



BC FIRST NATIONS
HOUSING &
INFRASTRUCTURE
COUNCIL

FNHIC-BC REPORT

Delivery Model Design Session

Introduction

The mandate of the First Nations Housing and Infrastructure Council of BC (FNHIC-BC) is to manage the process of designing and implementing a First Nations controlled housing and infrastructure authority in BC, that will: assume authority and control for First Nations housing and infrastructure program delivery in BC; and deliver associated housing and infrastructure services.

The purpose of the October 9-10, 2018 “Delivery Model Design Session” was to develop three realistic design options for the proposed BC First Nations housing and infrastructure authority, to be used as the starting point for an extended discussion and design process, with the BC First Nations housing community.

Each day of the session was designed to begin with short presentations, before participants were transitioned into separate discussion groups to review some topic-specific questions, presented to prompt conversation on potential delivery models for the authority.

Attendees invited to participate in the session, represented a range of expertise, including: on and off reserve housing managers, federal departments, provincial housing providers, infrastructure specialists and others.

Garry Merkel, Executive Director, and Chief Mark Point, Vice-Chair and President, FNHIC, facilitated the design session. Using an overhead presentation titled “Designing a First Nations Housing & Infrastructure Authority”, and Chief Dan George, FNHIC Chair updated the group on FNHIC’s work so far, government’s ongoing commitment to the transfer and the upcoming MOU and how the analysis of Phase 1 feedback would be used in Phase 2.



Chief Mark Point discussed the challenges FNHIC has faced:

- Communications have been a challenge. Despite inviting communities to communicate, responses have been limited in this first round, but we will repeat our engagement sessions for as long as it takes to get every First Nations involved.
- Timing is a challenge. These things take time. It is anticipated that a memorandum of understanding (MOU) will be signed before the current federal government's mandate concludes. (Prior to end of the next fiscal year.) Not everything will transfer over at once.
- The potential upcoming change in government could create a problem for us but the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP), and other mechanisms give control to First Nations. It is uncertain whether a new government would continue to honour the current government-to-government relationship, but the transfer will go forward in any case.
- We are not just speaking about housing. FNHIC is about housing and infrastructure. We often tend to forget about the connection between them – this process is focused on both.
- From “a 40,000-foot perspective” housing and infrastructure touches on social, finance, economic development and other aspects of community, depending on the lens you look through. It's about on reserve and off reserve and homelessness. We need to “reverse engineer” this to see what we need to deal with, and then figure out how to address it.
- We need to think about how this will impact self-governing nations and treaty nations differently.

Participants

Participants acknowledged their cumulative years of experience in their housing and infrastructure roles – estimated at 660 years. Attendees came from backgrounds and experience in various housing and infrastructure-related areas, including:



- Political
- Health and safety
- Housing
- Change management
- Government services
- Waste management
- Homelessness
- Infrastructure
- Engineering
- CMHC
- Housing administration
- Chief and Council
- BC Housing Board
- Construction
- Urban economics
- Risk management
- Remote building
- Medical
- Nation leader
- Emergency planning
- First Nations housing and infrastructure
- Communications
- Multi-level management
- Housing official
- Teaching.

Day One

Analysis

FNHIC research leads had categorized the feedback from Phase 1 engagement sessions into categories of analysis. Participants were divided into facilitated discussion groups. With a synopsis of the feedback in hand they were invited to consider a series of prepared questions regarding designing a new Authority. The questions related to the following topics:

1. Culture and scope of the delivery system
2. Location and governance
3. Program and service delivery
4. Corporate planning, policy and standards
5. Fiscal relationships (with clients)
6. Harmonization / integration (on/off reserves) / human resources / staffing
7. Infrastructure



Feedback

After the first day participants were left with more questions than answers about how a housing and infrastructure authority would be governed. The questions explored governance topics such as:

- The roles of Advisory Councils, technical experts, housing and infrastructure professionals;
- Separating the business of housing and infrastructure from politics;
- Selecting or appointing representatives to participate in the new Authority;
- Accountability; who is the Authority accountable to—how does it report—how is it transparent;
- Establishing policies and standards; and,
- The approximately 60% of First Nations people who live in urban areas.

Key Comments

Decolonizing housing and infrastructure

- The definition of crazy is repeating the same action and expecting a different result—we have to do things differently
- We need to decolonize housing
- “Houses” to an Indigenous person are more than just physical structures; consider referencing “shelters” rather than “houses”
- We cannot try to “tweak” an inefficient system that we did not create
- We need to create something that reflects the needs of First Nations people

Vision

- With strong support from First Nations communities, the Authority must prioritize the safety, well-being and identity of children and their families.
- We are working towards bringing the people home—we need housing for them.



New ways to measure success

- Success cannot be measured or determined by the number of housing units constructed, maybe we can “measure the twinkle in a child’s eyes”
- Establish acceptable baseline levels that First Nations can pursue; determine steps to achieve them (i.e. sufficient sewage treatment, water etc.)

New focus

- The current system attempts to categorize groups together; instead, efforts are needed to reshape entities at the community level
- We need to “put the individual at the centre”, in terms of housing and infrastructure
- The model should take into account the community’s objective

New ways of doing business

- Funding should be evidence-based; a province-wide needs assessment could be helpful
- Multi-year funding allocations should not require burdensome proposal driven processes; financial statements should replace year-end reporting requirements
- Comprehensive Community Plans are critical planning tools
- First Nations have been forced to compete for access to programs and services; this needs to be changed
- Consider ways to enforce policy; identify pertinent issue(s) and provide assistance to rectify them
- Need new environmental assessment legislation
- When discussing housing and infrastructure, it is important to be mindful of any inadvertent impacts on other issues; UNDRIP must be reflected
- Recognition and implementation of rights legislation may have impacts on the development of the FNHC



New ways to think about infrastructure

- While infrastructure is often isolated from housing, an integrated approach is needed when developing a mandate that outlines the delivery model
- Many housing challenges are a direct result of infrastructure challenges.
- Infrastructure is more than water and wastewater services. We need to include:
 - Circuit Riders
 - Water systems (monitoring / maintenance)
 - Life cycle costing and replacement
 - Engineering support
 - Standards / regulation (i.e. environment, water, waste water)
 - Recruitment / training of operators
 - Village maintenance plan
 - Fire protection
 - Recycling
 - Garbage / solid waste sites
 - Roads and bridges
 - Storm water management
 - Drainage
 - Flood protection
 - Equipment maintenance (small tools / large machines)
 - Climate adaptation
 - First Nations water and waste water association
 - Environmental issues
 - O&M Funding (80% / 20%)
 - Capital Asset Inventory System (CAIS) / Accelerated Cost Recovery System (ACRS)
 - First Nations Infrastructure Investment Plan (FNIIP)
 - Maintenance Management Plan (MMP)
 - Official Community Plan (OCP) / PDP / CCP
 - Replacement costing and schedule
 - Schools, recreational facilities
 - Parks
 - Docks / boat ramps / landing strips
 - Remote community (power and electricity).



Day Two

The task for the second day was to draw on the engagement feedback and the results from Day One and develop potential governance and delivery models for the new Authority. Garry Merkel gave a brief presentation on “What is a delivery model?” that covered key questions to be explored such as:

- What are key elements of a delivery system (often a mixture of principles, descriptions and illustrations)?
- How could a delivery model be structured?:
 - Centralized Model;
 - Regional Model;
 - Virtual Model; or
 - Integrated Model.

Merkel presented several models including:

- A sample “Cooperative Model”
 - With BC Housing Authority at the centre, surrounded by five separate regional authorities; and
- A sample “Regional Hub Model”
 - With BC Housing Authority at the top, divided down through regional offices, and then down through delivery arms/agencies.

The group also examined a chart illustrating the model of the current system.

Designing

Attendees participated in three separate discussion groups, to design potential delivery models, based on previously gathered feedback.

Group One

Delivery Model Design #1 – A Regional Model with Centralized Services
With features such as:



- Having a number of regional offices, including one centralized regional / virtual office, would be beneficial; all physical offices should be situated on-reserve
 - Determining the size and locations of the offices, will require further discussion.
- Consider how to regionalize the offices in a manner that reflects First Nations communities, their populations, and their alliances.
- The model will require dividing the province into regions:
 - Determining regional boundaries will require further discussion (i.e. based on language groups, cultural groups, etc.)
- The centralized regional / virtual office could:
 - Accommodate centralized functions (including the CEO) and services that support the CEO (i.e. administration, finance, etc.);
 - Accommodate expertise and functions typically provided by a regional office; and
 - Be situated away from Vancouver in a geographically central location (i.e. Prince George).
- The regional offices could:
 - Accommodate expertise and functions typically provided by a centralized office;
 - Be situated on-reserve; and
 - Support career opportunities for communities.

Group Two

Delivery Model Design #2 – A Centralized Model with Regional Offices

With features such as:

- A centralized authority could include regional offices;
- A separate professional housing board could be established to support the authority;
- A leadership group could be established to provide advocacy (a critically important feature of a government-to-government process);



- The HIC would:
 - Interact with the housing authority and deal with policy-related issues; and,
 - Oversee the authority;
- The authority could:
 - Include a profitable component
- The regional offices:
 - One of the offices could be mobile, and situated in a community as needed; and,
 - Could accommodate off-reserve representatives;
- There would be one central office:
 - Tsawwassen First Nation may have space available to accommodate a central housing authority office; and,
- The group also discussed:
 - Culture and programs versus service delivery;
 - Focusing on regional territories rather than reserves;
 - Not defining First Nations people as being on-reserve or off-reserve; and,
 - A key focus of the model, on “home”.

Group Three

Delivery Model Design #3 – A Centralized Model with a Regional Presence

With features such as:

- The authority will be physically located at a centralized location, with the objective to work towards providing services as close to communities as possible;
- Office space could be rented in local community offices;
- The delivery of services could be regionally-based;
- A separation between the HIC and the housing authority should be maintained;
- The housing authority’s board of directors could include eight to ten members:
 - A letter of expectations and priorities could be affirmed annually by each director;



- Directors would be appointed by the HIC, based on a skills matrix (i.e. representing legal, corporate, culture and other experience)
- Clear (and perceived) conflict of interest rules would apply;
- The housing authority should:
 - Produce an annual report;
 - Be “Culturally-Based and Community Driven”;
 - BC communities’ Chiefs and Council could assign two community members to participate on the 20-member political arm of the housing authority;
- Administration (i.e. record keeping, IT, finance) of the authority should be as lean and efficient as possible;
- Regions within the health authority, could have multiple communities with varying circumstances and needs; funding and services could be customized to meet their needs;
- The board’s functions could include:
 - Setting priorities and strategic planning (after speaking with a network of experts and housing professionals)
 - Identifying best practices for building practices, arrears management, etc. (a list of worst practices could also be developed); and
 - Creating housing policies, which communities could adapt as required
- No major changes to programs or services would occur immediately after the transfer of authority; transitions would occur only after extended dialogue with communities.

Next Steps

FNHIC research leads will analyze the feedback from the Design Charrette and then draft the three models into a format that will become the key material for FNHIC Phase 2 round of engagement sessions. Phase 2 is planned to begin in the Spring of 2019.