

Minutes
Meeting of June 12, 2025

In attendance: Lance Haymond, AFNQL
Guy Latouche, AFNQL
Mauricio Suchowlansky, AFNQL
Pierre Bélanger, CMHC
Jean-François Samuel, CMHC
Ina Wielinga, CMHC,
Sean Sommers, ISC
Isabelle Déry, ISC
André Dansereau, ISC
Nathalie Spénard, ISC
Éric Bouchard, ISC (FNIHB)

Absent: Véronique Mercier, ISC

Facilitator: Guy Latouche

1. Word of Welcome and introduction

The agenda is accepted without modification.

2. Actions Follow-Up

All actions listed in the minutes of the March 2025 meeting and the action tracking table have been addressed as expected. The insurance file, Unifor's commitment, and the response to the recommendations of the Auditor General's Report are included in the 2025-2027 Action Plan. As for the future of the *Indigenous Housing Connection* newsletter, it is the subject of a specific item on the agenda for this meeting.

3. National and Regional Environment**AFNQL****Revision of the National Distribution off from the Article 95 and RRAP Programs**

The Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL) is taking the lead on this very concerning issue and will present a resolution at the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Annual General Assembly in September. It should be noted that after suffering a 40% reduction in its budget share, the Quebec region could experience another major reduction if the allocation formula is revised as envisaged by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). Three other regions will suffer the same fate. We request that the revised formula not result in a decrease in regional budgets. The solution therefore requires the injection of additional funding into programs.

This is an issue we raised extensively at the last meeting of the Chiefs' Committee on Housing and Infrastructure, which was attended by the Vice-President of Housing at CMHC.

Transition of the First Nations Market Housing Fund to First Nations Control

When the First Nations Market Housing Fund (FNMHF) was created, it was anticipated that control of the fund would eventually be transferred from the federal government to First Nations. The Fund's Board of Directors and President and CEO are all First Nations citizens who have worked to reform the Fund to significantly improve its services and outcomes for First Nations.

The AFNQL will present a second resolution to the AFN General Assembly, this time urging the federal government to honor its intention to transfer control of the Fund to First Nations, as set out in the trust deed that established the FNMHF.

2025 Federal Election

The appointment of former Cree Grand Chief Mandy Masty-Gull as Minister of Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) is certainly good news. She is well-versed in the housing issues facing First Nations in the Quebec region. She is expected to attend the Chiefs' meeting on June 18.

We have no clear indication of the new government's intentions regarding First Nations housing, but the fact remains that shortly after his election, the Prime Minister declared that he wanted to implement "Canada's most ambitious housing plan since the Second World War." It remains to be hoped that this plan will include a component specifically for First Nation

Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy (URN)

The AFNQL held two engagement sessions on March 27 and 28. Attendance was very good. The goal was to inform and consult First Nations and potential stakeholders on the Short-Term Action Plan, which includes three components: engaging, documenting needs, and funding shovel-ready projects.

It should be noted that for the first two of the seven years of URN funding, the AFNQL will use the services of the Société immobilière du Regroupement des Centres d'amitié autochtones (SIRCAAQ), a 100% First Nations-owned, off-community housing provider. The goal is to quickly implement projects to address pressing needs. No decision has yet been made regarding the direction to be taken for the subsequent five years.

Closing the Housing and Infrastructure Gap

In April 2024, the AFN released the report, "*Closing the Infrastructure Gap*", which estimated the cost of closing the infrastructure gap at \$349.2 billion. Later that year, a first report, produced with the assistance of the Conference Board of Canada (CBoC), entitled "*Benefits for All Canadians*", presented the return on this investment: \$635 billion in economic output, \$308.9 billion in gross domestic product (GDP) growth, and more than 338,000 jobs annually, including more than 31,000 for First Nations people. More recently, a new report, also with the assistance of the CBoC, goes beyond economic aspects. It shows how closing the infrastructure gap promotes broader and long-term benefits on aspects such as mental health, educational achievement, workforce skills, culture, and more.

Highly Valued Resource Leaves AFN

Dan Gaspé, AFN Senior Housing Policy Advisor, has announced his retirement. He left his position in May. He was long a key figure in advocating for the rights and needs of First Nations in the housing sector. He held a similar position with the AFNQL for several years. He leaves with an invaluable legacy.

ISC

Human Resources News

Ministerial Appointment: The Honourable Mandy Gull-Masty has been appointed Minister of Indigenous Services. She served as Grand Chief of the Grand Council of the Crees from 2021 to 2025, becoming the first woman to hold this position. She is also the first Indigenous person to be appointed Minister of Indigenous Services.

Newcomer: Hélène Aubé joined the team on June 19 as Fire Protection Coordinator.

Ministerial Budgetary Context

Since April 1, 2025, ISC has been implementing a departmental strategy to ensure long-term financial sustainability. This strategy includes the introduction of salary caps.

At the regional level, the conversion of operating and maintenance (O&M) funds has made it possible to maintain jobs by balancing salaries. However, this measure reduces the availability of funds for travel, which is currently limited to essential travel. The duration of these measures remains to be confirmed.

On the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB) side, operational travel is not affected by the new restrictions.

Infrastructure and Housing Budgets

Highlights 2024-2025

- **Infrastructure:** The majority of planned projects have been funded, demonstrating the effectiveness of the prioritization approach.
- **Housing:** The sector has supported projects promoting First Nations governance, including through:
 - Capacity enhancement
 - Financial innovation
 - Home ownership
 - Construction and renovation
 - Lot preparation

Planning 2025-2026

Important considerations must be taken into account to achieve the objectives of the Capital and Maintenance Program, which aims to address infrastructure gaps on reserves. The main challenges relate to the stability and predictability of funding and the alignment of funds with long-term planning.

First Nation Children's Housing Fund

To date, the Quebec region has received three of the five years of funding announced, for a total of **\$79,824,406**. This funding is intended to support housing projects aimed at improving the well-being of children and families.

- 2023-2024 : **\$ 19 258 197**
- 2024-2025 : \$ 29 381 055
- 2025-2026 : \$ 31 185 154

The region has adapted the formula for allocating funds at the regional level, taking into account variables such as the number of children, housing occupancy rates, and a geographic remoteness index.

Emergency Management

Update on extreme weather events

- **Floods – Spring 2025:** No major events to report for the period.
- **Wildfires – Current season:** A few fires are active in the northern zone, but no response is required at this time. Forecasts indicate a later fire season this year.
- **Wildfires – 2023 season:** The claims process is ongoing.

Smoke-Free Areas

ISC (Regional Operations and FNIHB) is continuing to establish smoke-free areas in existing buildings. Once operational, these areas will limit evacuations in situations where the threat is to air quality rather than the spread of fire.

Update – State of Emergency in the Cree Nation of Chisasibi

Following a breakdown at the water treatment plant, more than 16,000 liters of water were delivered to the community. The emergency was managed by the community with support from ISC's operational reserve and partners.

CMHC

Section 95

Subsidies as Pledge of Collateral (SPC)

Under the Section 95 program, a new loan security option is now available to communities. In addition to the ministerial loan guarantee (MLG), if the criteria are met, CMHC may agree that the loan attached to a Section 95 project be guaranteed by the Section 95 subsidies of the same project.

This option should address communities that may have certain issues preventing them from having access to MLG as a land issue or to communities that do not want MLG. Lastly, this option should ease the pressure on the still-growing budget attached to ISC MLG.

Note that this new flexibility is not intended to circumvent MLG ineligibility due to financial issues.

CMHC specialists will explore this option with communities once the allocation of Section 95 funds from 2025–2026 has been confirmed.

Atlantic Pilot Project

ISC (Atlantic) and CMHC are working to integrate the MLG application into the current Section 95 approval process. In doing so, after receiving the community's consent, CMHC will apply for MLG directly from ISC on behalf of the communities. This pilot project was implemented this year, in fiscal year 2025–2026. We'll provide an update later this year on the progress of this project.

Allocation of 2025-2026 Section 95 Funds

Allocation letters were sent to eligible communities on June 13, 2025. Overall, \$11,050,000 was shared between Quebec communities. A total of 20 communities will share 33 units. A complete list of the funds allocated will be shared shortly.

Housing Internship for Indigenous Youth (HIIY)

This year, as a result of ISC-CMHC collaboration, a total of \$1,409,779 for 56 internships was approved. CMHC invested \$219,588 for a total of 11 internships, and ISC invested \$1,190,191 to support 45 internships.

National Update

Elections

The Honourable Gregor Robertson, Minister Responsible for CMHC, has not received a specific mandate letter. However, we understand that our Minister will follow up on the Prime Minister's mandate letter on how it will support it. We have not yet been informed of the response.

We are still awaiting the details of the creation of "Building Canada Home (BCH)".

4. RHTC 2024-2025 Report

The Annual Report for the year 2024-2025 is reviewed and accepted by RHTC authorities.

5. Action Plan 2025-2027

The Action Plan is reviewed and accepted by the RHTC authorities. This plan replaces the previous one (2023-2025), which had expired. It is suggested that the year of completion of the actions carried out that remain included in the Plan be added.

6. Strategic Discussions: Sec. 95 Allocation

In our efforts to avoid a substantial budget cut, we must highlight the region's performance in delivering the program. We want to avoid devaluing other regions; that's not the goal. In any case, there has been no reallocation of Section 95 funds between regions in recent years (this may be due to the fact that costs are increasing, and therefore the number of units to be delivered is lower). However, sometimes regions do not deliver the renovation budget. We are comfortable demonstrating that the region is performing well, that we must avoid returning funds to the Treasury Board, that needs are increasing, but that the Section 95 program budget is not keeping up. We have reliable data that demonstrates the needs in Quebec.

7. Results of One-Off Initiatives

ISC and CMHC have prepared and shared an overview of the achievements of one-off initiatives over the past five years. These are budget injections in addition to regular budgets. Since 2021, the two partners have invested tens of millions of dollars in Quebec communities to address identified needs such as housing construction and renovation, lot servicing, capacity building, and innovation.

For more details, see the presentation documents available via the following link:
<https://apnql.com/en/regional-tripartite-housing-committee/>

8. Communications Update: *Indigenous Housing Connection*

Survey results show that the newsletter is rarely consulted by First Nations. Producing the newsletter is a considerable amount of work. However, the section on the distribution of CMHC funds among communities seems to generate more interest. We have other effective means of communication, including emails sent by the AFNQL and the Community of Practice Housing (CoPH) platform. They are ideal for disseminating any important information, including the distribution of CMHC funds. After discussion, it was agreed to discontinue production of the *Indigenous Housing Connection* newsletter.

9. Next meeting

October 22 is the date chosen for the next RTHC meeting.