



## Minutes Virtual meeting of May 17, 2023

In attendance: Lance Haymond, AFNQL  
Guy Latouche, AFNQL  
Pierre Bélanger, CMHC  
Jean-François Samuel, CMHC  
Éric Bouchard, ISC (FNIHB)

Bruce Labrador, ISC  
Johanne Verville, ISC  
André Dansereau, ISC  
Nathalie Spénard, ISC

Absent: Ina Wielinga, CMHC

**Facilitator:** Guy Latouche

### 1. **Word of Welcome and introduction**

The half-day meeting is held on the ZOOM platform. The moderator welcomes everyone. The agenda is accepted without modification.

### 2. **Actions follow-up**

The actions follow-up is presented at the end of these minutes.

### 3. **National and regional environments**

#### **ISC**

##### **Office of the Auditor General of Canada (OAG) Program Audit**

Regarding emergency measures, the audit exercise took place over several months, resulting in a report with recommendations. The Ministry felt challenged by the findings on the structural mitigation measures program. Essentially, these projects aim to limit the impact of extreme events linked to climate change. These are often major projects, requiring concerted action (e.g., by neighbouring municipalities) and the involvement of multiple provincial partners. Discussions are underway with communities regarding potential projects to be implemented.

Regarding infrastructure and housing, the exercise covers the period from 2019 to 2023. FNIHB and CMHC are among those involved. Information gathering will continue until early fall, and the report to Parliament is scheduled for March 2024. There are no issues to highlight in the current process.

##### **Community-Based Housing Initiative**

Confirmation of funding is underway for projects starting or continuing in 2023-2024. In addition, there will be a reminder that components of the Housing Initiative are open on an ongoing basis to receive project proposals: overcrowded housing expansion; capital outlay; renovation; lot servicing, capacity building and innovation.

### **Terms of reference for the Infrastructure Common Fund (ICF)**

The ICF was set up in 2017 in partnership with ABSCAN. One of its objectives is to tie funding into the project implementation cycle by providing continuous and timely access to funding sources. As a result, following the substantial additional funds obtained at the end of the fiscal year, which were directed to the ICF, the region will increase the funding available for lot development in 2023-2024, thereby meeting needs expressed by First Nations.

Terms of reference have been drawn up. They set out the process, modalities, roles, and responsibilities. When the approval process is completed, they will be shared with the RTHC, and a presentation could be made, if desired.

### **Temporary housing guideline**

In response to the exacerbation of the number of requests from communities for financial support for the acquisition of temporary housing (site trailer style), and since this is a type of housing that has been shown to be unsustainable, the various ISC sectors involved now have access to a regional guideline that provides a framework for this type of funding. It should be noted that the spirit of the document is to encourage communities to better plan their needs and consider sustainable housing solutions, such as permanent housing with prefabricated modules. The guideline will be shared with the RTHC when finalized.

### **Child and family file**

The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal Order 41 (CHRT41) contains provisions for ISC to fund the purchase and construction of capital assets for the delivery of First Nations child and family services, or for the delivery of services under Jordan's Principle. Projects of all kinds are submitted, such as the construction of arenas. In the interests of fairness, the process for analyzing these requests is quite specific.

### **Flood season**

As the water level in Lake of Two Mountains rises, a dozen homes are reported flooded in the Mohawk community of Kanesatake. The current challenges within the community have had a significant impact on communications and the Ministry's ability to provide support. However, a FNIHB environmental health officer was on site to provide services to the population and prevent health risks (e.g., mold). The flooding also forced the closure, then alternating traffic, of Route 131 to Manawan. This situation caused delays in supply but did not result in a breakdown in service. Finally, forest fire season is underway, but as of May 17, there are no major threats to community safety.

### **Emergency coordinators**

Previously, the functions of coordinating emergency measures in communities were carried out among other assigned tasks. A regional decision now allows funding for a specific emergency measures coordinator position per community. In 2022-2023, ISC funding was for half a year's salary for communities that expressed an interest. In 2023-2024, arrangements have been made to cover the salary for the year. Discussions are underway with communities to solicit interest. Note that this approach responds to one of the recommendations of the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) to better support the communities.

### **Electrification file: Barriere Lake Algonquin community**

The newly elected Chief, Casey Ratt, wanted a complete update on the electrification dossier. For the Hydro-Québec connection option, 4 conditions were attached by the former elected officials, conditions to which the new council adheres: 1) a moratorium on residential billing for the first 5 years; 2) implementation of a single billing system; 3) a consultative process in place for development along the electrified corridor (route 117); 4) increased electrical capacity during the construction period, which could extend from 4 to 5 years, and which therefore justifies increasing the capacity of the generator fleet for the school and residential communities. Note that the biomass option has not been ruled out, and Chief Ratt wishes first to validate the community's social acceptance of the Hydro-Québec connection.

### **Infrastructure reform**

It will be recalled that the *Closing the Infrastructure Gap to 2030* exercise carried out in 2022 highlighted a multi-billion-dollar requirement to meet the needs expressed by First Nations in Canada. Although Budget 2023 did not announce any substantial sums, the government is moving ahead with infrastructure reform, the aim of which is to establish a single authority for all ISC programs that fund capital assets, including FNIHB programs, but eventually bringing together all federal infrastructure programs. This approach would focus on ownership and funding envelopes that would enable First Nations to implement their initiatives according to their priorities and needs.

Although the proposed concept may be interesting, we must remain realistic about the timetable for its implementation, as this major initiative will require the introduction of new financial instruments and tools, such as monetization.

Preparations are underway to hold exploratory discussions with the chiefs (one-hour session), to hear their vision of this reform. One option would be to include the topic at the next face-to-face meeting of Chiefs in June, but if the agenda is already full, a virtual session could be held, also in June. Engagement sessions will follow, currently scheduled this fall.

*AFNQL comment*

*We are concerned about what the Government of Canada is trying to do. This reform is underway. Consultation should be upstream. Housing is an area that is chronically underfunded. There are things that need to be restored before we think about a transfer, because it's not worth taking over a program that isn't working. The recent experience with the draft water legislation is a bad example: rules, but no funding attached!*

### **Human resources**

Oumar Ba has been back since May 15 as Regional Manager, Environmental and Public Health Services. He is therefore the person to designate as the FNIHB representative on the RTHC.

## **CMHC**

### **Housing Acceleration Fund (HAF)**

The planned launch of this program is the end of June 2023. The fund aims to break down barriers and help build homes faster in an innovative and ambitious way.

More than twenty aboriginal organizations and governments were consulted, and several comments from Quebec were shared with the HAF team with a view to introducing flexibilities. We are awaiting their approval.

### **Urban, Rural and Northern Native Housing (URN)**

Aboriginal partners, including the AFN, have asked for more time to engage and co-develop the URN Aboriginal Housing Strategy. They also plan to co-develop implementation plans, including for the newly released Budget 2023 commitment of \$4 billion over 7 years.

We're currently finalizing the compilation and analysis of feedback and will be contacting the partners who participated in the engagements to schedule a follow-up session to validate what we've heard. The upcoming plan deals with:

- continue bilateral discussions with partners once government direction is known;
- continue to work with federal partners (ISC, CIRNAC and Infrastructure Canada);
- continue to jointly develop strategy and implementation plans with aboriginal partners;
- provide policy options/advice to government.

### **Aboriginal Transitional Housing Initiative**

Approaches are continuing to be made to several communities and urban organizations. There is still time to apply, but the window of opportunity is slowly closing.

We have increased collaboration with ISC to ensure better coordination following approval of applications. It should also be noted that ISC has contributed significantly to the initial funding of several projects to ensure their development.

### **One-time offer to Indigenous governments – Renovation**

All Quebec files have been processed and approved. The total amount committed is \$17.5 million for 1,288 units. Financing comes from the Co-investment Fund.

### **Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI)**

We look forward to approval of files by early July.

### **Regular program – Renovation**

In 2023-2024, we will be in our 2nd year of the allocation cycle. The deadline for applications is June 15. The regularization exercise for pre-2020-2021 files went well, and a few files were extended. The exercise is ongoing for post 2020-2201 files.

### **Regular program - Section 95**

The 2023-2024 budget allocation process is underway. We expect letters to be sent the week of June 9, with a deadline of October 13.

With interest rates rising, the number of units will fall. We expect to be able to finance around 30 units, as opposed to 39 units last year. Rising interest rates, higher life-cycle cost per unit requirements and a reduced budget envelope have had a major impact.

The regularization exercise for Section 95 projects has begun. For several projects, applications for ministerial loan guarantees have not yet been made. ISC may feel the effects this year, with an increase in requests.

*AFNQL comment*

*Thirty units is so little housing for the whole region. We need more money in the system. Many First Nations rely heavily on the Section 95 program.*

*Comment from ISC*

*The program delivers only a third of the units that the region used to deliver. Should we review the eligibility criteria? It's worth asking. A three-year plan?*

### **Aboriginal Youth Housing Internship (AYHI)**

The call for expressions of interest is now closed. Requests total \$1.7 million, while the Quebec budget is \$238,707. ISC has committed to supporting the initiative on a massive scale. It will cover 100% of on-reserve requests for non-agreement First Nations, with a contribution of nearly \$700,000 for 40 internships. CMHC will support treaty First Nations, Inuit and urban organizations up to the limit of its budget.

*Special mention*      *We would like to sincerely thank ISC. This collaboration is perfectly in line with the skills and capacity building component of the RTHC's strategic plan.*

### **Federal government announcement**

The government has asked Infrastructure Canada (INFC) to take new steps to support the Minister of CMHC by strengthening housing policy and program capacity. These measures will enable INFC to assume some of the roles and responsibilities typical of core public service departments that oversee Crown corporations.

Over the coming months, Infrastructure Canada and CMHC will be working closely together to determine which roles and functions are best suited to CMHC as a Crown corporation, and which may be more appropriate for Infrastructure Canada.

The government's priorities remain unchanged. With Infrastructure Canada and CMHC working in closer partnership and leveraging their respective strengths, the government will be better able to deliver a housing and homelessness program that benefits all Canadians.

*New action*              *Follow up on the government's announcement that it has asked Infrastructure Canada (INFC) to take new measures to support the Minister of CMHC. What exactly is the status of this partnership?*

## **AFNQL**

### **National update**

The Assembly of First Nations will be holding a National Forum on Housing and Homelessness on May 31 and June 1. Guy Latouche will present the status of the funding and financing component of our Regional Housing Strategy. He will focus on what led to the creation of the Centre of Expertise in Financial Literacy and Housing. He will be joined by Dominique Collin, who will present ABSCAN's business model.

### **Update to Chiefs**

Chief Haymond presented an update on the housing file at the last Chiefs' meeting in April. The Chiefs were briefed on several topics, including:

- Urban, Rural and Northern Aboriginal Housing Strategy;
- bridge the infrastructure gap by 2030;
- Federal Budget 2023 and community housing;
- CMHC's Rapid Housing Initiative and Housing Accelerator Fund;
- children's housing needs;
- Regional Housing Strategy;
- homelessness and drinking water issues.

### **A look back at the 2023 Federal Budget**

Chief Haymond deplores the absence of additional funding for housing in First Nations communities in the latest federal budget. It seems that the Minister's approach is to observe how communities will use the money that is already in the system (Budget 2022) to determine what happens next. Adequate budgets and capacity building are prerequisites before considering housing devolution. Current approach doesn't make sense, say AFNQL representatives.

#### **4. RHTC 2022-2023 Report**

The Annual Report for the year 2022-2023 is reviewed and accepted by RHTC authorities.

#### **5. New Action Plan 2023-2025**

The Action Plan is reviewed and accepted by RHTC authorities. This plan replaces the previous one (2021-2023), which had expired. It was suggested that an action item be added to follow up on Chief Picard's statement: "20 years after the AFNQL's 1st report: what progress has been made."

#### **6. AFNQL 2023 Regional Housing Meeting**

As was the case in 2022, the 2023 regional meeting will take place in 2 stages. The first, in September and in virtual mode over half a day, will serve to disseminate information, namely on the regional and national environment and budgets. The second, more substantial and face-to-face, will leave plenty of room for communities to express themselves and share their experiences, successes, and challenges. November is the target month for now.

#### **7. Next meeting**

The date of the next meeting will be determined following the Operational Committee's conference on June 15.

# Regional Housing Tripartite Committee

## Actions follow-up

#	Actions
1	To plan a discussion with one or more key industry players to address the issue of home insurance, which remains a persistent challenge. <b>Action resulting from RHTC meeting: February 2021</b> <i>Updated May 2023. Issues and solutions need to be identified. To be added to the 2023-2025 Action Plan.</i>
2	Reflection on the RHTC's communications strategy. <b>Action resulting from RHTC meeting: June 2022</b> <i>Update May 2023. The Operational Committee will make a proposal on this subject and will communicate it to the coordinating members.</i>
3	Unifor's commitment to First Nations housing. <b>Action resulting from RHTC meeting: February 2023</b> <i>Updated May 2023. Communication maintained with Unifor. Awaiting FNAESC's business plan for a mobile construction trades unit (opportunity?).</i>
4	AFNQL Regional Housing Meeting 2023-2024: reflection on format and concept. <b>Action resulting from RHTC meeting: February 2023</b> <i>Update May 2023. Subject on the meeting agenda. See specific section of minutes.</i>
5	Follow up on Chief Picard's statement: "20 years after the 1st AFNQL report: what progress has been made?" <b>Action resulting from RHTC meeting: February 2023</b> <i>Update May 2023. The Operational Committee will make a reflection and proposal for action encompassing all relevant aspects (backlog, skills and capacities, etc.) and will share it with the coordinating members.</i>
6	To plan a presentation by the Community Housing Transformation Centre (CHTC) to the RHTC-Co. <b>Action resulting from RHTC meeting: February 2023</b> <i>Updated May 2023. Work underway. Conferences held, including with FNAESC and a group of experienced managers. To plan a presentation at the next regional meeting.</i>
7	ISC-CMHC will initiate reflections on the possibilities of integrating other partners for linkages and collaboration in aboriginal housing programs and initiatives. A follow-up will be made at a future RHTC meeting. <b>Action resulting from RHTC meeting: February 2023</b> <i>Updated May 2023. The Operational Committee will conduct an analysis (identification of needs and partners, feasibility, timetable, etc.) and report back to the coordinating members.</i>
8	Reflection on the next version of the RHTC's 2023-2025 Action Plan. <b>Action resulting from RHTC meeting: February 2023</b> <i>Update May 2023: subject on the meeting agenda. See specific section of minutes.</i>
9	Administration of an Aboriginal Housing Connection Newsletter survey and analysis of results. <b>Action resulting from RHTC meeting: February 2023</b> <i>Updated May 2023. Other surveys are already underway. In order not to overload the communities, it is planned to wait until the next regional meeting and administer the survey directly on site.</i>
10	To follow up on the government's announcement that it has asked Infrastructure Canada (INFC) to take new measures to support the Minister of CMHC. What exactly is the status of this partnership? <b>Action resulting from RHTC meeting: May 2023</b>