



## ATLANTIC POLICY CONGRESS OF FIRST NATIONS CHIEFS SECRETARIAT

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### “Nation to Nation”: Turning Words to Action

We are always stronger together—whether in our communities, our relationships, or between different organizations—that’s why building better relationships between First Nations and the Government of Canada is very important to the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs (APC). The Prime Minister of Canada has specifically instructed, in mandate letters to all ministers, that relationship building with indigenous people is a priority. And with the Liberals holding majority governments across the Atlantic region, our time to present a unified voice focused on advancing Atlantic First Nation priorities is now.

On Tuesday April 11, 2017, the APC co-chairs and executive director met in Ottawa with members of the Atlantic Regional Liberal Caucus to discuss our key priorities. This was the first time in over 20 years that such a meeting has taken place regionally and we are encouraged that there won’t be such a long gap before the next one.

During our time together last week, it was made clear that Atlantic Canada’s First Nations are an economic force gathering momentum that will be key to driving the future of our communities and this region. We are Canada’s fastest growing youth population and already a strong contributor as outlined in an independent economic impacts study released last year: [1.14 Billion Strong: Indigenous Economic Performance in Atlantic Canada.](#)

We discussed our mutual enthusiasm for the March announcement of \$325M for the Atlantic Fisheries Fund, along with innovation and partnership funding opportunities outlined in Budget 2017. This is significant because in many Atlantic First Nations communities, the fishery has been the sole contributor to deficit reduction and financial sustainability.

In terms of infrastructure, our priorities are focused on water and housing. Establishing an Atlantic First Nations Water Authority (AFNWA) through our Clean Water Initiative is critical for public health and safety for First Nations through safer water and wastewater management. This work is already underway. The Atlantic Caucus heard about 23 APC communities who have already united and signed on as well as strategic partnerships formed with Halifax Water and Uluoeweg Development Ltd. to make this a reality.

In the coming weeks, a report outlining the housing needs, gaps, and recommended actions in our region will be provided to all key federal ministers, Atlantic MPs and senators. This report was prepared through bringing together and collaborating with Atlantic Chiefs, housing staff, and technical advisors. It is an important step toward achieving support for a First Nations-controlled housing approach which fully addresses housing needs in all our communities.

Atlantic First Nations communities and their members seek the same level of health and wellbeing as all Canadians. The Atlantic Caucus heard directly that having First Nations

participation in the planning, management, and delivery of programs and services related to [health care delivery](#) is a priority. We also shared that chronic diseases and supporting mental wellness are Atlantic Chiefs' top Health Priorities. These priorities are placed within the context of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the [Truth and Reconciliation \(TRC\) Commission Calls to Action](#).

We're not the only ones focused on relationship building—the federal government is also focused on building and strengthening Nation to Nation relationships and we recognize the importance of working with federal representatives. Overall, the briefing with the Atlantic Caucus was a success. Everyone in attendance recognized the importance of collaboration and are committed to working with APC. There is no doubt that members of the Caucus clearly heard about and understood our top priorities—which moves all our people forward in the right direction. Together.

### **About APC**

Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat is a policy research and advocacy organization that analyzes and develops culturally relevant alternatives to federal policy for 38 Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, Passamaquoddy and Innu communities and peoples.

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