



ATLANTIC POLICY CONGRESS OF FIRST NATIONS CHIEFS SECRETARIAT

Atlantic Chiefs: 2019 federal budget raises both hope and concern for First Nation Communities in Atlantic Canada

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(Dartmouth, Nova Scotia) The Trudeau government's investment in post-secondary education is being praised by Atlantic Canada's First Nations Chiefs. Released yesterday afternoon, the budget reaffirms the government's commitment to ensure post-secondary education access for First Nations youth remains a top priority.

"Building on last year's investment means that youth in our communities will have greater access to post secondary institutions," says Co-Chair, Chief Bob Gloade. "Continued investments in the academic future of Atlantic Canada's fastest growing population will foster positive and measurable outcomes—not only for our youth, but for the economy throughout the region."

While the Chiefs were pleased to see investments in post-secondary education, they expressed disappointment in the government's seemingly diminished commitment to the establishment of the innovative First Nations-led service delivery models for water and wastewater. The lack of clear commitment in this year's budget to advance this critical work is concerning to many First Nations communities in Atlantic Canada who are without access to clean and safe drinking water and wastewater.

"Budget 2018 affirmed support to accelerate the pace of construction and renovation of affected water systems, yet First Nations communities seem no further ahead in terms of controlling our outcomes and ensuring access to safe and clean water," says Chief Wilbert Marshall, Chair, First Nations Water Authority.

Through the vision of the Atlantic Chiefs, the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat (APC), in partnership with Dalhousie University, Halifax Water, and Accelerator Inc. developed a preliminary business plan with governance structure recommendations for an Atlantic First Nations Water Authority to operate and maintain community water systems.

A dedicated, independent regional water authority will improve public health and safety while also ensuring positive economic and environmental outcomes. Creation of this water authority is fundamental to the long-term cultural and economic growth of First Nations communities in the region.

“We had hoped that by now, one year later, we would be closer to realizing the design, delivery, and control of water services, led by Indigenous Peoples for Indigenous Peoples. Ownership is an important aspect of reconciliation. When our communities control their own outcomes and are invested in their own success, improvements are bound to follow,” said Chief Marshall.

In addition to the comprehensive scientific research that has been undertaken and technical expertise provided, the innovative First Nations Water Authority is based on best practices in utility water and wastewater service delivery, financial modeling, and good governance. Just as important, the foundation of this initiative is based on broad and in-depth input from all First Nations communities in the Atlantic Region. The federal government has yet to provide the First Nations Water Authority the full authority they require to advance the project in addition to the remaining funding that is needed to continue the project.

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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 30 Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, Passamaquoddy, and Innu communities and peoples. If you have any questions, please direct them to: John Paul, Executive Director. He can be reached by e-mail at John.Paul@apcfncc.ca or by phone at (902)-435-8021 and (902)-830-5023.