Closing the Gaps in Atlantic Canada

First Nations communities are Atlantic Canada’s fastest growing population and are hubs of economic growth, especially in rural areas.

Our economic impact is approximately $2 billion, nearly doubling in just five years. Since the election of the federal Liberal government in October 2015, we have been pleased to work with government to build new Nation-to-Nation relationships with First Nations peoples. While we have made progress on the social and economic challenges facing our communities, there is still much more to do.

The following issues are critically important to the growth and independence of First Nations communities in Atlantic Canada. The time is now to lift First Nations communities up and allow them to reach their full potential.

Economic Development

First Nations youth in Atlantic Canada, June 2019
• Fastest growing population in Canada
• 53% of youth plan to finish high school
• 50% plan to attend University/College
• 62% know someone who can help them achieve their goals

We are requesting the government’s support and participation in this proposed Labour Market Summit.

An Atlantic First Nations Labour Market Summit would bring together First Nations Chiefs, Federal and Atlantic Provincial governments, and sixteen Atlantic universities to address present inequities and to develop strategies that will eliminate barriers presently experienced by Atlantic Indigenous populations. Strategies developed at this Summit will produce measurable education and labour market outcomes for First Nations people.

AAEDIRP requires continued and consistent funding to build these necessary alliances that are enhancing and growing economic self-sufficiency for Atlantic First Nations communities.

The Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program (AAEDIRP) is a partnership between the member communities of the Atlantic Policy Congress, the Inuit of Labrador, and 15 Atlantic universities who all work to address the economic development needs of First Nations communities. AAEDIRP conducts community-based research and produces evidence-based data to support informed decision making and development of effective, culturally appropriate economic policies and programs.

Housing Crisis and Needs

Atlantic Canada, May 2016
• 1449 new units needed to address over crowding
• 1765 new units required to address population growth (over 5–10 years)
• 521 retrofitted for mold & radon
• 53 units condemned with people still living in them

Atlantic Canada, August 2019
• 4300 new units required to address over crowding
• All new units will require expansion of water/wastewater infrastructure

The demands to provide housing for First Nations increases every day. Funding from government over the last number of years has made a positive impact in some First Nations communities, however, gaps remain, with the sustainability of housing a major concern.

Our communities require the development of a First Nations-led federal housing strategy. This will ensure capacity is built and homes are sustainable for decades to come.
Many First Nations communities in Atlantic Canada are without access to clean and safe drinking water and wastewater. In Canada in 2019, that is unacceptable. The establishment of the Atlantic First Nations Water Authority (AFNWA), a dedicated, independent regional water authority, will improve public health and safety, while also ensuring positive economic, cultural, and environmental outcomes.

While the Business Case for the AFNWA has been submitted, the federal government has yet to provide First Nations with a clear path to the full authority required to advance the project. In addition, the federal government has yet to commit to the scale of funding necessary over a 25-year period to establish the AFNWA.

A system is made better, automatically, when you own it.

Fisheries

The Atlantic Integrated Commercial Fisheries Initiative (AICFI) supports Mi’kmaq and Maliseet First Nations by providing the mentoring and training required for First Nations to succeed in this sector.

Continued funding and capacity building from government is essential to maintain participation in the region.

The Aboriginal Aquatic Research and Ocean Management (AAROM) program supports Mi’kmaq and Maliseet First Nations in aquatic research and ocean management on species that are significant to the Mi’kmaq and Maliseet communities or are at risk, such as Atlantic salmon, American eel, lobster, etc.

The Atlantic AAROMs require additional and consistent funding to maintain and build capacity. In particular, more resources are needed in the areas of marine protected areas and protection of habitat.

Key Issues

Climate Change, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples are very important issues to First Nation communities in Atlantic Canada, and across Canada.

- Climate Change and its impacts on the environment and economy affects us all. It is tied to First Nations’ multi-generational protection of the land—now and for future generations. **It is part of our tradition, culture, and beliefs and will remain a critical priority for our people and communities.**

- We believe in and agree with the **Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.**

- **The United Nations Declaration of Rights** is a key piece on the path to reconciliation.

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 31 Mi’kmaq, Maliseet, Passamaquoddy, and Innu communities and peoples.

For more information about APC, please visit www.apcfnc.ca