeting rooms, others). ISC reiterated the invitation to CMHC to use the rooms as needed.
- The Pope's visit this summer is mobilizing several stakeholders, including ISC, which is participating in the preparation and planning (itinerary) of the event related to the region's Indigenous communities.
- Travel to ISC employee communities has resumed.
- Chief Wawatie of Barrière Lake First Nation is open to the electrification of his community subject to the prerequisites for his support.
- At a national housing meeting in ISC, Ms. Candace Bennett, Executive Director of the First Nations Housing Professionals Association, expressed a desire to meet with the RTHC to provide information and discuss about the association.

ACTION: Invite Candace Bennett, Executive Director, to come and give a presentation on the First Nations Housing Professionals Association to the RTCH.

- FNIHB resumes inspections and, during the visits, they are in close contact with housing officials to ensure follow-up.

CMHC

- After François Sauvageau's retirement, Ina Wielinga will be CMHC's new representative on the RTHC.
- We are still waiting for instructions and guidelines related to the latest Federal Budget. An amount of \$1.5 billion is planned for a third phase of the Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI) over a two-year period. Also, an amount of \$300 million over five years is planned for urban, rural and northern areas.
- More details will follow shortly, but CMHC has just approved the use of the grant as a form of guarantee for a CMHC direct loan to access the Section 95 program. To use this new form of guarantee, FNs will have to qualify. This is therefore not an alternative for FNs who do not have access to the Ministerial Loan Guarantee (MLG) due to financial difficulties. We will share more details as soon as possible.

6- Review of the regional housing meeting and follow-up (fall) (AFNQL)

The first part of the regional housing meeting was held virtually on May 25 (1/2 day).

The AFNQL is satisfied with the event attendance. Between 55 and 60 participants attended the meeting. The meeting was informative in nature, which did not prevent the participants from asking many questions and being interested in the presentations.

The school board ensured facilitation and adopted a format that everyone enjoyed.

The second part of the regional housing meeting will be held in person in Québec on September 27 and 28. The school board will hold its annual meeting on September 29 at the same location.

The RTHC-OC will meet on June 7 to start organizing the September regional meeting (mainly to determine the content of the meeting).

ACTION: After the September meeting, the RTHC Operational Committee is invited to start reflecting on the format of the regional housing meeting and to make one or more recommendations to the RTHC:

Save the ½ day in spring for information topics and keep in touch with FNs.

Meeting management by the FNs (for example, organized by the school council. Be mindful, as the panel also has a political dimension.)

7- Housing Connection (all)

After analyzing various options (including ISC's Info.com), it was decided to continue publishing Housing Connection annually in its current form.

When: Housing Connection will be published at the end of November 2022.

Potential content: Section 95 allocation and CMHC renovation

ISC Housing Initiative

Recap of the regional housing meeting

RTHC annual report

Federal Budget 2022 Details

Coordination: **ACTION:** Ina Wielinga volunteered to coordinate the publication of Housing Connection. She will send an email to the members with a timeline to ensure publication by the end of November 2022.

Ina will explore with the communications division the idea of conducting interviews (through communications) with FNs or other Indigenous housing stakeholders and including them as inserts in Housing Connection (for example, "the housing circuit rider corner," or a word from FNQLEDC– Financial Literacy).

8- RTHC annual report (AFNQL)

The AFNQL presented the RTHC annual report. It was approved as presented with the names of the RTHC members added to the report.

ACTION: In 2022-2023, a decision will have to be made on the RTHC communication strategy (reference page 7 of the 2021-2022 annual report, "Continuation of initiatives already embarked upon").

9- Miscellaneous and next meeting (all)

No miscellaneous items were added to the agenda.

The next meeting will take place in Québec in person (if possible) on November 23 and 24 at the ISC offices.

It should be noted that Oumar Ba will resume his position in FNIHB in mid-August.

10- End of meeting