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**PAUKTUUTIT**  
INUIT WOMEN OF CANADA

**Written Submission**  
**for the Pre-Budget Consultations**  
**in Advance of the Upcoming Federal Budget**

**By Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada**

**August 7, 2020**



## Pauktuutit's Priorities and Pre-Budget Recommendations

**RECOMMENDATION #1 (URGENT PRIORITY):** That the federal government immediately invest \$20 million to build five shelters and transitional housing buildings specifically for Inuit women and children fleeing violence, including four in Inuit Nunangat and one in Ottawa.

**RECOMMENDATION # 2:** That the federal government financially support the implementation of Pauktuutit’s 15 policing recommendations aimed at improving the safety and security of Inuit women.

**RECOMMENDATION # 3:** That the federal government financially support the creation and delivery of programming aimed at improving the wellbeing and safety of Inuit women and children living in urban centres throughout Canada, including increasing access to affordable housing and skills training opportunities.



## About Pauktuutit

As the national representative organization of Inuit women in Canada, Pauktuutit leads and supports Inuit women through work that ranges from advocacy and policy development to community projects to address their unique interests and priorities for the social, cultural, political, and economic betterment of Inuit women, their families, and communities.

Inuit women continue to fight to have their rights respected and to be directly included, consulted and engaged in decision-making that affects their lives. Improvement of the political, social, economic and health circumstances of Inuit women and their families requires that Inuit women have equal primacy in all policy level discussions.

## A call to support and to invest in the resilient Inuit women living in Inuit Nunangat and in urban areas across Canada.

All Canadians have felt the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, for those women and children already living in difficult circumstances, the consequences of sheltering in place have been even more challenging. Factors at play include overcrowded housing conditions, lack of safe spaces like shelters and transitional housing, the prevalence of drug and alcohol addictions, and the pervasiveness of violence against Inuit women. All this against the backdrop of generations of trauma rooted in colonialism.

*“Gendered violence against Inuit women is a problem of massive proportions... Understanding it requires situating the issue within its colonial context, including how Inuit ways of living and being were dramatically disrupted as corporate colonialism took root and developed in the North.”*

— Dr. Elizabeth Comack

The emergence of COVID-19 has also meant that the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) Action Plan, which was supposed to be ready this past June, was delayed indefinitely due to shifted federal government priorities, leaving Inuit communities wondering if and when any of the MMIWG Report’s recommendations from 2019 will ever be implemented.

**As FINA considers measures that will restart the economy, Pauktuutit strongly believes that Inuit women must be adequately supported to ensure their wellbeing and that of their children. Doing so in a meaningful and holistic manner will also contribute to the responsible economic development of Canada’s North.**



This critical support for Inuit women takes many forms, including the creation of more safe spaces for women fleeing violence, the implementation of a number of tangible police practice reforms, and culturally appropriate programming and supports for urban Inuit women.

Inuit women are key economic and social contributors, and must therefore be included in all financial deliberations impacting their communities within Inuit Nunangat and in urban centres across Canada where Inuit live.

**RECOMMEDATION #1: That the federal government immediately invest \$20 million to build of five shelters and transitional housing buildings specifically for Inuit women and children fleeing violence, including four in Inuit Nunangat and one in Ottawa.**

*“We are hopeful that the federal government will recognize the urgent need for this infrastructure and respond favorably to our ask. It is actually a matter of life and death.”*

— Rebecca Kudloo, President, Pauktuutit

The highest priority identified by Pauktuutit’s Board members at their last AGM in January is to secure funding to address the urgent need for shelters and transition housing for women and children fleeing domestic violence and abuse.

In light of the alarming fact that **Inuit women experience sexual and physical violence at a rate 14 times the rest of Canada**, Inuit women have been pleading with the federal government for these funds for over two decades.

Unfortunately, this request for Inuit-specific safe spaces has not yet materialized even though the MMIWG Inquiry’s Calls for Justice tabled in June 2019 included the “imperative” recommendation that the federal government “fund safe houses, shelters, transition houses and second stage housing” for Inuit women, children and 2SLGBTQQIA fleeing violence (Recommendation 16.9).

**Across Inuit Nunangat, which covers one-third of Canada’s mass, more than 70% of Inuit communities lack safe shelters or other supports.**

As a result, not only must women and children leave their homes and schools when they are threatened by violence, but they must also leave their communities and support systems. **There are approximately 15 shelters at any given time to serve the 51 communities across Inuit Nunangat.** Inuit Nunangat is also the only region in Canada without second stage housing.



Moreover, Inuit communities are not eligible to access funding for shelters through the federal Family Violence Prevention Program. These discriminatory policy and program gaps hinder our collective ability to address violence against Inuit women and children.

And now, the current COVID-19 public health crisis has left Inuit women and children living in violent and abusive households in even more precarious and vulnerable situations – especially during times when certain communities were completely blocked off during the pandemic.

Without a doubt, these new shelters would represent a wise use of federal infrastructure dollars, playing a significant role in improving – if not saving – the lives of many women and children in these regions, as well as providing meaningful local employment and skills development opportunities.

To meet this critical need, the proposed infrastructure would be built in Nunavut, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut and in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, as well as in Ottawa which has the largest urban Inuit population in Canada. It would provide badly needed emergency shelter, childcare and healing space in some of the highest need Inuit communities.

Basing the project on a construction budget of \$3.5 to \$4 million per building, each shelter would be approximately 5,000 square feet in size, for a total budget of \$20 million.

**RECOMMENDATION # 2:** That the federal government financially support the implementation of Pauktuutit’s 15 policing recommendations aimed at improving the safety and security of Inuit women.

*“You can have all these recommendations, all these things that the community is saying, but there’s never any follow-up, follow through, based on the recommendations that people are saying over and over and over again.”*

-Inuk woman who was interviewed for the purpose of Pauktuutit’s 2020 policing report.

Earlier this year, Pauktuutit published a detailed report<sup>1</sup> which called for a fundamental shift in how northern policing is carried out to address the pervasiveness and severity of the violence experienced by Inuit women.

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<sup>1</sup> *Addressing Gendered Violence Against Inuit Women: A review of police policies and practices in Inuit Nunangat*, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, January 2020, [http://www.pauktuutit.ca/wp-content/uploads/Pauktuutit\\_Addressing-Gendered-Violence\\_English\\_Full-Report-1.pdf](http://www.pauktuutit.ca/wp-content/uploads/Pauktuutit_Addressing-Gendered-Violence_English_Full-Report-1.pdf)



In Inuit Nunangat, policing is the responsibility of the RCMP, except for Nunavik, which has been policed by the Kativik Regional Police Force (KRPF) since 1996.

A number of challenges have been raised that call into question whether policing in Inuit Nunangat is being carried out in a manner that upholds justice and protects the safety and security of the communities being served, including: problems with policing in remote communities; the short duration of RCMP postings; the inexperience of officers; staffing shortages and turnover; language barriers; failure to recruit Inuit police officers; lack of cultural competency; lack of resources; underfunding; and lack of wrap-around services.

To address these serious challenges, Pauktuutit’s 2020 policing report lists 15 recommendations aimed at shifting police officers from “community outsiders” to being seen as collaborative community allies, including:

- ✓ the recruitment and retention of many more Inuit police officers;
- ✓ the implementation of culturally competent and trauma-informed policing;
- ✓ the creation of Inuit advisory committees;
- ✓ the establishment of gender-based policing protocols and gender-based violence training for RCMP members; as well as the need to have female officers present for statement-taking in cases of violence against women; and
- ✓ the overall adoption of a decolonized approach grounded in Inuit knowledge and world views.

Pauktuutit has been in dialogue with RCMP Commissioner Brenda Lucki and her senior team, who have committed to ushering in these major policing changes. Pauktuutit views this positive engagement as an important first step.

**However, such a commitment is not enough. To address the pressing problem of gendered violence against Inuit women and the role of the police in the matter, the federal government – along with its partners from all levels of government – must also fully and officially back these reforms and provide the means to operationalize these changes within Inuit Nunangat.**

Moreover, as is mentioned in detail in Pauktuutit's report, it is absolutely critical that the complex issue of the relationship between Inuit communities and the RCMP be understood by policy makers and front line implementers with the *full* historical context of colonialization in mind.



**RECOMMENDATION # 3:** That the federal government provide financial support for the creation and delivery of programming aimed at improving the wellbeing and safety of Inuit women and children living in urban centres throughout Canada, including providing increased access to affordable housing and skills training opportunities.

*“The lack of shelters often results in Inuit women moving south in search of safety. However, in cities like Ottawa, Winnipeg and Montreal, they are at high risk of more violence, life-threatening drugs like opioids and exploitation, including sex-trafficking.”*

— Gerri Sharpe, Vice-President, Pauktuutit

According to Statistics Canada and as referenced by ITK<sup>2</sup>, in 2016 there were 17,690 Inuit living outside Inuit Nunangat, mostly in urban centres like Ottawa, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Montreal and Halifax. That number increased by 62% from the previous 10 years. From 2006 to 2016, the overall Inuit population grew almost three times the rate of the Canadian population, 29% versus 11%, for a total of 65,000.

For a multitude of factors, the transition from living in Inuit Nunangat to southern urban centres is fraught with challenges and dangers for Inuit, especially for Inuit women. This is ironic for many Inuit women who are often fleeing domestic violence situations at home in search of safer living conditions. Other reasons for relocation include overcrowded housing conditions, better access to services (including for medical treatment), education and employment opportunities, and family reunification<sup>3</sup>.

*“Healing from past trauma and maintaining connections with Inuit culture are of the utmost importance for women’s well-being in urban spaces.”*

— Excerpt from “Understanding the Needs of Urban Inuit Women”<sup>4</sup>

For this reason, culturally appropriate programs aimed at facilitating Inuit women’s transition to living in urban settings can play an important role in ensuring that they and their children

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<sup>2</sup> Inuit Statistical Profile 2018, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) <https://www.itk.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Inuit-Statistical-Profile.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> *Creating Culturally-Safe Spaces and Care for Inuit Women and their Families*, Pauktuutit, [https://www.pauktuutit.ca/wp-content/uploads/BAC\\_Info-Pad\\_English.pdf](https://www.pauktuutit.ca/wp-content/uploads/BAC_Info-Pad_English.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> *Understanding the Needs of Urban Inuit Women*, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, April 2017 <https://www.pauktuutit.ca/wp-content/uploads/358996508-Final-Report-UAS-Urban-Research-April-2017.pdf>



have access to safe and adequate housing and can tap into educational and job training opportunities. These programs also play a critical role in ensuring that they do not become victims of sex trafficking and/ or succumb to drug and alcohol addiction.

In recognition of the importance of culturally appropriate programming and services, Pauktuutit is proposing that the federal government provide financial support to ensure that Inuit women and children can live safely in urban areas by having access to Inuit-specific programs and services.

To fully understand what is required by Inuit communities during these pandemic times and during Canada's recovery phase, Pauktuutit recommends that parliamentarians, either through a House of Commons Standing Committee or a Senate Standing Committee, undertake a study to hear from various Inuit community stakeholders regarding the specific needs of Inuit women and children. This important insight would then inform the implementation of the above-mentioned funding.

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