

**Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee
on Human Resources, Skills, and Social Development and
the Status of Persons with Disabilities**

An Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy for Canada:

Proposed Governance Structure for the For Indigenous By Indigenous (FIBI) National Housing Centre

FOR INDIGENOUS BY INDIGENOUS

The Canadian Housing and Renewal Association INDIGENOUS HOUSING CAUCUS

Formed in 2013, the Indigenous Housing Caucus of the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (CHRA) is the national body representing urban, rural, and northern Indigenous housing providers from across Canada. In these areas, for over 40 years, “urban native” and “rural and native” housing providers have housed and supported Indigenous Peoples regardless of their ancestry, origin or nation.

March 2021 – March 11 Draft

In November 2020, the Indigenous Housing Caucus of the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (CHRA) submitted a paper to the HUMA Standing Committee outlining the basic elements of an Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy for Canada. The paper outlines why such a Strategy is needed and how Indigenous housing providers in urban, rural and northern areas are integral to such a Strategy. The paper emphasises the need for ongoing and sustainable funding at a scale proportional to need.

The paper outlines the main elements of a properly resourced Strategy including:

- Development of a “For Indigenous By Indigenous” National Housing Centre
- Increasing the supply of stable, safe, affordable housing by building 73,000 new units
- Support for tenants’ well-being and long-term success with wraparound Indigenous services
- Accelerated action on Indigenous homelessness, and
- A focus on northern housing

Since submission of the paper, the following members of the CHRA Indigenous Housing Caucus have appeared before the HUMA Committee:

President and CEO of Namerind Housing, Regina and CHRA Indigenous Caucus Chair, Mr. Robert Byers (Dec 1, 2020)

CEO of Homeward Trust, Edmonton, Ms. Susan McGee (Dec 3, 2020)

CEO of Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA), West Vancouver, Ms. Margaret Pfoh (Jan 26, 2021)

CEO of Vancouver Native Housing Society, Mr Dave Eddy (Jan 28, 2021)

Executive Director of the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, Ottawa, Mr. Jeff Morrison (Jan 28, 2021), and

Indigenous Caucus Manager, Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, Ottawa, Mr. Steve Sutherland (Jan 28, 2021)

THIS PAPER FOCUSSES ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FOR INDIGENOUS BY INDIGENOUS NATIONAL HOUSING CENTRE AND PROPOSES A GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE TO SUPPORT IT.

Governance Proposal

The Indigenous Housing Caucus of CHRA proposes a separate stand-alone Board of Directors to oversee the delivery and administration of URN funding; specifically:

1. A separate Board of Directors be established to oversee the functioning of the FIBI Centre and the delivery and administration of the URN funding.
2. The FIBI Centre be incorporated as a separate governing entity, authorised to receive funds from the Government of Canada and to allocate them to other incorporated Indigenous entities across the country.

Functions and Scope:

3. Program delivery and administration be the core functions of the Centre.
4. The FIBI Centre's scope include federal funding and programs to end Indigenous homelessness as well as all federal Indigenous housing and housing-related funding.
5. The FIBI Centre have as its focus - service to Indigenous households in need regardless of Indigenous background. To recap from our 2018 FIBI Report, the FIBI Centre would be "Indigenous designed, owned and operated, focussing on people and service".
6. The FIBI Centre focus on continuous improvement to service embracing innovation, research, evaluation and social enterprise.
7. The FIBI Centre engage with other systems important for the health and welfare of Indigenous People including the health care, employment, child-welfare and justice systems.
8. The FIBI Centre not have an explicit advocacy role.

Governance

9. The FIBI Centre be governed by a Board of Directors with the appropriate skills and experience and representative of the URN Indigenous housing and homelessness serving community.
10. The FIBI Centre Board of Directors not be selected by Government but be appointed by Indigenous organisations and recruited via national competitions.
11. The FIBI Centre Board of Directors comprise the following positions (not listed in any order of priority). Representatives to be selected from the off-reserve community:
 - one Indigenous director from the banking/finance community – selected via national competition
 - one Indigenous director from the business community – selected via national competition
 - one Indigenous director from the legal community - selected via national competition
 - one Indigenous director from the Indigenous tenant community selected via national competition
 - one director from the Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services – selected by OAHS

- one director from the BC Aboriginal Housing Management Association – selected by AHMA
- three directors from front-line Indigenous housing and homelessness and social services community – selected via national competition

Off-reserve Indigenous housing and homelessness delivery and housing-related organisations, including the CHRA Indigenous Caucus amongst others, will also have a seat at the table. A collaborative process involving such agencies will help to finalise the Board table will be undertaken to ensure that voices are heard and consulted.

Consideration will be given to creating regional positions as well. The goal is to form a Board that has the necessary skills and experience to allow for the professional delivery and administration of the URN Indigenous Strategy.

12. The Chair and Vice Chair would be selected from the elected and appointed members of the Board.

Indigenous/Non-Indigenous Directors

As part of this governance proposal we need to be clear on whether a non-Indigenous person is eligible to stand as a FIBI Centre board member.

We propose that diversity be embraced on the FIBI Board of Directors by having Indigenous and non-Indigenous Directors as a founding principle with Indigenous members representing a majority at all times.

Relationship of the FIBI Housing Centre to the CHRA Indigenous Housing Caucus

In our proposal we wish to be clear on how the Indigenous Caucus relates to the new FIBI Housing Centre. Bottom line – the governance structures are separate. In this proposal the governance structure of the CHRA Indigenous Caucus remains unchanged. The Caucus continues with the same functions (for example the Annual Caucus Day at the CHRA Congress, and advocacy to government). The role of the Working Group within the Caucus remains unchanged. As mentioned, the Board of Directors of the FIBI Housing Centre forms a separate entity.

Transition to the FIBI Centre

Even after approval of the FIBI Centre concept, it will take some time to get it up and running. Note that it took the Community Housing Transformation Centre almost two years to get established – from announcement of the concept to the hiring of the Executive Director and doors opening.

Even though the FIBI Centre is separate from CHRA under this proposal, we are recommending that the CHRA Indigenous Caucus take on all responsibilities for the initial development and setting up of the Centre. This includes, at a minimum, development of 1) the articles of incorporation, 2) business plan, 3) establishment of

Board selection processes, and 4) setting up an Interim Board. Significant funds are required for this and we recommend that the Government of Canada provide the funds and name the CHRA Indigenous Caucus as the lead. We estimate that Years 1-2 funding should be at \$3.3 million with further years at full staffing complement at \$7.4 million.

Funding Request

We are recommending that:

1. a Federal commitment be made to the establishment of a FIBI National Housing Centre with a governance structure as outlined above, and
2. a five-year allocation of funds (\$28.8 million) to the Indigenous Caucus of the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association be included in the next Federal Budget for the establishment and initial operation of the Centre.

Conclusion

We will not summarise the proposal here but will summarise some of its benefits:

- The FIBI Board of Directors incorporates the necessary skills and experience to perform its role
- Is a robust and transparent proposal and has the necessary systems and practices in place to ensure good governance and accountability
- the CHRA Indigenous Caucus continues unchanged and separate from the FIBI Centre
- CHRA is separate from and does not “own” the FIBI Centre
- Keeps the advocacy role with CHRA and the Indigenous Caucus
- Brings the housing, homelessness, and housing-related organisations representing Indigenous Peoples not living on First Nation reserve lands “into one conversation”

And, ultimately, will help us provide enhanced services to Indigenous People in need across the country.