

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE TENTH REPORT OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS STANDING COMMITTEE ON INDIGENOUS AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS, ENTITLED, “ARCTIC SECURITY AND SOVEREIGNTY, AND THE EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES”

John Aldag

Chair

Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs

House of Commons

Ottawa, Ontario

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Dear Colleague,

I am pleased to submit the Government’s Response to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs (INAN)’s Report entitled *Arctic Security and Sovereignty, and the Emergency Preparedness of Indigenous Communities*, which was tabled on June 21st, 2023. This response illustrates the Government of Canada’s efforts to ensure Northern and Indigenous communities can thrive, and be sustainable, resilient, strong and secure.

INTRODUCTION

The Government of Canada thanks the Committee, and all witnesses who participated in this critical study. The Government of Canada accepts 13 of the recommendations, agrees in principle with three, and disagrees with one of the recommendations set out in the Committee’s Report. The Committee’s recommendations on emergency management align with the efforts of the Government of Canada to improve emergency management programming and provide better supports for Indigenous communities. The Committee’s recommendations on Arctic security and sovereignty implicate a range of federal departments and their efforts to improve the lives of those who live in the North through investments in infrastructure, emergency services, housing, defence, and international cooperation.

The Government of Canada welcomes and appreciates the Committee’s attention to the important issues of emergency preparedness, Arctic security, and Arctic sovereignty. These issues are especially relevant in today’s efforts to combat climate change. Climate change’s impacts will be more significant in the Arctic than almost anywhere else on Earth. Across the country, Canadians are experiencing increasingly frequent and severe natural hazards and extreme weather. Indigenous communities, given their often remote and isolated locations, and their cultural connection to the land, face extreme strain on their emergency services which challenges their ability to engage in cultural practices and to live off their traditional lands. The Government of Canada is committed to working with Indigenous communities, as full and equal partners, to ensure their communities have the capacity to adapt to and mitigate the risks of climate change. In the North, across multiple federal departments, efforts are being made every day to ensure those who live in the North are not only secure and protected in the face of the evolving Arctic threat environment, but have the opportunity to thrive in a sustainable economy and environment.

Due to the fact that INAN’s report covers two important but separate topics, first emergency preparedness in Indigenous communities and second the security and sovereignty of the Arctic, it is important to ensure the various distinct groups discussed in the report are clearly identified. Indigenous communities are found across all of Canada’s provinces and territories. Indigenous groups in Canada are the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. Under the *Indian Act*, reserve lands are lands the title of which is vested in the Crown that have been set apart by the Crown for the use and benefit of First Nations and consequently the federal government has unique responsibilities to on-reserve First Nations communities, one of those responsibilities is emergency management and preparedness. For communities that are not eligible for the

Emergency Management Assistance Program (EMAP), including non-Indigenous communities, Métis, Inuit, and some self-governing communities, financial emergency management support is provided through the Public Safety Canada's Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements (DFAAs). Canada's Arctic and Northern territories are home to First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and non-Indigenous Canadians. Inuit Nunangat is the homeland of Inuit in Canada and stretches from northern Quebec and Labrador to northern Yukon. The territory of Nunavut was established in 1999 as part of a land claim agreement with the Nunavut Inuit. Nunavut is the only territory without EMAP eligible communities. Beyond ISC (ISC) and Public Safety Canada (PSC), multiple other federal departments provide supports and resources to Indigenous, Arctic, and Northern communities that contribute to their ability to prepare for a manage emergencies, maintain security, and project Canada's sovereignty. Those collective efforts are outlined in this response.

The Government supports Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination and will continue working collaboratively with partners to improve access to high-quality services. Our vision is to support Indigenous peoples by building up their capacity to mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergency events. To fulfil the Government of Canada's unique responsibilities for on-reserve lands, ISC's EMAP provides emergency management resources directly to on-reserve First Nations communities and other eligible recipients. First Nations are the experts on what risks their communities face and the lands on which they live . The Government of Canada is supporting First Nations right to self-determination, and their right to own, control, access, and protect information about their community, by ensuring First Nations are in control of their own emergency management needs and decisions.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Self-determination and Culturally Appropriate Services

Recommendation 1:

That the Government of Canada work with Indigenous people to identify capacity needs in the context of emergencies, and that adequate and flexible funding (including advance payments) and other resources, such as training, be provided to address identified capacity needs.

Response:

The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation.

Recently, EMAP has updated its program terms and conditions to further enable the granting of advance payments to First Nations in need of financial resources to prepare for risks facing their communities. Advance payments are instalments of financial assistance made before the recipient contracts the services they need. Increasing access to advance payments allows communities to be proactive in addressing imminent threats to their community, thereby limiting opportunity for damage to the community and its members. Further, through EMAP, the Government of Canada is working to identify those First Nations communities with significant need for emergency management capacity. In accordance with the recommendations of the Auditor General of Canada, ISC is working to update EMAP's assessment of community level risk to identify those communities with the highest need, facing the highest risk, and allocating resources and emergency management coordinator positions in highest risk areas. EMAP currently provides funding for up to 96 full-time Emergency Management Coordinator positions in First Nations communities across the country.

We continue to engage with First Nations communities and organizations on their emergency management needs through the development of multilateral emergency management service agreements and investments to enable First Nations to negotiate these agreements. By ensuring First Nations are full and equal partners, they can have more autonomy to decide what services they need and how best to manage the risks their communities face.

The Government of Canada also works with Indigenous peoples across Canada and throughout the Canadian Arctic to determine capacity and training needs with respect to building

community-based marine emergency response capacity. This engagement occurs through various Oceans Protection Plan (OPP) programs such as the Indigenous Community Boat Volunteer Program which provides funding to Indigenous applicants to allow communities to purchase a boat and equipment required to support their participation in the Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) Auxiliary and allows them to provide lifesaving marine response capacity within their own communities in the event of a marine search and rescue incident. CCG also delivers an Indigenous Search and Rescue (ISAR) training and exercising program that assists Indigenous communities with building their marine search and rescue response knowledge and capabilities.

Additionally, under the renewal of the Oceans Protection Plan, the Government of Canada continues to develop the Communications Portal for Integrated Incident Response (CPIIR), a national communications tool that will facilitate integrated preparedness and incident response, and enhance collaboration during on-water emergencies, events, and exercises with Indigenous and coastal communities across Canada. CPIIR is intended to become the primary communication tool that will link federal agencies to Indigenous and community partners and other responsible authorities during a marine incident response. Through CPIIR, communities will receive training that will help them participate in the project, as well as improve their capacity for response. Engagement for the Arctic component of CPIIR will commence in fall 2023. Further, we are working with Indigenous communities to establish Coastal Marine Response Teams (CMRTs) to support marine spill pollution response efforts. The project will be collaboratively co-developed with participating communities to enhance local marine pollution response capacity through the provision of contribution funding to support engagement, training, exercising, response equipment acquisition and local response planning.

Recommendation 2:

That the Government of Canada, in partnership with Indigenous people, work with provincial and territorial governments and organizations that provide services to Indigenous people during emergencies to ensure that such services are provided in a culturally-safe and appropriate manner.

Response:

The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation.

The Government of Canada strives to ensure that the services it provides match the level of service provided to non-Indigenous communities and that they have the autonomy to choose and seek the services they want, including Indigenous-led service delivery.

ISC has partnered with First Nations organizations that specialize in providing these emergency management services to First Nations communities and will continue to seek further partners across Canada to promote the transfer of the provision of emergency services for First Nations to First Nations themselves. One of the best ways to do this, is by supporting First Nations and/or First Nation organizations who are interested in service delivery to First Nations, by First Nations. By supporting First Nations organizations in the field, communities can receive culturally informed and appropriate services from providers that are familiar with the aspects of traditional knowledge related to emergency management. Further, supporting these organizations helps promote a strong sustainable economy in First Nations communities that is better equipped to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

The Government of Canada, through ISC, is also working to ensure that the services available to First Nations communities are sustainable, adequate, and culturally appropriate through the development of new multilateral emergency management service agreements. The agreements, which are formed between the Government of Canada, First Nations leadership, and provincial/territorial governments, or non-government organizations, serve to ensure that First Nations are full and equal partners in emergency management. It is through these multilateral agreements that First Nations can be full and equal partners in determining the emergency management roles and responsibilities of each level of government and determine service standards that meet the unique needs and circumstances of First Nations.

Public Safety is working to develop a federally-led table of senior officials (PS, ISC, CIRNAC, and others) alongside Indigenous partners from the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), Metis National Council (MNC), and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) to establish a forum to bring forward emergency management policies, programs, and projects led by the Federal government and/or Provinces and Territories (P/Ts) to engage Indigenous partners; identify Indigenous EM priorities that will strengthen emergency preparedness, response, and recovery efforts; and identify opportunities for further collaboration. The Agenda will be co-developed through requests for agenda items and on-going engagement with members on key areas of interest/relevant policy and program activities that are upcoming. Membership is open to other government departments (OGDs), P/Ts, and National Indigenous Organizations (NIOs) and their governing members.

Funding

Recommendation 3:

That the Government of Canada provide funding to ISC (ISC) to ensure that infrastructure mitigation projects that have been approved by ISC can be funded appropriately.

Response:

The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation.

Structural mitigation projects are identified through the First Nation Infrastructure Investment Planning process, which details First Nations' current and future infrastructure investment needs over a five year period. The Government of Canada works collaboratively with First Nations throughout the year to support projects on a prioritized basis with available resources.

Through the First Nation Infrastructure Fund (FNIF), the Government of Canada works with First Nation communities on-reserves to mitigate natural hazards and provides dedicated funding for climate resilience infrastructure through structural mitigation projects. While structural mitigation projects qualify as an eligible category, it receives only a share of funding due to other infrastructure priorities also eligible under FNIF, which include: energy systems, roads and bridges, fire protection, connectivity, planning and skills development, and cultural and recreational facilities and band administration buildings.

Since 2016 and as of March 31, 2023, \$149.5 million has been invested for 120 structural mitigation projects of which 64 are completed, while 56 remain ongoing. These approved, ongoing projects will be funded through available, planned allocations of the First Nation Infrastructure Fund through to 2027-28.

In addition to ongoing projects being delivered by the Department, the Auditor General reported in the *Emergency Management in First Nations Communities—Indigenous Report 8*, that as of May 2022 there were 112 unfunded structural mitigation projects. Progress has been made on these unfunded structural mitigation projects, and as of June, 2023, 51 eligible unfunded structural mitigation projects remain a priority for communities with an estimated project cost of approximately \$95.5 million. As indicated in the Management Response Action Plan (MRAP) to the Auditor General of Canada's report, the Government of Canada is committed to addressing these outstanding structural mitigation projects.

We will support First Nation partners in adapting to a changing climate by funding structural mitigation projects in their communities. ISC will use existing available resources to fund current and ongoing structural mitigation projects, and where possible, leverage funding from other government departments such as Infrastructure Canada's Disaster Mitigation Adaptation Fund and Green and Inclusive Community Buildings Program that support climate adaptation and infrastructure resilience. The Government of Canada will also explore other funding options available to the department to accelerate the delivery of outstanding unfunded structural mitigation projects.

Finally, Canada National Adaptation Strategy aims to build strong communities through reducing the impacts of climate-related disasters, improving the health and well-being of Canadians, protecting biodiversity, building resilient infrastructure and supporting the economy. The strategy recognises that climate change impacts each community and region in different ways. Each community has different abilities to prepare for and respond to extreme weather and the slow onset of climate change. The National Adaptation Strategy follows four guiding principles that empower communities, regions, and First Nations to develop plans tailored to their needs while moving all of society towards a safe and resilient future. The principles are:

- respect jurisdictions and upholding Indigenous peoples' rights;
- strive for equity, climate and environmental justice;
- take proactive measures to reduce climate impacts before they occur; and,
- maximize positive benefits to people, businesses, and the environment, while anticipating and avoiding any negative effects that could cause potential harm

Through the National Adaptation Strategy, Canada can mobilize resources, identify gaps, and tailor the most effective local solutions for adapting to climate change. Further, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis are leaders and drivers of climate action. They are addressing climate change in ways that reflect their distinct nationhood, cultures, and knowledge. Many Indigenous organizations, regions, and communities are advancing efforts to monitor, assess, and understand climate change impacts and to develop climate change strategies and action plans to address the unique needs of their communities and natural environments. The Government of Canada will continue to support the efforts of Indigenous peoples in Canada to protect their communities from climate change and their work to build strong, sustainable, healthy communities.

Recommendation 4:

That the Government of Canada work with Indigenous communities and organizations to identify additional funding needs for mitigation projects and that those projects be funded accordingly.

Response:

The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation.

We are committed to working with Indigenous communities to identify their funding needs for mitigation projects, particularly as they relate to emergency management. To date, Indigenous communities have accomplished meaningful and exceptional work to identify the risks their communities face and prepare for them. Their continued dedication to the safety of their communities is commendable and acknowledged. EMAP offers funding to First Nation communities on-reserve and other eligible recipients through the Non-Structural Mitigation and Preparedness (NSMP) funding stream that supports emergency preparedness through small-scale projects. These projects can include: all-hazard risk assessments; development and updating of emergency management plans; exercising emergency management plans; emergency management training and courses; flood mapping; landslide studies; research or studies pertaining to disaster risk; early tsunami warning systems; public awareness; and funding to host an emergency management forum or workshop for regional First Nations communities. EMAP also allows for the purchase of low-value equipment for emergency preparedness and mitigation projects through Non-Structural Mitigation and Preparedness (up to \$5000 per piece of equipment). Funding is provided on an application, first come, first serve basis, but given the funding cap of \$18 million per year, only a certain number of mitigation projects can be funded in communities annually.

Following the Auditor General's report on emergency management on-reserve, a recommendation was developed directing the Government of Canada to "implement a risk-

based approach to inform program planning and decisions on where to invest in preparedness and mitigation activities to maximize support to communities at highest risk of being affected by emergencies.” The purpose of this recommendation is to help better direct the investments of Non-Structural Mitigation and Preparedness funding into communities that are in the highest need of support for mitigation and preparedness projects. The progress on this recommendation is underway, which will include work with First Nation partners to ensure that this process is done in conjunction with community goals. This initiative, through its rollout, has the opportunity to further the goal of service transfer by supporting First Nations to lead their own mitigation and preparedness work. This work is ongoing and will continue to evolve as the needs of First Nation communities managing emergencies evolve. It is essential to note that Indigenous Services’ EMAP only provides services to First Nation communities on-reserve and eligible recipients. Should off-reserve First Nations, Métis, Inuit communities, and non-Indigenous communities be impacted by a natural hazard, they are entitled to emergency management support through the DFAAs which are administered by Public Safety Canada and shares the cost of recovery with the provincial/territorial government. The DFAAs do not provide direct financial assistance to individuals, but provide expanded financial resources to provincial and territorial response and recovery efforts.

Coordination

Recommendation 5:

That the Government of Canada prioritize work on multilateral agreements for emergency services and service transfer in First Nations communities, including by providing adequate resources to First Nations to support their participation in the development and implementation of agreements, and that ISC report its progress to the Committee within six months of the tabling of this report.

Response:

The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation.

Currently, ISC has eight bilateral emergency management service agreements with provincial and territorial governments and third-party emergency management service providers. These agreements were put in place to ensure First Nations had access to emergency response services comparable to those within the same jurisdiction. In 2022-2023, ISC transferred \$8.2 million to continue to fund these agreements. Although these agreements are a good starting point, more work needs to be done to ensure that First Nations are full and equal partners in a fully comprehensive approach to emergency management, including supports for First Nations-led approaches.

ISC is taking concrete next steps to help transform emergency management with First Nations, whether through the development of new multilateral emergency management service agreements or funding First Nation-led emergency management initiatives that build the foundation for further service transfer to First Nations. The Government of Canada has identified opportunities to engage with First Nations and provincial and territorial governments across all jurisdictions and will continue to prioritize the advancement of multilateral service agreements in a way that ultimately supports First Nations’ right to self-determination.

In British Columbia, we continue to meet regularly with the other signatories of the Tripartite Emergency Management Services Memorandum of Understanding and plans are underway to advance a new multilateral agreement as directed by the First Nations Leadership Council. The Government of Canada also meets regularly with the T̓silhqot'in National Government to advance their emergency management priorities, as per their Collaborative Emergency Management Agreement between the T̓silhqot'in National Government, Canada, and British Columbia.

In Ontario, the Government of Canada has initiated a dialogue with First Nation leadership and the Province of Ontario on advancing a multilateral agreement, with the aim of ensuring First Nations have the opportunity to express how they envision themselves in a new emergency management paradigm in Ontario. The Government of Canada will continue to engage with First Nations and offer engagement supports. Other work is underway in Ontario to support Missanabie Cree First Nation, who created and operate an Indigenous Emergency Operations Centre and are developing Ontario's first First Nation-led evacuation host site, Island View Camp.

Region-specific strategies are being developed to promote the uptake of new multilateral service agreements, but more direct engagement with First Nations in all jurisdictions is needed for the Government of Canada to better tailor its approach based on the direction and priorities of First Nations. To address this, we have developed regional engagement plans and funding is available for First Nation-led engagement. For instance, in 2022-2023, the Government of Canada provided \$1.8 million to First Nations, Tribal Councils, and Indigenous Representative Organizations in Saskatchewan and Manitoba to lead engagement with their membership on their vision for emergency management and develop their own proposals and models for First Nation-led emergency management. The Government of Canada plans to reconvene with partners to discuss the preliminary outcomes of their engagement in fall of 2023. There are also numerous emergency management forums being planned across the country over 2023-2024 where the Government of Canada will have the opportunity to further engage with partners on the potential of working collaboratively on new multilateral service agreements.

The Government of Canada has identified opportunities to engage with First Nations and provincial and territorial governments across all jurisdictions and will continue to prioritize the advancement of multilateral service agreements in a way that ultimately supports First Nations' right to self-determination.

Recommendation 6:

That ISC, in working to support Indigenous emergencies management, ensure that all information from all relevant sources, including other federal departments, is considered in developing a comprehensive emergencies management response.

Response:

The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation.

The Government of Canada works with First Nation communities and other relevant stakeholders, such as various federal departments, provincial and territorial governments, and third-party emergency management service providers, to ensure that all information from all relevant sources is considered in developing a comprehensive emergency management response. EMAP provides funding for eligible activities for emergency response through the Response and Recovery funding stream, but the community approach to each emergency event is determined by community and regional leaders, in conjunction with local and regional authorities. The Government of Canada does not determine the direction for a comprehensive emergency management response, but instead provides financial supports to affected communities to do so. When a First Nation community is experiencing an emergency, government officials are often in constant contact with community leadership.

Work is ongoing to support and incorporate traditional and local knowledge into the manner in which emergency management is approached. Given the historical devaluation and disregard of Indigenous land-based knowledge by colonial systems and institutions, it has only been recently that the emergency management system has begun leveraging this knowledge to develop more effective responses to emergency events. Programs like the EMAP's FireSmart funding stream provides financial support for activities such as fuel reduction, forest thinning, and prescribed burning that is determined by local leadership and is in line with traditional approaches to wildfire management. The Government of Canada is working to further incorporate Indigenous knowledge into the management of emergencies, especially as it relates to what is and is not eligible under the EMAP. This is ongoing work that is being done in conjunction with First

Nation communities and emergency management experts that will result in a more comprehensive emergency management system.

The Government of Canada is making significant efforts to assess and mitigate risk from some of Canada's most prevalent emergency events. Canada's first National Risk Profile, which outlines the need for a whole-of-government approach to emergency management was released in May 2023. When departments better communicate, it ensures that planning accounts for everyone affected by an emergency event. The Government of Canada is working on a number of flood risk mitigation initiatives which were announced in Budget 2023 and is working to ensure the needs of First Nations will be met by these initiatives. Together, the suite of initiatives put forward will help ensure all Canadians are aware of the risks they face, public resources are aimed at reducing the most significant risks, and that the financial cost of flooding does not fall solely on the shoulders of individual Canadians.

Communication

Recommendation 7:

That the Government of Canada work with all public alerting stakeholders, in partnership with Indigenous communities, provinces and territories and providers to evaluate emergency alerting approaches to ensure that the needs of communities are being met.

Response:

The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation.

We recognize there are challenges and barriers in the reach of public alerting systems and the importance of robust communications infrastructure to support emergency response should not be underestimated. The Government of Canada also acknowledges the value of engaging with a broad group of stakeholders, including Indigenous partners, to improve public alerting across the country. We, along with provincial and territorial partners, are committed to continuing to strengthen the overall use, sustainability, continuity of service and governance of the National Public Alerting System (NPAS). In June 2023, Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers met to discuss this collaborative work and instructed officials to explore alternative funding models, including a national alerting framework and alerting standards, that serve all Canadians. The Government of Canada will continue to provide a leadership role and collaborate with all public alerting stakeholders to improve the effectiveness and ongoing delivery of the NPAS and emergency alerting in Canada.

Prevention/Mitigation

Recommendation 8:

That as part of the ongoing redesign of the federal Additions to Reserve policy, the Government of Canada, in partnership with First Nations communities and organizations, explore improving the Additions to Reserve process by streamlining the process for communities whose lands are frequently affected by emergencies such as wildfires and flooding.

Response:

The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation.

It is recognized that the current Additions to Reserve process is time-consuming. Proposals are initiated and submitted by First Nations to ISC and prior to a Ministerial Order being signed, there is the requirement to satisfy multiple technical components as stipulated in the 2016 Policy. These components can include: survey of the lands, an environmental site assessment, addressing third party interests, satisfying the Duty to Consult, and considering the views and interests of provincial, territorial and local governments. These views and interests include elements that fall within control of the provincial/territorial government such as minerals, natural resource exploration (surface and subsurface), water, and transportation.

Over the next two years, CIRNAC, is undertaking to redesign the Additions to Reserve Policy, which was last updated in 2016, based on First Nation-led solutions and grounded in place-based realities. To date, CIRNAC has undertaken preliminary engagement with First Nation partners to better understand the issues with the current policy and process. CIRNAC has also launched a Call for Proposals to fund First Nation-led engagement on possible solutions based on lived experiences. Following this period of engagement with First Nations and Indigenous organizations, the Government of Canada will work with First Nation partners to co-develop policy options that are reflective of these local realities (including realities such as flooding or wildfires) and recommend them for consideration by decision-makers.

ISC and CIRNAC will be conducting additional work and analysis on the procedural aspects of the Additions to Reserve process in collaboration with First Nation land managers and Indigenous institutions to identify other opportunities for expediting the process. This may include the creation of tools and templates to facilitate the resolution of third party interests as well as the completion of municipal service agreements.

Lands to be added to reserve land can originate from provincial or federal Crown land, or fee simple land acquired by the First Nation and are transferred to Canada to complete the Additions to Reserve process. First Nations can enter into legally binding agreements with provinces, territories, local governments or corporations that are empowered by law to take or to use lands, e.g. land exchange agreements, or provinces will provide provincial Crown land under settlement agreements such as Treaty Land Entitlement. Under these types of agreements, provinces may have certain responsibilities, e.g. funding or conducting surveys and environmental site assessments.

In general, provinces and territories are advised of the Additions to Reserve proposal and given the opportunity to express views and interests to the First Nation and engage in discussions based on good will, good faith and reasonableness. First Nations initiate discussions with the province or territory as early as possible regarding an Additions to Reserve proposal. The First Nation is responsible for discussing issues raised by the province or territory. Where requested, ISC may provide facilitative or technical assistance in support of the discussions.

Recommendation 9:

That the Government of Canada, in partnership with Indigenous communities and organizations, provinces and territories, and organizations like the National Indigenous Fire Safety Council, work to improve the capacity of communities to respond to wildfires develop a comprehensive wildfire response that respects and integrates Indigenous knowledge and expertise, including wildfire mitigation practices, and that ISC report its progress to the Committee within six months of the tabling of this report.

Response:

The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation in principle.

Funding for wildfire suppression activities is provided by the Government of Canada to provinces and territories in two ways: bilateral wildfire management agreements, and/or direct reimbursements processed through the EMAP's Response and Recovery program. ISC holds wildfire management agreements with seven provinces to provide wildfire suppression services for on-reserve First Nations. These agreements are with provincial agencies responsible for wildfire response in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick. The Government of Canada does not hold wildfire suppression agreements with Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, the Northwest Territories, or the Yukon, but would reimburse the province or territory based on invoices for on-reserve wildfire suppression costs.

The Government of Canada does not directly fund First Nations for on-reserve wildfire suppression activities. In lieu, the Government of Canada provides funding to provincial and territorial governments for combatting wildfires that affect EMAP eligible recipients, as wildfire fighting is within provincial and territorial jurisdiction and provinces and territories are

equipped with resources and assets (e.g., waterbombers) and personnel to combat large-scale wildfires that cross multiple jurisdictional boundaries. Provincial and territorial governments have the ability to contract Indigenous firefighting crews qualified to fight wildfires. ISC provides funding to access this training should a community be interested in developing a crew.

The amount of funding that is provided through wildfire management agreements typically uses standard funding formulas developed and updated by the regional jurisdiction, which takes into account the amount of hectares affected (“burnt”) on-reserve lands. Where wildfire suppression costs for First Nations exceed annual amounts provided through wildfire management agreements, the Government of Canada will provide top-up funding to cover on-reserve wildfire suppression costs. As the Government of Canada engages First Nations and provincial and territorial governments across Canada on developing emergency management multilateral service agreements, the Government of Canada will also engage on how to modernize wildfire management agreements so that they promote a comprehensive wildfire response that respects and integrates Indigenous knowledge and expertise.

To support wildfire risk reduction, EMAP, through the non-structural mitigation and preparedness component of the program, provides funding for FireSmart projects in First Nations communities. FireSmart projects reduce the risk of wildfires impacting communities by diminishing the ability of wildfire to cross the urban-wildland interface. FireSmart funding provides financial support for activities such as fuel reduction, forest thinning, and prescribed burning that is determined by local leadership and that is in line with traditional approaches to wildfire management. The Government of Canada is working to further incorporate Indigenous knowledge into the management of emergencies, especially as it relates to what is and is not eligible under EMAP.

In First Nation communities on-reserve, wildfire risk is most prominent at the wildland-urban interface. As wildland fires start to intermingle with manufactured structures, these combined fuel sources create uniquely complex conditions that affect the ignition and spread of a fire that differs from both an isolated structural fire and an isolated wildfire. Consequently, ensuring First Nations communities can quickly respond to wildfires at the wildland-urban interface is essential to protecting the health, safety, and property of First Nations living on-reserve.

Budget 2022 provided \$39.2 million over 5 years starting in 2022-23 to support Wildland-Urban Interface Firefighting Equipment and Training; this includes dual-purpose firefighting equipment (e.g. fast-attack vehicles) that can also support communities in response to structural fires. In an effort to ensure that communities are best prepared for fire events, before accessing this funding communities are encouraged to first participate in FireSmart activities and non-structural mitigation initiatives (i.e. wildfire pre-suppression planning, wildfire risk assessments, fuel reduction, forest thinning, training and corresponding low-value equipment, etc.) to ensure prevention and mitigation approaches are in place.

This year, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) in partnership with ISC, released its Fire Protection Strategy, 2023 to 2028. ISC has invested \$10 million towards this plan which prioritizes education and prevention initiatives, smoke/CO2 alarm and extinguisher installations, building inspections, firefighter training, and upgraded telecommunications to support emergency services.

Emergency Response Plans

Recommendation 10:

That the Government of Canada, in partnership with Indigenous communities and organizations, identify which communities do not have emergency response plans and provide resources necessary to develop those plans, and that ISC report its progress to the Committee within six months of the tabling of this report.

Response:

The Government of Canada supports this recommendation in principle.

This recommendation aligns with a similar recommendation on ISC's own department specific emergency response plans in the Auditor General's November report on emergency management in First Nations communities. ISC agreed with that recommendation and has laid out in its Management Response Action Plan the actions the departments intends to take to address that recommendation.

The Government of Canada supports Indigenous people's right to self-determination and will continue working collaboratively with partners to improve access to high-quality services for First Nations, Inuit and Métis as a priority for Canada. Our vision is to support Indigenous peoples by building up their capacity to mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergency events. First Nations are the experts on what risks their communities face and the lands they live on. We are working with First Nations communities and organizations to support them with the development of their emergency management capacity through the non-structural mitigation and preparedness and FireSmart funding streams as per their identified priorities. Projects funded through these program streams may include the development of response plans that include an identification of risks and vulnerability assessments for the community. To respect their right to self-determination, and their right to own, control, access, and protect information on the well-being of their community, ISC does not require that First Nations communities submit their emergency response plans for assessment or tracking. In the past, the department compiled the list of First Nations with an emergency management plan but this information could only be obtained on a voluntary basis because those plans are proprietary. Compiling such a list also does not include the assessment of the quality of the plans. While updating its own national and regional emergency management plans, ISC will be reaching out to First Nations and their organizations to confirm relevance and usefulness of those plans while inviting communities to share their plans with regional departmental emergency management staff for reference and coordination purposes.

We will continue to ensure that resources are available for First Nations communities to develop their own emergency response plans, according to the risks they feel are most significant, and in the way they decide it best serves their community.

ARCTIC SECURITY AND SOVEREIGNTY

The Canadian Armed Forces in the Arctic

Recommendation 11:

That the Government of Canada uphold its commitment to the renewal and modernization of the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD); and that it strengthen the capabilities of the Canadian Armed Forces in the Canadian Arctic.

Response:

The Government of Canada supports this recommendation.

As announced in June 2022, the Government of Canada is investing \$38.6 billion dollars (on an accrual basis) over twenty years to modernize North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) capabilities, including next-generation sensors, modernized command, control and communications systems, new and advanced short-, medium- and long-range air-to-air missiles, infrastructure and support capabilities, and science and technology funding for the defence of North America. These investments will help ensure NORAD is well-equipped to respond to evolving aerospace threats to Canada and North America, including those approaching through the Arctic.

The Department of National Defence has worked to establish and integrate NORAD modernization projects into the broader Defence program, move out on the most urgent priorities and lay the ground for deeper partner and stakeholder engagement on the full suite

of initiatives over the coming months and years. NORAD modernization will be a multi-year effort. Many projects will reach Initial Operational Capability (IOC) by the late 2020s, with others following in subsequent years.

To deliver on this suite of investments in a timely manner, the Government of Canada is working as quickly as possible to establish new project offices and to strengthen its internal services capacity. This approach is based on lessons learned from the implementation of Canada's 2017 Defence policy *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (SSE) and will support timely and effective implementation.

National Defence has been conducting engagements with territorial, municipal and Indigenous partners on the site development planning process for northern infrastructure upgrades in Inuvik, Yellowknife, Iqaluit, and Goose Bay. Project timelines for NORAD modernization is [available on a publicly accessible web page](#).

Canada's approach to the defence of the Arctic is articulated in the 2017 Defence policy SSE and the 2019 whole-of-government *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework* (ANPF). SSE recognizes the evolving Arctic security environment and identifies requirements for enhanced capacity and domain awareness. It commits the Government of Canada to pursue the acquisition of maritime, land, air, and space capabilities with Arctic applications. The ANPF reinforces guidance and commitments made in SSE to enhance the ability of the Canadian Armed Forces to operate in the Arctic. In this context, the Government of Canada is pursuing investments to enhance the CAF's footprint, mobility, and reach in the North. Canada is investing in six Arctic Offshore Patrol Ships (with additional ships for the Canadian Coast Guard), a new fleet of future fighters (88 F-35 fighter jets), space-based surveillance and communications capabilities, and remotely piloted aerial systems. In addition, many investments in NORAD modernization will support enhanced Northern operations.

The CAF also maintains a permanent presence in the Canadian Arctic, anchored by Joint Task Force North, where approximately 300 CAF personnel are stationed at its headquarters in Yellowknife, with detachments in Iqaluit and Whitehorse. The CAF also has assets and capabilities positioned within Canada's Northern territories, including: four CC-138 Twin Otter aircraft; Canadian Forces Station Alert; the CAF Arctic Training Centre in Quasuittuq (Resolute Bay), Nunavut; and 1 Canadian Ranger Patrol Group, which includes over 1,800 Canadian Rangers across 60 communities in the North. Additionally, work is ongoing to complete the Nanisivik Naval Facility, which is expected to be operational by 2025.

The CAF maintains the ability to operate effectively in the North through annual operations. Operation NANOOK, the CAF's signature Arctic training operation, reinforces the CAF's capacity to project and sustain forces in the Canadian Arctic, and enhances collaboration with both domestic and international partners and allies. The CAF also carries out a number of operations focused on resupply, maintenance, and surveillance in the North, as well as cold-weather exercises to build force capabilities in the challenging Northern environment.

Recommendation 12:

That the Government of Canada work with Northerners, territorial governments and First Nations, Inuit and Métis to establish a new joint rescue coordination centre in the territories to ensure that the Arctic is better served by the Canadian Armed Forces' search and rescue assets.

Response:

The Government of Canada disagrees with the recommendation.

Joint Rescue Coordination Centres (JRCC) are co-staffed by the Canadian Armed Forces and the Canadian Coast Guard. As all JRCCs can communicate with any primary and secondary search and rescue asset anywhere within their respective area of responsibility, the location of a JRCC is not linked to the location of search and rescue response assets or the coverage that these assets may provide. They are, however, co-located within military installations to minimise support requirements and cost.

Responsibility for responding to aeronautical or maritime Search and Rescue incidents in Canada's North generally rests with the JRCC closest to the region where the response is needed. JRCC Victoria provides the primary Search and Rescue response to the Yukon Territory, JRCC Trenton covers the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, including the North of Baffin Island, and JRCC Halifax covers the southern half of Baffin Island. Together these locations provide Search and Rescue responsiveness throughout Canada's vast Northern area and rely on a network of known assets within those regions which extends well beyond the Canadian Armed Forces and Canadian Coast Guard Search and Rescue assets. This network includes federal, provincial, territorial, municipal, commercial, private, and volunteer assets to generate a response to incidents within the federal Search and Rescue mandate.

In order to increase Search and Rescue response capacity in the Arctic, the Government of Canada has focused primarily on supporting the development of community-based marine emergency response capacity through various projects. For example, under the first phase of the Oceans Protection Plan (OPP), the Canadian Coast Guard opened its first Search and Rescue station in Nunavut, in 2018. With additional funding from the second phase of OPP (OPP Renewal), the newly rebranded Arctic Marine Response Station (AMRS) was enhanced to hire and train crew from local communities, to procure an appropriate Arctic Search and Rescue vessel and to expand the station's operational season by one month annually (beginning in 2023) to better align with the communities boating season. Additionally, the Government of Canada has invested heavily in the development, equipping, and training of community-based volunteer maritime Search and Rescue responders through the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary (CCGA) and delivery of the Indigenous Community Boat Volunteer Program (ICBVP). The ICBVP offers coastal communities a process to apply for funding to purchase Search and Rescue - capable vessels and/or equipment required to strengthen volunteer-based maritime safety and Search and Rescue capacity in the Arctic through participation in the CCGA. There are now CCGA units in 40 Arctic communities, operated by more than 460 Auxiliary volunteers with access to 68 vessels.

The Canadian Rangers

Recommendation 13:

That the Government of Canada, recognizing the crucial role played by the Canadian Rangers with respect to security and sovereignty in the Arctic, take all measures necessary to ensure that they can effectively conduct their duties; and that in doing so, the government commit to:

- *reviewing and adjusting the Equipment Usage Rate on an annual basis;*
- *ensuring that members of the Canadian Rangers continue to qualify for and are paid an Isolation Allowance;*
- *ensuring that the Canadian Rangers receive timely and adequate compensation for their work and personal usage equipment; and*
- *prioritizing investments in training for members of the Canadian Rangers.*

Response:

The Government of Canada supports this recommendation in principle.

The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) makes every effort to ensure a Canadian Ranger who uses their personal vehicles, such as snowmobiles, and other equipment in support of approved CAF activities is not disadvantaged by doing so. The use of personal equipment by Canadian Rangers has been determined to be the most effective method of having our valued members effective in the field. Canadian Rangers use their own vehicles or equipment because acquiring such items through the local economy or issued through the Canadian Forces Supply System would present significantly greater cost and sustainment challenges. Thus, the Canadian Rangers' willingness to provide their personal equipment and be adequately reimbursed for such use has proven itself to be a simpler, more efficient and effective means to ensure the Canadian

Rangers remain relevant and can contribute to CAF domestic operations and sovereignty activities, as well as support to local, regional and Indigenous civil authorities.

In June 2023, the Government of Canada reviewed its policy on the compensation for usage of personally owned equipment by Canadian Rangers. Rangers who must use their personally owned equipment to perform CAF duties at isolated locations are reimbursed for wear-and-tear expenses. The revised rates will result in an increase in the compensation received.

The CAF is also amending the compensation and benefits instructions - Isolated Post to ensure that those Canadian Rangers in isolation posts are accurately compensated. Discussions on the adequate frequency of reviewing and adjusting rates, and on how best to ensure that these rates are sufficient, are ongoing.

As part of Canada's 2017 defence policy SSE the Canadian Army will conduct a comprehensive review of the Canadian Rangers Corps with the objective of expanding the training and effectiveness of the Canadian Rangers and improving their functional capability within the CAF. This review will focus on the role, mission, tasks, command and control, geographic laydown, staffing and administrative frameworks of the Canadian Rangers and, as required, update the policies, processes and mechanisms that govern personnel and the provision of equipment necessary for the Canadian Rangers to execute their mission now and into the future.

Lastly, the Canadian Army is also facilitating increased participation of Canadian Rangers in collective training opportunities to enable knowledge and experience sharing amongst the Canadian Rangers with their Regular and Reserve Force counterparts.

Climate Change

Recommendation 14:

That the Government of Canada, recognizing that climate change disproportionately affects the Arctic region, work with northern and Indigenous partners to mitigate and adapt to climate change in the Arctic, notably by investing in net-zero and climate-resilient infrastructure, renewable energy systems, emergency preparedness, and northern research, knowledge and capacity building.

Response:

The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation.

We are committed to working with provincial, territorial, municipal, and Indigenous partners to advance a whole-of-society approach for climate change. This includes working collaboratively with northern partners to advance regional priorities and continuing to make investments that support northern and Indigenous communities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate impacts. The Government of Canada is also committed to renewed nation-to-nation, Inuit-to-Crown and Government-to-Government relationships with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, based on the recognition of rights, respect, cooperation, and partnership. The Government of Canada supports the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and recognizes that the role of First Nations, Inuit and Métis in leading self-determined climate action in Canada is critical to advancing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

Federal investments and initiatives that support northern and Indigenous climate action are enabling northerners and Indigenous peoples to lead climate responses that are regionally and culturally appropriate. Some of the key federal programs include:

- The Northern Responsible Energy Approach for Community Heat and Electricity (REACHE) program which funds clean energy and energy efficiency projects and clean energy capacity in the North to reduce dependence on diesel for community heat and electricity.

- Climate Change Preparedness in the North program which funds vulnerability and risk assessments, hazard maps and adaptation plans, and implementation of non-structural and small-scale structural adaptation measures in the North.
- Indigenous Community-Based Climate Monitoring program which funds community-led projects to monitor climate and the environmental effects of climate change in Indigenous communities across the country using a distinctions-based approach.
- Engaging Indigenous peoples in Climate Policy program which provides capacity funding to the three National Indigenous Organizations and other regional Indigenous organizations to support meaningful and robust engagement in climate policy discussions and collaboration on climate change.
- The Government of Canada, in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis governments and representative organizations, are leading the development of an Indigenous Climate Leadership Agenda that will support self-determined action in addressing Indigenous peoples' climate priorities. This work will also support the phased implementation of distinctions-based climate strategies.
- Low Carbon Economy Fund includes a new \$180 million Indigenous Leadership Fund (ILF) to provide dedicated funding for climate action by Indigenous peoples, including communities in the Arctic and the North.
- Canadian Centre for Climate Services is working through governance systems in the North responsible for delivering climate adaptation programming and developing relationships to better understand northern needs and provide user-driven climate services.
- Small Craft Harbours Program is supporting the construction of new fishing harbours in the Arctic, such as the Clyde River Small Craft Harbour. This program will support the creation of marine infrastructure that incorporates climate resiliency factors and tools in an effort to make these assets climate resilient against future weather events and climate change impacts.
- Emergency Management Assistance Program provides funding for preparedness and mitigation training and projects, emergency management coordinator positions, assisting communities in recovering from natural disasters and rebuilding with climate resilient infrastructure. ISC's infrastructure programming also invests in structural mitigation projects that increase community resilience to climate change.
- Clean Energy for Rural and Remote Communities program (CERRC) is providing \$457 million over eight years to reduce reliance on diesel in rural and remote communities by deploying and demonstrating renewable energy projects, encouraging energy efficiency, and building skills and capacity. CERRC is currently supporting over 142 renewable energy and capacity building projects in remote off-grid and Indigenous communities across Canada, 38 of which are in the North.
- In 2021, Canada established Wah-ila-toos, an inter-departmental collaboration hub that seeks to increase access to funding for rural, remote, and Indigenous communities. Wah-ila-toos supports Indigenous-owned and community-led projects through a single-window application approach for diesel reduction initiatives via programs from five departments.
- Climate Change Adaptation Program (CCAP) aims to enhance adaptation knowledge and skills among Canada's professionals and the workforce more broadly over five years (2022 – 2027). The CCAP includes a funding envelope dedicated to supporting projects that meet territories' specific adaptation skills development needs. The Government of Canada is currently working with the territories to identify regional needs, establish targeted priorities, and develop projects that will develop and improve adaptation skills in targeted professions (e.g., engineering, planning, landscape architects, accountants,

those working in natural resources sectors), enable adaptation actions and increase climate resilience.

- As part of Operation NANOOK, Canada's signature northern operation, the Government of Canada regularly collaborates with provincial, territorial, municipal, and Indigenous partners to exercise whole-of-government emergency and disaster response cooperation in the North. The critical experience and operational capacity these exercises are building is especially important given the need to adapt to the changing Arctic climate, which is expected to increase demand for emergency response and other northern operations in the coming years.
- Government of Canada infrastructure in Iqaluit, Yellowknife, Inuvik and Alert, as well as the sites of the North Warning System is included in the scope of a series of National Defence climate change vulnerability assessments that are expected to be completed in Fall 2023. The information from these assessments will be used to develop tools to assess and manage risk.
- Integrating greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets with asset management practices by establishing standards for federally funded construction, operations, and maintenance in the Department of National Defence Green Building Directive.
- Investments aimed at increasing knowledge and understanding of the changing Arctic environment and enabling community resilience and adaptation. This includes projects like the Advanced Microgrids towards Arctic Zero Emissions (AMAZE), which seeks to modernize the power and energy system of Canada's North Warning Radar System through innovative technology solutions, reduce reliance on fossil fuels, and lower GHG emissions. The outcomes of AMAZE will also benefit remote civilian communities in the Far North in reducing GHG. Collaborative projects with northern stakeholders have included research in the following objectives: to better model changes in sea and lake ice conditions that impact ice-based transportation and route planning in the North; to develop adaptive emergency planning frameworks that build on existing strengths to bolster each community's resilience; and to improve coastal community incident response.

We have invested in creating integrated marine pollution response plans in collaboration with all impacted communities and response partners, to improve emergency preparedness in the marine environment. Working with all levels of government, Indigenous and coastal communities, and the greater emergency response family through the OPP Integrated Marine Response Planning initiative, The Government of Canada hopes to develop response plans for Canada's coastlines, including in the Arctic where all partners' jurisdictions, knowledge, skills and concerns are taken into consideration.

Since fiscal year 2017-2018, \$8 million in grants and contributions has been transferred to support First Nation, Inuit, and Métis governments, organizations, and communities to improve local emergency response capacity across the Arctic Region. The Government of Canada delivers programs and services that reflect the needs of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Northerners. Efforts include OPP projects as well as core programs and services; specifically:

- Providing funding for the purchase of community vessels to 25 communities to increase community-based Search and Rescue capacity.
- Increased funding to the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary to support their expansion of 40 units throughout the Canadian Arctic.
- Establishing the Arctic Marine Response Station in Kangiqtinik (Rankin Inlet), Nunavut, crewed by members of the local community.
- Establishing a permanent Arctic Marine Environmental Response team in the Canadian Arctic comprised of Inuit, First Nations, and Métis employees.

- Developing departmental emergency response contingency plans, that include Inuit Qaujimagatuqanit (i.e., Inuit Knowledge).
- Providing environmental response and incident management training to local Indigenous partners, including Inuit Land Claim Organizations, Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary units, Guardians, and community members.
- Expanding the communications processes with remote Arctic communities to ensure awareness of operations, and enable greater interoperability, coordination, and cooperation across jurisdictions.
- Launching the Indigenous Participation and Training Program.

Since the release of the Strengthened Climate Plan in 2020, Canada has committed more than \$2 billion in targeted investments to support Indigenous communities to transition to clean energy, advance nature-based solutions, build new or retrofit green community buildings, promote resilience of health systems, and undertake major disaster mitigation projects. These investments supplement more than \$425 million over 12 years committed under the Pan-Canadian Framework, as well as funding provided to Indigenous proponents through general climate programs for which they are eligible recipients.

Most recently, the release of Government of Canada's first National Adaptation Strategy (NAS) in June 2023, supported by the Government of Canada Adaptation Action Plan, included \$2 billion in new funding and over 70 measures to support adaptation priorities. Many of these measures are supporting northern and Indigenous communities, such as:

- A \$489.1 million top-up to the Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund (DMAF) over ten years to support communities, including those in northern regions, build resilience to climate-related disasters. This investment builds on over \$2.3 billion that has been committed for 83 built and natural infrastructure projects across Canada.
- A \$530 million transfer to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) to support community-led adaptation projects through the FCM's Green Municipal Fund. The program will focus on raising the adaptation capacity of small, rural, and remote communities.
- Investing \$50 million over five years to enhance existing programs in Indigenous and northern communities. This includes the Climate Change Preparedness in the North Program and the Indigenous Community-based Climate Monitoring Program.
- Investing \$12 million over five years to enhance the Climate Change and Health Adaptation program.

As part of the NAS, the Government of Canada has committed to develop bilateral action plans with all provinces and territories to implement shared adaptation goals and objectives. Bilateral action plans will respect jurisdictional and Indigenous rights, as well as support provincial and territorial priorities. Canada also reaffirmed its commitment to work in partnership with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis through the Indigenous Climate Leadership Agenda to implement Indigenous communities' adaptation priorities.

The Government of Canada also engages with provinces and territories through a series of Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Ministerial tables. The Canadian Council of Environment Ministers (CCME) is the primary minister-led intergovernmental forum for collective action on environmental issues of national and international concern. The forum is composed of the environment ministers from the federal, provincial and territorial governments. In addition to the CCME, there are a number of other FPT tables that contribute to important sector-specific issues (e.g., energy, forests, agriculture). The Climate Change Committee (CCC) is a working group of the CCME, responsible for convening federal, provincial, and territorial members to advance collaborative work on shared climate change priorities.

The Government of Canada also continues to maintain strong partnerships with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis partners on their climate change priorities through distinctions-based bilateral tables that provide an effective mechanism for Indigenous partners to work directly with Canada to identify ways for policies and programs to better support the priorities and perspectives of Indigenous peoples. Going forward, the Government of Canada will continue to work in partnership with northerners and Indigenous peoples through targeted initiatives and investments to respond to the unique and disproportionate effects of climate change in the North and support self-determined climate action.

Infrastructure

Recommendation 15:

That the Government of Canada develop and implement, with Indigenous and northern partners, a long-term plan to invest in northern infrastructure; that this plan be used to better align strategic investments in military and civilian infrastructure in remote and northern regions of the country; and that infrastructure investments in the Arctic focus on community sustainability and socioeconomic development.

Response:

The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation in principle.

The Government of Canada recognizes the importance of a strong and vibrant North and the continued need to invest in Canada's North to continue to advance the socio-economic well-being of northerners and Canadians. Investments that support community sustainability and socioeconomic development are essential to strengthening Arctic security, emergency preparedness and ensuring Canada's enduring Arctic sovereignty. Guiding these investments is Canada's co-developed Arctic and Northern Policy Framework.

Launched in September 2019, and co-developed with territorial, Indigenous and provincial partners, the Framework reflects the priorities and perspectives of Arctic and Northern people and is grounded in inclusive engagement across the region. It is "A shared vision of the future where Arctic and northern people are thriving, strong and safe". The Framework builds on eight overarching and interconnected goals and includes a Safety, Security and Defence chapter led by the Department of National Defence. Goal 2 of the Framework is "strengthened infrastructure that closes gaps with other regions of Canada." The Government of Canada supports investments in the North, including on a distinctions basis to allow for northern and Indigenous partners to address critical housing and infrastructure needs, as well as targeted infrastructure investments towards climate priorities such as the Atlin Hydro Expansion project, and post-secondary education.

The Government of Canada, in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities, continues to make immediate and long term investments to support ongoing work to close the infrastructure gap by 2030. The Government of Canada investments in northern infrastructure are facilitated through dialogue with northern and Indigenous partners and key funding providers. These investments not only enhance the socio-economic potential of northerners but also reflect the vision of the Framework and the priorities of Framework partners. However, despite making considerable investments in Canada's north, the Government of Canada recognizes that it needs to do more.

In relation to emergency preparedness, at the federal level, roles and responsibilities for emergency management are defined in the *Emergency Management Act*. The Act requires ministers of each department to identify the risks associated with their areas of responsibility and to prepare and implement an emergency management plan to address those risks. For on-reserve First Nations communities, and other EMAP eligible recipients, emergency management resources are provided through EMAP. For off-reserve communities that are not EMAP eligible, such as Métis, Inuit, or non-Indigenous communities, emergency management support is shared between all levels of government. Canada's Emergency Management Strategy is the result of federal, provincial, and territorial efforts to establish complementary approaches

to emergency management.

Canada's Emergency Management Strategy recognizes that emergency requirements are constantly changing, and as such there is a need for collaboration to enhance community safety and resilience. In the North, the territorial governments have their own emergency management organizations:

- Nunavut Emergency Management;
- The Northwest Territories Emergency Management Organization; and
- The Yukon Emergency Measures Organization

On infrastructure investments, while the Government of Canada acknowledges that all National Defence investments, including for infrastructure, must be based first and foremost on military requirements, it is actively looking for opportunities to fulfil those requirements in a way that also brings benefits to Northern communities. Canada is also working with partners across the federal government to make sure investments in the North are aligned and that work is done collaboratively.

For example, following the NORAD Modernization announcement in June 2022, the Department of National Defence launched site development planning for defence infrastructure upgrades in Inuvik, Iqaluit, Yellowknife, and Goose Bay. National Defence has had ongoing engagements with municipal, territorial, and Indigenous organizations and governments in the four communities to seek feedback on the draft site development plans and discuss potential opportunities for community access and use of defence infrastructure, where possible. These engagements will continue as the project implementation evolves.

In the context of NORAD modernization, the Government of Canada has conducted preliminary engagements with territorial and Northern Indigenous governments, to build relationships, learn about their priorities, and identify opportunities to leverage defence investments to create economic opportunities where possible.

The Government of Canada has committed to increasing the Federal government's presence in Iqaluit through the construction of Transport Canada's National Aerial Surveillance Program Hangar. When completed in 2025, this facility will provide Canada with a new capability to ensure the Government is ready to assist with the surveillance of emergencies year-round in Iqaluit and surrounding areas.

We will continue engagements with all Northern and Arctic partners over the long term, and become more bilateral and project-specific as the North American Aerospace Defense Command NORAD modernization implementation progresses.

Additionally, a work plan has been developed between Inuit leaders and the Government of Canada through the Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee as part of the new Sovereignty, Defence and Security priority area. One objective in the work plan is to see where Government of Canada infrastructure requirements can align with an Inuit-specific infrastructure needs assessment.

In addition, Budget 2022 also allocated \$9.5 million over five years for National Defence to meet its consultation and cooperation obligations under the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (UNDA)*. The fund is intended to provide funding to Indigenous peoples and their communities, as well as their national and regional representative organizations to support implementation of UNDA, engagement, and the building of deeper collaborative relationships. By enabling increased opportunities for engagement, the program will help strengthen our relationship with Indigenous peoples across Canada, including in Canada's North.

Other investment's in Arctic and Northern communities are focused on the Small Craft Harbours Program. Planned new harbour facilities in northern regions of the country, such as Kangiqtugaapik (Clyde River), contribute to socioeconomic and community development, as

well as conservation/protection of marine areas. These harbours will, when completed, provide safe access to the land and sea for these communities. It is expected that they will further contribute to local economic development and may spur the development of additional fisheries in the area. Additionally, it would ensure that the existing and emerging fisheries that are already being conducted will be done in a safe and secure fashion.

The Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) provides over \$33 billion in long-term, stable funding delivered by Infrastructure Canada to:

- Help communities reduce air and water pollution, provide clean water, increase resilience to climate change and create a clean-growth economy;
- Build strong, dynamic and inclusive communities; and,
- Ensure Canadian families have access to modern, reliable services that improve their quality of life.

Under ICIP, the Rural and Northern Communities Infrastructure Stream (RNIS) provides funding to support the needs of Canada's rural and remote communities by investing in the unique and wide-ranging infrastructure priorities of small, rural and remote communities, for projects that will improve food security, improve road, air or marine infrastructure, improve broadband connectivity, increase access to more efficient or reliable energy sources, and improve education or health facilities.

In addition, the Canada Community-Building Fund (CCBF) is a permanent source of funding provided up-front, twice-a-year, to provinces and territories, who in turn flow the funding to their municipalities to support local infrastructure priorities. Funding can be pooled, banked and borrowed, providing financial flexibility. Communities may choose strategic investments in 19 different project categories: public transit, wastewater infrastructure, drinking water, solid waste management, community energy systems, local roads and bridges, capacity building, highways, local and regional airports, short-line rail, short-sea shipping, disaster mitigation, broadband and connectivity, brownfield redevelopment, culture, tourism, sport, recreation, and fire.

Arctic Sovereignty

Recommendation 16:

That the Government of Canada, in partnership with Indigenous peoples, Northerners and territorial governments, develop and implement a long-term strategy and vision to assert Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic; and that such a policy be designed to support reconciliation and to empower resilient and responsive local communities.

Response:

The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation.

Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework recognizes the importance of having "strong, self-reliant people and communities working together for a vibrant, prosperous and sustainable Arctic and northern region at home and abroad, while expressing Canada's enduring Arctic sovereignty." This is further emphasized in the Framework's Safety, Security, and Defence Chapters, which outlines the sovereignty-related goal of ensuring "the Canadian Arctic and North and its people are safe, secure and well-defended.

Northern partners including Indigenous governments have repeatedly expressed a desire to enhance partnerships with the Government of Canada, leverage their unique knowledge to play a meaningful role, and benefit from economic opportunities in support of Northern and Arctic defence and sovereignty. Northern Affairs through its Arctic and Northern Policy Framework initiatives continues to ensure that these voices are heard, and that efforts to advance Arctic security and sovereignty continue to lead to a safe and secure North.

In December 2022, Canada filed an addendum to the Executive Summary of its 2019 Arctic Ocean submission, extending the outer limits of Canada's Arctic Ocean continental shelf with the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. Prior to the filing, federal officials from Global Affairs Canada, Natural Resources Canada and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, provided individual briefings to government representatives of Nunavut, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. Additionally, engagement meetings were held with Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI) and the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA).

In June 2022, Canada and the Kingdom of Denmark signed a new boundary agreement resolving the Lincoln Sea and the Hans Island disputes and establishing a boundary on the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles in the Labrador Sea. Federal officials undertook consultations with Inuit organizations in Nunavut during the negotiations regarding a new land border on Hans Island, which resulted in the commitment to ensure continued access to and freedom of movement on the entirety of the island. Inuit in Nunavut were also consulted on the maritime boundary and their inputs helped inform Canada's negotiating position. As Canada develops the domestic regulations required to meet the substantive obligations under the Agreement, the Government of Canada will continue to ensure timely and regular engagement with Inuit in Nunavut on the proposed regulatory measures.

The Arctic Council

Recommendation 17:

That the Government of Canada, in partnership with like-minded states and Indigenous permanent participants, determine the best way forward for the Arctic Council considering Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine; and that the government work with its partners to facilitate the continued participation of Indigenous peoples in intergovernmental cooperation in the Arctic.

Response:

The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation.

The Government of Canada has been actively working with like-minded Arctic states and with Indigenous Permanent Participants on the joint commitment to the enduring value of the Arctic Council for the benefit of circumpolar cooperation, and northern and Indigenous communities in Canada. The smooth transfer of the Arctic Council Chair to Norway from Russia on May 11, 2023 was the culmination of a 15-month break by seven Arctic states and five Indigenous Permanent Participant organizations when activity in the Council's formal governance was paused due to Russia's illegal and unjustified war against Ukraine. With Norway now chairing the Council for the next two years, States and Indigenous Permanent Participants will build upon the resumption of Council work initiated by like-minded Arctic states in June 2022 and increase project activities. In support of this objective, the Global Arctic Leadership Initiative will continue to provide financial support to Canadian-based Permanent Participant organizations to enable their ongoing and meaningful participation in Arctic Council work.

CONCLUSION

The Government of Canada thanks the Committee for its work on these recommendations. The Government also thanks the witnesses for once again bringing before the Committee, important issues and evidence for action. The Government of Canada will continue to demonstrate its firm commitment to this important work through collaboration with Northern, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit partners to ensure the Arctic remains safe and secure, and that Indigenous communities are prepared for the risk their communities face.

Sincerely,

