



Federal budget 2009 and Aboriginal Issues Analysis

What's in the budget?

-\$2.075 billion for housing initiatives to address social housing problems and limited on-reserve Aboriginal housing issues

-\$515 million over 2 years for First Nations on-reserve community infrastructure projects such as schools, roads and other "critical infrastructure"

-\$165 million to complete water and wastewater projects already initiated in 18 First Nation communities

-\$200 million for skills training to help reduce unemployment rates of Aboriginal people

What does it mean for Aboriginal Peoples?

Once again, the federal budget falls short in providing the stimulus and financial backing needed to revive the economy, create jobs and provide the housing and infrastructure for the First Nations People of Canada.

The budget sets out \$2.075 billion for housing initiatives but this will only address some of the social housing problems and limited on-reserve Aboriginal housing as it falls significantly short of the \$2.5 billion target set out by housing experts and advocates across the country.

The budget also provides \$515 million for on-reserve infrastructure. However it is not clear how quickly the money will be provided to First

Nations or if the communities will be required to put up 20% of the project funding, as is currently the case for water and wastewater projects operating costs – an almost impossible amount for many communities.

The budget puts \$200 million for skills training. One has only to look at the unemployment rates of Aboriginal Peoples to see that this amount falls woefully short of what is actually needed.

What would be better choices?

The United Nations' Human Development Index shows that the majority of Canadians enjoys one of the highest qualities of life yet, measured against the same benchmarks, Canadian Aboriginals rank 63rd.

The Kelowna Accord (negotiations between Aboriginal Governments and Federal government to create an economic stimulus) focused on reconciliation, poverty reduction, and improving the standard of living for First Peoples. A better choice would be to deliver the promises of the Kelowna Accord through federal budget commitments rather than the "piecemeal" approach seen by the Conservatives 2009 federal budget. Through the Accord the commitments to infrastructure, education and skill development and loan funds would address schools, violence, employment, health care, safe drinking water and socio economic status issues.