

STRONG NORTHERN AND REMOTE COMMUNITIES

RIISING TO THE MOMENT IN FEDERAL BUDGET 2016



In February, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities released *Cities and Communities: Rising to the Moment*, our recommendations for the 2016 federal budget.

To reach its transformative potential, this upcoming budget must benefit all Canadians. That includes the nearly 150,000 people living in three territories, Labrador, and northern regions of B.C. Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec.

These northern and remote communities are integral to Canada’s social and economic fabric. Genuine nation-building efforts must support their economic diversification and growth in the face of unique challenges of climate, geography and low population density.

In 2016, that means engaging with local governments, with their proven track-record of assessing and acting on local priorities that address national challenges. This document highlights key FCM recommendations for budget 2016 to strengthen northern and remote communities, and Canada’s future.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Strong public infrastructure connects northern and remote communities to the rest of Canada—and to each other. But with limited capital, they need a strong federal partner to sustain the roads, airports, telecommunication links, water facilities, waste treatment systems and other infrastructure that supports economic development and a high quality of life.

The federal budget must:

- Retool the New Building Canada Fund to finance more local projects under the Provincial-Territorial Infrastructure Component—reflecting municipalities’ nearly 60 per cent ownership of Canada’s public infrastructure.
- Streamline federal infrastructure programs to work for smaller communities—including empowering local governments to get projects moving by “stacking” federal funding sources.
- Maintain the base plus per capita funding formula for existing and new federal infrastructure programs, in recognition of low population densities in Canada’s northern and remote regions.
- Work with FCM to ensure continued investments in northern broadband infrastructure while the CRTC completes its national review of basic telecommunications services.

HOUSING AND COST OF LIVING

Appropriate, affordable housing is the heart of any livable community—and of any strategy to improve quality of life and attract people and investment to the North. But as the cost of living rises, northern and remote communities have unique challenges housing their workers, families and vulnerable populations.

CLIMATE RESILIENCY

Climate change deepens challenges that northern and remote communities face in providing services and facilities that retain and attract residents and foster growth. They need substantial investment now to adapt roads, bridges and other infrastructure to rising temperatures.

PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

In the North, keeping people safe starts with investments in community-level preparedness. The federal government has a crucial role to play on every level—from crime prevention to emergency response to natural disaster recovery.

The federal budget must:

- Reinvest expiring federal funding into new long-term rent subsidies for rent-gear-to-income units affected by expiring housing operating agreements.
- Create a \$1.3 billion housing carve-out in the Social Infrastructure Fund, prioritizing affordability and social housing for two years through investments in capital repair and renewal.
- Partner with FCM on a Northern Affordable Housing Strategy with a long-term funding plan, recognizing unique geographic and cultural needs and unique housing pressures in communities affected by resource development.
- Increase and index the residency component of the Northern Residents Tax Deduction, and strengthen food security by working directly with local communities to reform Nutrition North.

The federal budget must:

- Ensure the Green Infrastructure Fund works for northern and remote communities by adopting an allocation model based on the Gas Tax Fund: base plus per capita allocations to provinces and territories, with predictable funding to all municipalities set through bilateral agreements.
- Empower northern and remote communities to direct green funding to environmental protection, renewable energy and community resilience projects—including snow load enhancements and melting permafrost adaptations.
- Engage local governments to expand national disaster mitigation strategies beyond flooding to cover the full spectrum of risks, including drought, forest fires, invasive species and emerging consequences of climate change.

The federal budget must:

- Boost cooperation among all orders of government on crime prevention and mental health services, including implementing proven approaches like Housing First to support vulnerable populations in northern and remote areas.
- Improve emergency management by reinvesting in local search and rescue capacity and by consulting northern and remote communities on the design, governance and implementation of the new national Public Safety Broadband Network.
- Launch a review of changes to the Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements to protect municipal resources from facing unfair burdens during disaster recovery operations.

© Federation of Canadian Municipalities. All rights reserved.

Federation of Canadian Municipalities
24 Clarence Street, Ottawa, ON K1N 5P3
www.fcm.ca

