



Secrétariat  
de l'Assemblée des  
Premières Nations  
du Québec  
et du Labrador

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## ***BILL C-10***

### *Budget Implementation Act, 2009*

SUBMITTED by  
the ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS OF QUEBEC AND LABRADOR  
to the  
STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE  
HOUSE OF COMMONS

February 23, 2009

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE  
BILL C-10: BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2009**

Witnesses: **Grand Chief Lucien Wabanonik**,  
Algonquins Anishnabeg Nation  
**Chief Gilbert Whiteduck**  
Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg  
**Councillor Tony McLaughlin**  
Eagle Village First Nation

The AFNQL wishes to thank the members of the Standing Committee on Finance for their invitation. Deprived from their territories and resources, the First Nations live a situation of permanent economic recession. The First Nations are sensitive to what the Canadian population is currently living. However, we warn the government: the poor state of public finances must not serve as a pretext for maintaining or aggravating the unacceptable socioeconomic situation lived by the First Nations.

If we were given the opportunity, we could address the Committee members for an entire day about the projects and the needs of First Nations members. We will confine ourselves to four priorities, namely the housing situation, the under-financing of education for our children, the necessity to raise the 2% limit imposed to expenses linked to First Nations and, finally, the critical situation of the Algonquin community of Kitcisakik, who is still living without direct access to running water and without electricity, at only a few hundreds of kilometers away from this parliament.

### **Housing**

Investments in Housing and Safe Drinking Water to Aboriginal Communities are a far cry from the needs. In the recently-adopted federal budget, \$400 M, over a two-year period, have been earmarked for First Nation on-reserve housing. An additional \$165 M have been allocated for the completion of infrastructure projects related to safe drinking water and wastewater.

Out of the announced \$400 M, our communities will benefit at the very best, \$20 M per year for two years. The needs would require ten times this amount, and this, over a five-year period, in order to meet the social housing needs of the First Nations of Quebec/Labrador. Also, no measure has been provided for thousands of aboriginals living off-reserve in alarming situations.

In regards to improving the conditions linked to safe drinking water as well as wastewater, the AFNQL estimated the needs of communities as being close to \$100M. The budget foresees \$165 M, and this is for all the regions across Canada. It is therefore inconceivable to believe that the measures which were announced will have a real impact of improvement on the conditions to access drinking water and rehabilitate wastewater. The amounts that were announced are still too negligible to ensure decent living for the aboriginal populations of Quebec/Labrador. The community of Kitigan Zibi which is situated north of Ottawa, within two hours from the capital, is obliged to purchase its water for ten years, and is a concrete example where Canada is failing to honor its obligations as government towards the First Nations.

### **Education**

Following the presentation of the federal budget, First Nations of Quebec express also their major concerns about the under-funding of education, by noting that the sums invested by the government do not tally with the needs or the gaps identified in several studies.

Moreover, nothing is provided for ending the chronic under-funding of First Nation education, except for some specific measures that are clearly insufficient, and which were elaborated without consultation. The schools of the First Nations have no reasons whatsoever to rejoice, especially since the gap that separates them from the other schools in Canada, is only bound to widen. The government is doing nothing to catch up with the backwardness sustained by our institutions and our children.

Our schools are trying to survive with a funding formula that has not changed since 20 years. It's exactly as if the Quebec schools were financed on the same pattern as in 1980! It's scandalous!

Although the federal government made an announcement of \$268M over a five-year period for the whole of the First Nation schools in Canada, it should be noted that these sums are conditional to specific criteria, and that schools must submit project proposals in order to have access to it.

There is no provincial government whatsoever that would dare require from their schools to submit a lot of small initiatives in order to have access to their financing. Yet, this is how the department of Indian Affairs administers the education of the First Nations.

According to an analysis on financing carried out by the First Nations Education Council (FNEC), a loss in real monetary value of \$28.1 M will be brought about by the fact of not taking into account the increase of the cost of living and the number of students, solely for the region of Quebec and for the year 2009-10. In Canada, this loss is assessed to \$267.3 M. And this has been going on since 1996. It has now

become unbearable for our communities to support such a lack of funding. We have to cut somewhere else to try and provide a modest education to our children, which is unacceptable for a society that claims to be fair and modern.

### **The 2% limit imposed to expenses linked to First Nations**

This serious drop in education is only one example of a situation which persists since the federal government imposed a limit of 2% in regards to expenses of Indian government programs, and this, since 1996. During that period, our population has increased by 25%. The consequences of such a measure on our populations are huge and have repercussions over a long period of time. It is a loss of investments in our communities that DIAND itself does not hesitate to assess at 1 billion \$.

### **Critical situation of the Algonquin community of Kitcisakik**

We also wish to remind you that the community of Kitcisakik is still expecting an answer on its project of a new village. The village of Wanaki should be replacing the current infrastructures of the village of Kitcisakik, where Algonquins have been living in dire living conditions, in small houses without electricity and without running water. Added to adequate houses, the new village would have public infrastructures, such as a school and a sports center. In 2007, the project was evaluated at \$120 million.

### **Conclusion**

We will conclude by drawing your attention on the will of First Nations to develop and on the necessity for the government to support in an active way, our economic development. We are asking you to help us help ourselves, as you did on various occasions for other private or public organizations in the past.

We are asking you to not apply a policy of negation towards our nations; we can become partners and succeed. This is the will and the hope that we entertain, in spite of these hard times for everybody.

Thank you for your attention.

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