

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

News Release

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FNLCL Dismayed by Lack of Progress in Improving First Nations Housing and Infrastructure

(xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam), Sk̓w̓xwú7mesh (Squamish) and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLCL) is deeply concerned by the recent findings published by the Auditor General of Canada regarding housing in First Nations Communities released on March 19. It confirms that since their first report in 2003, little progress has been made in supporting First Nations to improve housing conditions in our communities.

During the period reviewed between 2015 to 2021, there has been no meaningful improvement in First Nations housing conditions. Long standing mould issues have gone unaddressed, communities with the poorest housing conditions have not received commensurate funding and little progress has been made in transferring the control of housing to First Nations. The report found that Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) continue to utilize outdated funding formulas based on 2001 census data without reflecting over twenty years of demographic changes or the evolving needs of our communities.

In 2019, the Government of Canada committed to working with First Nations to close the housing and infrastructure gap by 2030. ISC has funded numerous reports and studies focused on First Nations' housing needs. In 2021, the Assembly of First Nations estimated that First Nations communities needed a total of \$44 billion to close the housing gap by 2030. Due to increasing construction costs, inflation and other factors, this figure has since tripled to \$135 billion as of 2023.

"It is quite disheartening that while Canada acknowledges the housing and infrastructure gap, and the fulsome reports that provide concrete estimates to close this gap, there has been no clear strategy to incorporate and implement the findings," remarked Hugh Braker, First Nations Summit's Political Executive. From 2018 to 2023, ISC and CMHC spent only \$3.86 billion on housing in First Nations communities and their annual funding has remained stagnant since the 1990s. He stated, "By neglecting to utilize this information to inform funding decisions, the Government of Canada has not acted in good faith to fulfill its extensive commitments to improving living conditions within First Nations communities."

Inadequate and unsafe housing in First Nations communities have resulted in a whole host of attendant social issues including family violence, substance abuse, the suicide crisis, poor physical and mental health, educational and economic obstacles, and forced migration from community leading to cultural loss.

For the BC Assembly of First Nations' Regional Chief Terry Teegee, "The auditor general's latest report is both validating and disappointing. It confirms that despite what First Nations have been saying for years, housing conditions in our communities remain unimproved and are even worsening in some places." He further stated "The vast resources on First Nations traditional territories are what has allowed Canada to prosper as a country so far. It is past time for Canada to fairly distribute that wealth."



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Canada has previously emphasized the importance of reconciliation and the renewal of a nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous communities that is based on the recognition of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs concluded, First Nations are experiencing a complete housing crisis with overcrowding, dated infrastructure, and resulting socioeconomic impacts. As First Nations, we have the inherent rights and jurisdiction to determine adequate housing services to our citizens and members irrespective of whether they live on or off reserve. The last major infrastructure investment to First Nations was over 25 years ago, Canada must start making significant funding investments to back up their commitments today.”

The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), First Nations Summit (FNS), and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC).

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