

Recommendations from Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada recommends that the federal government:

1. **Strengthen its commitment to new investments in Inuit-specific shelters and transition housing for women and children** fleeing violence, across Inuit Nunangat.
2. **Improve maternal healthcare for expectant mothers by endorsing the development of legislation and providing multi-year funding for training of Inuit midwives and support for the integration of their role** and services in all communities across Inuit Nunangat.
3. **Close the gender equality gap for Inuit women by ensuring a Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) framework is applied to all legislative, policy and program decisions** that impact Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit, including:
 - The implementation of new programs and investments under the *Federal Pathway to Address Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People*, as well as the *MMIWG Inuit Action Plan*.
4. **Support the implementation of Pauktuutit's 15 policing recommendations** aimed at improving the safety and security of Inuit women.

About Pauktuutit

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada is pleased to present its 2023 budget recommendations. 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 that address their unique interests and priorities for the social, cultural, political, and economic betterment of Inuit women, their families, and communities.

All Canadians have felt the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, for Inuit women and children already living in difficult circumstances across Inuit Nunangat, the pandemic's consequences have been much more dire. Factors at play include overcrowded housing conditions, lack of safe spaces like shelters and transitional housing for women, limited access to community-based health services, and a severe downturn in visitors to the North to whom many Inuit women sell their art, crafts, and textile work.

A call to support and invest in the resiliency of Inuit women across Canada.

The leadership, lived experiences, ideas and energy of Inuit women are all essential to ending gender-based violence and promoting healing. The voices and leadership of Inuit women are also key to creating the systemic change that is necessary to close the significant socio-economic gaps for all Inuit, compared to other Canadians.

However, the capacity and talents of Inuit women and Inuit women's leadership to address these critical challenges is often untapped, while their many contributions and achievements are under-valued.

At the national, regional and community levels, **Inuit women continue to fight to have their rights respected and to be directly included, consulted, and engaged in the decision-making that affects their lives.**

As the Committee considers measures that will jump-start the economy, Pauktuutit strongly believes that Inuit women must be adequately supported to ensure their own wellbeing and that of their children. Doing so in a meaningful and holistic manner will also contribute to economic independence for Inuit women and their families.

This critical support for Inuit women takes many forms, including the **creation of more safe spaces and second-stage housing for women fleeing violence, improved access to health services and healing programs, the empowerment of Inuit women's voices and leadership, as well as implementation of police practice reforms.**

These critical support recommendations are detailed on the following pages:

RECOMMENDATION #1: Inuit-Specific Shelters & Transition Housing

Pauktuutit calls on the federal government to strengthen its commitment to build new Inuit-specific shelters by funding additional shelters, safe houses, transition houses and second-stage housing for Inuit women, children, and gender-diverse people fleeing violence.

The need for this funding was included in the MMIWG Inquiry's Calls for Justice tabled in June 2019 and classified as "imperative" (Recommendation 16.9).

According to Statistics Canada, **Inuit women experience sexual and physical violence at a rate 14 times higher than other women in Canada. Despite this shocking statistic, across Inuit Nunangat -- which covers one-third of Canada's mass -- more than half of Inuit communities lack safe shelters, transition housing or other supports.**

Even with the planned addition of five new shelters (one in each region of Inuit Nunangat and one in Ottawa), there will only be **20 shelters to serve 51 communities in the North.**

Investments in new shelters and transition housing represent a wise use of federal infrastructure dollars, playing a significant role in improving -- and even saving -- the lives of many women and children, as well as providing meaningful local employment and skills development opportunities.

RECOMMENDATION #2: Inuit Midwifery

To address the urgent need for pre-natal, birth and post-partum care for expectant mothers across Inuit Nunangat, Pauktuutit requests multi-year funding for the training of Inuit midwives and to support the respectful integration of their role in community clinics and hospitals.

Currently, due to a lack of access to maternal care services, Inuit women who do not have high-risk pregnancies are still pressured to go south to give birth. Pauktuutit calls for the government to endorse the creation and development of legislation to support and ensure Inuit women and families have equitable access to culturally distinct pre and post natal care services.

This practice is extremely hard -- even dangerous -- for expectant mothers and their young families. Consider, for example:

- In January 2021, Silatik Qavvik died when she travelled from Sanikiluaq, Nunavut to Winnipeg for childbirth and caught COVID-19 there. Silatik was just 35 years old and the mother of four children and a newborn.

- When an expectant mother and her partner go south for childbirth, their young children are left behind in their northern communities where, without the watchful eyes of their mother and father on them, they can be vulnerable to sexual or physical abuse.
- Going south removes women from their circle or network of support – extended family and friends.
- Going south means that an Inuk woman may be subjected to racism from health care providers.

Investing in Inuit midwifery will help ensure Inuit women have access to safe and compassionate pregnancy, birth, and postpartum care. This investment also means these women won't have to leave their homes, their young children and circle of support to receive this care.

RECOMMENDATION #3: Empowering Inuit Women's Leadership

To end gender-based violence and close the gender equality gap for Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit, Pauktuutit requires federal funding that is targeted towards implementing an Inuit-specific Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) Framework across all legislative, policy and program decisions that impact the lives of Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit, including:

- The implementation of new programs and investments under the *Federal Pathway to Address Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) and 2SLGBTQQA+ People*, as well as the *MMIWG Inuit Action Plan*.

Additionally, Pauktuutit's *Empowering Inuit Women in Leadership* initiative will advance gender equality to end gender-based violence and create systemic change by ensuring Inuit women's voices are heard on both **the range of policy issues** that get considered and **the types of solutions** that are proposed.

The goals of the initiative are:

- ⇒ To ensure the implementation of an Inuit-specific Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) framework to address violence and ensure safety of Inuit women.
- ⇒ To increase equitable and diverse leadership opportunities to enhance the safety of Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit; and
- ⇒ To empower Inuit women and their democratic participation in their respective communities.

These goals are key to increasing the safety and well-being of Inuit women, as research shows women’s leadership has a distinct impact on policy priorities.

This impact is especially important on policies that emphasize personal safety, aim to improve quality of life, and reflect the priorities of Inuit women, gender-diverse Inuit, their families, and communities.

RECOMMENDATION # 4: Implementation of Pauktuutit’s 15 Policing Recommendations to Improve the Safety and Security of Inuit Women

In 2020, Pauktuutit published a detailed report: *Addressing Gendered Violence Against Inuit Women: A review of police policies and practices in Inuit Nunangat*. This landmark report 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.

The report identified challenges that call into question whether policing in Inuit Nunangat is being carried out in a manner that upholds justice while protecting the safety and security of the communities being served.

These challenges include problems with policing in remote communities; the brief 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 policing challenges, Pauktuutit’s report lays out 15 recommendations aimed at shifting police officers from “community outsiders” to being seen as collaborative community allies, these recommendations include:

- ⇒ 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 violence training for RCMP members and gender-based policing protocols, including the need for female officers to be present when statements are taken in cases of violence against women; and
- ⇒ the overall adoption of a decolonized approach grounded in Inuit knowledge and world views.

In 2021 Pauktuutit signed a historic Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), the *Pinasuqatigiinniq Agreement* with the RCMP to work collaboratively to achieve these major policing changes.

“Through the growth of our Agreement, we are working to ensure our equitable participation. Together we have created mechanisms for Inuit women’s advocacy, and inclusion in processes of engagement, co-development, implementation, and opportunity for evaluation,” explained President, Gerri Sharpe.

“Our partnership has evolved to include Pauktuutit’s Engagement Principles, RCMP Core Values and a Terms of Reference. This principled approach is based on mutual trust in transparent and open communication, with the shared goal of reducing violence against Inuit women, children, and gender-diverse Inuit through an engaged, sensitive, and culturally responsive policing service.”

Pauktuutit is also working with Public Safety Canada on policing reforms that will affect Inuit women and girls. **Multi-year funding is required for Pauktuutit to sustain this important and meaningful work.**

Pauktuutit is available to answer any questions Committee members may have.

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