

News Release

April 21, 2021

First Nations Leadership Council Sees Federal Budget as Step Forward

(Xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səlilwətał (Tseil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) is pleased to see the federal government pledge more than \$18 billion towards closing gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and advancing reconciliation over the next five years. While we are still waiting to see the allocation of funds specifically for First Nations, this figure is a significant increase from the previous federal budget. The FNLC notes that this Liberal minority budget requires support from at least one major party, and otherwise will become a campaign platform.

“This budget is by and large a reflection of what the First Nations Leadership Council, and our partners across the country, have been pushing for over the past year,” said BC Assembly of First Nations Regional Chief Terry Teegee. “We need a just recovery from the economic devastation of COVID 19, and we are pleased to see funding specifically earmarked for Indigenous communities to rebuild after the pandemic.”

The FNLC also acknowledges the importance of including the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the budget, since this will take considerable work and needs to be fully and meaningfully resourced.

“We note that the budget commits \$31.5 million over two years to support the co-development of an action plan with Indigenous partners to implement legislation on the UN Declaration,” stated Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, Secretary-Treasurer of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. “While this spending is necessary, we also strongly caution that implementation of the UN Declaration cannot be dependent on an action plan, and we call for the federal government to allocate additional funds to immediately begin co-developing processes and monies for legislative alignment with the UN Declaration and must be directed to Rights Holders for their direct involvement, not top down approaches.”

The budget also includes significant supports for Indigenous Children and Families (\$1 billion over the next five years) including \$73.6 million towards implementation of the *Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*. The FNLC is calling for a detailed breakdown of this funding to be provided.

“The financial commitments contained in yesterday’s federal budget are a significant step in attaining the necessary resourcing to reform child and family services with a target to providing better outcomes for our children.



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We must continue to do everything we can to work together towards changing the focus from intervention and separation to strengthening and keeping families together”, said Cheryl Casimer of the First Nations Summit.

Despite some important advances, the FNLC notes the lack of a specific First Nations housing strategy. It is disappointing that funding for First Nations housing isn’t explicitly allocated, since housing is a social determinant of health. We have seen how inadequate housing contributed to higher rates of COVID transmission during the pandemic.

The budget also included further financial support to improve access to health care, a promise of action on the continuing tragedy of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2 spirited people, and a specific fund to commemorate the legacy of residential schools. In all, the FNLC sees the promised funding laid out in the federal budget as a step in the right direction towards addressing First Nations priorities.

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The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), First Nations Summit (FNS), and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC).

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