



**PRESS RELEASE**



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## **Aboriginal and Government Housing Experts Discuss Improving Housing Conditions for Aboriginal Canadians**

**OTTAWA, Ontario, November 25, 2004** — Representatives of federal, provincial and territorial governments, Aboriginal organizations and communities, and Aboriginal housing experts discussed approaches to improving the housing conditions of Aboriginal peoples at a meeting in Ottawa on November 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>.

The Housing Sectoral Session is one of seven follow-up sessions to the Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable held on April 19, 2004. At that round table, the Prime Minister set out a vision that included a focus on closing the gap between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians in key quality of life indicators, including health, education, housing and economic opportunities.

"We need to do more to address the significant gap in living conditions for Aboriginal people," said Labour and Housing Minister Joe Fontana. "Housing is the foundation for safe and strong communities and is essential to individual health and well-being. We are strongly committed to continuing our work with Aboriginal leaders, provinces and territories and housing experts to ensure that living conditions improve for Aboriginal Canadians."

The Housing Sectoral Session was designed to facilitate a technical discussion on Aboriginal housing issues in advance of a Policy Retreat in the spring of 2005, which will include members of the Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, Aboriginal leaders and provincial and territorial representatives; and a planned First Ministers' Meeting on Aboriginal issues in the fall of 2005.

Some 100 representatives from Aboriginal organizations, the federal, provincial and territorial governments worked together to address four priority areas that were discussed. The dialogue included ideas on increasing housing supply; improving and maintaining housing quality; jurisdiction/control and accountability; and affordability and access to homeownership and rental housing.

Other sectoral sessions to be held between December and late-January are on the themes of economic opportunities and negotiations and accounting for results. Previously held sectoral sessions have focused on health and education.

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