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# **Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Bryan May**



## Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Thursday, February 2, 2017

• (1100)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.)):** I call the meeting to order.

Good morning, everybody. Seeing that it is past 11 o'clock, we need to get started here.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Monday, June 13, 2016, the committee is resuming its study on poverty reduction strategies. We are currently in the housing component of this study. The committee has agreed to study affordable housing, housing strategies, homelessness, Housing First initiatives, and other new and innovative approaches.

First of all, thank you all for being here today. From the Department of Employment and Social Development, we have Catherine Scott, director general of the community development and homelessness partnerships directorate. From the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, we have Charles MacArthur, senior vice-president of regional operations and assisted housing, and Michel Tremblay, senior vice-president of policy, research, and public affairs. From the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, we have four representatives: Lynda Clairmont, senior assistant deputy minister of regional operations; Allan Clarke, director general of economic research and policy development at lands and economic development; David Smith, acting director general of community infrastructure, regional operations; and Daniel Leclair, director general of regional infrastructure delivery, regional operations. Thank you all for being here.

We're really looking forward to getting into this component of our study, and the timing of your being here is really good. We're going to start travelling next week, so the information we get to prepare us for that travel is critically important.

We're going to allow all groups to present to us today, so we're going to keep presentations to seven minutes if that's possible. We're going to start with the Department of Employment and Social Development. Catherine Scott, you have seven minutes.

**Ms. Catherine Scott (Director General, Community Development and Homelessness Partnerships Directorate, Department of Employment and Social Development):** Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here before you today, to speak on behalf of the Department of Employment and Social Development Canada to discuss the homelessness partnering strategy.

Homelessness affects a diverse cross-section of the population, from single adults to youth, families, women with children, veterans, and seniors. In 2014 approximately 136,000 Canadians used an emergency shelter across the country.

Compared to the housed population, homeless individuals are far more likely to experience mental health or addiction issues, be victims of assault, and suffer from a variety of physical health ailments, including tuberculosis, HIV, and the effects of inadequately controlled diabetes and hypertension.

As a result of related public spending on health, social, and judicial services, the economic costs of homelessness are high. Some estimates indicate that it costs Canadians as much as \$6 billion annually. The homelessness partnering strategy is a community-based program that provides direct financial support to 61 designated communities across the country, as well as to aboriginal and rural and remote communities, to allow them to address their local homelessness needs.

Through this strategy, qualified organizations may receive funding for projects to help prevent and reduce homelessness in Canada. These projects are funded through both regional and national funding streams. The program's formal adoption of the Housing First approach in 2014 represented a departure from more traditional approaches of addressing homelessness primarily through emergency shelters and services.

The focus of Housing First is to provide clients with access to independent and permanent housing as quickly as possible, without having to meet any preconditions. This model focuses on clients who are either chronically homeless, meaning individuals who are currently homeless and have been so for six months or more in the past year, or episodically homeless, referring to individuals who are currently homeless and have experienced three or more episodes of homelessness in the past year. Once housed, these clients receive tailored, wraparound supports to ensure long-term housing stability.

We are only now beginning to receive data to measure the impact of the shift to Housing First. With the full five-year implementation, we will have a much better sense of the effectiveness of this approach for communities.

•(1105)

[*Translation*]

At the same time, communities moving to the Housing First model continue to have the flexibility to support other proven approaches and to support priority populations, such as youth homelessness and homelessness within the seniors' populations.

The Homelessness Partnering Strategy is a unique program. Our community governance model plays a significant role in the successful implementation of projects at the local level. A community advisory board exists in each of the 61 designated communities and is made up of a wide range of stakeholders. It is responsible for setting the direction for addressing local homelessness issues and recommends projects for funding. A community entity, normally an incorporated organization such as the community's municipal government, is responsible for the implementation of a community plan and the administration of funds.

Budget 2016 announced an additional \$111.8 million in funding for the Homelessness Partnering Strategy over two years. This builds on the program's existing five-year investment of nearly \$600 million over five years, from 2014 to 2019.

Additional funding has therefore been provided to the program's three original funding streams. Approximately \$54 million in additional investments over two years have been made to the designated communities stream. The Aboriginal homelessness funding stream doubled, receiving an additional \$29 million over two years. The rural and remote homelessness stream funding also doubled to \$11.2 million per year over two years.

[*English*]

In addition to the three regional funding streams, there are also three nationally delivered funding streams.

The national homelessness information system is a partnership model designed to facilitate data collection from homeless shelters and other service providers.

The surplus federal real property for homelessness initiative is delivered by our department in partnership with Public Services and Procurement Canada to transfer surplus federal lands and buildings to stakeholders for \$1 to create affordable housing for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Budget 2016 also announced \$12.5 million over two years for the innovative solutions to homelessness funding stream. This stream tests innovative approaches to prevent and reduce homelessness, particularly with respect to indigenous and Inuit peoples, young people, women fleeing violence, and veterans who experience homelessness.

Two calls for proposals were launched in the fall of 2016 to solicit new projects. One call was for larger contribution projects and the other was for smaller-scale experimental projects requiring grants under \$25,000. These project proposals are now being assessed, and an announcement is expected in spring 2017.

Over the course of the next year ESDC will have the opportunity to engage with provincial and territorial partners, municipal representatives, and communities, as well as with indigenous

stakeholders and others to seek their views as we prepare for program renewal in 2019.

This engagement will include the work of the advisory committee on homelessness, to be chaired by parliamentary secretary Adam Vaughan. The nomination process to seek members for this advisory committee was launched yesterday, February 1, and is open until February 20.

Thank you. I look forward to answering your questions.

•(1110)

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

I will now turn it over to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Mr. Tremblay, the next seven minutes are yours. Go ahead.

**Mr. Michel Tremblay (Senior Vice-President, Policy, Research and Public Affairs, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to be here.

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the committee's study of poverty reduction strategies.

[*Translation*]

We note that housing is one of the four main areas the committee is focusing on, and for good reason. Research has shown that good housing provides the stability from which families and individuals can leverage better social and economic outcomes—better health, better education and better employment prospects. In short, it can help break the cycle of poverty for low-income households.

[*English*]

Conversely, high housing costs can contribute to poverty. Nationally, we estimate that about 1.8 million Canadian households are currently in core housing need, spending 30% or more of their pre-tax income on housing. That means less money is available for other necessities like food, health care, and education. This makes it harder for families to stay healthy and to support their children's education and development, thus perpetuating the cycle of poverty from generation to generation.

As Canada's national housing agency, CMHC has an important role to play in reducing poverty through better housing. As Evan Siddall, our president, said when he appeared before the committee last April, helping Canadians meet their housing needs is our *raison d'être*.

One way we do this is by working with the provinces, territories, indigenous communities, and other stakeholders to ensure that vulnerable Canadians have a place to call home. Each year CMHC provides federal funding of approximately \$2 billion to help meet the housing needs of low-income families, seniors, people with disabilities, indigenous people, and victims of family violence, among others. Most of this funding is used to support more than 500,000 Canadian households living in existing social housing units across the country, including in first nations communities.

Significant federal funding is also provided through the investment in affordable housing, a collaborative initiative with the provinces and territories. Provinces and territories match federal funding and are responsible for program design and delivery in their jurisdictions.

CMHC also provides funding to help improve living conditions on reserves by building new social housing units, renovating existing homes, and building capacity within first nations communities.

As the committee knows, budget 2016 included a significant boost to this annual funding, providing for \$2.2 billion in new investments over two years to give Canadians greater access to affordable housing. The government has made it clear that housing is an important component of its overall approach to strengthening the middle class, promoting inclusive growth for Canadians, and helping to lift more people out of poverty. Most of this new funding is flowing through CMHC and is being used to address pressing housing needs in the short term: for example, federal spending under the investment in affordable housing has been more than doubled, with an additional \$504 million over two years to support new construction and renovation of affordable housing, as well as measures to foster safe, independent living, and housing affordability.

Budget 2016 also provided more than \$200 million to build, repair, and adapt affordable housing for Canada's growing senior population, allowing them to stay in their homes. Nearly \$90 million is earmarked to build or renovate shelters for victims of domestic violence. Close to \$574 million is being invested to renovate and retrofit existing social housing units, making them more affordable to operate and reducing their impact on the environment. Some \$554 million is being invested in improving housing and living conditions in first nations communities. The immediate housing needs of people living in the north and in Inuit communities is also being addressed, with new funding commitments totalling \$178 million. Up to \$30 million is available to help preserve affordability for low-income households living in federally administered social housing where long-term operating agreements are expiring.

Budget 2016 also included two new initiatives aimed at supporting the construction of affordable rental housing, an important option for many Canadian households. The \$200 million affordable rental innovation fund was launched by CMHC in September 2016, and offers financial support for ideas and new funding models and innovative building techniques that spur the rental housing sector. The fund is expected to help create up to 4,000 new affordable housing units over the next five years.

CMHC is also finalizing the design of a new affordable rental housing financing initiative, which will provide up to \$2.5 billion in low-cost loans to municipalities and housing developers during the earliest and riskiest phases of development. Further details will be announced in the near future.

Importantly, the budget committed the government to consult Canadians and housing stakeholders on a national housing strategy. In our role as housing policy advisers to the government, CMHC has been supporting our minister, the Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, in this process.

●(1115)

[*Translation*]

Last summer and fall, we led a national conversation on housing, reaching out to Canadians and a broad range of stakeholders to help identify innovative new ways to improve housing outcomes for Canadians. The consultations confirmed that this is a top-of-mind issue for many Canadians. A number of clear messages emerged. Canadians want better housing outcomes, especially for those who need the most help. They told us that housing solutions need to be people-focused, so that individuals and families have access to jobs, schools and supports in order to participate in their communities and help improve their life opportunities.

[*English*]

CMHC continues to support Minister Duclos in the development of the national housing strategy for release later this year. Among other objectives, the strategy will help guide and promote greater alignment among policy areas, including poverty reduction, and among various orders of government and other participants in the housing sector.

That concludes my opening remarks, Mr. Chair. Thank you again for the opportunity to be here. My colleague and I would be pleased to answer any questions from the committee.

**The Chair:** That's fantastic. Thank you very much.

Now, from the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, we have the senior assistant deputy minister of regional operations.

Madam Clairmont, the next seven minutes are yours.

**Ms. Lynda Clairmont (Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Regional Operations, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** Thank you very much.

Mr. Chair and honourable members, *merci et meegwetch* for inviting us to appear before the committee today, here on traditional Algonquin territory. We welcome the opportunity to talk a bit about what the department is doing with respect to housing.

I want to begin by acknowledging the committee's work on poverty reduction strategies, affordable housing, homelessness, mental health, Housing First initiatives, and other innovative approaches. This work contributes to our broader knowledge of these issues and will help inform our work.

Housing and community infrastructure are fundamental needs for indigenous people on reserve, in rural and urban areas, and in the north. They are a vital part of healthy and safe communities and are at the heart of well-being, economic prosperity, and sustainability.

There is a large body of research that has looked into the linkages between the physical environment in which people live and their social, economic, and health outcomes. Improvements in housing can support the overall well-being of community members and, more specifically, help them perform well at school or engage in employment.

The government is moving forward to more effectively support indigenous communities on the issues most important to them. As you are aware, budget 2016 provided \$4.6 billion over five years to support community infrastructure in indigenous and Inuit communities, and we are working with communities and partners to deliver on those commitments.

Of that amount, INAC received \$416 million over two years to specifically address immediate housing needs on reserve to support the construction, service, and renovation of over 3,000 units. To date, \$267 million or thereabouts has been allocated for about 965 housing projects that will address immediate needs on reserve. Our regional officials are working closely with communities to implement these projects.

Budget 2016 investments are in addition to an average of \$146 million provided directly to first nations to support a range of housing needs, including new construction, renovations, operations and maintenance, technical support, and capacity development.

With respect to northern and Inuit communities, budget 2016 provided \$156.7 million to address Inuit housing and the acute need in three of the northern regions, with \$50 million for Nunavik, \$15 million for Nunatsiavut, and \$15 million for the Inuvialuit settlement. We will continue to work with CMHC to address the needs of Inuit housing.

Our partnership with CMHC also extends to working with the Métis organizations to engage on distinct Métis housing issues and develop options that will address their unique needs. In the interim, Métis can access funding under CMHC's indigenous off-reserve funding program.

Communities are already starting to benefit from the 2016 infrastructure investments. For example, in October of 2016, \$800,000 was provided to the Munsee-Delaware first nation in Ontario for the construction of six new housing units in the community. We also funded three duplexes in Elsipogtog in New Brunswick. We had pre-manufactured duplexes, which allowed for quick and efficient construction, helping this first nation to begin to address its housing shortage. To reduce overcrowding in Barrens Lands First Nation in Manitoba, we invested in the construction of four housing duplexes to be completed this spring.

The budget 2016 investments are also starting to address the broader infrastructure gaps in indigenous communities. For example, 88 projects are under way to help communities update and connect to energy systems and to have Internet access, which is pretty fundamental.

While funding is part of the solution, we are also working with partners to reform our housing policy and programs, support community capacity, and establish a new fiscal relationship with indigenous peoples. We have provided funding to support community planning, and this is a priority for the department as well.

Through the national housing strategy, the government is working with indigenous communities to develop an effective long-term approach to support planning, construction, financing, and maintenance of housing on and off reserve. As part of the national housing strategy, the department, with support from CMHC and indigenous representative organizations, engaged communities and other partners on the reform of housing programs, Inuit housing, and longer-term investments. CMHC will publish a report on this first phase of engagement, and we will continue to engage with indigenous partners as we launch a second phase of engagement this spring.

The second phase will lead to the development of a distinct indigenous on-reserve housing strategy and options for on-reserve housing reform that will support a broader spectrum of housing approaches and solutions. It will also highlight specific needs in northern and Inuit communities and for the Métis.

● (1120)

While homes are at the centre of any community, improving the quality of life for all members must be supported by other community infrastructure, including water, schools, community centres, and more.

We are currently working in close partnership with indigenous organizations and other key partners on how to implement the government's long-term infrastructure investment plan. The goal is to ensure that community infrastructure on reserve and in northern communities is well planned, effectively managed, and comparable to the rest of Canada.

We will continue to encourage community-driven planning as one of many tools for capacity-building. Interest in community planning as a process that promotes healing and identifies community priorities and aspirations is gaining momentum.

We have engaged with indigenous mentors who have experience working with other first nations communities to create community plans. This has supported the development of an indigenous community development national strategy that will impact all areas of governance capacity, transparency, and accountability. It will support indigenous peoples in building a path forward and improved outcomes in areas such as health, education, and good government.

The government is also working to establish a new fiscal relationship with indigenous peoples that will provide sufficient, predictable, and sustainable funding. We will work in partnership with indigenous organizations to design this new fiscal relationship, enabling indigenous communities to develop long-term strategies and plan for their future.

I want to thank you again for your work on poverty reduction and for equipping all partners with better information, advice, and evidence.

We will continue our discussions with indigenous leaders and communities and other key partners. We will work together to support the implementation of poverty reduction strategies. It will help all of us move along the path of reconciliation toward a renewed, nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous communities.

I look forward to our discussions here today.

Thank you, *merci*, and *meegwetch*.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Thank you to all of you. You've been fantastic about keeping to the time, actually coming in under time in most cases.

Right off the bat, we're going to go to MP Poilievre for the first six minutes of questions.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC):** Thank you very much to all of our witnesses.

I heard a lot in the testimony about all the things the government can and is trying to do to help, but I didn't hear anything about all the things the government is doing to harm. Increasingly, it's becoming clear that government policies are the driving force behind the inordinate increase in the cost of housing for Canadians.

I have in front of me right now an affordability report produced by the Canadian Home Builders' Association. It's on housing and the provision thereof. This report shows that the cost of housing construction has barely increased at all since 1995. Based on the chart in front of me, that increase is probably about the same as the overall cost of living—very modest. Meanwhile, the cost of land on which to build has tripled.

The Canadian Home Builders' Association, joined by many others who work in this field, attribute this increase to a mountain of red tape, to restrictions on land development, and to development charges that are far in excess of the real cost associated with providing infrastructure to the new housing being built. This level of provincial and municipal interference in construction of new housing is the major driver behind the cost of owning one's home. It stands to reason that this analysis is correct. It is true that land costs go up with time—as the old saying goes, they're not making any more of it—but it is impossible to believe that the increase in land costs is simply a function of market economics.

Our population in this country has been growing less than 2% over the last two decades. It's not as though we've had a 250% increase in Canada's population, which would lead to such increases in land costs. What we have had is a massive increase in the cost of bringing a home to development: the permitting that must be achieved, the transaction costs, the consultants that are required in order to win approval at city hall, the subsequent fees and charges that are applied to that construction. All of these are limiting supply and, in so doing, increasing cost.

My question is for CMHC. Is your organization keeping track of the costs of government for each unit of housing that is built in the various markets across the country?

• (1125)

**Mr. Michel Tremblay:** Thank you for the question.

At the moment, we are not, but we are in the process of completing a study on the escalating home prices in major urban centres in Canada. You are correct. Obviously, economic factors such as population growth, the average income in these areas, and low interest rates also contribute to rising prices in certain areas, but land accessibility restriction has also been identified as a driver of prices, so we are in the process of trying to collect more data on this information to try to get to the bottom of some of these things.

Obviously, cities such as Toronto and Vancouver in particular have finite land availability, as you mentioned. There are also all sorts of development restrictions placed by municipalities, but we don't have figures on how much that contributes specifically to cost.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** The land restrictions that exist in markets like Toronto and Vancouver are a major reason for the lack of availability of building. These kinds of zoning restrictions have been proven to drive up housing costs. A recent paper by the Brookings Institution that was co-authored by a Harvard-trained economist showed that these kinds of restrictions are particularly hard on impoverished minorities, who, over decades, moved towards greater social equality by migrating to where job opportunities were—big cities, where there was lots of employment. Building restrictions imposed by municipal and state governments have made housing unaffordable for such people, and therefore they are shut out of economic opportunities. It's very good for the wealthy, of course, because their home values are inflated by government restrictions on supply, but very damaging for low-income people who are not yet in the housing market.

Would CMHC commit to studying the impact of excessive government restrictions on housing construction on the social mobility of low-income people in pursuit of opportunity?

• (1130)

**The Chair:** We're actually past time, but I'm going to allow for a quick answer.

**Mr. Michel Tremblay:** As I mentioned, we are committed to doing additional research on the availability of land, land restrictions, and so forth. We are looking at performing studies over the next year or so.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

It's over to MP Ruimy, please.

**Mr. Dan Ruimy (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Lib.):** Thank you very much, everybody, for being here and presenting.

I'm going to start my questioning with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation as well.

I grew up in Montreal. We were a large family of five boys and my mom and dad, and all our lives we were in apartment buildings. I don't think home ownership was ever a big issue for us. Like a lot of Canadians.... Not everybody is into home ownership. In places like my riding, one of the challenges we have is that there are not a lot of apartment rentals. There is not a lot of opportunity for young single people to even be able to afford an apartment, because there's not a lot of supply there.

In budget 2016, there was talk about \$2.6 billion to encourage builders to build more rental inventory. Could you tell us a little about that?

**Mr. Michel Tremblay:** Yes, there was. We are just putting the final touches on this program, so I can't speak to a lot of the details, but we are going to be launching it in the near future. It is with the purpose of increasing the supply of rental housing, by up to 10,000 units.

**Mr. Dan Ruimy:** Okay, good. Thank you.

I also know that in subsidized housing, co-op housing, a lot of those contracts were expiring. Mortgages were expiring, and the federal government gave enough money to cover the subsidies until 2018. What happens to those subsidies after 2018?

**Mr. Charles MacArthur (Senior Vice-President, Regional Operations and Assisted Housing, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation):** As you say, we've been given the money up until 2018, and this was given for the short term, between 2016 and 2018 and the national housing strategy, so we look forward to the national housing strategy to provide further direction.

**Mr. Dan Ruimy:** Then is the onus on the federal government?

**Mr. Charles MacArthur:** We also work with groups that are expiring. At our affordable housing centre, we have folks on the ground who go out and work with groups that are approaching their expiry to try to help them work toward sustainability after the agreement. We try to develop financial plans and work with them on sustainable models through which they can thrive after the end of their agreements.

There are a variety of subsidies. The agreements usually are timed so that they end when the loan that was in place ends. Many of the subsidies are for the loan amount, so when the loan's gone, the expense of that loan will also come out of the bottom line of the expenses of many of the groups that have agreements in place.

**Mr. Dan Ruimy:** Yes, I'm still concerned about what happens after 2018, but we'll leave it there.

This is to Catherine Scott. I know that you're getting applications in right now for the innovative solutions to homelessness project. Can you share anything that you've seen so far?

• (1135)

**Ms. Catherine Scott:** It's fairly early. The application process closed just before Christmas, and we're in the process of assessing the applications. We had, I would say, an overwhelming response, which was fantastic. We received project proposals from across the country, so we're just now in the process of assessing them and hope to be able to make some announcements about the projects that will be receiving funding in the next few weeks.

**Mr. Dan Ruimy:** Along that line, how are you planning to measure some of these? Once you pick them, are there measures in place? What's your action plan to measure the outcome of this so we know what's going to work, what's not going to work? What's in place, or is there something in place?

**Ms. Catherine Scott:** This is part of our innovative solutions to homelessness stream. We had set some priorities in terms of looking at projects, for example, with indigenous stakeholders or projects that addressed youth homelessness or veterans. As we decide which projects we're going to be funding, we will be looking at what impacts we're achieving with some of those subgroups, with some of our investments over the next couple of years through that stream.

**Mr. Dan Ruimy:** Will those be made public, do you think?

**Ms. Catherine Scott:** Likely we'll report through the departmental reporting process on the results of those investments.

**Mr. Dan Ruimy:** Okay.

Moving forward, can you describe what programs or funding opportunities exist for wraparound services? Providing a place is one thing, but if somebody is addicted to drugs or has mental health challenges, just putting them into a home is not the only answer. How are we addressing wraparound services?

**Ms. Catherine Scott:** That's really at the core of the Housing First model, and that is the focus of federal investments. Sixty-five per cent of federal investments in large urban centres are to be directed toward Housing First approaches.

You're right that it's not just about placing people in permanent housing. That is the first step, because that approach has demonstrated clearly that once individuals are in permanent housing, they tend to be more stable, and then they're able to address some of the other issues that they're facing.

At the core of Housing First there is an intensive case management approach. That approach is around providing those individuals with a case manager and ensuring that they are connected to all of the services they need, including housing retention, working with landlords, and accessing mental health or medical services.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We have to move on now to MP Boutin-Sweet, please. Welcome.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

My thanks to everyone for being here. I have been hearing some very interesting things today.

I am going to start with some questions on Aboriginal housing. They go mostly to the group of witnesses from the department, but also to the officials from CMHC.

Last year, my colleague Charlie Angus asked you a question about Aboriginal housing. Let me quote you a part of the reply: "...the housing shortage on reserves will rise to approximately 115,000 units by 2031." You added that "almost 41% of households on reserve are dwellings in need of a major repair and mould or mildew has been reported in 51% of the units."



I travelled to Nunavik and saw that for myself. I also saw the overcrowding in the housing there; it was senseless.

In Budget 2016, the amount of \$416.6 million over two years was allocated to this. According to your estimates, with that amount, it should be possible to build 300 new units and renovate 1,400 others. We know that the growth rate in the north is high.

I have a proposal; tell me what you think about it. You want innovative solutions? Perhaps I have one.

Construction costs are very high in the north. One possible solution would be to provide training in the construction trades in the north, on site. Of course, the training would be tailored to the local cultures. There would be a lot of advantages. One would be job creation, of course. That alone would be a great help in combatting poverty. You would not have to bring workers in from the south, so the construction would cost less.

You could work with the local population. We want a new nation-to-nation relationship with Aboriginal people. There would also be advantages in working with them, as they could propose solutions for building accommodation that is adapted to the culture and the climate, which is not the case at the moment. I know that there are already local leaders, in Inukjuak, for example, and they have very good ideas on the subject.

Ms. Clairmont, just now, you mentioned addressing the gaps in infrastructure, especially in connecting energy systems. That is actually one of the problems: people there are not connected to the Hydro-Québec grid.

I would like to know what the two groups of witnesses think of that idea.

• (1140)

[English]

**Ms. Lynda Clairmont:** Thank you for the question. I'll start off and then maybe I'll ask some of my colleagues to jump in. Allan can talk a little bit about connectivity and Internet access. We're also looking at a number of projects around electrification and connecting communities to the electrical grid, particularly in the north.

With respect to your idea about training for trades in the north and in all communities, this is a priority for us. That, I think, is what I was referencing around developing capacity-building. Increasingly we want to work with communities so that we don't have the situation in which somebody goes in, builds, and then leaves.

Just yesterday I saw a film from a B.C. community in which they were building a small community centre and a couple of houses, and they were training people in the community to get "trade tickets", as I believe they called them, from the building they were doing. Capacity development and working with the communities on their needs are very key for us.

We're also quite focused on innovation, and again Allan may want to speak a little bit to that. We're looking for alternative solutions in the north: more green and environmentally friendly housing, and housing that more closely meets the needs of the communities and can follow people through their stages of life. The house you want at 18 isn't the house you want at 40, and it probably isn't the house you

want at 65. We're trying to look at how, in smaller communities, we would be able to build that flexibility around housing stock. We're also, with the communities, focusing on how to maintain that stock. That also offers employment opportunities, I think, for community members.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** Thank you.

[English]

**Ms. Lynda Clairmont:** Allan, did you want to...?

**Mr. Allan Clarke (Director General, Economic Research and Policy Development, Lands and Economic Development, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** I could say a few things about some of the innovations we're looking at in financing. When the minister reported to the Senate standing committee following their report on on-reserve housing infrastructure, she committed the government to look at some innovative financing options that would support the construction of housing and infrastructure.

There are a number of interesting innovations that have already begun. One that we consider best in class in some of the work it's doing is the First Nations Fiscal Management Act. That's a piece of legislation through which first nations can assert jurisdiction over fiscal matters as well as taxation. It also provides a vehicle called the First Nations Finance Authority that allows first nations, through the mechanism of pool borrowing, to raise money in the capital markets. The first bond of the finance authority was issued back in June 2014, and since that time the finance authority has raised almost \$300 million for first nations to finance a number of on-reserve projects, including housing and infrastructure.

Now that it has been road-tested, we see this as a vehicle we could be developing further to deal with some of the major gaps in housing and infrastructure. People will look at how we deal with housing now—we're funding homes, but we're not really financing housing. That vehicle, the finance authority, and the other institutions under the fiscal management act would help support more innovative financing structures.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

Now we'll go over to MP Sangha.

**Mr. Ramesh Sangha (Brampton Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and my thanks to all the witnesses for coming here today.

My first question goes to Catherine Scott.

We have seen that the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness has talked about homelessness conditions in its study, and York University's Canadian Observatory on Homelessness has also talked about homelessness in regard to indigenous communities. We also see that CMHC's study states that core housing needs are greater for Inuit. Inuit are disproportionately represented in respect of Canada's homeless population. When we talk about core housing needs, Inuit feel core housing needs aren't there.

My question to you is this: what measures has ESDC taken to ensure that the first nations, Métis, and Inuit people have access to safe, adequate, and affordable housing?

• (1145)

**Ms. Catherine Scott:** I can speak a little bit about the investments through the homelessness partnering strategy in our indigenous stream, and then I'll ask my colleagues to add anything supplementary they have on access to affordable housing.

Within our program there is a dedicated indigenous stream of funding. It's about \$28 million this year and next and it provides funding to about 40 communities across the country. We have dedicated community advisory boards, made up of indigenous stakeholders who manage and decide the priorities of investment for those funds. The way the program is structured allows the local communities to design interventions that are culturally sensitive and that respect indigenous practices.

In looking at the statistics on homelessness, in 2016 we did a point-in-time count in 32 communities across the country, and the indigenous population was about 37% of homeless individuals. Similarly, the shelter study we released at the end of 2016 also demonstrated that indigenous populations are significantly over-represented in emergency shelters, representing about 30% of that population.

**Mr. Ramesh Sangha:** Is the funding that the federal government is giving going to the agencies or directly to the indigenous communities? I'm talking mostly about Inuit now.

**Ms. Catherine Scott:** This funding goes directly to indigenous-serving organizations to develop interventions specifically for indigenous clientele, interventions that are culturally sensitive.

**Mr. Ramesh Sangha:** Is there any way that private infrastructure improves on the first nations infrastructure fund? Do you think that private infrastructure will be better than the other one?

**Ms. Catherine Scott:** Private infrastructure in terms of...?

**Mr. Ramesh Sangha:** Spending through private infrastructure.

**Ms. Catherine Scott:** Through our program, we do invest mostly in the community-level service providers at this point.

**Mr. Ramesh Sangha:** Would it be helpful for the national housing strategy for the reduction of poverty? Will it be helping in that way?

**Ms. Catherine Scott:** I think that will certainly be an important component in terms of looking at how we address homelessness within indigenous populations.

**Mr. Ramesh Sangha:** My next question is to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Maybe Mr. MacArthur or Mr. Tremblay can answer this question.

Our minister is already speaking regarding the plan and policies. He says that these investments are transitional measures to bridge the gap for the next two years while consultations are undertaken with the provinces, territories, and stakeholders, leading to a new approach under the national housing strategy.

With regard to the national housing strategy, we have already seen that the maximum amounts are being spent on that. Budget 2016 announces the federal government's plan to expand current investments with regard to affordable housing.

How will you lead the development and implementation of the national housing strategy to better address the needs of Canadians with respect to affordable housing and to help reduce poverty?

• (1150)

**The Chair:** You must answer very briefly, I'm afraid; sorry.

**Mr. Michel Tremblay:** I can't speak to all the details, as the national housing strategy is still being developed, but I can safely say that we've heard from Canadians that we need to focus on those Canadians who are most in need. Obviously there's a recognition that a lot of investment is required, but also that there's a finite amount of money available, so we will focus on those who are most in need. That's what Canadians have been telling us through our consultation process.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I'll turn it over to MP Robillard, please.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.):** Welcome to all the witnesses.

This question is open to everyone.

Last January, in Laval, our government and the Government of Quebec announced a two-year agreement on investments in affordable and social housing in Quebec.

Can you tell us how it will be decided which seniors will benefit from those investments, in Quebec and elsewhere in the country? What are the best ways in which to turn those investments into reality?

[*English*]

**Mr. Charles MacArthur:** We have signed agreements with all 13 provinces and territories. All of the supplemental agreements for the flowing of the dollars through our provincial partners have been signed.

There are a variety of ways. The doubling of the investment in affordable housing is intended to serve folks who are on or are eligible to be on social housing waiting lists. It is definitely directed that way.

With regard to other investments that were made, some were geared directly towards seniors. There is a requirement that it go towards seniors. Others are for renovation and retrofitting of existing social housing.

There are requirements. We work with the partner, and they have to submit plans to show where money is being spent. We have an audit process in place to make sure it went to where it was intended to go.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Robillard:** How are the people informed about how things will work? By that I mean seniors in general. Do we reach out to the boards of directors in each institution?

[English]

**Mr. Charles MacArthur:** In order to ensure that the funding in budget 2016 for seniors could flow quickly and get to where it was needed in a timely manner, that was done through existing agreements we had with provinces and territories. The provinces and territories have the responsibility to design and to deliver the programs. Given that it was an interim investment for 2016-2018, there was some urgency to make sure the mechanisms we already had in place would get the dollars to those in need quickly. There was interaction with the provinces and territories.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Robillard:** I was actually thinking about seniors who are not really aware of these programs. Is there a way to provide them with more information so that they can take advantage of these investments?

[English]

**Mr. Charles MacArthur:** As I said, it's the provinces and the territories that are designing and delivering, and they are the ones working directly with the groups in terms of the seniors housing to construct or renovate housing that's on the ground. Our provincial partners may choose to use some of the funding, particularly the doubling of the investment in affordable housing, for rent supplements or rent allowances. They would be in direct contact with the seniors who are there on the ground in the province or the territory.

• (1155)

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Robillard:** My next question is on another matter, but it is also open to everyone.

As my colleague mentioned, the proposal in Budget 2016 was to allocate \$416.6 million over two years, through Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, in order to improve housing conditions on reserve, to reduce overcrowding, and to improve health and safety conditions.

What effect will this housing measure have on poverty on reserve?

**Mr. Daniel Leclair (Director General, Regional Infrastructure Delivery, Regional Operations, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** Thank you for the question.

If I may, I will deal with the question from an infrastructure angle.

As you mentioned, \$416 million were allocated for specific projects in Budget 2016. Currently, more than 965 projects are under way. That includes renovating 3,220 housing units. The ground is being prepared so that houses and other new buildings can be built.

The funds allocated for the improvement of community infrastructure, housing in this case, will help to provide the basics on which to create a better environment for the members of the community that will benefit from them. Then, the people could be better prepared for the labour market and could see their standard of living improve, in terms of poverty. In other words, improving community infrastructure is directly linked to the improvement of living conditions for aboriginal communities, in terms of poverty.

[English]

**The Chair:** You still have about 30 seconds.

**Mr. Yves Robillard:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay.

We will now go over to MP Motz, please.

**Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the groups that have been here presenting today.

My first round of questions will be directed to you, Ms. Scott.

At the conclusion of your presentation, you mentioned a government program or committee or whatever that is chaired by my colleague Mr. Vaughan. Can you explain that to me again? I missed it. What is its composition going to look like, and what is it all about?

**Ms. Catherine Scott:** Sure.

Minister Duclos announced the creation of an advisory committee on homelessness yesterday and is now seeking individuals across the country who are interested in sitting on this committee. It's a call-for-nomination process. We're looking for probably up to 10 individuals who have knowledge of the homelessness partnering strategy and have expertise in homelessness or in related areas, such as mental health, to work with us over the next few months to look more closely at the current program and how it's working, to hear from individuals on the ground in terms of, for example, the Housing First approach or to look at specific aspects, such as youth homelessness or prevention measures. That's all in an effort to help us in preparing for the renewal of the homelessness partnering strategy for 2019.

**Mr. Glen Motz:** I understand, then, that if there are people who would fit those criteria, we can present them to you, or to—

**Ms. Catherine Scott:** There's an online nomination process. On the ESDC website, there is a fairly comprehensive description of the criteria, as well as an application form for individuals who are interested in applying to be a member of that advisory committee.

**Mr. Glen Motz:** Thank you.

From experience, we know that the community entities or the community-based organizations are understandably stretched when it comes to securing sufficient funds to meet their individual community homeless and housing needs normally. One of their biggest challenges is the currently underfunded area of maintenance and repair. I know this gap creates significant wait times and lists of people who need to get into houses or suites that we have but that are not suitable to be inhabited. In some cases, the buildings themselves need repair.

Are there any plans to consider funding reallocations to assist in this area, where we already have housing, but it's just not suitable for occupation?

**Ms. Catherine Scott:** Under the current program, communities can use a portion of their funding for capital expenditures. It's true that we do expect larger communities to dedicate about two-thirds of their funds to Housing First approaches and in smaller communities we expect about 40%, but the program does allow for some capital investments, and depending on the funding streams, there's more flexibility. Traditionally communities have dedicated a very small amount of their funding to those types of investments and have turned instead to some of the funds they receive from CMHC for those types of investments. However, it's certainly something that we would be looking at and asking about as we think about the renewal of the program.

• (1200)

**Mr. Glen Motz:** Thank you.

I think one of the things to keep in mind on a case-by-case basis is that it might be critical to examine and allow for some flexibility, depending on where community needs are in that regard. It's just a suggestion.

My last question, if I have time, Mr. Chair, has to do with permanent supportive housing. We know that's another gap in our current model.

We all know that the goal of a Housing First concept is to provide stability to individuals in their lives at a time when they need it, and wraparound supports and whatever else that might look like. That intervention will allow them to eventually be on their own again without any sort of supports or cost, potentially.

However, we also know that not everyone graduates from these programs successfully, and some people require some semblance of permanent supportive housing. What funding streams either exist now in your program or are being planned in order to address the issue of permanent supportive housing?

**Ms. Catherine Scott:** Through the existing investments, communities can use the funds provided to them toward supporting individuals in permanent supportive housing, and those interventions include the wraparound services and supports that those individuals, once they are in housing, need in order to remain housed. That's certainly an issue we would be prepared to look at more closely as we consult across the country on what's working and what's not working and where we need to provide more flexibility in our program funding.

**Mr. Glen Motz:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We'll go over to MP Dhillon for the next six minutes.

**Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Clarke, how do we ensure that on-reserve housing is being built in areas where new water and other infrastructure is also being built, if they are being funded through separate programs?

**Mr. Allan Clarke:** Daniel might want to follow up on this. I can follow up later on some of the other things you were thinking about.

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** Okay.

**Mr. Daniel Leclair:** Thank you very much for the question.

My role is mainly to support my colleagues in the region, to support the first nations community members to build infrastructure. In the last budget, we were able to get money for a longer period, so we got money for two years and for a five-year period.

To answer your question, when we build a house, for example, we need to ensure that the water, the road, and all the other infrastructure are there. The key to that is to be able to plan.

By coincidence, this week I was in Shamattawa in northern Manitoba, and that was clear. Colleagues in the region are working with the community members to plan the new house that will be built next year. It is more complex there, because that community is on a winter road, so it's all about planning. It's how to ensure that for this fiscal year we are bringing the material on the winter road, which just opened this week. Then we have to ensure that the road will be constructed and the water line will be there this summer so that when the construction of the house starts, we will have not only the housing unit but also the proper infrastructure surrounding it.

Right now within INAC, we have a group in my team that looks at all of the assets—water, schools, housing, and other infrastructure—and basically works together to ensure that when a project happens in a community, this is all coordinated.

**Mr. Allan Clarke:** Not every community is the same, and there's differentiation that has to be taken under consideration, so not every solution is going to respond to the circumstances of every individual community.

At the end of the day—and this might also speak to a comment that was made earlier about ongoing repair and maintenance—it really comes down to how the construction and ongoing maintenance of a building is financed. I think right now, through this pay-as-you-go system that we have, we are not looking at the longer-term financing needs or leveraging. We are not looking at what we could be doing through longer-term financing, including taking into account the whole life cycle of an asset. If you just build the thing and then walk away from it, you're trying to fund all these things in a way that's not necessarily coherent to the nature of the asset that you're financing.

•(1205)

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** How would this benefit by bringing it under a unified fund?

**Mr. Allan Clarke:** As I mentioned earlier, the First Nations Finance Authority is in the business of raising the financing. It's private sector financing for first nations, based on revenues that the first nations are earning. They securitize their own source of revenues to build homes or infrastructure or other public works on-reserve. Through that, you have the first nation itself, which has the authority and jurisdiction to construct whatever infrastructure or housing development that it is interested in doing.

At the end of the day, first nations need to be able to exercise a level of jurisdiction that is commensurate with performing duties that any local government would carry out. Perhaps not every first nation is going to be in that circumstance, but I think that through some of these more innovative notions, you're going to be able to spread the federal support more broadly and you're going to give those communities that have the ability more innovation in terms of how they can raise their money. The homes that are being built through the finance authority, or financed through the finance authority, are not being built with government money. It's their own sources of revenue that are being securitized to build those things in first nations communities.

[Translation]

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** Do you have anything to add, Mr. Leclair?

**Mr. Daniel Leclair:** I would like to add something to what my colleague Mr. Clarke has just said.

Let me take Shamattawa as an example; we talked about it this week. The community was asking members of the community to pay rent. As Mr. Clarke said, that is part of the solution in better management, not just of the new units, but also the existing ones.

One of the specific issues discussed during the work of the Senate committee was working with the First Nations, the members of the band councils, the chiefs and the councils, in order to ensure that the people on reserve pay rent, which would be used for the upkeep of the housing that already exists.

The needs are so great that additional funding may perhaps not be enough to resolve the situation. So we have to see what we can do in terms of innovation and increasing the number of units, as mentioned in the previous question, as well as in properly training the members of the community, in order not only to get new housing built, but also to have existing housing maintained.

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** Thank you very much.

[English]

My next question is for Catherine Scott.

**The Chair:** Be very brief, please. You have about 45 seconds.

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** Okay.

You mentioned the preconditions to getting housing as quickly as possible. Can you talk a little bit about these?

**Ms. Catherine Scott:** Under the Housing First approach, in fact there are no preconditions. That's what's new about this approach. Previously you would wait until an individual could demonstrate that

they were sober, for example, before they would be moved into housing. Under Housing First, the principle is that the individual, whatever state they're in, is placed in housing, and then we address their needs.

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** Is that temporary housing?

**Ms. Catherine Scott:** It could be, in the first stage, transitional housing, but the goal of Housing First is to place that individual in permanent housing.

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** So it's transitional and then permanent.

What if their alcohol problem is still present?

**Ms. Catherine Scott:** That's where the wraparound services come in. The intensive case management approach is that the individual would have a caseworker who ensures that they get access to any of the services they need and helps them retain their housing.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Excellent.

MP Vecchio is next, please, for five minutes.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC):** Thank you very much.

First off, in Minister Duclos' mandate letter, there was a request for a list of the federal lands. Has that been formulated, and is it now available to us? What stage is that at?

**Ms. Catherine Scott:** As I mentioned in my presentation, we manage the SFRPHI program, the surplus federal real property for homelessness initiative. In that initiative we take properties that become surplus. It's often former national defence housing, for example, or RCMP—

•(1210)

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** But is there a list yet available?

**Ms. Catherine Scott:** We're working with PSPC and also with CMHC. It's a collaborative approach, building on the SFRPHI approach, to develop that and to develop an approach for a broader program.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Is there a deadline to have that completed?

**Ms. Catherine Scott:** I would say over the course of this year.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Okay. That's not a problem.

Speaking of Housing First, I've seen that strategy, and as a critic, I've heard some really positive feedback on it. Are you looking at expanding the Housing First initiative? I know that right now it's located in 61 communities, but in the smaller, more rural communities, we have a great program that has been set up by the Psychiatric Survivors Network. Are you looking at expanding that program because we've had such success, or what are the plans with that program?

**Ms. Catherine Scott:** In terms of the current program, we set requirements for communities to dedicate funds to Housing First only in the larger and mid-sized communities. In more rural or smaller communities, we didn't set those same requirements. Because their funding levels are smaller, the capacity is not always there.

Certainly we have been providing a lot of technical assistance and training for communities that do want to develop a Housing First approach. We have seen many smaller communities that have done it, so that's very positive.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Excellent. Thank you very much.

Moving over to the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, recently we had a fire in Oneida, which is in southwestern Ontario, where I'm from. The chief came out and immediately said that it was the federal government's fault because of the lack of funding.

Are we watching how the money is being spent on housing? How are we making sure that the money that is earmarked for housing is being spent on housing? What do we have in place for that?

**Mr. David Smith (Acting Director General, Community Infrastructure, Regional Operations, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** The funding that is allocated to first nation communities is proposal-based funding for a specific project. If there is funding allocated for six housing units, for example, in a first nation community, there needs to be a clear project scope, with deadlines for when deliverables are achieved at certain milestones. Then disbursements are done, and then there's a final inspection for budget 2016 funding.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Excellent. Thank you very much.

When we're looking at specific investments into social housing, do you have data referring to the investment on housing for those with disabilities, housing for seniors, and housing for families? When you're saying that you're investing specifically into targeted groups, do you have any information and data showing that?

**Mr. David Smith:** Unfortunately, in 2012 the department went ahead with the reporting burden, and we stopped collecting certain data from first nation communities. This was information that was based on volunteer reporting.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Excellent.

For the rest of the communities across Canada, rather than just specific ones, what kind of data do you have on that for those with disabilities, for seniors, and for low-income families?

**Mr. Charles MacArthur:** We do get reports from provinces and territories, because that's where the majority of our funding flows, so I would have to get the breakdown for that. If we have it, I will provide it to the committee.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** That would be greatly appreciated.

When it comes to transition, that's one of the things I see within my own community. We have people who have been staying in many of these units for 25 years and longer. What are the plans for transitioning out of affordable housing into something better or greater for them? Is there any target that we have for that? How do we try to help those families who are in need?

We find that one of our biggest problems is that the market is expanding because of the number of people who are not leaving those units, and sometimes their income data is not being looked at thoroughly. What would you say to that?

**Mr. Charles MacArthur:** At CMHC, we function along the spectrum of housing, from affordable through market and home

ownership and apartments and the like, so we're there in all of the places with regard to supply. We'd have to look into the question that you asked as well.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Okay.

**The Chair:** I just want a point of clarification, Mr. Smith. You used the term "reporting burden". Can you clarify what that means?

**Mr. David Smith:** Yes, there was a directive that was given to the department to decrease the amount of reporting—

• (1215)

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. David Smith:** —that was requested from first nation communities.

**The Chair:** I see. Okay.

**Mr. David Smith:** There was a serious number of reports that were being requested.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Now we have MP Boutin-Sweet for three minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** Thank you.

Now I am going to turn to the matter of homelessness.

Ms. Scott, the Housing First program does good work. It helps very vulnerable people who are already living on the street.

But local organizations also working in prevention saw their budgets reduced when it was decided that, in major cities, 60% of the budget for the Homelessness Partnering Strategy, or HPS, would be invested in the Housing First approach. As I am sure you know, in Quebec, we have been asking for some time for the people working in the streets, the people who know the conditions and the possible solutions, to be allowed to choose which approach to use.

I would like to know if we can expect the CMHC to allow a choice of approach, either the generalist approach or the Housing First approach, according to the needs on the ground.

Earlier, you mentioned a committee that would be studying the HPS in general. Is that one of the things you are going to look at?

**Ms. Catherine Scott:** At the committee, yes, absolutely. One of the objectives is specifically to consider the Housing First approach and to determine to what extent it is working on the ground. We can also examine the way in which the funds are allocated to various approaches. I would say that the examination will be done in the coming year.

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** Could that be made part of the housing strategy or will it be too late to do that?

**Ms. Catherine Scott:** We are expecting the HPS program to be renewed, starting in 2019. So we will be examining those questions in the coming year.

As for current investments in the program, I am sure you know that we have an agreement with the Government of Quebec governing the investments in that province.

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** Yes.

**Ms. Catherine Scott:** The two governments agree on the priorities for the investments.

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** Yes, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Mr. Duclos talked to me about it already. Thank you.

Now I would like to talk about long-term agreements that have expired. There was an amount of \$30 million invested over two years in order to maintain rental subsidies, but it covered only a part of the agreements. It was also temporary and there was no provision for agreements that had expired.

According to your estimates, how many housing units should be built in order to genuinely eliminate waiting lists? In Montreal alone, there are 20,000 people on a waiting list for social housing.

What are we going to do to make sure that people do not have to choose between paying their rent and paying for groceries? What are we going to do for people who have already lost their subsidies? At the moment, there is nothing.

**Mr. Michel Tremblay:** The national housing strategy is not fully developed yet. As I mentioned, we want to assure you that the national housing strategy will target the people in greatest need. We expect there to be a wide variety of initiatives to try and achieve those results. At the moment, I have no further details about waiting lists and the way in which we might be able to manage them.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We're going to start into a second round. We're back to six minutes, and first up is MP Poilievre.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** The Fraser Institute did an analysis on the cost of red tape in the original construction of housing, and it showed that in Hamilton the cost is \$21,000 per home build. In Oakville it's \$60,000, and in Toronto it's \$46,000.

Of course, 100% of these costs are passed on to the home buyer, because the builder is not in the business of providing housing at a loss. Is Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation tracking these costs and taking them into consideration when it receives requests for funding from particular municipalities for housing?

●(1220)

**Mr. Charles MacArthur:** The vast majority of the funding flows through the provinces and territories, and therefore the majority of the requests for funding come through the provinces and the territories, and they look at the need in the particular community for affordable housing. I would assume that they're making choices based on what the greatest need is in their communities, as they're the ones who design and deliver the programs.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** I'm not looking for the need.

The municipalities have said that housing is a federal responsibility by virtue of their requests for federal tax dollars, and of course the federal government is responsible for federal tax dollars. If the growing and unsustainable increases in the costs of housing are in part attributed to red tape and deliberate decisions to delay construction by municipal governments, the federal government, which is funding those delays through your programming, ought to take an interest in it.

**Mr. Charles MacArthur:** We have an interest in it, an interest in getting buildings built faster and making sure that they're built efficiently. We're very interested in that, and all orders of government have a role in that. I think municipal governments have a significant interest in it, and they have to do their part as well.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** So is there any plan, then, to track those costs and those delays?

**Mr. Michel Tremblay:** As I mentioned earlier, we are aware of the Fraser Institute research. We did look at it and we are going to do research to determine if...

I must say that municipalities do not say that these delays are extensive, just so we know.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Of course not.

**Mr. Michel Tremblay:** We are going to try to perform research to determine if what the builders are saying is true versus what the municipalities are saying. We will see what we can do.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** My next question is for aboriginal affairs.

When I was minister of employment and social development, I was approached by numerous progressive aboriginal chiefs seeking to change their land use policies in order to allow for the collateralization of individual housing units so that band members could get access to typical commercial mortgages.

I know that Chief Bear in Saskatchewan, for example, was leading the charge in this respect—and actually, the question is also for CMHC. I wonder if CMHC and aboriginal affairs are working with aboriginal communities to allow them the possibility of individual home ownership on reserve, if the community has decided it so desires?

**Mr. Charles MacArthur:** We do now work with first nations communities to try to come up with a land tenure that is mortgageable. Oftentimes, it's on.... We do work with a variety of first nations. An example is Tsawwassen First Nation, which is trying to do a large development.

We work with them so that it's mortgageable land with regard to the way they do the leasing and the like. With regard to on-reserve housing for first nations, I'll turn it over to my colleague. I don't know where that's at.

**Mr. Allan Clarke:** I can speak to that.

A number of first nations are advocating for a change in the land tenure on reserve. The Indian Act does not really provide the type of land tenure that most other Canadians take for granted, and it's a huge impediment to business development and of course to individual home ownership.

Manny Jules, the chief commissioner of the First Nations Tax Commission, has been advocating for a different land tenure system on reserve, which fundamentally would change the nature of funding and financing—and mortgaging, because the Indian Act currently restricts mortgages and seizure of property on reserve. It would fundamentally change that.

There are a number of first nations that are advocating to look at that, but land tenure clearly remains a huge impediment.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Thank you.

Do I have more time?

**The Chair:** You have about 30 seconds.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** What changes to the Indian Act would be required to fix the impediment you've just described?

**Mr. Allan Clarke:** I suppose this is a personal opinion.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Yes, please.

**Mr. Allan Clarke:** It's not really about changing the Indian Act, but about providing a level of jurisdiction that is appropriate to the nature of supporting government functions for first nations.

As to what we see and where things have been successful, Tsawwassen was mentioned. It is a self-government agreement, so it's outside the Indian Act now. However, for even those that are ostensibly under the Indian Act, there are pieces of legislation that Canada has developed, whether it's the First Nations Land Management Act or the First Nations Fiscal Management Act, that provide a jurisdictional and institutional framework for first nations to exercise that jurisdiction.

The current land tenure regime under the Indian Act isn't adequate. You would probably have to create a different piece of legislation that affords that jurisdiction to manage the land the way other levels of government would in Canada.

• (1225)

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** That's excellent. Thank you very much, sir.

We'll now go over to MP Long, please, for six minutes.

**Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair; and thank you to our guests today.

For my first question, I know a few of my colleagues talked on it briefly, but I want to go back to CMHC and Mr. MacArthur about the expired operating agreements.

My riding is Saint John-Rothesay. I know we have many agreements that are obviously coming up and expiring. Can you explain to me again how the new money has been flowed to finance and accommodate the expired agreements?

**Mr. Charles MacArthur:** The expired agreements are in the amount of \$30 million. We've gone out to those groups and we've re-established agreements with them that will flow the same amount of funding they were receiving prior to the expiry of their agreement. We're doing that on an ongoing basis, because agreements are expiring at different times.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** You're saying it's the same system, the same process. It's just an extension of the agreements.

**Mr. Charles MacArthur:** It's an extension for the same amount of the agreement.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Thank you.

I also want to talk about stacking of subsidies. Previous government policy prevented the stacking of subsidies. For example,

provincial rent supplements from health could help finance projects supported with capital grants from CMHC. That's currently not allowed. How can that be addressed?

**Mr. Michel Tremblay:** As we develop the national housing strategy and talk about coming up with new transformative programs and initiatives, I think we can certainly take a look at that. Obviously, the easiest way to address it would be to allow stacking.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** What's your opinion on that?

**Mr. Michel Tremblay:** Do you want my personal opinion?

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Yes.

**Mr. Michel Tremblay:** I think it should be allowed.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Do you think it would be helpful?

**Mr. Michel Tremblay:** It would be helpful for sure.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Okay.

Mr. MacArthur, would you comment?

**Mr. Charles MacArthur:** I think we need to be creative. We do the housing part, and if there's a wraparound service that makes sense, I think we need to look at it. We also have the innovation fund there, so folks with good projects that are unique and the like should come and visit.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Thank you.

Ms. Scott, thank you for your presentation. Again, I was proud that Minister Jean-Yves Duclos came to Saint John and named it one of the cities in the rollout of the tackling poverty together project. That project will encompass six cities across the country. We're very excited to be involved in that.

I do want to talk briefly about shelters and homelessness and the Housing First program you're implementing. As I said at the last meeting we had, in our group we have about 60 people in Saint John who serve breakfast at the Outflow men's shelter every Saturday morning. I'm there first-hand. I'm getting to know that situation very well.

The concern I have is that Outflow would get roughly \$170,000 a year from the province for running the men's shelter, but they would have to privately raise probably two or three times that just to stay functional and provide the service they do.

Can you talk about what you see for the future, and potential innovation to help in situations such as that, and how important it would be to have the proper alignment between the federal and provincial governments to help those people living on the streets?

**Ms. Catherine Scott:** To begin with, the federal government obviously isn't the only investor addressing homelessness. There are a number of provinces that make very significant investments, in particular some of the larger provinces, Ontario and Alberta. We work very collaboratively with the provincial governments as much as possible to try to align approaches and to ensure, for example, that program directives at the federal level aren't impeding approaches at the provincial level and vice versa. I think we can do more. Moving forward, that's one place where we want to look at greater collaboration with the provinces and territories. We do know that for every dollar the federal government invests, there are significant dollars invested by either provincial, municipal, or private sources.



To speak about innovation, one of Minister Duclos' mandate letter commitments is also around the development of a social innovation and social finance strategy. As part of that, how do you ensure that community loan funds have the capital they need to work with organizations like the one you mentioned in terms of providing patient capital or more generous loan terms to allow for investments and those types of initiatives? How do you look at social innovation approaches that may come up with some very unique partnerships that allow for collective impact and greater social impact over time? I think those are some really important pieces that we'll also be developing that I think could have a real impact for all organizations that provide community services.

• (1230)

**Mr. Wayne Long:** One of the issues that we face in Saint John with respect to Outflow, as an example, is that Outflow is coming up with different social innovation projects and putting these men to work, whether it's carpentry, in a coffee shop, or what have you, and social enterprise too, I guess, but again, there doesn't seem to be a clear source at times of support funding for those kinds of programs. These guys and ladies at the shelter are kind of left on their own to figure a lot of this out.

Can you again just tell me what plans you have moving forward to aid people like that? People at Outflow run the men's shelter, but they're also part-time psychologists, medical people—you name it. They're so caught up. What other support do you see coming that could help those people in shelters?

**The Chair:** We're actually at time, but I'll give you a moment to answer that.

**Ms. Catherine Scott:** Certainly the governance structure that we have under the homelessness partnering strategy, the community advisory boards, have shown that in some communities they've made real strides in terms of a collaborative and systems-based approach whereby they try to direct organizations and individuals to the services they need.

We've seen some great examples. For example, in Hamilton they've been able to leverage data and do things like by-name lists to try to pinpoint those individuals who need very direct interventions and lead them to the services they need. That's one example I could provide.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Now we go to MP Boutin-Sweet for six minutes, please.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Tremblay, I would like to go back to the last question I asked you.

Do you have an estimate of how many social housing units would have to be built to eliminate the waiting lists? For the upcoming budget, have you thought of the people who have lost their subsidies? Is something going to be done for people in that situation?

**Mr. Michel Tremblay:** In terms of an estimate of the number of housing units, I don't have the data with me. I can forward it to the committee later, if we have it.

As for the people who have already lost their subsidies, once again, that will depend on the new initiatives in the national housing strategy. We have to wait for the details of the strategy to see how those issues will be addressed.

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** The next budget will come out before the strategy. Can we expect it to include assistance for the people who have already lost their housing subsidies?

**Mr. Michel Tremblay:** Unfortunately, I don't know the content of budget 2017.

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** Okay.

I have many ideas, and I have already shared some as part of the consultation on the strategy. Here's another one: it costs less to maintain green buildings than traditional buildings. So it is beneficial for everyone, especially for social housing and co-op housing, because the groups that need that type of housing are less able to pay.

CMHC's original mandate is still the same, as you mentioned: to help people find affordable housing.

Could CMHC become an effective tool providing financial incentives for sustainable building and energy retrofit? I'm thinking of low-interest loans that might encourage groups to build green housing and make sustainable renovations.

• (1235)

**Mr. Michel Tremblay:** Is the question whether CMHC could do that?

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** Yes, my idea is to use CMHC for that type of funding, among other things. Could that be considered?

**Mr. Michel Tremblay:** Yes, I think it could be considered.

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** Is it a possibility we can expect? You answered quickly.

**Mr. Michel Tremblay:** I cannot elaborate, but CMHC could do it. We already have the authorization to make loans. That's what I meant.

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** Do you think it might be useful in the circumstances I described?

**Mr. Michel Tremblay:** I think the green building principle should definitely be explored. That would actually help the Government of Canada, and the country, to achieve more than one objective: first, providing access to affordable housing, and second, protecting the environment.

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** I am also contemplating a partnership between the federal government, the provincial governments and the cities. For instance, we could take advantage of the municipal taxes, the taxes on construction materials, and so on. It would also be possible to lower construction costs and building maintenance costs. I have plenty of ideas for you, just come and see me.

In terms of the national housing strategy, it must be said that the housing situation is really different from coast to coast to coast. Do you agree with me that a strategy should be flexible enough to allow the regions dealing with specific problems to solve them on their own? Flexibility is an important criterion of the strategy.

A second, equally important criterion is that, to be effective, a strategy must come with resources, especially financial resources. What is proposed in a strategy must truly become a reality because we have the resources we need to do so.

Third, the work required to implement the strategy, not just the consultations, must be done in partnerships with grassroots groups, the community stakeholders.

**Mr. Michel Tremblay:** I think Minister Duclos repeatedly mentioned that he was definitely looking for transformative, flexible and innovative approaches.

He also focused on the partnership and co-operation between various stakeholders.

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** Some groups are doing things that cost nothing at all, such as seniors who host students in their homes. I have seen that in St. John's. I have also seen it not far from here; I think it was in Gatineau. In St. John's, there weren't enough university residences. To solve that problem, they combined two solutions to address two different problems. When a young student goes to live with a senior, they can help each other financially and physically. So it is possible to include that sort of thing in a housing strategy.

Of course, a flexible strategy assumes that each region is able to determine what is important and what would be useful in its case.

[English]

**The Chair:** Answer very quickly, please.

**Mr. Michel Tremblay:** I'm not sure.

[Translation]

That was not actually a question, was it?

[English]

**The Chair:** That was very quick.

Now we'll go over to MP Robillard, please.

**Mr. Yves Robillard:** My last question is for either Ms. Scott or Mr. MacArthur.

[Translation]

Let me go back to the announcement the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development made in Laval last month. It was said that those investments would provide support to building and renovating housing units for victims of family violence.

Can you tell us more about that initiative in particular? An initiative of that kind is likely to help reduce poverty. Finally, is the initiative expected to be introduced elsewhere, outside Quebec?

•(1240)

[English]

**Mr. Charles MacArthur:** That was part of the investment in affordable housing. Across the country, off-reserve there's \$89.9

million available for shelters for victims of family violence, and on-reserve there's another \$10.4 million available, so yes, to answer the question, it is available across the country.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Robillard:** Thank you.

[English]

**Mr. Ramesh Sangha:** My question is again to Ms. Lynda Clairmont.

The federal government has committed \$554.3 million over two years through budget 2016 to address urgent housing needs on reserve. Can you please speak to the current on-reserve housing reforms engagement process and provide some feedback to this committee on how indigenous people are responding?

**Ms. Lynda Clairmont:** I'll start off and then kick it over to David.

**Mr. Ramesh Sangha:** Yes, anyone can answer.

**Ms. Lynda Clairmont:** The \$554 million is CMHC and INAC funding, correct?

**Mr. David Smith:** Yes.

**Ms. Lynda Clairmont:** That's for on-reserve, so we are working very closely with CMHC.

Over the past year we've initiated a number of engagements, including with the AFN, with indigenous organizations regionally, and also with various communities, to assess what the concerns are and what our options and strategies are for moving forward. I think that answers your question.

**Mr. Ramesh Sangha:** Yes.

**Ms. Lynda Clairmont:** David, would you like to respond?

**Mr. David Smith:** Yes, if I may.

As Lynda highlighted, through the national housing strategy we've been working very closely with CMHC and participating in their engagements with regard to what we heard. We've been working with the Assembly of First Nations and their housing and chief committee, where there are also technicians. They have representatives from every region. We've been to the Assembly of First Nations general meeting and the annual meetings, and we supported the AFN in having a working session in Manitoba where there were 550 participants from first nations communities who were technicians, operators, and different experts who came to discuss future programs and to speak specifically to housing and their view on how housing should be delivered in the future in first nations communities. We continue to work with these organizations and with the regional organizations and communities.

We've also posted on our website for all Canadians to be able to share their views on how housing could be delivered in first nations communities, and we continue that.

**Mr. Ramesh Sangha:** Inuit are not included in the reserves because the Indian Act does not apply to them, so what do you suggest is the remedy for them?

**Ms. Lynda Clairmont:** As I said in my opening remarks, in budget 2016 we did also get funds to invest in Inuit housing, and the department is working very closely with CMHC and with Inuit partners to look at how best to resolve some of those acute needs in the north.

I don't know if the CMHC wants to add anything.

**Mr. Charles MacArthur:** In addition, in Nunavut there was money associated with the funding we have in all three northern territories, so in addition to the Inuit-specific funding, there were investments in affordable housing.

Also, we received money with regard to our housing internships initiative for first nations and Inuit youth, which is a training program. For us, of course, it's around housing and the like. We have 35 Inuit youth working in the program now, learning about different kinds of housing. It could be administration or it could be as simple as painting and the like, but we've done that. That's part of the overall program. We've made a concentrated effort to try to target Inuit youth and get our numbers up.

**Mr. Ramesh Sangha:** Thank you.

•(1245)

**The Chair:** We have about 15 minutes left. After some discussion, we thought maybe we would give every side an opportunity for another three-minute question. I know Glen had a three-minute question, as did Dan. Is that something that you would be willing to do? Okay.

We'll start with Dan for three minutes. Go ahead.

**Mr. Dan Ruimy:** I want to focus on challenges faced by urban aboriginals.

In my riding, there's a young man whose name is Andy Bird. His big thing is that he's a wrestler, and that's why he pulled himself out of his reserve to make himself better. He comes from Saskatchewan. He started something really cool. It's called The Bird's Nest. He brought one or two people over from Saskatchewan from his reserve into urban Maple Ridge, and he just started working with them. Slowly, one went to two, two went to three. Now he's got, I think, seven or nine, and another three more, and they bought a house. They're doing this on their own.

It's great that I see money flying all over the place for larger organizations, but how do urban aboriginals like Andy Bird tap into some of this money so it's not coming out of their pockets and they're not struggling? These are people who are trying to help themselves. How do we facilitate that for them?

**Ms. Lynda Clairmont:** CMHC is doing a lot, but I'll maybe kick it off. One of the things we're hearing through the consultation process from first nations is the artificiality around on-reserve and off-reserve, because there is a certain amount of flow. How do we address those needs? That's part of the collaboration that we're working on through the national housing strategy with CMHC, looking at solutions to that. I think the innovative approach of that fellow you spoke about is one of many different kinds of approaches and options that people are initiating on their own. When we come through the national housing strategy, I think it's something that we'll be looking at so we can better help people in that situation.

**Mr. Charles MacArthur:** I was just going to say that this is the sort of thing that our folks who are on the ground need to make contact on. Depending on how large he wants to grow his initiative, we've got some small funding available for folks to think through their ideas and help them to get their product ready. Here's somebody in Maple Ridge, a community where, if the mortgage, the financing, is put together properly, we can possibly finance it from the perspective of mortgage loan insurance. There are a variety of things —

**Mr. Dan Ruimy:** I've only got about 10 seconds left. Should I send him to CMHC?

**Mr. Charles MacArthur:** Yes, absolutely, with his ideas, for sure. We would be interested in talking with him.

**Mr. Dan Ruimy:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Now we go to MP Motz.

**Mr. Glen Motz:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is to the indigenous affairs office.

Someone made a comment earlier on about the pushback, the lack of reporting, or a desire not to report. I guess the question is, how do the funds from your office flow and get accounted for on first nation reserves? Who administers them? Just from recent conversations with individuals from the reserve in my riding, there is some concern about how those things are administered. They're concerned that their housing needs aren't being met, not because there are no funds available, but because the band themselves, the council, are not looking after them. Help me understand how that flows and how the accountability happens.

**Mr. Daniel Leclair:** Thank you for the question. It's a very good one.

With budget 2016, as I mentioned, we got \$416 million, and basically the profile for the first year was to issue \$208 million. In addition to that at the department, we decided collectively to spend more money on housing because, as you will all agree, the needs are way higher than the allocation that we have collectively.

The projects were proposal-based, so we made three calls for proposals. We had three streams in the calls for proposals. The first one was the obvious one, the immediate needs. What are the immediate needs? The second one was capacity development, which is connected to some of the questions and comments today that it's not only building but that we also need to help first nation members improve their capacity to not only build the houses but maintain them. The other one was the innovation fund.

We did three calls for proposals, and why three? Well, we had to consider the construction season. It's because we were approached by some first nation leaders who said we were going too fast. Some of them weren't necessarily prepared, since it was a good surprise to get the money and the budget. Because of that, we worked with the first nations and basically we said we would have three calls for proposals. When we received the proposals, of course, we worked with our colleagues in the region, and you can imagine that we had a lot of proposals. I referred to the number of projects. As we speak now, 965 projects have been approved, but that translates to basically more than 3,000 units to be either renovated or newly constructed.

•(1250)

**Mr. Glen Motz:** My question, though, sir, is who administers the funds? If a project on my reserve is approved, who gets the money, and how is it paid out?

**Mr. Daniel Leclair:** Exactly. My first point was that we had to add a process, basically, to get their proposals.

We receive the proposal. We work with our colleague in the region. We work with the first nation to approve the project. When the project is approved—to answer your question—the money from headquarters is transferred to the region and is transferred to the recipient.

To receive the money, the band council—

**Mr. Glen Motz:** So the reserve gets it?

**Mr. Daniel Leclair:** Yes, the band council receives the money. The chief and the council receive the money, and after that, basically, they can go ahead with the project.

**Mr. Glen Motz:** They can start the project. What accountabilities exist to make sure that it gets done in the manner in which it was designed?

**Mr. David Smith:** That's where there is the scope of work with milestones and timelines. There are disbursements done based on the milestones.

**Mr. Glen Motz:** Excellent.

**Mr. David Smith:** They don't get the total amount right off the get-go. They get a certain amount to do the soft costs. When we speak of soft costs, we mean pre-feasibility, feasibility, design. Then they'll go to tender. Once all these elements are verified, the disbursements are done.

**Mr. Glen Motz:** They have to meet certain requirements to get the money?

**Mr. David Smith:** Absolutely. Then, after that, it's tendered and built.

**Mr. Glen Motz:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Now we'll go to MP Boutin-Sweet, please, for three minutes.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Groups working in housing have sent me some questions to ask you. There are some that I haven't had the opportunity to ask. I will ask two.

[English]

Can you confirm that the forthcoming national housing strategy will contain investments to maintain and increase the supply of social housing in Canada?

[Translation]

That's the first one. I'm asking them one after the other, but I expect you to answer both.

[English]

Can you commit that the bulk of the forthcoming housing investment will be directed at low-income, vulnerable populations?

**Mr. Michel Tremblay:** Thank you for the question.

As mentioned in my opening remarks and a couple of other times, what we've heard from Canadians is that we should focus the attention and the national housing strategy on the folks most in need, so definitely the strategy will likely be able to meet that requirement and target more low-income individuals and other vulnerable populations.

Your first question was...sorry?

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** Can you confirm that the investments will maintain and increase the supply of social housing?

**Mr. Michel Tremblay:** I can't comment on that at this point. I can't confirm that, yes or no.

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** Why not?

**Mr. Michel Tremblay:** Because we're still developing the national housing strategy. Obviously, the strategy will ensure that Canadians have a place to call home and have an affordable place. That's the vision. If the question is on whether we're going to extend the operating agreements or not, I can't comment on that at this time.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** No, that wasn't the question.

First, we are losing social housing now because contracts are expiring and the housing units will be rented out to those who can afford not to use the rent supplement. We must not lose what we have right now.

Second, the waiting lists are long. So new social housing units must be built, such as the low-income housing in Quebec.

•(1255)

[English]

**Mr. Michel Tremblay:** What I can say is that definitely, the national housing strategy is going to be such that the outcomes for Canadians are improved and not worsened, hopefully. I hope that kind of answers your question.

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** Kind of? I'll get back to you.

[Translation]

Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I don't often do this, but I think this is an important question, so if you will indulge me for a moment, because I know we have about five minutes left...

Both Vancouver and Toronto have taken steps to waive all the development fees. In any of the research that you've seen, has this had an impact on making housing more affordable? I mean affordable housing, not necessarily social housing. There's a distinction there between those two that we haven't really discussed today. I think we tend to use those terms interchangeably. I think the term "affordable housing" needs to be addressed a little bit. However, in both of those cases, Toronto and Vancouver, has there been an impact that you've seen?

**Mr. Michel Tremblay:** I haven't seen a notable impact.

**The Chair:** It has not sped up supply in any way that you've seen at this point?

**Mr. Charles MacArthur:** I think any reduction in fees and in regulation will translate, but projects take a while to work their way through the system. They're sometimes a year or two in planning, so any changes making it smoother to get approvals will help over time.

**The Chair:** Is there any impact on infrastructure spending in waiving these fees?

**Mr. Charles MacArthur:** I couldn't make the direct connection, but when municipalities make it easier for affordable housing to come through the system, it definitely helps with the ease of getting it done and makes it smoother. However, I wouldn't want to speculate on the exact—

**The Chair:** Is there a way to track that, or have you thought how you would track that moving forward?

**Mr. Charles MacArthur:** It would come down to looking at what time frames it currently takes on average, and then comparing it to what....

**The Chair:** That's excellent. That's all I had.

Go ahead, Mr. Motz.

**Mr. Glen Motz:** Mr. Chair, I think that's a great question. When you get to Medicine Hat, you're going to find some answers.

**The Chair:** We're going to get an answer?

**Mr. Glen Motz:** Specifically to those issues.

**The Chair:** That's a great segue, not specifically to Medicine Hat, but I just wanted to remind everybody that we will be starting our travel next week, and the final version of the itinerary is going to be sent out tomorrow. If there are any questions or concerns about that itinerary, please contact the clerk or the analyst. We will be doing our eastern swing—Kuujuaq, Saint John, and Toronto.

Our next meeting is going to be on Tuesday, February 7. Again, we're going to be meeting with department officials regarding the topic of neighbourhoods.

To all of you, thank you very much for coming today. It's been very informative, and I appreciate all the work that's gone into these presentations and answering our questions.

Thank you to everyone on the committee and all those involved who made today possible. Have a great day.

The meeting is adjourned.

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