

The Auditor General notes that the financial costs of not dealing with housing inadequacies can be measured in higher costs elsewhere.

*"Inadequate and overcrowded housing, among other things, can contribute to social and health problems, such as sickness, marriage breakdown, alcoholism and child abuse. The financial results can be measured in terms of higher cost of health care, social assistance benefits, policing and penitentiary services. Solving the housing problems on reserves could reduce the cost of health services and social assistance by improving social and health standards."* (Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the House of Commons, 1991, p. 333)

The Committee found that the most compelling testimony came from witnesses who had experienced problems first hand.

*"People are always talking about the Third World countries, but we have a terrible situation right here—no running water, diseases and so on related to housing. What has not been mentioned are the social ills that arise, the adverse impact on education, the feeling of unworthiness. All these things tie into the housing program, not to mention the health and economic aspects. We are dealing with a key issue."* (Mr. Charlie Hill, Assembly of First Nations, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, Issue No. 21:17)

Deaths from fire are 3.5 times the non-native level. (*Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, Issue No. 17:6) In Bearskin Lake for example, Chief Fiddler noted that there are practically no fire safety measures in the community. There is neither a fire truck nor insurance coverage. (*Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, Issue No. 26A:23)

Mr. Bill Montour told the Committee about six children who died in a house fire in Davis Inlet. They were trying to find heat in -34°C temperatures, -64°C with the windchill, using a hotplate.

*"First Nations suffer a higher incidence of death, disease, injury and illness than the general Canadian public. The long-term cost of treating these diseases and injuries is much greater than the short-term cost of providing adequate living space, safe water, supplies, sanitation facilities and houses that meet safety standards. Just this past weekend six Innu children died needlessly in a house that did not meet safety standards, even though Canada promised relocation in 1967."* (Mr. Bill Montour, Chief of Staff, Assembly of First Nations, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, Issue No. 12:4)

Other witnesses commented:

*"Many of the communities have large numbers of houses that are overcrowded. Close to urban centres such as Calgary, we hear stories that there are 20 people in one house. These are things that have to be addressed. We have to address the issues such as if you don't have a place to study, what are the chances of you going to school?"* (Mr. Bob Decontie, Housing Coordinator, Assembly of First Nations, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, Issue No. 12:27)

*"I can let you all know it doesn't feel good when you have to pick one of your constituents off the ground with his head blown off, because the young man, educated, a nice person, saw no hope or light because of the conditions under which he lived and took that way out".* (Hon. Don Morin, Minister Responsible for Northwest Territories Housing Corporation and Minister Responsible for Department of Public Works, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, Issue No. 26:28)

In Rankin Inlet, Ms Bettie Palfrey from the Keewatin Regional Health Board told the Committee about incidences of tuberculosis, hepatitis and E. Coli in the Keewatin.

*"Last year this region had a major outbreak of E. Coli 0157, which is a deadly strain. It affected over 500 residents of the region—at least 500. We had two fatalities, both young children. Several more young people will require life-long monitoring and testing for*