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INUIT TAPIRIIT KANATAMI

ITK Priorities for Election 2019



About Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) is the national representative organization for Inuit in Canada, the majority of whom live in the 51 communities of Inuit Nunangat, the Inuit homeland encompassing the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (Northwest Territories), Nunavut, Nunavik (Northern Quebec), and Nunatsiavut (Northern Labrador). ITK advocates for policies, programs and services to address the social, cultural, political and environmental challenges facing our people.

The comprehensive land claim agreements that have been settled in Inuit Nunangat continue to form a core component of our organization's mandate. These land claims have the status of protected treaties under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, and we remain committed to working in partnership with the Crown toward their full implementation. Consistent with its founding purpose, ITK represents the rights and interests of Inuit at the national level through a democratic governance structure that represents all Inuit regions.

ITK is governed by a Board of Directors composed of the following members:

- Chair and CEO, Inuvialuit Regional Corporation
- President, Makivik Corporation
- President, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated
- President, Nunatsiavut Government

In addition to voting members, the following non-voting Permanent Participant Representatives also sit on the Board of Directors:

- President, Inuit Circumpolar Council Canada
- President, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada
- President, National Inuit Youth Council

Vision

Canadian Inuit are prospering through unity and self-determination

Mission

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami is the national voice for protecting and advancing the rights and interests of Inuit in Canada



Introduction

Inuit Nunangat is the Inuit homeland in Canada, encompassing 51 communities in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (Northwest Territories), Nunavut, Nunavik (Northern Quebec), and Nunatsiavut (Northern Labrador). Inuit Nunangat encompasses nearly one third of Canada's landmass, its entire Arctic coastline, and significant offshore areas. It is a distinct geographic, political, and cultural region that is co-managed by Inuit and the federal government through governance structures established by comprehensive Inuit land claim agreements.

International interest and activity in our homeland is surging amidst a worsening climate crisis, profound and growing inequity between Inuit and most other Canadians, and a severe infrastructure deficit throughout Inuit Nunangat that leaves the region vulnerable to shifting geopolitical interests. Solutions to these and associated challenges can only be advanced through strong Inuit-Crown partnership that respects and supports Inuit self-determination and governance. The following ITK priorities for federal election 2019 reflect the urgent need to take action to address these and associated challenges at a time of renewed global focus on the Inuit homeland.

Implementing an Inuit Nunangat policy

ITK calls on the next federal government to develop and implement a formal Inuit Nunangat policy. Implementing an Inuit Nunangat policy means revising federal policy and program eligibility and program and service delivery criteria to ensure that all four regions of Inuit Nunangat are able to access and directly benefit from policies, programs, or initiatives that are intended to benefit Inuit. It also means ensuring that federal budget allocations that are intended to benefit Inuit are allocated directly to the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., Makivik Corporation, and the Nunatsiavut Government. Implementing an Inuit Nunangat policy is the most efficient and effective means to bring Inuit Nunangat into Canada as a nation building exercise at a time of surging international interest and activity in the Arctic.



Current challenges facing Inuit Nunangat

Inuit Nunangat contains largely untapped potential and opportunity that should be developed and harnessed at a time of surging international interest and activity in the Arctic. The future of Inuit Nunangat should be central to the platform of every national party in this election. Inuit Nunangat remains the least developed geographic region in Canada. Inuit experience extreme inequality compared to other Canadians, and to other Canadians in Inuit Nunangat. Addressing social and economic inequalities, both between Inuit Nunangat and within Inuit Nunangat itself, is a necessary pre-condition to the development of a healthy, resilient and secure Canadian Arctic. Economic prosperity, national security and public safety all depend on healthy communities and inclusive economies and systems of governance. In addition, 33% of Inuit are under the age of 14, meaning policy interventions which target health, education and social development will have a disproportionately beneficial impact in Inuit Nunangat compared to other regions within Canada. As a result, Canadian policy should commit to ambitious investments throughout Inuit Nunangat, conceived and evaluated with the goal of eliminating social and economic inequities.

ITK calls on the next federal government to take action on the following priorities:

1. Social infrastructure and suicide prevention

Objective: Inuit families are safe and prospering through major investments in social infrastructure and in mental health services and supports

ITK calls on the next federal government to contribute major investments in social infrastructure and mental health services and supports. Such investments are needed to enhance the health and safety of Inuit Nunangat communities, support women entering and remaining in the workforce, and to create the environmental conditions necessary for optimal lifelong development in children. Net outcomes of social infrastructure and mental health services and supports would include reduced rate of suicide among Inuit, reduced income inequality and greater self-sufficiency and competitiveness, as well as improved health and wellness. Improved Inuit health and wellness, including improved mental health and a reduced rate of suicide among Inuit, are central to the sustainability of Inuit Nunangat as a distinct geographic, political, and cultural region.



- a) ***Inuit mental health and suicide prevention:*** The next federal government must prioritize investments in Inuit mental health and suicide prevention. Reducing the rate of suicide among Inuit can only be achieved through major investments in the protective factors that we know help protect individuals, families, and communities from suicide risk. Such investments must include housing and transitional housing, family violence shelters, and addictions treatment centers located in all four regions of Inuit Nunangat, as well as ongoing support for implementing the National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy.

- b) ***Family violence shelters and transitional housing:*** Federal investment in family violence shelters and transitional housing units are needed in Inuit Nunangat. Household safety and security are linked to greater educational attainment, employment, and health and wellness outcomes. However, too many families in Inuit Nunangat experience or are exposed to physical and/or sexual violence, creating risk for intergenerational trauma and a host of negative outcomes including underemployment and poverty, low educational attainment, and poor mental health. The severe housing shortage in Inuit Nunangat means the most vulnerable in society often cannot escape violence. Existing family violence shelter capacity is strained. There are currently only 13 family violence shelters serving Inuit Nunangat. Investments in family violence shelters and transitional housing are required to address the twin challenges of household crowding and violence.

- c) ***Addictions treatment centres:*** Addictions treatment is not accessible to most residents of Inuit Nunangat despite the disproportionate burden of intergenerational trauma faced by Inuit Nunangat communities compared to most other parts of Canada. Nearly all Inuit Nunangat residents who require addictions treatment must leave our homeland for centres in southern Canada, often at great expense to provincial and territorial governments. The limited accessibility of addictions treatment is a disincentive for those who require the most support, and treatment centres in the south are in most cases not Inuit-specific and do not provide services in Inuktitut. There is currently only one addictions treatment centre in Inuit Nunangat, Isuarsivik located in Kuujuaq, Nunavik. A five-year plan to build a second centre, in Iqaluit, was announced in August 2019.



2. Housing

Objective: To end the housing crisis in Inuit Nunangat and improve housing outcomes in line with outcomes for the rest of Canada

To end the ongoing housing crisis in Inuit Nunangat, the next federal government should commit to completely filling the social housing backlog across Inuit Nunangat within the first two years of its mandate through major social housing investments that include energy saving retrofits that reduce operations and maintenance costs for existing housing stock. Inuit have been experiencing a housing crisis for the entire period that Canada has exercised its jurisdiction over our homeland. Incremental federal investments in Inuit Nunangat housing have failed to end the housing crisis and will never be enough to fill the housing deficit in our communities.

3. Renewable energy and climate action

Objective: By 2050, Canada has achieved net zero greenhouse gas emissions through rapid and ambitious climate action, including support for Inuit community transitions to renewable energy

The International Panel on Climate Change projects global annual emissions must be halved by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050 to stem the devastating climate impacts Inuit Nunangat is already experiencing. The next federal government should address the global climate emergency by taking unprecedented and aggressive action to mitigate Canada's greenhouse gas emissions and support the transition to renewable energy in Inuit Nunangat. Inuit are determined to actively shape inclusive and effective climate policies and actions. We seek energy independence as well as ownership and governance of energy systems in Inuit Nunangat communities. Consistent with the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework the next government should support Inuit self-determined pathways to energy security through targeted investments in Inuit Nunangat that remedy barriers to the deployment of renewable energy technologies and reduction of diesel and support increased Inuit ownership and governance of energy systems.



4. Inuit-Crown partnership

Objective: Inuit-Crown partnership guides the development and implementation of federal programs, policies, and initiatives intended to benefit Inuit

The Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee (ICPC) is the primary vehicle for advancing reconciliation between Inuit and the federal government. All parties should align their election platforms with ICPC's priorities and workplan deliverables. Inuit can only be served by the federal government if federal ministers and federal departments understand Inuit priorities and take action to address them. Strengthening the Inuit-Crown partnership is necessary for educating federal ministers, departments, and senior officials about Inuit-Crown priorities and how best to address them through the development and implementation of Inuit-specific federal programs, policies, and initiatives. Significant work remains to further strengthen the ICPC in ways that result in federal policies, programs, and initiatives that are more effective and impactful for Inuit.

5. Infrastructure and economic self-reliance

Objective: Eliminate the infrastructure deficit in Inuit Nunangat

The next federal government must commit to eliminating the infrastructure deficit in Inuit Nunangat by 2030, beginning in the first two years of its mandate by creating an Arctic Infrastructure Fund accessible to all four regions of Inuit Nunangat, with an initial investment of \$1 billion, in addition to major infrastructure investments, including in social infrastructure, marine and air infrastructure, and telecommunications. The growing infrastructure gap between Inuit Nunangat and the rest of Canada is a notorious impediment to the prosperity of Inuit Nunangat residents and contributes to a tremendous lost opportunity cost for the national economy. Furthermore, the infrastructure deficit in Inuit Nunangat leaves the region vulnerable to climate impacts, safety and security threats, and makes it challenging for Inuit to capitalize on economic development opportunities. Investments in social infrastructure are needed in particular to support the environmental conditions that we know are necessary for children and families to thrive. Social infrastructure includes early learning and child care centres, kindergarten to grade 12 and postsecondary education, family violence shelters and transitional housing, addictions treatment centres, social and transitional housing and facilities for programming/service provision.



a. **Marine and air infrastructure**

Objective: Marine and air infrastructure investments reflect the essential service role of marine and air infrastructure in Inuit Nunangat

Inuit Nunangat encompasses Canada's entire Arctic coastline and significant offshore areas, including the Northwest Passage. Yet marine infrastructure throughout the region is impoverished or nonexistent compared to other coastal regions of Canada, despite surging international interest and activity in the region that includes increased shipping traffic. These gaps extend to air transportation infrastructure and to training to effectively operate aviation and marine infrastructure. Most airport runways in Inuit Nunangat date from the 1950s and 1960s and are made of compacted gravel. This has a significant impact on emergency travel and the delivery and cost of goods and services not to mention the everyday air travel that so many other Canadians take for granted. In addition, the absence of marine infrastructure results in economic leakage, particularly in the renewable resource sector because fishing vessels operating in Inuit Nunangat must leave the region to offload and to refuel. Finally, the existing marine and air infrastructure gaps impede search and rescue operations, resulting in unacceptably long response times which endanger the health and safety of Inuit and others.

b. **Telecommunications infrastructure**

Objective: Invest in fibre optic connectivity for all Inuit Nunangat communities

While most Canadians are increasingly adopting higher levels of service, Inuit can only hope that communities across Inuit Nunangat will have access to these service levels by 2031. The Auditor General's analysis of connectivity in rural and remote communities faulted the federal government's lack of ambition and lack of a comprehensive national broadband strategy for the continued failure to substantively address the digital divide, and nowhere is this more apparent than in Inuit Nunangat. In order to remedy this challenge, the federal government should commit to investing in regional fibre projects, beginning with regional feasibility studies, with the goal of laying fibre optic cable backbone connecting all 51 Inuit communities by 2024.



6. Education

Objective: Close the gap in educational outcomes between Inuit and non-Inuit

The department of Indigenous Services Canada's mandate should be broadened to include specific aspects of Inuit K-12 schooling in order to ensure that the federal government's fiduciary responsibility to Inuit under section 91(24) of the *Constitution Act* is being met. This is also necessary to ensure that Canada upholds its international treaty obligations to Inuit and all Canadians, including its obligations to uphold the rights of persons with disabilities and eliminate racial discrimination. Furthermore, this step is required in order for Canada to fulfill its commitment to implementing the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. In order to end racial discrimination against Inuit, the federal government should commit to investing per-pupil Inuktitut funding for K-12 language of instruction that is equivalent to per pupil federal spending for French and English.

Enhancing the federal role in Inuit K-12 schooling would help ensure that Inuit students have access to a quality of education and associated supports required to successfully apply for and secure a post-secondary degree. Furthermore, Canada is the only jurisdiction with Arctic territory that lacks an Arctic university. The federal government should prioritize supporting the development of an Inuit Nunangat university alongside its renewed commitment to supporting Inuit K-12 schooling.

7. National Inquiry into MMIWG Calls to Justice

Objective: Full implementation of the MMIWG Calls for Justice

ITK calls on the next government to ensure the full implementation of Calls for Justice contained in the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The next government must commit to fulfilling obligations in the Calls for Justice, including the 46 Inuit-specific Calls for Justice, and the work of the MMIWG National Action Plan must follow a distinctions based approach that respects Inuit based models.



8. Poverty reduction and food security

Objective: Ensure all Inuit families are prospering and getting enough healthy food to eat

ITK calls on the next government to partner with Inuit in developing and implementing innovative poverty reduction programs and interventions that help reduce poverty among Inuit and ensure families are getting enough healthy food to eat. At the same time, the next federal government must align federal policy with Inuit priorities related to wildlife harvesting activities, federal procurement, climate change and food security for Inuit households.

9. Advancing Inuit self-determination in research

Objective: Federal policy respects and supports Inuit self-determination in all aspects of research

ITK calls on the next federal government to co-develop a national Inuit Nunangat research policy with Inuit. Such a policy is necessary to coordinate research initiatives among more than 10 federal departments and agencies that carry out research in Inuit Nunangat, as well as to respect and support Inuit self-determination in all aspects of research. Arctic research in Canada is governed, funded and administered in an incoherent, uncoordinated and wasteful manner that rarely benefits Inuit. The dysfunctional and uncoordinated nature of Arctic research is an unacceptable impediment to the growth of the region and hinders Canada's Arctic policy and diplomacy.



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