

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDSHIP CENTRES LEFT BEHIND IN THE 2009 FEDERAL BUDGET

For Immediate Release

OTTAWA, ON, January 26, 2009 – The National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) is disappointed by today's Federal Budget 2009 announcement. As Canada's largest Aboriginal service delivery infrastructure, the NAFC is most disturbed by the Government of Canada's complete lack of interest in one of the most vulnerable populations in Canada – Aboriginal people living in urban Centres.

"First Nation, Métis and Inuit people in urban areas account for over 50% of the total Aboriginal population, and experience greater economic disadvantage than the rest of Canadians," said NAFC President Vera Pawis Tabobondung. "In today's economic climate, urban Aboriginal people have effectively been locked out in the cold."

President Pawis Tabobondung continues, "Canada's 118 Aboriginal Friendship Centres have not had an increase in funding since 1998 - despite increased costs, inflation and the rapid influx of Aboriginal people to urban areas. Why are we continually left behind?"

Despite working with the Department of Canadian Heritage on a long-term plan for sustainability, Canada's Aboriginal Friendship Centres remain shut-out from budgetary allocations.

"Friendship Centres received no increased supports during record surpluses," said NAFC Executive Director, Peter Dinsdale. "Now in times of economic uncertainty, the only thing we can be sure of is that we will be left to fend for ourselves."

Mr. Dinsdale concludes, "Being Canada's forgotten peoples would be an understatement. Ten years without any consideration, coupled with today's lack of commitment to improve and sustain Friendship Centres, renders us a distant memory in the minds of our Government partners."

As Canada's largest infrastructure of urban Aboriginal service delivery providers, the National Association of Friendship Centres advocates for the needs of 118 Friendship Centres and their urban Aboriginal membership.

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