

## Minutes

Virtual meeting March 12, 2025 - 1 to 4 p.m.

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

Sean Somers, ISC  
Isabelle Déry, ISC  
André Dansereau, ISC  
Véronique Mercier, ISC  
Nathalie Spénard, ISC

**Absent :** Ina Wielinga, CMHC

**Facilitator:** Isabelle Déry; **Note-taking:** Véronique Mercier and Nathalie Spénard

FNIHB = First Nations and Inuit Health Branch

### 1. Adoption of agenda, varia and follow-up actions (ISC)

- The agenda is accepted.
- No addition to varia.
- The minutes of the June 18-19, 2024 meeting were adopted and the actions updated.

### 2. National and Regional Environments

#### Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador (AFNQL)

##### New Regional Manager

Francis Verreault Paul was elected by the Chiefs on February 25. He succeeds Ghislain Picard, who was AFNQL Chief for 33 years. Francis has been the Chief Regional Cabinet Director for the past 2 years. It might be worth inviting the new Regional Chief to the next meeting of the Regional Tripartite Housing Committee (RTHC).

##### Urban, Rural and Northern Aboriginal Housing Strategy (URN)

The AFNQL is organizing 2 mobilization sessions on March 27 and 28. The aim is to inform and consult First Nations and potential stakeholders. For the first 2 of the 7 years of URN funding, the plan is to retain the services of the *Société immobilière du Regroupement des Centres d'amitié autochtones* (SIRCAAQ), an off-community housing provider that is 100% First Nations - by First Nations for First Nations. The aim is to rapidly implement projects to meet pressing needs. The AFNQL think-tank will be called upon to guide the choice of projects to be financed in the short term.

The short-term action plan also includes documenting the housing needs of FNs people living off-community. We are well aware of the needs in our communities, which is not the case outside them. The action plan for the next 5 years remains to be drawn up, and this is where mobilization comes into its own.

##### Transfer of federal responsibilities

The ISC national office is not in a position to respond to the AFNQL's request for funding for an overall analysis of the ins and outs of the federal devolution process affecting all areas in order to meet a request from the Chiefs. However, the funding currently obtained will enable us to carry out a first stage of analysis, which consists of producing a portrait of First Nations infrastructure needs and comparing it with the funding available for such

infrastructures. The infrastructures targeted are those funded by ISC and located within the boundaries of the 30 non-treaty communities in Quebec.

This assessment of community needs, combined with a portrait of available funding, will give the AFNQL an overall view of the opportunity for (current funding) and demand for (immediate and future financial needs) community infrastructure funding. This will help determine the extent to which the pre-devolution situation allows us to respond adequately to the real needs of the communities and their members.

### **New national distribution of CMHC Section 95 program funds**

The AFNQL is very concerned about upcoming cuts to CMHC's social housing program. CMHC is preparing to make major changes to the distribution of Section 95 program funds between regions. Once again, using updated but unreliable census data, this will result in a significant increase in funding in some regions, while others will lose just as much. Our region will be among the losers. Not so long ago, the budget for the Section 95 program enabled us to build 60 to 70 homes a year. Rising construction costs mean that this year, with the same budget, we'll only be able to build 33. We don't dare imagine the impact of a reduction like the one we suffered in 2005, which was of the order of 40%. This is very worrying.

With changes on the horizon in the current federal political context, we must do everything we can to at least protect the budgets allocated to our region. The AFNQL finds it unfortunate that we have reached the point of protecting regular budgets when the discussion should continue to focus on reducing the housing deficit.

**DISCUSSION:** CMHC colleagues confirm that the loss in Quebec would be significant. The regions that will be favored by the new distribution of funds (MB, SB, SK) are struggling to make full use of their current budgets, whereas we in Quebec invest it fully year after year. We're looking for zero impact. We need more funds, for all types of housing. We can't have less than we have now. One aspect of this problem is that the base budget for the Section 95 program has never been indexed over the years...

### **Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)**

#### **Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) 2025-2026**

The funds were allocated and disbursed during the first quarter of 2025. A total of \$12.4M\$ (\$8.4M\$ base budget + \$4M\$ from risk provision) was available. Quebec's initial share was \$696,000. Following a reallocation process, \$900,000 was allocated to Quebec communities. The base budget was allocated in accordance with the planned formula. For the sum of \$4M\$, priority was given to files with mold.

#### **Affordable Housing Fund (AHF)**

The national housing strategy was to run for 10 years. According to the plan, many initiatives will end in March 2028. In order to leave a reasonable period for the construction of approved projects, the approval window for future files is getting shorter and shorter, and there are many projects in development.

#### **National Agency - Urban, Rural and Northern Initiative**

Negotiations on the service agreement with the top-ranked national proponent in the opportunity for tender have been extended to the fall of 2025, in accordance with Government of Canada directives. Once the agreement is in place, we can expect a further delay before the agency becomes operational.

#### **Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Canada**

The Office of the Auditor General's (OAG) 2024 audit of housing in First Nations communities was released on March 19, 2024. The scope of the audit included an assessment of ISC's and CMHC's progress in supporting First Nations (on-reserve) to help close the housing gap, improve housing conditions and increase First Nations' capacity to manage housing.

A total of seven recommendations are the subject of a specific action plan, including: 1) closing the housing gap; 2) supporting communities with the poorest housing conditions; 3) better understanding the extent of mold; 4) identifying communities with the greatest capacity needs; 5) simplifying the application process and access to

funding; 6) compliance with the National Building Code; and 7) updating the data used in the funding allocation formula.

Although further action and improvements are still required, ISC-CMHC actions and collaboration in Quebec are already moving in the direction of these recommendations. Updating the data used in the allocation formula based on the 2021 census could have a significant negative impact in Quebec if the funds available are not increased. Implementation of this recommendation is scheduled for the 2026-2027 fiscal year.

**ACTION:** The RTHC's Operating Committee (RTHC-OC) will consider options for including our regional actions in response to the OAG's recommendations. Follow-up at next meeting.

## **Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)**

### **Regional operations :**

#### **Human Resources News**

Sean Somers holds the position of Regional Director Infrastructure, Environment and Emergency Management until March 31, 2026.

#### **Current political context: Impacts**

The resignation of the Prime Minister has created uncertainty that complicates the management of files. The current political context, amplified by a number of factors, has led the department to adopt a corporate strategy to ensure long-term sustainability. This strategy is accompanied by various internal measures, including initiatives linked to priority setting and the development of budgetary action plans for each sector of the organization.

#### **Funding 2024-2025 - First Nations Children's Housing Fund**

A communication was sent to RTHC members on March 6 to provide an update on this funding and give the main details. In all, ISC allocated \$413 million nationally, including \$29,381,055 for the Quebec region. The Quebec region was able to maintain its regionalization of the allocation formula, considering the variable of the number of children in the community rather than a calculation based on total population.

Due to the late availability of funds and the priority of granting funding to eligible FNs, the process was complex, but on time, thanks to the mobilization of staff to meet this priority.

Recipients received 90% of their contribution when the amendment was signed, with the 10% holdback released upon receipt of the project list and spending plan. These funds are to be allocated to housing projects aimed at the well-being of children and families. ISC strongly encourages communities to work with their social services sector to identify projects for funding. It is also possible to combine these funds with other sources, such as the Housing Initiative or CMHC programs.

To date, the plan for the next three years of this funding (2025-2026 to 2027-2028) is not yet known, but further information will be shared in due course.

#### **Revision of the Tendering Policy**

In 2025-2026, the department plans to publish a revised Tendering Policy, including an update of the five annexes attached to it. The question of including housing in this policy was discussed at national level. After careful consideration, it was decided not to include housing in the policy for the time being, a decision in line with the position widely supported by the Quebec region.

#### **On-reserve and community housing initiative update**

Good news: the 2025-2026 housing budgets are secured for the region. The housing sector is currently revising the Housing Initiative guides and forms, which should be published on the [web page](#) on April 1<sup>st</sup> 2025. We are particularly grateful to the AFNQL and CMHC for their contributions and comments, which have enabled us to consider adjustments to certain streams, always with a view to better meeting the needs of FNs.

In addition, the sector is currently finalizing the process of indexing the 2024-2027 construction and/or renovation envelopes, taking into account CMHC's updated Maximum Unit Prices (MUP). We expect to confirm this information to communities in April, to support them in their planning for this funding.

To date, only just over half of the plans from communities eligible for this funding have been received. Housing Circuit Riders will be called upon to support communities in this exercise.

### **3. A look back at the AFNQL Regional Housing Meeting**

The meeting took place on February 4 and 5 at the Hôtel Le Concorde in Quebec City, and was very well attended (115 participants). It's worth noting that several chefs and advisors were present.

A survey with a limited response rate (10%) and a follow-up group found that participants want fewer presentations and more exchange activities. Panel discussions on community challenges and successes were appreciated. Participants also liked the Mashteuatsh community's presentation on its housing programs. In general, the second day organized by the Community of Practice in Housing was more appreciated, as there were more networking activities.

Suggestions included administering an on-site survey to increase the response rate, coaching future presenters to ensure they avoid overly technical presentations, and having topics that are more relevant to elected representatives.

### **4. Update on the RTHC Action Plan**

This marks the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and final year of the [RTHC's 2023-2025 Action Plan](#). The vast majority of planned activities have been carried out, particularly in the Skills and Capacities Component. Less progress was made on activities with the National Research Council Canada. These activities could be reactivated at any time, since a working group already exists. Perhaps the next RTHC plan should be less ambitious in this respect.

On the financing front, the center of expertise in financial literacy (Manikaso) lost its resource at the end of last autumn. The [Manikaso Centre](#) has therefore had to reposition itself, and its activities are on hold for the time being, pending a replacement.

The Centre's foundation remains in place to prepare for a future catch-up project. The RTHC's next action plan will strengthen the Governance component by making links with the commissions and the transfer of ISC responsibilities to First Nations. It is also recommended that the next plan take into account the recommendations of the OAG report.

### **5. Communications RTHC 2025-2026 : Vision**

RTHC members agree that the [Indigenous Housing Connection](#) is little consulted by communities. Chief Haymond mentions that he appreciates the bulletin for the section on CMHC allocations. All other information contained in this newsletter is already transmitted to communities via other means of communication (AFNQL distribution list, AFNQL website, CoPH Workplace, Housing Initiative website, etc.). Consequently, given the workload associated with the production of the Indigenous Housing Connection and the limited results, it is envisaged to only share allocations in the future.

**ACTION:** RTHC-OC to evaluate RTHC communications for 2025-2026 and propose options/recommendations at next meeting.

### **11. Next meeting: dates and format**

The next 2-day face-to-face meeting will be coordinated by the AFNQL, in June 2025.

It was agreed that the RTHC-OC would discuss the matter and make a proposal for a choice of dates, taking into account upcoming events and the scope of the topics to be covered.

**The meeting was adjourned at 3:34pm**