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INUIT TAPIRIIT KANATAMI

# Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami Pre-Budget Submission 2022



# 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 over 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.

The members of 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 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

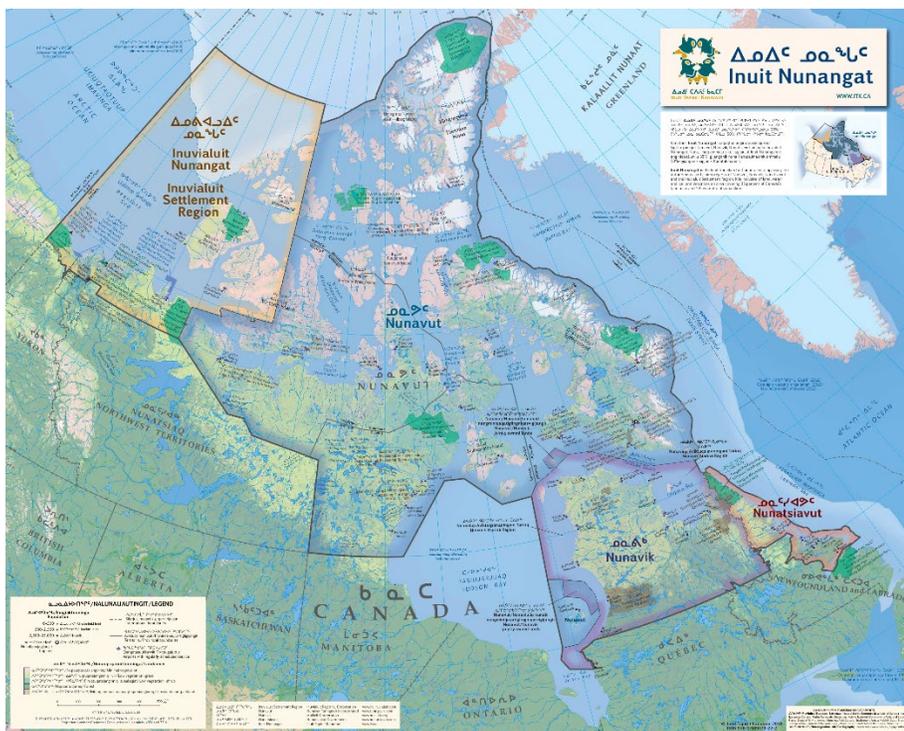
Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami is the national voice for protecting and advancing the rights and interests of Inuit in Canada.

# Introduction

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami's 2022 pre-budget submission focuses on the importance of deep investments in specific priority areas that will have cascading benefits across the whole of Inuit society. Inuit Nunangat experiences a crippling housing crisis and the highest documented prevalence of food insecurity of any Indigenous people living in a developed country. These negatively impact on health and safety, education, employment, economic development, cultural continuity and our ability to make joint progress on a shared commitment to eliminate tuberculosis across Inuit Nunangat by 2030. For the 2022-2023 fiscal year, ITK seeks the inclusion of Inuit-specific priorities in the federal budget that advance the achievement of principles and priorities identified in the Inuit Nunangat Declaration on Inuit-Crown Partnership.

## Inuit Nunangat

Inuit Nunangat is the Inuit homeland in Canada, made up of 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 democratic governance structures established by comprehensive Inuit land claim agreements.



## **Applying an Inuit Nunangat fiscal policy**

Budget 2022 should solidify the Government of Canada's commitment to the bilateral relationship with Inuit by recommitting to an Inuit Nunangat fiscal policy in the allocation of Inuit-specific funding. The inclusion of an Inuit section that is specific to Inuit self-determined priorities is a critical component of reconciliation with Inuit. Focused implementation of an Inuit Nunangat fiscal policy in federal budgets rather than broad-based pan-Indigenous investments creates efficiency, cost savings, and more immediate positive impacts and benefits for Inuit that in turn benefit all Canadians.

## **Ending the Housing crisis**

Improving housing outcomes in Inuit Nunangat will address a national crisis that has been perpetuating for over 60 years of public government housing policy and remove a major impediment to healthy living, education and employment for Inuit. Although there is a housing challenge across much of Canada, the Inuit housing crisis is both uniquely acute and long-standing. Over half (51.7%) of Inuit in Inuit Nunangat live in crowded housing compared to 8.5% percent of non-Indigenous Canadians. In addition, more than 70% of the communities in Inuit Nunangat do not have a safe shelter for women and children experiencing family violence. The seriousness of this issue was evident with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic as social distancing measures and lockdowns resulted in individuals and families spending more time in unsuitable homes leading to increased exposure to the virus and unsafe situations for those unable to escape family violence. Investing in housing is an investment in our health, wellbeing and economic prosperity.

A significant and historic opportunity exists to eliminate the housing crisis in Inuit Nunangat within the term of this Parliament, and lay an adequate foundation for the future sustainability of housing development and delivery. Strong commitments to improve housing in Indigenous communities have been made by the Government of Canada. Direct housing funding through recent federal budgets is being successfully delivered by Inuit organizations. Yet, these investments are not sufficient to meet core housing needs. To identify, describe and synthesize elements of existing and prospective regional housing needs across Inuit Nunangat, ITK has determined that \$3.04 billion over the next 10 years is required for the construction of housing units as well as the maintenance and repair of existing stock. Direct Inuit housing investments should be delivered through a grant mechanism that allows Inuit representative organizations sufficient flexibility, certainty and transparency while ensuring housing delivery meets the specific needs of Inuit communities.

## **Improving Food Security through self-determination**

Inuit like all Canadians have the right to adequate food, yet there are no federal programs or initiatives in place that set out to address this long lasting health crisis faced by Inuit in Canada. Consequently our people have the unenviable distinction of experiencing the highest documented prevalence of food insecurity of any Indigenous people living in a developed country. This crisis not only reflects the significant challenges experienced within our food system but also the gravity of compounding social and health inequities that persist. Access to affordable, safe, and nutritious food by Inuit will remain out of reach until Inuit are in a position to shape a concrete, distinctions-based, whole-of-government approach to food security.

The [Inuit Nunangat Food Security Strategy](#) released in July 2021 is driven by the desire to end hunger and support the development of a sustainable food system. The Strategy identifies the coordinated actions required to overcome the multiple factors that drive Inuit food insecurity, including monetary poverty, the high cost of living, low incomes, climate change, and infrastructure deficits. The investments the Government of Canada provided to Inuit communities for food relief initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic were crucial for many families but are in no way substantial enough to end this ongoing crisis. The federal government has committed to supporting the Strategy through the Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee yet no resources have been committed to date. An initial investment of \$100 million over four years for the implementation of the Inuit Nunangat Food Security Strategy would ensure that Inuit-driven food security solutions can effectively address the priorities of our communities.

## **Eliminating Tuberculosis by 2030**

Inuit in Canada face rates of tuberculosis (TB) over 300 times higher than in Canadian-born non-Indigenous people. High rates of TB across Inuit Nunangat are a symptom of significant disparities in social determinants of health between Inuit and other Canadians, including overcrowded housing, food insecurity, barriers to health care, and poverty. This staggering and unacceptable reality has been trending upward for the last two decades and needs to change. TB is both preventable and curable. Substantial investment is needed to: strengthen key areas of TB programming and health service delivery; implement strategic interventions that enable communities and health systems to work together; engage Inuit-governed research to increase understanding of the drivers of TB in Inuit communities; and improve social determinants of health and health equity for Inuit. Moving towards achieving equity in public health by eliminating tuberculosis from Inuit regions in Canada requires a monumental effort well beyond existing TB prevention and control programs.

In 2018, the Government of Canada and ITK made a joint commitment to eliminate TB from Inuit Nunangat by 2030. The Government of Canada provided an initial investment of \$27.5 million to start this work with the recognition that substantial further funding would be required to achieve the goal of TB elimination by 2030. ITK produced the [Inuit Tuberculosis Elimination Framework](#) to guide the development of regional action plans to eliminate TB which are holistic, systematic and evidence-based. The Framework highlights strategic actions and investments required to create access to high-quality TB care and address the long-standing social and economic inequities that are linked to TB transmission and to the high prevalence of TB disease among Inuit. Each Inuit region has used the initial investment of funding to develop and begin to implement a TB elimination action plan specific to their unique context. This work includes social protection initiatives, enhanced TB screening activities, community engagement, training community health workers, development of education materials for health care providers and the general public, building partnerships, monitoring and evaluation of TB initiatives, Inuit-specific research, and examination of areas of cross-section between COVID-19 and TB. While work on implementing regional TB elimination action plans has been challenging and slower than planned during the pandemic, Inuit remain highly committed to moving the work forward. Additional funding to extend the programming until 2030 will enable the scale-up of elimination efforts and pursuit of necessary additional opportunities.

ITK and Inuit regions have worked together to determine the full cost of implementing TB elimination action plans. This work has shown that \$141 million over eight years (2022-2030) is needed for the elimination of TB across Inuit Nunangat. This funding is crucial for breaking the cycle of TB in Inuit communities. Maintaining TB elimination will also require substantial investments in housing and poverty reduction, including in relation to food security for Inuit communities.

### **Enhancing Inuit-led suicide prevention measures**

In Budget 2019, the federal government committed \$50 million over 5 years to support suicide prevention among Inuit through implementation of the [National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy](#). Inuit have invested this funding in the development and implementation of regionally-specific suicide prevention strategies, work on the prevention of child sexual abuse, preliminary work on poverty reduction, housing, and trauma informed care, as well as strengthening partnerships and increasing data collection.

However, suicide prevention requires a holistic approach with meaningful action and deep investment at both the community and regional levels to address the range of identified risk and protective factors for suicide. The response by the federal government to the recent COVID-19 pandemic and the unprecedented level of coordination and funding that was provided to address public health and wellbeing, the economy, public safety, etc. denote a willingness and ability to respond to address public health crises. Suicide is a preventable public health crisis in Inuit communities.

As such, ITK is seeking annual funding comparable to the level of Inuit-specific funding that was provided through the COVID-19 Indigenous Community Support Fund for augmented implementation of the National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy to respond to the public health crisis of suicide in Inuit communities. Focus on additional support for the implementation of our existing evidence-based and Inuit-specific suicide prevention strategy rather than the development of parallel pan-Indigenous mental health and wellness strategies will result in more immediate positive impacts and benefit for Inuit.

## **Supporting Inuktitut**

The legacy of residential schools continues to cast a long shadow on Inuit culture and language and has contributed to the gap in education, health and economic prosperity outcomes for Inuit relative to other Canadians. The dominance of French and English programming across Inuit Nunangat continues to be a main driver of language shift by tethering academic, social and economic advancement to English and French. Federal investment in Inuktitut is necessary to reverse the language shift as well as to close a profound policy gap in the Crown's fiduciary responsibility to Inuit.

Although an Inuktitut Costing Model is in the process of being finalized through the Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee, an immediate and urgent initial Inuit-specific investment for the next two fiscal years would accelerate support for Inuktitut while bridging to the finalization of the overall Inuktitut Costing Model and subsequent investment and implementation efforts. This measure would reaffirm Canada's commitment to reconciliation and recognize the urgency of supporting Inuktitut by ensuring Inuit have immediate access to Inuktitut resources.

## **Strengthening Inuit self-determination in research**

ITK released the [National Inuit Strategy on Research](#) (NISR) in March 2018 and its companion Implementation Plan in August 2018. The Strategy articulates Inuit expectations for research, defines Inuit-preferred 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. The Strategy outlines five priority areas: Advance Inuit governance in research; Enhance the ethical conduct of research; Align funding with Inuit research priorities; Ensure Inuit access, ownership and control over data and information; Build capacity in Inuit Nunangat research.

Research is among the last public policy areas where colonial policies remain relatively unchanged, contributing to ineffective spending that does not tend to positively impact Inuit. In Budget 2021, the federal government committed \$4 million over three years to support the development of an Inuit data strategy directly supporting the implementation of the Strategy's fourth priority: Ensure Inuit access, ownership, and control over data and information. Building on this investment, ITK is seeking \$25 million over five years to advance Inuit self-determining in research, implementation of the National Inuit Strategy on Research, and ensure that federal spending on Inuit Nunangat research is aligned with Inuit priorities and needs.



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