



Aboriginal Housing Management Association
Celebrating 25 Years

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Hard times ahead for Indigenous housing providers

Safe, affordable housing is a key component to ending cycles of poverty and improving health outcomes for Indigenous families but the wait for funds continues.

Unceded traditional territories of the x̱m̱əθḵw̱əy̱əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱w̱ú7mesh (Squamish), and sə̱lilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, Vancouver BC (February 26, 2024) – Indigenous housing providers have been waiting to see what the Provincial government would roll out in the face of our current housing crisis. They will be waiting even longer for significant new investments dedicated to supporting the growing needs of urban Indigenous housing providers.

“We understand that our Province is under enormous pressure due to the rising cost of living. Operating in a deficit in the wake of COVID is difficult and it impacts spending priorities,” said Margaret Pfoh, CEO of the Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA). “AHMA continues to amplify the voices of Indigenous housing providers and extend the offer of our expertise and partnership to the Province to work together on solutions.”

The Budget 2024 initiatives that will continue to benefit British Columbians most include investments in healthcare, public transit, climate change, small businesses, and housing for middle-income earners. We welcome recent investments in the Rental Protection Fund, the BC Builds Program and Homes for People Plan, Clean BC, and the much-needed increases to benefits for low-income families. We also celebrate the funding that has been dedicated to supportive housing and social housing projects as well as sustaining treatment and recovery programs.

The Provincial budget includes modest spending increases to previously announced provincial housing measures. The community housing sector is pleased to see these investments continue; however, we are disappointed to see that Budget 2024 completely missed the opportunity to allocate new funds to support the Aboriginal Housing Management Association's [Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy](#).

“Indigenous housing providers across BC are struggling to survive with shoestring budgets that pay workers a bare minimum and leave operational budgets not able to keep pace with rising costs,” said Pfoh. “An equity-based approach to housing centers Indigenous rights and Indigenous leadership. Our housing societies have long been providing culturally supportive, trauma-informed housing for those most in need and now they are struggling to survive due to a dire lack of funding.”

Urban, Rural and Northern or ‘URN’ describes those who are Indigenous but not living on reserve lands or in connection with traditional cultural home communities due to colonial displacement and

dispossession. “We make up approximately 75% of the entire Indigenous population in BC,” adds Pfoh. “URN Indigenous people living in urban, rural, and northern areas face unique challenges with accessing adequate housing, and do not qualify for the support that is provided for Indigenous people living on reserve.”

Large bodies of evidence demonstrate that access to safe, culturally supportive, and affordable housing is critical to ending the ongoing cycles of poverty that are impacting Indigenous families across BC. The Provincial government understands that housing is a key factor in promoting better health and social outcomes for all Indigenous people including women, children, Elders, and youth, yet BC Budget 2024 contained no new funding for URN Indigenous housing.

The BC government can still magnify the impact of its housing strategy by:

- Funding [AHMA’s URN Indigenous Housing Strategy for BC](#), which prioritizes those most vulnerable to housing precarity and living in poverty across our province, including Indigenous people who are 13 times more likely than non-Indigenous people to experience homelessness.
- Extending the Property Transfer Tax exemption to purpose-built rental buildings purchased with assistance from the Rental Protection Fund. This would provide the Fund with an additional \$30 million to preserve affordable homes for tenants in those buildings.
- Providing property tax relief for non-profit housing providers, including co-ops.
- Redirecting the modest renter rebate and additional homeowner grant allowances to supportive housing initiatives.

AHMA and our partners in the community housing sector will be looking to the BC government’s upcoming election campaign platform to address gaps in the current strategy and promote equity and reconciliation in BC by prioritizing Indigenous housing.

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[AHMA](#) is a For Indigenous, By Indigenous organization made up of 55 members that represent over 95% of Indigenous housing and service providers in BC. AHMA members support almost 10,000 Indigenous families living in urban, rural, and northern regions of BC. AHMA has almost 30 years of experience and expertise as the first Indigenous housing authority in Canada.