CHRA INDIGENOUS CAUCUS

Canadian Housing and Renewal Association
A Home for the Housing Sector

November 21, 2025

The Right Honourable Mark Carney, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2
[By Email: pm@pm.gc.ca]

The Honourable Gregor Robertson
Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and
Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada
180 Kent Street
Suite 1100
Ottawa, ON K1P 0B6
[By Email: minister-ministre@infc.gc.ca]

The Honourable Mandy Gull-Masty
Minister of Indigenous Services Canada
229 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
[By Email: minister-ministre@sac-isc.gc.ca]

Dear Prime Minister, Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, and Minister of Indigenous Services,

We are writing on behalf of the CHRA Indigenous Caucus, the National Indigenous Collaborative Housing Inc. (NICHI), the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC), and the Indigenous housing and service providers we collectively represent across the country. We welcome the Government of Canada's renewed commitment to Indigenous housing in Budget 2025. At the same time, we must note that many of these commitments reflect longstanding obligations announced in Budget 2023 that remain undelivered. This work must be advanced now to achieve timely, credible progress on affordability, supply, and reconciliation.

As organizations on the ground, we see every day how Indigenous people—particularly women, youth, and Elders, continue to face the highest rates of core housing need in the country. According to Statistics Canada, "more than 80% of Indigenous people live in urban, rural, and northern communities" (2021 Census). These are the communities that rely most heavily on Indigenous housing and service providers that support all distinctions and statuses without jurisdictional barriers. The CHRA Indigenous Caucus was established to represent this reality, and it continues to serve as a critical source of national policy expertise and practitioner insight.

However, recent federal materials continue to conflate For-Indigenous-By-Indigenous (FIBI) delivery exclusively with distinctions-based governments, overlooking the demographic reality that distinctions-based systems alone cannot meet the needs of many Indigenous people. This

conflation has further politicized Indigenous housing delivery and stalled resources intended for the Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy, preventing urgently needed funding from reaching the communities it was designed to support.

In practice, front-line housing, prevention, and safety work is carried out by urban, rural, and northern (URN) Indigenous housing providers, Friendship Centres, and community-based organizations that support people across every Indigenous identity and circumstance. These vital organizations operate where Indigenous people live and seek help and are often the only service providers capable of offering culturally grounded, barrier-free supports.

Friendship Centres fill systemic gaps that distinctions-based mechanisms cannot address, alone. For decades, they have provided comprehensive, culturally grounded, wraparound supports, combining housing supports with mental health care, employment services, food security programs, family support, youth programming, cultural healing, and other community safety initiatives. Serving over one million people annually, Friendship Centres are the front-line institutions that contribute to the wellbeing, cultural continuity, and housing stability of Indigenous people living in urban, rural, and northern communities.

Clarifying the distinction between URN Indigenous service providers and distinctions-based governments, who also provide URN housing, is therefore essential. Without explicit recognition of URN providers as a distinct and necessary pillar of Indigenous housing policy, federal programs risk unintentionally sidelining the Indigenous organizations that deliver most of the culturally safe housing, prevention, and wraparound supports for Indigenous people living in urban, rural, and northern areas.

Federal Budget 2022 allocated $4 billion for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis housing, and $300 million for the Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy. NICHI, created by the URN Indigenous non-profit sector, was established to deliver this strategy and has already demonstrated the effectiveness of Indigenous-led delivery. With an initial investment of $281 million, NICHI efficiently funded Indigenous-led housing projects nationwide and continues to identify shovel-ready projects ready to move forward with federal support.

Federal Budget 2023 allocated $4 billion for URN Indigenous housing intended to be allocated in 2024/2025: $1.2 billion was distributed through national and regional distinctions-based organizations, and the remaining $2.8 billion was to be made available through the January 2024 Request for Proposals. These commitments were created to meet the needs of Indigenous peoples living in URN settings precisely because distinctions-based systems do not always reach them. However, the federal RFP process, now approaching two years, has prevented urgently needed projects from proceeding, despite clear readiness across the sector and amidst the worsening housing crisis. During this extended delay, Indigenous people remain unhoused, continue to live in overcrowded conditions, and are foregoing food and other necessities to pay for unaffordable housing. We urge you to release the $2.8 Billion now so communities can start delivering urgently needed projects. Both NICHI and NAFC stand ready to support the rapid and accountable allocation of these funds.

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The outcomes NICHI has achieved to date demonstrate what is possible when Indigenous-led models are supported. NICHI, created by Indigenous housing providers in 2022, now represents more than 107 providers nationwide. With an initial investment of $281 million, NICHI delivered 74 projects, securing 3,800 units and shelter spaces, within just 18 months. These projects created jobs and contracts for Indigenous and local businesses, strengthening regional supply chains and generating economic activity. NICHI has recently resumed reviewing unfunded proposals to confirm their readiness, identifying an additional $140-200 Million in projects for early 2026 that could deliver approximately 1,000 or more units.

Evidence from other jurisdictions reinforces the value of these approaches. In British Columbia, the Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA) has identified 11 shovel-ready projects, totaling 764 units that can proceed immediately with federal investment, and has demonstrated a social return on investment of approximately $6.79 for every dollar invested in Indigenous housing (Aboriginal Housing Management Association, 2024), underscoring the high social and economic value of Indigenous-led delivery models.

To align federal housing policy with demographic realities and service patterns, we respectfully request that the Government of Canada formally recognize Indigenous housing providers as the Fourth Pillar of Indigenous housing policy; complementary but distinct from the three distinctions-based strategies. This framing is consistent with UNDRIP, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, the MMIWG2S+ Final Report's Calls for Justice, Canada's 10 Principles respecting its relationship with Indigenous Peoples, and the lived experience of the Indigenous communities we serve.

Accordingly, we ask for three commitments:

1. Clear differentiation between URN Indigenous service providers and distinctions-based governments in all federal documentation and program design.

2. Formal inclusion of URN Indigenous housing and service providers: through NICHI, the CHRA Indigenous Caucus, NAFC, and others, in policy development and housing implementation tables.

3. Stable, long-term institutional funding for NICHI and URN Indigenous providers so that the sector can continue to deliver national-scale results with strong regional capacity.

These measures would ensure that federal investments reach the Indigenous people who rely most heavily on community-based institutions for housing, safety, and support. They would also enable the federal government to achieve measurable, cost-effective outcomes in priority areas, including rental protection, Indigenous co-operative expansion, and the development of affordable and rent-geared-to-income housing in URN communities.

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We appreciate the government's ongoing commitment to Indigenous housing and reconciliation, but timely action is now essential to maintain momentum, support Indigenous-created institutions, and deliver the housing solutions that Indigenous peoples urgently need and deserve. Our organizations stand ready to work with you to advance this work with speed, scope, and scale.

We would welcome a meeting with your offices to discuss next steps, provide insight into our members' project portfolios, and support the timely release of the URN housing funding.

Respectfully,

Sally Ledger
Sally Ledger (Nov 20, 2025 16:39:22 EST)

Sally Ledger,

Interim CEO, Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services (OAHS)

on behalf of, CHRA's Indigenous Caucus

John Gordon, CEO, the National Indigenous Collaborative Housing Inc. (NICHI)

Jennifer Rankin

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