



# ITK Priorities for Election 2021

August 2021



# About Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) is the national representative organization for the 65,000 Inuit in Canada, the majority of whom live in Inuit Nunangat, the Inuit home land encompassing 51 communities across the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (Northwest Territories), Nunavut, Nunavik (Northern Québec), and Nunatsiavut (Northern Labrador). Inuit Nunangat makes up nearly one third of Canada's landmass and 50 percent of its coastline. ITK represents the rights and interests of Inuit at the national level through a democratic governance structure that represents all Inuit regions. ITK advocates for policies, programs, and services to address the social, cultural, political, and environmental issues facing our people.

ITK's Board of Directors are as follows:

- 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:

- 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.

A worsening climate crisis, profound and growing inequity between Inuit and most other Canadians, and a severe infrastructure and housing deficit throughout Inuit Nunangat leaves the region vulnerable, including to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and strong emergence from it. Solutions to these and other disparities 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 2021 reflect the urgent need to take action to address these and associated challenges at a time of renewed national focus on reconciliation and the Inuit homeland.



## **1. Inuit Nunangat Policy**

ITK calls on the next federal government to prioritize the completion of an Inuit Nunangat Policy in partnership with ITK, and to adopt and implement it within the first three months of taking office. An Inuit Nunangat Policy is needed to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and impacts of federal programs, policies and initiatives that are intended to benefit Inuit. ITK welcomed the federal government's commitment in 2019 to co-develop an Inuit Nunangat Policy, yet progress on completing the Policy has lagged.

## **2. Inuit-led suicide-prevention measures**

ITK calls on the next federal government to support suicide prevention among Inuit by continuing to invest in implementation of the National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy, as well as by making major new investments in mental health services and supports. 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.

## **3. Food security among Inuit**

ITK released the *Inuit Nunangat Food Security Strategy* in June 2021 in order to help coordinate actions to reduce poverty and improve food security among Inuit living in Inuit Nunangat. The high prevalence of poverty and food insecurity among Inuit is unacceptable and contributes to other social and economic challenges. ITK calls on the next federal government to advance actions identified in the Strategy, including by turning the Nutrition North Canada program into an evidence-based food security program, investing in the infrastructure needed to help reduce food costs, and helping curb the cost of living in Inuit communities by establishing a remote air service program that reduces the cost of shipping food and goods into Inuit Nunangat communities.

## **4. Infrastructure and housing**

The infrastructure gap between Inuit Nunangat and the rest of Canada, including the long-standing housing shortage in our communities, contribute to high cost of living and poor social and economic outcomes for too many families. ITK has welcomed recent federal investments in infrastructure and housing in Inuit Nunangat and calls on the next federal government to pledge major new and sustained investment in the region in order to bring it into Canada, uphold Canada's human rights obligations, and help support economic development.

## **5. COVID-19 relief and poverty reduction measures**

ITK calls on the next federal government to maintain and build upon existing COVID-19 relief measures that are intended to help support Inuit and to introduce new poverty reduction measures, including a national food security program. ITK's 2021 *Inuit Nunangat Food Security Strategy* identifies federal-led actions that would help curb poverty and food insecurity in Inuit Nunangat, including through the implementation of a national food security program, cost of living reduction measures, and guaranteed livable income models.

## **6. Missing and murdered Inuit women and girls**

ITK calls on the next federal government to help improve the safety of Inuit women and girls by developing national legislation that addresses domestic violence, sex trafficking, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking experienced by Indigenous peoples. The US Violence Against Women Act has proven effective in curbing violence against women in that country and similar national legislation is needed in Canada to close the federal statutory gap in relation to the high prevalence of gendered violence experienced by Inuit and other Indigenous peoples. This legislative initiative must result in the provision of federal resources to encourage community-coordinated responses to combating violence, including programming to prevent violence, housing protections for survivors, funding for advocates and rape crisis centres, as well as culturally and linguistically specific services.

## **7. Tuberculosis elimination**

ITK calls on the next federal government to renew investment and support for Tuberculosis (TB) prevention measures in Inuit Nunangat. ITK welcomed the federal government's commitment in 2018 to help reduce active rates of TB by at least 50% by 2025 and eliminating active TB by 2030. However, it is not possible to achieve these goals without renewed federal leadership in helping to coordinate the range of measures needed to address the factors driving high rates of TB among Inuit living in Inuit Nunangat, and which include the housing shortage, poverty, and high cost of living.

## **8. Implementation of Inuit Land Claims Agreements**

ITK welcomed the federal government's 2019 commitment to develop a process for reviewing, maintaining and enforcing Canada's treaty obligations between the Crown and Indigenous communities. However, such a process has not been developed. ITK continues to call on the federal government to achieve this commitment to partner with Inuit Land Claims Organizations (ILCOs) to establish a Modern Treaties Implementation Review Commission as an adjunct office within the Office of the Auditor General. Such a Commission is necessary to improve monitoring and implementation of Inuit-Crown land claims agreements.

## **9. Legislative implementation**

ITK calls on the next federal government to prioritize implementation of An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children, Youth and Families, as well as An Act Respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The effectiveness of An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children, Youth and Families in supporting Inuit self-determination over child welfare systems is largely contingent on federal prioritization of brokering the agreements required to support Inuit in administering child welfare systems, and providing the funding needed to support current and future systems. Successful implementation of An Act Respecting the UN Declaration is similarly contingent on the federal government's prioritization, on an urgent basis, of developing an associated action plan to guide implementation of the law, in partnership with ITK, the Assembly of First Nations, and the Métis Nation.

## **10. Distinctions-based Indigenous health legislation**

Distinctions-based Indigenous Health Legislation is needed to help improve the availability and quality of health services to Inuit across Canada by provincial and territorial governments. ITK welcomed the federal government's 2020 commitment to expedite work on this legislative initiative and calls on the next federal government to table a bill by spring 2022.

## **11. Climate change**

The National Inuit Climate Change Strategy, released in 2019, is an Inuit-led response to the global climate crisis. ITK calls on the federal government to advance actions identified in the Strategy, including through coordinated climate policy and decision-making inclusive of Inuit as rights holders, that improves Inuit quality of life rather than adding to the socio-economic inequities that Inuit already face.

## **12. Education and Inuktut**

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic further underscore the fragility of education systems in Inuit Nunangat, and the links between educational attainment and other social and economic challenges. Provincial and territorial governments alone are unable or unwilling to remedy the myriad barriers that prevent too many Inuit from securing a high quality and Inuit-specific education. The pandemic has highlighted in particular the need for greater support for Inuktut-medium education, the need to ensure that the rights of students with disabilities are upheld, and to ensure that educational standards are in place that are enforceable and prevent Inuit from experiencing discrimination. ITK calls on the next federal government to play a leadership role in supporting measures that support primary and secondary school educational attainment among Inuit.

### **13. Inuit self-determination in research**

ITK calls on the next federal government to support Inuit self-determination in research in order to advance reconciliation and ensure that federal spending on Inuit Nunangat research better meets the needs and priorities of Inuit. The National Inuit Strategy on Research, released by ITK in 2018, articulates Inuit expectations for research, defines Inuit approaches to building research partnerships, and identifies the actions needed to enhance the effectiveness, impact, and usefulness of research occurring in Inuit Nunangat for Inuit, including data security.

### **14. 100 Wellington/Indigenous Peoples Space**

ITK welcomed the federal government's commitment in 2017 to transform 100 Wellington into an Indigenous Peoples Space whose primary function for Inuit would be to support and advance Inuit-Crown diplomacy and partnership. ITK calls on the next federal government to commit to opening this facility by June 2022.

### **15. Reconciliation within the FPTI relationship**

ITK calls on the next federal government to play a leadership role in developing productive intergovernmental relationships that include Inuit as full participants along with provincial and territorial governments. This includes through the development of processes for information sharing and for constructive decision-making. ITK has welcomed Inuit representative organizational participation in Federal-Provincial-Territorial-Indigenous (FPTI) meetings, however, Indigenous organizations are still routinely excluded from substantive discussions on issues that directly impact us.



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