

CREATING A HOUSING & INFRASTRUCTURE AUTHORITY FOR BC FIRST NATIONS

WHAT ITS ABOUT

Why is housing and infrastructure being transferred to First Nations control?

Creation of an Authority is a step towards indigenous self-government, the goals of First Nations and federal governments for housing transformation under the Assembly of First Nations' National Indigenous Housing Strategy and the Government of Canada's directive to transfer its delivery of indigenous services to indigenous control. It also reinforces the indigenous view that housing decisions should be in the hands of indigenous people.

What will the new authority assume responsibility for?

The transfer of federal authorities means the new BC First Nations housing & infrastructure authority will be fully responsible and accountable for designing and delivering housing and infrastructure programs and services to BC First Nations. HIC is not involved in a devolution process and the Authority is not intended to be a delivery agent for federal government programs; rather it will take over the federal government's authorities and will have the ability to determine its own programs and services plus use other delivery agents to help deliver those programs and services (like federal and provincial governments do now).

WHERE WE'RE AT

Where is HIC at in the process?

HIC is working with BC First Nations to identify delivery models and terms of delivery and to solidify all essential elements in an agreement in principle between HIC and ISC. HIC is beginning the second phase of engagement to present three potential delivery model examples to the BC First Nations housing and infrastructure community and leaders for feedback. This second phase of engagement will involve repeated sessions with various groups to further refine our ideas, the delivery model , the terms of the associated transfer agreement and how BC First Nations want to approve the agreement-in-principle and the final transfer agreement. HIC and ISC are developing an agreement-in-principle for a to-be-negotiated agreement that outlines the terms of a transfer of housing and infrastructure authorities from Canada to the new BC First Nations Authority.

What happened in the first phase of engagement?

In the first phase of engagement HIC held outreach sessions with First Nations across the province to build understanding of this initiative and to gain local perspectives to support development of the BC authority. HIC compiled the excellent insight gathered during the first phase, which included more than 20 community outreach sessions with the BC First Nations housing community, as well as meetings with housing service providers, urban housing groups, education facilities and financial institutions. Using the knowledge and information gathered, HIC held a targeted delivery model design workshop in October 2018 with highly-experienced housing and infrastructure professionals to develop three housing and infrastructure delivery design concepts. HIC turned these concepts into delivery model examples, which are being taken back to BC First Nations for feedback in a second phase of engagement.

ENGAGEMENT & COLLABORATION

Who is HIC working with?

This project was initiated by BC First Nations and is being led by the HIC in British Columbia. Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) is leading from the Government of Canada and the Province of BC's role is still being determined. BC's First Nations is at the forefront of HIC's work.

- Extensive engagement, consultation and collaboration with the BC First Nations housing and infrastructure community and leadership is essential to achieving success.
- To ensure the delivery model meets the needs of First Nations, HIC is engaging First Nations, government, associations, agencies, organizations, urban indigenous and other related service providers plus any others who can contribute towards its mandate.

Who has HIC been engaging?

HIC has held engagement sessions with BC First Nations leadership and housing and infrastructure managers to gain their perspectives. In the first phase of engagement, HIC held more than 20 community outreach sessions with the BC First Nations housing community, as well as meetings with housing service providers, urban housing groups, education facilities and financial institutions. Insight was also gained from discussions at the 2017 and 2018 Assembly of First Nations Housing and Infrastructure Forums.

HIC provides regular updates to members of the BC First Nations Leadership Council (BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit and Union of BC Indian Chiefs). HIC works closely with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and is developing its relationship with the Province of BC to contribute to the development of the future Housing & Infrastructure Authority and to facilitate a smooth transition.

What engagement has been done with First Nations communities to date?

Being community driven is fundamental to the successful creation of the delivery model. Extensive engagement, consultation and collaboration with the BC First Nations housing and infrastructure community and leadership is essential to achieving success.

- During the first phase of engagement to gain input into what should be considered in a new housing and infrastructure Authority, HIC held more than 20 community outreach sessions with the BC First Nations housing community across BC.
- For those not able to attend sessions, HIC held phone interviews with representatives from other parts of the province.
- HIC also held a targeted delivery model design workshop with highly-experienced housing and infrastructure professionals to develop three housing and infrastructure delivery design concepts.

How is HIC working with federal government?

HIC has been working closely with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) to contribute to the development of the future Housing & Infrastructure Authority and to facilitate a smooth transition. HIC and ISC have established a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that commits the parties to the collaborative development of a housing and infrastructure authority for BC's First Nations. The MOU was signed by representatives of both parties in January 2019. Having a formal mandate from the federal government solidifies the collaborative intergovernmental relationship and the extensive work already underway between the parties. HIC and ISC have also developed a joint workplan that identifies the key milestones to create an Authority and transfer services. HIC and ISC have started developing an agreement-in-principle for a to-be-negotiated agreement that outlines the terms of a transfer of housing and infrastructure authorities from Canada to the new Authority. HIC and ISC will continue to work collaboratively as the process continues.

Where do CMHC and other federal departments fit in?

CMHC currently provides training, resources and financial assistance to help First Nation communities build, buy or renovate on-reserve housing. Infrastructure Canada also provides infrastructure services which reach First Nations Communities. HIC is working with CMHC to determine if CMHC will become a signatory to the current ISC MOU or if a new MOU is required. HIC is also working at the more senior level of the federal system to determine if there are any other federal authorities in other departments that may be included in the transfer.

DELIVERY MODEL

What will the Housing & Infrastructure Authority delivery model look like?

HIC is working to create a new delivery system that is focussed on improved community appropriate services, quality service delivery and fostering a new relationship between on-reserve residents and their houses. At its core, the delivery model will be designed to reflect the needs of First Nations people, incorporate cultural sensitivities, accommodate regional and geographical considerations, support community readiness and address other factors arising from community engagement. This new Authority will be service oriented with an aim to bring efficiencies, ensure collaboration between the Authority, service providers and communities, and support those responsible for the coordination, delivery and management of housing and infrastructure services. The system will be designed to support First Nations to make their own decisions, expand their opportunities and ensure equal access to housing and infrastructure. The goal will be to enable and empower First Nations to deliver housing and infrastructure they envision for their community.

What proposed models is HIC looking at?

HIC has developed three delivery model examples with a selected group of experts from the BC First Nations housing community. These examples are being used as a starting point for discussion with BC First Nations in the second phase of engagement. This second phase of engagement will involve repeated sessions with various groups to further refine our ideas, the delivery model and associated terms of the final transfer agreement.

What things are being considered in delivery model development?

Important design questions are being addressed during the delivery model development process. These include: the scope of the indigenous population served; the relationship between on and off-reserve housing; the scope of infrastructure; integration with or use of existing housing providers; and the link to the National Indigenous Housing Strategy. Additional delivery model details such as organizational structure, programs, services, roles and responsibilities (provincial, regional, communities) and supporting service providers are also being determined through the engagement process. Design categories include: Culture and Scope; Location and Governance; Program and Service Delivery; Corporate Planning, Policy and Standards; Fiscal Relationship (with clients); Harmonization/Integration; and Human Resources and Staffing.

What services will be included?

The final set of services to be delivered once the transfer of authorities is complete is still being determined, but the full range housing and infrastructure services are being considered. There will be a full review of existing services to assess relevancy and value and whether to keep or modify, with a goal to improve and innovate where relevant. The system will be designed so services will be client based and determined by the needs of First Nations. HIC is engaging First Nations' communities and organisations across BC to ensure First Nations' experience, expertise and best practices will contribute to the model for service delivery. The new authority will also be able to revise, expand or create new services in collaboration with First Nations

communities as it evolves. The range of services will depend on what communities want and what is affordable.

What kind of infrastructure will be covered?

HIC is identifying the range of infrastructure to be included as part of its engagement and consultation with the BC First Nations, housing and infrastructure service providers and professionals. The full range of infrastructure will be determined as the process unfolds, but at a minimum it will include housing related infrastructure, e.g., roads, hydro, sewer, water. Additional infrastructure such as water systems, waste treatment, major highways, bridges, energy systems, economic development projects, etc. are also being considered as part of the transfer.

How will the Authority work with the BC Government?

The authority will work with the province and municipalities to reduce jurisdictional barriers to First Nations housing. HIC has had initial discussion with the provincial government about the Authority. HIC will also continue discussion with the provincial government to determine what opportunities exist for collaboration to support its goal to harmonize on and off reserve housing and blur the boundary between what have historically been separate and uncooperative jurisdictions.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR BC FIRST NATIONS

How will the new model be different from what exists now?

HIC is working to change the paradigm of housing and infrastructure in BC First Nations communities and to design a made-in-BC model developed by BC's First Nations. The goal is to create a model that empowers and enables First Nations to deliver the housing and infrastructure services they envision for their community. First Nations will assume full control and responsibility for their own housing, in the province, in each First Nation and within the individuals in each family. Ultimately this will be a First Nations driven, community service oriented authority that will:

- Be a First Nations designed and managed institution that uses cutting edge housing specialists from across the country and has First Nations managers with experience in the field of on reserve housing and infrastructure.
- Make more community-based funding decisions, foster lateral relationships between First Nations, bring First Nations into the mainstream housing sector and establish new sources and methods of revenues.
- Provide the tools, resources, education, training and support to those responsible for delivering housing and infrastructure, as well as a full scope of financial tools for new builds, additions, repairs and renovations.

How will the services and resources offered by the federal government be replaced?

HIC will take over or draw down the federal government's authorities and will have the ability to determine its own programs and services including using other delivery agents to help deliver those programs and services (like the federal government does now). The transfer of federal authorities means the new Housing & Infrastructure Authority will be fully responsible and accountable for designing and delivering housing and infrastructure programs and services to BC First Nations. The Authority will not only replace ISC, it will expand the housing portfolio as it pursues private sector, provincial or other funding and financing mechanisms unavailable to ISC and other government agencies.

Will it include off-reserve as well as on-reserve?

HIC has been tasked with harmonizing or integrating on and off reserve housing. HIC will work with the Province of BC, urban indigenous housing providers and others involved in BC First Nations housing to determine how this can happen. The goal being to bridge the gaps that currently exist between on and off reserve delivery so that First Nations people will have continuous housing services as they move between communities. HIC's work initially has focussed on gaining a comprehensive understanding of the on-reserve models. In the next phase of engagement, HIC has started to work closely with the Province of BC to determine how to collaborate towards an integrated or harmonized system. One of the key drivers for this conversation is that deep collaboration between the new First Nations authority and the provincial government will be essential when delivering First Nations housing and infrastructure services or programs in BC – especially given that the federal government's role will be significantly reduced or eliminated (other than providing funding and ensuring high-level accountability).

Will First Nations have a choice to opt in or opt out?

This will be a wholesale transfer of federal authorities which includes responsibility for design, delivery and accountability for programs and services, partially in response to the federal government's directive to transfer authority and control of Indigenous programs to Indigenous organizations. HIC is creating an overarching delivery model that will include all BC First Nations, although some elements will continue to retain the ability for communities to opt-in (e.g. market housing, financing).

TIMELINES

When is the transfer of services going to happen?

HIC anticipates the transfer will happen in stages. HIC has been working extensively with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) to contribute to the development of the future Housing & Infrastructure Authority and to facilitate a smooth transition. HIC and ISC have developed a joint workplan that identifies the key milestones to create an Authority and transfer services. HIC and ISC are also developing an agreement-in-principle for a to-be-negotiated agreement that outlines the terms of a transfer of housing and infrastructure authorities from Canada to the new Authority. The target is to begin some aspects of transfer for the 2020/2021 fiscal year. HIC is also exploring assuming delivery responsibility for some services earlier, e.g., inspections. HIC and ISC will continue to work collaboratively as the process unfolds.

Is HIC's timeline achievable?

The timelines HIC has established were developed with relevant organisations, including First Nation authorities that have assumed control of services in other areas. HIC is conducting multiple streams of activities simultaneously, e.g. engagement with BC's First Nations and all relevant groups, while at the same time working with the relevant government and housing and infrastructure service providers. HIC has been working closely with ISC and CMHC since the end of 2018 to foster a collaborative approach throughout all stages of development from the Authority, from design to implementation to support a smooth transition. The parties are united in their commitment to supporting First Nations communities in delivering on the First Nation leadership's goal and the federal government's mandate to transfer authority for housing and infrastructure delivery to First Nations. However, this timeline has political elements including the upcoming federal election and BC First Nations' support for the agreement-in-principle and final transfer agreement. HIC has established its timelines but is also well aware that these timelines may have to be adjusted as unforeseen factors arise.

FUNDING

Would First Nations lose funding they currently have in place?

First Nations will not lose existing funding resulting from the transfer of authority and responsibility from the federal government. The current approach is to increase funding as part of a indigenous national housing reform priority. HIC is not aware of any reduction in housing and infrastructure funding. Recent announcements from government have increased funding in these areas. This process is not about changing funding – it is about creating First Nations government to take over authority to design and deliver housing and infrastructure programs and services.

How will funding work?

Funding will move through the new Authority however some long-term core funding, e.g., block funding, 10-year funding agreements, self-government funding blocks, may remain as agreements between the First Nation and Canada. The rest of existing housing and infrastructure funding will still come from the federal government, but the Authority will also pursue funding from other sources, including other levels of government, social investors, foundations. The Authority will also use financial mechanisms developed by the First Nations financial management institutions. First Nations will still be able to access programs of general application that are not delivered through the Authority, as they currently do. The goal of the new Authority will be to empower and enable First Nations to deliver the housing and infrastructure services they envision for their communities. Financial tools to support new builds, additions, repairs and renovations will be developed. Ideas and details for these new financial tools will be gathered through HIC's engagement and provided to the new Authority for implementation once established.
