

Regional Tripartite Housing Committee (RTHC)

Minutes

Virtual meeting - November 9 and 10, 2021

Attendance:

AFNQL : Chief Lance Haymond, Guy Latouche

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

ISC: Bruce Labrador (RO*), Éric Bouchard (FNIHB**), André Dansereau (RO), Pascal Dubé (RO), Sonia Gavin (FNIHB), Nathalie Spénard (RO)

Guest: Jean Vincent, Aboriginal Savings Corporation of Canada (ABSCAN) – Day 2, Item 7

Facilitator: Pascal Dubé; **Note-taking**: Nathalie Spénard

* RO = Regional Operations

** FNIHB = First Nations and Inuit Health Branch

Summary of Actions

Action 1: Presentation by the CMHC team on its work with financial institutions, such as BMO or TD, in relation to the housing for First Nations file.

Action 2: Organize an expanded meeting of the RTHC's operations committee (RTHC-OC) to brainstorm on opportunities to maximize the implementation of renovation budgets, including the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP).

Action 3: Ensure that the results of the Skills and Capacities Axis of the Regional Strategy on Housing and Infrastructure, and therefore the RTHC Action Plan, are known and promoted.

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

1. Welcoming address and introduction

The virtual mode of delivery remains in place. In the absence of Oumar Ba, who is on a one-year assignment, a round table discussion introduced Sonia Gavin (interim until November 30, 2021) and Eric Bouchard as the FNIHB representative to the RTHC. The agenda was accepted without addition.

2. Follow-up on the actions of the May 26, 2021 meeting

Action 1: Invite Jean Vincent to learn more about the steps being taken to expand the activities of ABSCAN, and as well, about the perspectives surrounding the First Nations Market Housing Fund (FNMHF) **(on the agenda)**.

Action 2: Schedule a discussion with key industry stakeholder(s) to address the issue of home insurance, which remains a persistent issue. **(follow-up):** Pre-validation of insurance issues with FNs will be conducted through the administration of a survey. To support the development of the survey, key stakeholders from communities with mixed housing stock (private and community) will be consulted.



Q: Could this exercise explore alternatives in the area of insurance products for FNs (e.g., self-insurance, risk insurance)?

A: The work will lay the groundwork for solutions that will effectively and affordably address FNs' needs for home insurance (through personal property or liability insurance).

3. National and Regional Environments

Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador (AFNQL)

Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy (IFSD) Report

IFSD was commissioned to produce a national picture of the housing needs of First Nations (FNs) and associated costs to address the backlog. This report was written using data extrapolated and reworked from the 2018 National Survey of all FNs in Canada, and its key finding highlights that the national need for FNs housing is \$44B (immediate need to eliminate the gap).

Some qualification is required (low national survey participation rate), but one of the findings of this report is that migration-related needs (members living outside the community who are potentially interested in returning) are \$21B and would be twice as large as overcrowding-related needs (\$10B).



Q: In relation to out-of-territory populations, is the solution proposed by the AFN through housing in communities or creating urban spaces, a mix of both or no solution proposed?

A: With respect to out-of-territory populations, one proposed solution is to address the migration needs of people who live outside and want to return to their communities.

Q: Addressing such issues often brings with it the realization that money will not solve everything. Is this an issue that is being discussed at the national level?

A: The multisectoral approach is indeed discussed. This reinforces the credibility of the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Economic Development Commission (FNQLEDC) report on "Paving the way" (https://apnql.com/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/CDE-rapport-v13_eng-avec-annexes.pdf). The implementation plan is multisectoral and will cover all axes.

Homelessness

The *Indigenous Homelessness* component of Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) "Reaching Home" program provides financial support to communities to help them address their local homelessness needs. ESDC is soliciting proposals to shift the \$27M national envelope (\$9M annually/3 years) to the regions. AFN's preferred approach is to work with a regional organization that will manage the funds and deal directly with communities to fund homelessness initiatives on reserve. Discussions on the approaches are still ongoing and a decision is expected shortly.



Q: Will the funding be for capital (e.g., building day care centers) or for services, such as accompaniment?

A: Any project that is dedicated to addressing homelessness will be eligible, but the nature of the eligibility (capital versus services) remains to be clarified.

Q: Do we know which facet of homelessness this budget will focus on?

A: This is still being explored. Certainly each region will need to define an action plan and strategies.

Grand Economic Circle of Indigenous People and Quebec – November 25-26, 2021 (in person)

Organized by the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Economic Development Commission (FNQLEDC), this event will be a starting point for a movement towards greater economic inclusion of Indigenous People. The program includes, among other things, a workshop on the housing situation, approached from the perspective of development and economic opportunities by Chief Haymond, Jean Vincent and Martin Légaré.

As a follow-up to the RTHC's discussions with UNIFOR regarding its desire to make a difference in the communities, the organization will potentially be invited to participate in the event and will be prepared to make a written commitment regarding its intentions to contribute.

Special Chiefs Assembly - December 7-9, 2021 (virtual)

The Assembly will be preceded by concurrent dialogue sessions, one of which will be dedicated to housing. The AFNQL will address the Skills and Capacities axis to prepare for the backlog elimination initiatives.

Chiefs Committee on Housing and Infrastructure (CCoHI)

Cindy Woodhouse appointed as National Spokesperson for CCoHI. She will replace former Chief Kevin T. Hart as Regional Chief for Manitoba.

BMO Announcement - August 5, 2021

Opportunity to be explored: Commitment of \$12B to fund affordable housing over a period of 10 years, with a portion earmarked for affordable housing and infrastructure that supports the economic development of Indigenous peoples.



It should be noted that CMHC has a team dedicated to working in collaboration with the financial community such as BMO or TD in relation to this type of financing initiative.

Action 1: Presentation by CMHC on the work of its team working with financial institutions, such as BMO or TD, in relation to the housing for First Nations.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)

Indigenous Shelter and Transitional Housing Initiative

Two components:

\$250M initiative for the renovation and construction of shelters: Pan-Canadian initiative open to all Canadians. Files in Quebec have been identified and the process has begun. The subsidy for renovation is \$75,000 on average per unit. For Indigenous housing, the opportunity is more towards renovation.

Dedicated initiative for Indigenous groups (Inuit, Métis, FN, urban) of 724\$M related to the Commission's recommendation to support women and children as well as 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals experiencing gender-based violence. Continuation of a 2019-2020 initiative (QC: 4 applications/1 funded). National goals: 38 shelters and 50 transitional housing units.



Q: Will money be set aside for the maintenance of these new buildings?

A: A maintenance line item is identified in ISC funding envelope for operational costs.

Q: In the second stream, do we know if the three unsuccessful proposals were due to a lack of funding or rather an eligibility issue?

A: Due to lack of funding. Applicants are invited to re-submit their projects. CMHC will work with communities who wish to refine and reflect on their application.

Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI)

RHI 1: Nearly \$43M approved for 199 units in Quebec in 2021-2022. 70% of the communities that applied received full or partial approval. Nationally, 38% of the units (1,800/4,700) were Indigenous-related.

RHI 2: National budget of \$1,5B. Available only to registered applicants on RHI 1 waiting list. Target to announce results in December 2021. Again, it is possible that demand will exceed funding availability.



Q: Are there any issues with the timelines and costs of RHI 1 projects?

A: Not a complete picture, as implementation times vary. Some projects are completed but others are behind schedule. There is no additional funding available at CMHC to cover cost overruns. All 199 units are expected to be delivered.

National Housing Strategy Update (some numbers) :

Since the start of the National Housing Strategy in 2018, several initiatives have been developed and utilized for First Nations (Seed Funding, National Co-Investment Fund, Shelters, Rapid Housing Initiative, Urban Indigenous Housing Renovation Fund). This represents 25 files processed among these initiatives, including 7 on reserve, for a total of 836 units and funding of over \$110M.

Renovation Budget

A national envelope of \$8M/year (QC = \$540K/year) is dedicated to this program. Maintaining the allocation model that allowed for one unit per year per community in enhanced budgets is no longer an option. Essentially, delivering this program requires a lot of work considering its low impact. A reflection on the approach is in order and suggestions are solicited.

Action 2: Organize a meeting of the expanded RTHC-OC to brainstorm on opportunities in order to maximize the implementation of renovation budgets, including RRAP.

Minister

The Honourable Ahmed Hussen remains the Minister responsible for CMHC. The word "Housing" is now included in his title of Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion. This could send a strong message for the next few years. The mandate letter is still awaited at the time of the meeting.

Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)

FNIHB

Visits of the environmental health agents have resumed, all in respect of the sanitary measures in place in the communities.

Minister

Appointment of the Honourable Patty Hajdu as Minister of Indigenous Services. The transition period is coming to an end, with some announcements expected soon. It is anticipated that the continued existence of a Liberal government will allow for a continued focus on key objectives and priorities. The previous Minister Miller will remain involved in indigenous issues and will continue to work closely with communities in Quebec through his appointment as Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC).

Fighting food insecurity

The department is working with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada on the issue of food insecurity, where potentially \$30M nationally could be available. For Quebec, a pilot project in schools is being considered. Discussions are underway for the creation of a fund to finance certain pilot projects.

Emergency Response Program

In addition to the pandemic context, forest fires are creating pressure on several regions, although Quebec was relatively spared this year. The Minister and the Deputy Ministers are very aware of the issue of emergencies, which is at the top of the departmental priorities. An enhancement and

enrichment of the Emergency Management Assistance Program (EMAP) is expected, although no amount has been provided, investments could be made in disaster response and recovery, support for the hiring of full-time emergency coordinators in communities, or additional resources at all levels to address issues and maintain a level of service in the delivery of major priorities and projects.

Federal-Provincial Jurisdiction

The Quebec government (particularly the *ministère de l'Environnement et de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques* (MELCC)) has expressed concerns about the issue of jurisdiction in the implementation of projects (think of a drinking water project, where the water source is off reserve and the treatment plant is on reserve). Information sharing and exchanges are planned to explain the planned investments in order to reassure Government of Quebec about ISC's operating methods, which comply with provincial environmental standards.

Community visits

Community visits have gradually resumed since September 2021, while respecting the health measures in place. To allow for a national overview, the trips are approved at the Deputy Minister level. It should be noted that the absence of engineers in communities during the last year and a half brings some issues in terms of financial monitoring some projects.

On-Reserve and Community Housing Initiative 2021-2024

The call for proposals was issued on August 23, 2021 and closes on January 14, 2022 for all streams of the Initiative. The 5-month period to submit projects is in response to community feedback that they wanted sufficient time to prepare projects. Measures are underway to ensure sound management of this year's funding envelope and to secure funds.

Given the transfer of budgets and responsibilities to CIRNAC for communities under self-government and modern treaties with respect to housing, ISC will no longer deal with the agreement holders (Cree and Naskapi) under the Housing Initiative. It should be noted that this decision did not have an impact on the regional allocation (\$51M/3 years), which is comparable to previous editions.

Review of the Tendering Policy

As part of the process of revising the National Tendering Policy, a collaborative exercise with the AFNQL is underway with the objective of regionalizing the Policy, while ensuring that a common core applicable to all regions is maintained. It is planned to expand the working group to include representatives of Quebec FNs, Tribal Councils and other local partners in order to properly identify the issues and the various visions in this file.

Ministerial Loan Guarantees (MLG)

The *Marital Property Act* requires a statutory declaration to access a MLG. The department is taking steps to adapt systems to capture this type of information and is conducting validations on the method of application. Meetings are forthcoming.

Electrification – Barrière Lake

A meeting was held in August 2021 with representatives from ISC, the community, Mitigokaa Development and Hydro-Quebec. The existing fleet of generators is at the end of its useful life and the window of opportunity to ensure a reliable and affordable supply is less than three years.

Availability of lots

Massive housing investments are creating pressure on lot availability. Discussions are underway with communities that are considering major construction projects over the next five years to prepare for potential constraints (e.g., environmental assessments) on the development of lots

needed to accommodate these new developments. These efforts have highlighted issues in two communities, which are being carefully monitored.

4. Follow-up to the RTHC Action Plan

The 2021-2023 Action Plan was approved by the RTHC at the May 2021 meeting and updated in September 2021 .

Skills and Capacities Axis: In the implementation phase and very close follow-ups are underway (regular ISC-AFNQL-FNAESC meetings). The initiatives are generating interesting results, such as the Community of Practice in housing (CoPH), the Point of contact in housing (PoCH) or the Attestation of College Studies - Housing Management Techniques for First Nations in Quebec. In addition, new projects in skills and capacities are currently being developed.



The results of this axis should be publicized and promoted to demonstrate that the objectives meet the needs of the FN. How could this be done, is it through a presentation to the leaders?

Action 3: Ensure that the results of the Skills and Capacities Axis of the Regional Housing and Infrastructure Strategy, and therefore the RTHC's Action Plan, are known and promoted.

Finance and financing axis: Since the FNQLEDC is currently very involved in the organization of the Grand Circle of Economic Development, there has been no significant progress in Phase II of this axis. However, the work should be able to continue within the next few weeks.

The Housing Needs Report will be released in the near future, in the form of a regional summary and a report by community. It will contain trends since 2000, and will include national collection data for each community.

Governance axis: This is an axis that progresses according to the progress of the other axes.



Q: The governance aspect is very present in the AFN discussions. Is there a need to accelerate the governance axis?

A: There does not appear to be a need to change the approach at this time. However, there are requests for collaboration (e.g., from ISC National) on governance initiatives. There are also other regions looking at this issue.

5. On-Reserve and Community Housing Initiative 2021-2024

- **Call for proposals:** August 23, 2021 to January 14, 2022 (application period: 5 months). Guides, forms, and reference materials are available on the CoPH open website.
- **Eligible Recipients:** Non-treaty First Nations and FN organizations.
- **Regional budget:** \$51M for three years (≈\$17M/year), equivalent to previous years. This is reflected in an 8.5% share of the national budget of \$200M/year (same share as in previous years). At the end of the Initiative, 85% of the regional budget is to be invested in the Construction, Renovation and Lot Servicing streams.
- **Funding:** In addition to funding some recurring projects in 2021-2022, the majority of the budget (approximately \$15M) will be invested over two years of implementation (2022-2023 and 2023-2024).
- **Streams:** The same as previous editions (construction, renovation, lot servicing, capacity enhancement, and innovation), but each stream has been revised as part of the regionalization exercise.
- **Support and coaching:** This is demonstrated through communication activities (email, webinars, targeted group discussions, personalized approach) and the development of a

toolkit, which includes a summary document, a compendium of Capacity and Innovation projects, a financial sustainability tool, and a question and answer book.

- **Next steps:** 1) Regular reminders to ensure that the January 14, 2022 deadline is not missed; 2) Preparation of analysis tools and criterion update; 3) Analysis of projects (January-February); 4) Announcement of results (March 2022).
- **Regional Waiting List:** Eligible projects that do not receive funding will be placed on a waiting list that will be valid until July 31, 2023, pending the availability of additional funding.



Q: Will all new construction have to include the installation of radon prevention systems?

A: Yes, the subsidy awarded includes this measure. The department may also provide an additional subsidy if the installation of a mitigation system is required as a result of the test.

Q: Although the First Nations under treaty are under the care of another department for housing, will they be subject to the same criteria and have access to the same support?

A: The budget transferred is not from the Housing Initiative envelope. The details of the approach (criteria, support) that will be taken by CIRNAC are not known.

Q: What is the approach for calculating Quebec's 8.5% share of the national budget?

A: Verifications would be required for the allocation formula, but it is the same as in previous years. It is tied in part to population and need.

Q: Is there an additional subsidy for a community proposing new construction that requires servicing of the lot?

A: The community requiring a lot for construction will need to ensure that a Lot Servicing Form is completed. Analysts will ensure that a complementary analysis is done.

Q: What about the projects on the 2019-2021 contingency list?

A: This list has been closed as of March 31, 2021. However, a community is welcome to re-file a project on the 2019-2021 contingency list using the new forms, as some of the criteria have changed.

6. Regional Housing Meeting

Shared ideas:

- **Format:** Face-to-face meeting or hybrid formula, in compliance with the health measures in force (possibility of having to limit the number of face-to-face participants).
- **Potential dates:** Late February/early March 2022 or April/May 2022. Benefits and constraints to be explored for each.
- **Location:** Quebec City or its surroundings.
- **Logistics:** A period of three months is necessary, considering that reservations must be made as soon as the dates are confirmed (rooms, translation services).
- **Budget:** Each organization will have to validate its financial availability, especially if the chosen date is in the current fiscal year.
- **Potential content:** FNQLEDC report findings; Progress on the Regional Housing and Infrastructure Strategy; Regional Action Plan; Housing initiatives and programs; Promotion and recognition of the Skills and Capacities Axis (e.g. graduation ceremony).

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

7. Follow-up on ABSCAN and FNMHF

Guest: Jean Vincent, President and CEO of the Native Commercial Credit Corporation (SOCCA) and the Aboriginal Savings Corporation of Canada (ABSCAN).

ABSCAN was created in 2005 with the objective of raising capital to finance economic development projects in Quebec's FNs. Since its inception, it has been interested in the savings of Aboriginal individuals and in the housing issue. The founders of ABSCAN are aware of the important challenge that housing represents in the communities, but also of its potential as a lever for economic development.

Vision: Of the \$40B total national need identified for a catch-up Indigenous housing project, it is believed that 10% (\$4B) of this need could be met through private homeownership. ABSCAN wants to be part of the solution by putting in place a mechanism to access \$4B of affordable capital in the capital markets to address the private homeownership market.

Objective: To access affordable capital with the objective of providing loans to FN members on terms similar to those available to Canadians.

Primary Approach:

- Working with the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association (NACCA), which is the umbrella organization for a network of 59 Indigenous Financial Institutions across Canada.
- Drafted a report summarizing the benefits and conditions of engaging an Indigenous Capital Corporation in housing lending (October 2020, outstanding).
- ABSCAN-NACCA: Three workshops with national stakeholders from ISC and CMHC to explain the concept of the long-term project, demonstrate the benefits and describe the implementation phase.
- Creation of a database to document risk characteristics.
- Development of a financial model that will present three scenarios addressing an estimate of the direct and indirect assistance required from Canada and the investment required from Indigenous Capital Corporations for the project to succeed.

Next steps:

- Approaches in connection with the CMHC Innovation Fund.
- Financial literacy and housing activities in Quebec to develop the market (mobile unit).
- Exploring avenues of financing and support for access to affordable capital.
- Engage with NACCA and other interested companies elsewhere in Canada as soon as the conditions for engagement are met.

To remember for this project:

- Ensure that the mechanism to be put in place relieves communities of financial responsibility for losses.
- Develop products that are adapted to the legal, fiscal and cultural contexts of the FN.

First Nations Market Housing Fund (FNMHF) :

The Fund is a tool developed to support First Nations housing projects across the country. When the fund was launched in 2008, the objective was to support the construction of 25,000 market-based housing units over a 10-year period. Thirteen years later, the Fund is far from the target with only 450 units. The capacity development component has more interesting figures: 218 First Nations across the country have benefited from it to date.

The Board of Trustees was renewed in December 2020 and all nine Trustees are First Nations members. One of their main objectives is to maximize the potential of this fund to enable greater

homeownership. However, in order to achieve this goal, it will be necessary to review the role, mission, mandate and tools of the Fund.

8. Aboriginal Housing Connection

The next publication could be in the Spring of 2022 or coincide with the regional housing meeting, depending on opportunities.

9. Next RTHC meeting

Wish to resume the regular frequency of three meetings per year, either face-to-face or virtual, whichever is appropriate.

As the usual frequency is February-May-September, the RTHC-OC is asked to provide a recommendation on the dates for the next meeting. Depending on what is possible, the next meeting could be combined with the regional housing meeting.