

INDIGENOUS ACTION CANADA



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The Honourable Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P., Minister of Indigenous Services
The Honourable Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations
House of Commons, Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Ministers Hajdu and Anandasangaree,

We are calling on the Federal Government to act **now** by declaring a State of Emergency and transferring adequate funding to Indigenous communities and Indigenous housing and service providers to address the housing crisis.

Colonial land dispossession has resulted in more than 80% of Indigenous people in Canada living away from their Indigenous-governed home communities, and many are on years-long wait-lists to return to live back home due to chronic underfunding of housing on reserves.

It's not unheard of for a family of 11, including members with chronic health conditions, to share a three-bedroom home in need of major repairs. Meanwhile in urban centers, 24% of Indigenous people are living in low-income households and disproportionately high numbers of Indigenous people experience housing insecurity, which puts them at risk of violent situations. This is a humanitarian crisis and an egregious violation of human rights law and deserves **immediate attention and action.**

This summer's unprecedented wildfires have exacerbated the crisis situation by threatening or destroying homes and lands of Indigenous communities across Canada, with thousands of evacuees being displaced for the long term. The coming winter months will make the situation even more dangerous for displaced people, while the effects of the climate crisis will continue to worsen the situation in multiple ways each year in remote communities.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, Articles 21 and 23 recognizes the rights of Indigenous peoples to determine and develop priorities and strategies for improving their social conditions, including housing. Adequate housing was also recognized as part of the right to an adequate standard of living in Article 25 of the 1948

Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in Article 11.1 of the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Current national strategies to address this urgent and sometimes deadly situation are not delivering the necessary results:

- Despite the declaration in the 2019 *National Housing Strategy Act*, that “**the right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right**,” severe underfunding has worsened the housing situation for Indigenous people, who disproportionately face acute housing needs.
- Canada's action plan to implement UNDRIP commits to working with First Nations on closing infrastructure gaps on-reserve and to an Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy to complement the three existing distinction-based housing strategies, but the necessary federal investments have not followed.
- The federal cabinet heard from housing experts at a retreat in PEI in August 2023, and the federal government has since begun to announce agreements with municipalities, as well as legislation to incentivize new rental housing; however, no significant commitment has been made to address the crisis facing First Nations, Métis and Inuit people.

In their submissions in advance of the 2023 federal budget, national Indigenous organizations estimated needs for federal investments in housing, [reported by the Yellowhead Institute](#), as an amount of about \$4 billion annually, with billions more required to address the full spectrum of experiences of Indigenous people living in urban, rural and remote areas. Nonetheless, the 2023 federal budget only represents a small fraction of the sums estimated to be necessary. We are now calling on the Canadian government to finally bridge long-known gaps in funding to address the Indigenous housing crisis, by **committing to long-term, stable funding of at least \$5 billion per year**.

Recognizing the urgent situation, the Canadian Government must **act immediately** to address the housing crisis affecting Indigenous communities by declaring a **State of Emergency** to support the immediate provision of safe, secure and adequate housing for Indigenous people across Canada.

Yours sincerely,

Marlene Hale
Wet'suwet'en Elder

Lorraine Rekmans
Serpent River First Nation

cc: The Honourable Sean Fraser, P.C., M.P., Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, P.C., M.P., Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.

Her Excellency the Right Honourable Mary Simon, C.C., C.M.M., C.O.