

## **Assembly of the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador**

### **Consultation on Regional Mandates**

#### ***HOUSING***

#### **THE FACTS**

- A housing crisis prevails within the First Nations and it is most probable that the social problems encountered locally are a result of this situation.
- The needs are enormous:
  - 8,800 units need to be built (within a 5 year span);
  - 5,000 units need renovations;
  - 1,800 units need to be decontaminated;
  - 7,300 lots need infrastructure services.
- The current construction activity meets only 15% of the needs.
- The decrease in the regional budget of the order of 35 to 40% is due to the implementation of CMHC's new national formula to allocate funding for social housing and renovation programs.
- The deterioration of the situation is inevitable in the context where, at the image of the population and the cost of living, the needs keep increasing, while funding is not in line with these needs.
- The population is in great need, in and outside the communities.

#### **THE MANDATE**

- Over the years, the Chiefs have established by way of resolution,
  - That the housing crisis is a regional priority;
  - That the federal housing programs intended for First Nations are deficient and new substantial sums of moneys are required;
  - That they intend to exercise their responsibility and their authority on any issue related to First Nations housing;
  - That they acknowledge the data of the report on housing needs, as well as its conclusions, and they mandate the Secretariat of the AFNQL to follow up on the situation;
  - That a 10 year housing strategy must be implemented;
  - That the Federal government officially recognize the authority and the responsibility of the First Nations in administering and delivering the housing programs intended for their members living outside the communities, and that the AFNQL identifies and negotiates the resources required for the implementation of programs, in line with the latter;
  - That the Chief holder of the portfolio represents the AFNQL at the level of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Chiefs' Committee on housing and infrastructures and promotes the regional positions, particularly the opposition to the concept of creating a First Nations national housing institute.

## THE ACTIONS

- Creation and periodical update of a data bank on housing needs within First Nations communities. Disseminate the reports. Make representations to the Federal government, encouraging the authorities to appreciate the true worth of the data which emerge directly from the communities themselves.
  - Preparation of a strategy intended to resolve the housing crisis. This 10-year strategy comprises two (2) components: 1- The elimination of the accumulated housing backlog, as a result of a major federal investment; 2- the negotiation and the implementation of a new approach which will enable the First Nations to exercise their full jurisdiction over the comprehensive issue of housing. Dissemination of this strategy to the officials of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) and request to meet with the minister.
  - Continued communication with the AFN, the federal and provincial authorities, and the political parties in an attempt to influence the decision-making in favor of regional concerns:
    - reminder on the omissions of the federal government (non-acknowledgement of a crisis situation, absence of a plan to eliminate the accumulated backlog, etc.);
    - approach the Department of Indian Affairs to present the regional housing strategy;
    - approach the Quebec's Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Regions (MAMRQ) to discuss the issue of off-reserve housing;
    - A watch over the regional interests at the level of AFN.
- Participate in the activities of the Tripartite Regional Committee on housing. Refocus the mandate of the Committee (recommendations) in relation to the Chiefs' authority (decision).
  - Organization of regional meetings focused on the dissemination of information and the sharing of good housing management practices.
  - Monitor the development of innovative projects of regional interest, in line with the First Nations Socioeconomic Forum.
  - Representations to the United Nations Special Rapporteur (U.N.) on the right to adequate housing, for the purposes of pressuring the Federal government to fulfill its international obligations in the area of housing for the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador.

## THE CHALLENGES

- Be able to properly disseminate the information pertaining to First Nations housing; be able to reach the right persons, those who are in need (elected representatives holders of portfolios, administrators); establish a real network that is functional and efficient in both ways (the AFNQL towards the FN, and vice-versa).
- Raise the awareness of the Conservative Federal Government on the importance of social housing, especially at a time where it seems to prioritize only the market housing.
  - Draw the attention of the federal authorities on a strategy which foresees a massive federal investment in First Nation communities, in the context where everything seems to

indicate that the announcement of additional funding for First Nations housing is not a federal priority.

- Revert to the former CMHC's national formula of housing allocations, and within this perspective, seek the support of other regions which gain no benefit whatsoever in taking that direction.
- Act upon the AFN to prevent the adoption of a resolution supporting the creation of a First Nations national housing institute, from happening.
- Gather information on off-reserve housing needs and bring the federal government to put an end to the agreement which would confer to Quebec the administration and the housing program funds for First Nation members living outside the communities, to then transfer this jurisdiction to the governments of the First Nations.
- Maintain the regional consensus, in the context where the housing situation varies considerably from one community to the other.