



8. ASSURE BETTER ACCESS TO CAPITAL FOR INDIGENOUS ENTREPRENEURS

Although public attention often focuses on the opposition of Indigenous peoples to economic projects proposed by others, few Indigenous communities do not want self-determination and long-term economic prosperity that improves quality of life.

Building the capacity for Indigenous communities to benefit from economic development may involve many factors, among them transportation and communications infrastructure, clean water, safe and comfortable housing, access to education and training, health care and law enforcement. Often, it will also require access to capital.

Whether as proponents themselves, or as partners and service providers to proponents, Indigenous entrepreneurs need capital to invest in equipment, training and other tools that can translate the benefits of short-to-medium-term projects into the long-term benefits of jobs and wealth for their communities. In some regions of Canada, particularly where Indigenous peoples have modern land claims, these Indigenous economic development corporations are seen as sources of capital by the broader business community and economic engines for regional growth and employment.

In 2017, we will continue to advocate that the federal government fulfill its commitments to address fundamental quality of life issues (including housing, water quality, education, law enforcement and health care) for Indigenous peoples. We will also press the federal government to assist Indigenous entrepreneurs by offering guarantees for business loans or insurance that can help them access capital at terms that align with their needs. In addition, we will advocate that Indigenous entrepreneurs have the tools necessary to establish credit ratings so they can explore various sources of financing, including private sector banks, credit unions and other financial institutions. Finally, we will look into federal programs that support Indigenous entrepreneurs, including those offered by the Business Development Bank of Canada, to determine if they could be improved to better meet their needs.