

February 28, 2018

## [ONPHA's Response to the 2018 Federal Budget](#)

On February 27, 2018, the federal Liberal government tabled their third budget. As the first federal budget since the National Housing Strategy (NHS) was released, housing advocates were hopeful that it would include more information about these initiatives. Unfortunately we will have to keep waiting on those details for now, but the budget does include several items that are positive for non-profit housing providers and their tenants, as well as low-income Canadians more broadly. Read on for information about some of the most note-worthy initiatives included in Budget 2018.

### Increased Funding for the Rental Construction Financing Initiative

ONPHA was pleased to see the expansion of the previously announced Rental Construction Financing Initiative (RCFI) from \$2.5 billion to \$3.75 billion over the next three years. While not targeted towards low-income households specifically, this low-cost financing initiative is expected to create 14,000 additional affordable units for modest- and middle-income households. Affordable units for these households are much needed, and they could also serve as a rental option for lower-income tenants who are in receipt of portable housing benefits moving forward.

We learned with the release of the NHS that the RCFI would be integrated into the wider National Housing Co-Investment Fund. Applications for this new Fund are expected to be open as of April 1, 2018 and ONPHA will share more details as we have them.

### Funding for Distinctions-Based Aboriginal Housing Strategies

As part of the NHS, the federal government committed to the development of distinction-based strategies for First Nations, Inuit and Métis populations. Building on funding commitments made in 2017, the 2018 Budget includes:

- An additional \$600 million over three years to support housing on reserve as part of a 10-year First Nations Housing Strategy;

- \$400 million over 10 years to support an Inuit-led housing plan in the Inuit regions of Nunavik, Nunatsiavut and Inuvialuit (in addition to last year's \$240 million commitment to support housing in Nunavut); and
- \$500 million over 10 years to support the Métis Nation's housing strategy.

We applaud the government on making these direly needed funding commitments and on their recognition of the need for distinctions-based strategies. However, we remain concerned that this approach neglects the unique housing and support needs of the growing number of Aboriginal Canadians living in urban and rural areas. As we have previously said, it is imperative that there be a separate strategy to address the unique situations of these households and that the federal government undertake targeted consultation to ensure these perspectives are included.

ONPHA remains committed to working with our Urban Aboriginal Housing Advisory Committee and other housing advocate partners to continue relaying this important message to both provincial and federal levels of government.

### Other notable developments and investments

Budget 2018 also includes several positive non-housing related initiatives and investments that could be especially impactful for those living in or operating non-profit housing communities. A few examples include:

- Increasing maximum benefits available for low-income workers through the Canada Workers Benefit;
- Improving access to the Canada Child Benefit and other supports for Aboriginal communities;
- \$231 million over 5 years to address the opioid crisis;
- \$20 million over 5 years to support community-based dementia programs and supports;
- \$7.8 million over 5 years to help community organizations serving vulnerable people build capacity to pursue government contracts and funding opportunities; and
- The creation of an Advisory Council on the Implementation of National Pharmacare

With the 2018 Budget, the federal government has also deepened their commitment to Gender Based Analysis by investing in several initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality and advancing the economic situation of women in Canada. We know that women are disproportionately impacted by poverty and the lack of affordable housing, and we applaud the federal government's commitments towards addressing gender inequalities in housing and beyond.

## Looking Ahead

The commitments made in Budget 2018 are undoubtedly positive, but there is still much work to be done. Moving forward, ONPHA will continue to advocate for a distinct federal strategy to address the unique needs of Aboriginal Canadians living in urban and rural areas. We will also continue to call on the Ontario government to sign onto cost-sharing agreements for the implementation of the NHS to bring this funding closer to reality.