

## **A Liberal Response to the National Association of Friendship Centres**

**1. In 2006, the NAFC worked with the Department of Canadian Heritage to develop a comprehensive business case for enhancement of the Aboriginal Friendship Centres Program budget. The business case is compelling, and it calls for \$32 million in additional funding over three years. Nevertheless, we have been unable to access new funds from federal Budgets.**

**Does your Party support immediately and significantly increasing the budget for the Aboriginal Friendship Centres Program, and working with the National Association of Friendship Centres immediately following the Election to update the Aboriginal Friendship Centres Program?**

A new Liberal government would consider increased funding for the Aboriginal Friendship Centres Program after reviewing the current fiscal framework. Canada needs respectful and progressive partnerships with our Aboriginal Peoples, characterized by trust, with real engagement and participation by Aboriginal Canadians. Friendship Centres are the perfect vehicle to help reach this goal.

**2. Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) is currently developing a successor program for the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy (AHRDS). Friendship Centres, and the Friendship Centre Movement, have effectively been shut out of the existing AHRDS.**

**Does your Party support a redesigned Aboriginal employment and training program that includes Aboriginal Friendship Centres as key delivery agents?**

We are fully committed to honouring the spirit of the Kelowna Accord, which included a \$200 million fund dedicated to economic development in First Nations communities. We recognize Aboriginal Friendship Centres as an essential resource in delivering employment and training programs, and will work with them to ensure the greatest number of individuals are served under our programs.

**3. Education is the key to the future, yet almost two-thirds of Aboriginal youth do not successfully complete high school.**

**Does your Party support the development and implementation of a cost-shared federal/provincial/territorial urban Aboriginal education program?**

The Kelowna Accord contained an unprecedented \$1.8 billion for post-secondary education and skills training, with five-year targets of 22,000 more high-school graduates, and 14,800 more post-secondary graduates. Liberals believe honouring the Kelowna Accord is the best way to close the poverty gap between Aboriginal Canadians and the rest of Canadians.

**4. Aboriginal people frequently account for a disproportionate number of the homeless people in urban centres, and there remains a demonstrable need for culturally-appropriate programming for urban Aboriginal homeless people.**

**Does your Party support the development and implementation of a national urban Aboriginal homelessness program?**

The Liberal Party believes in a strong housing strategy for all Canadians. The Kelowna Accord pledged \$1.6 billion for housing and infrastructure, with five year targets to reduce on-reserve housing shortage by 40 per cent, and to close the gap in access to off-reserve housing by 50 per cent. A new Liberal government will uphold the spirit of this commitment.

**5. In general, the health status of Aboriginal people is very poor when compared to non-Aboriginal Canadians. Reduced life expectancy, high diabetes rates, foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, and other issues highlight the urgent crisis that exists, and the level of services available to urban Aboriginal people is not sufficient to address needs.**

**Does your Party support the development and implementation of an urban Aboriginal health policy?**

Yes. We pledge to close the unacceptable gap in health equality between First Nations, Inuit and Métis, and the rest of Canadians. The Kelowna Accord pledged \$1.3 billion in health spending for Aboriginal Canadians. It also contained provisions to reduce infant mortality, youth suicide, and childhood diabetes by 20 per cent. We will deliver proper health care for Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

**6. The National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) is Canada's most significant urban Aboriginal service delivery infrastructure; however, despite this and the fact that a majority of Aboriginal Canadians live in urban areas, the NAFC is often excluded from federal policy discussions.**

**As Leader of your Party, will you commit to including the National Association of Friendship Centres in any future First Ministers' Meeting on Aboriginal issues, and similar forums?**

The Liberal Party is pleased to consult with a wide variety of groups and stakeholders as part of any negotiations between the federal government and the provinces and territories.