



Pre-budget Submission

August 2025

About Pauktuutit

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada is the national representative organization of Inuit women in Canada.

Guided by a Board of Directors representing Inuit regions and urban communities across Canada, we advocate for systemic change at all levels of government.

Pauktuutit Board of Directors membership:

Inuvialuit Region	Nunatsiavut
Nunavut – Kitikmeot	Urban – Yellowknife
Nunavut – Kivalliq	Urban – South-West
Nunavut – Qikiqtani North	Urban – South-East
Nunavut – Qikiqtani South	Urban – Happy Valley-Goose Bay
Nunavut – Iqaluit	Youth – Urban
Nunavik – Hudson	Youth – Inuit Nunangat
Nunavik – Ungava	

Vision

Inuit women and their families live in safe, healthy, and thriving communities, supported by strong advocacy that respects and promotes their cultural heritage, languages, and traditions. A future where Inuit women have equal access to health, social and economic development, and justice, all rooted in their cultural values and practices. They are empowered to maintain and celebrate their cultural identity while contributing to the well-being of their communities.

Mission

Grounded in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, Pauktuutit elevates the voices of Inuit women across Canada and supports their health, economic stability, safety, and access to justice through culture-specific policy advocacy, dedicated programs and strategic partnerships. By engaging and collaborating with Inuit women, communities, and organizations, we strive to empower Inuit women, ensuring they have greater opportunities to thrive.

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2025 Budget Recommendations

Investing in Inuit Communities is Investing in Canada's Shared Future

To truly honour Inuit sovereignty and uphold the inherent rights and dignity of Inuit women, gender-diverse Inuit, their families, and their communities, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada demands that the federal government move beyond promises and take concrete, sustained action to support Inuit-led solutions that strengthen our daily lives, protect our futures, and build a just and united economy for our people. Pauktuutit recommends that the federal government:

- 1. Improve access to affordable housing, safe spaces, and second-stage housing for Inuit women fleeing violence.**
- 2. Improve access to culturally specific health services and healing programs.**
- 3. Support economic development activities led by Inuit women in urban regions and in Inuit Nunangat.**
- 4. Empower Inuit women's leadership and close the gender equality gap for Inuit women by ensuring an Inuit-Specific Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) framework is applied to all legislative, policy and program decisions that impact Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit**
- 5. Support Inuit-led solutions to improve the safety and security of Inuit women, gender-diverse Inuit, their families and their communities.**
- 6. Provide further supports toward the strengthening of the Inuit Child First Initiative and Inuit-specific child welfare solutions developed and informed by Inuit women and Inuit communities.**

2025 Pre-Budget Submission

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada is pleased to present its 2025 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.

Grounded in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (attached *PIWC Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*), Pauktuutit elevates the voices of Inuit women across Canada and supports their health, economic stability, safety, and access to justice through culturally specific policy advocacy, dedicated programs, and strategic partnerships. We strive to empower Inuit women, ensuring they have greater opportunities to thrive.

Pauktuutit envisions a future where Inuit women have equal access to health, social, and economic development, and justice, all rooted in their cultural values and practices. The leadership, lived experiences, ideas and energy of Inuit women are all essential to creating a strong economy, ending gender-based violence, and promoting strong communities. The voices and leadership of Inuit women are 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 leadership, capacity, and talents of Inuit women are too often overlooked, with vital contributions and achievements remaining under-recognized and undervalued. This must change. Governments must actively support and invest in Inuit women's leadership as a cornerstone of lasting change in our communities.

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 and reinforce the unity of our country, Pauktuutit strongly believes that investing in Inuit women – who are vital leaders and contributors to their communities – is essential to ensuring their wellbeing and that of their children. Implementing these recommendations in a meaningful and holistic manner is a concrete step towards advancing reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples while unleashing the economic potential of Inuit women and their families, helping Canada achieve its commitment to a better future for all.

RECOMMENDATION #1: Improve access to affordable housing, safe spaces, and second-stage housing for Inuit women fleeing violence

Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit face complex factors that affect their experiences with housing and homelessness. **Given that 32.6% of the Inuit population is in core housing need**, housing insecurity is a threat to Inuit physical and cultural survival. Inuit women risk losing their culture when they are focused solely on meeting their physical survival and basic housing needs.

Pauktuutit advocates that every Inuk woman, child and family across Canada have access to safe, culturally appropriate, and affordable housing with safe housing as a fundamental human right. Pauktuutit calls on the federal government to strengthen its commitment to ensure affordable housing and 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.**

There is also the need for service providers that prioritize culturally relevant and holistic supports that help to preserve and promote Inuit culture, particularly in urban centres. Discrimination against Inuit women is a major barrier to accessing service providers and housing in urban centres. This discrimination includes both anti-women discrimination and anti-Inuit racism.

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Fast-tracking housing for those fleeing domestic violence, providing emergency support services, and increasing the availability of gender-based housing supports are essential steps toward mitigating housing insecurity and homelessness within this community. Furthermore, fostering culturally sensitive approaches within housing organizations and government agencies is imperative to ensure equitable access to housing and support services for Inuit women.

Investments in culturally specific shelters, transition housing, and affordable housing represents a wise use of federal infrastructure dollars, playing a significant role in improving the lives of many women and children, as well as providing meaningful local employment and skills development opportunities.

RECOMMENDATION #2: Improve access to culturally specific health services and healing programs

Inuit women face significant challenges within the Canadian healthcare system, which are exacerbated by systemic injustices and discrimination. From 2017 to 2020, over half (56.5%) of Inuit reported being without a regular healthcare provider. This lack of access to basic health care infrastructure forces many Inuit women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals to leave their communities to receive basic health care. Forcing Inuit women and gender-diverse individuals to leave their communities for basic health care is a colonial practice and many of them encounter racism, violence, and further discrimination when seeking care far from their homes.

Key to improved health care access is to address anti-Indigenous racism within the medical system. This includes tackling injustices such as **coerced sterilization** and **medical violence**. The denial of basic services harms Inuit women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals.

Prior to settler contact, Inuit traditional health care was deeply embedded in cultural, social, and spiritual practices. Health care was understood holistically between mental, emotional, physical and spiritual connections. **Access to equitable, culturally safe health services is paramount**, and Inuit voices are integral to health policy discussions. By focusing on Inuit-led health initiatives, a system will be created that respects and supports the health needs of our communities.

Pauktuutit calls on the federal government to fund improvements that will enhance access to culturally specific health services and healing programs for Inuit women, gender-diverse Inuit, their families and their communities.

There is a need for more Inuit healthcare providers, as well as a medical system that acknowledges Inuit traditional health care practices. All Inuit women, gender-diverse Inuit, their families and their communities should have access to culturally appropriate healing services that include the provision of traditional healing practices, mental health support, and substance use treatment. Traditional Inuit healing practices must be integrated into mainstream healthcare services and must be recognized and supported by the healthcare system.

RECOMMENDATION #3: Support economic development led by Inuit women in urban centres and in Inuit Nunangat

Poverty is a pressing challenge for Inuit communities, disproportionately affecting Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit. With 8 out of 10 Inuit in Inuit Nunangat experiencing food insecurity compared to one in ten non-Inuit Canadians, addressing these disparities is vital for the health and well-being of our communities.

Inuit women continue to work lower paying jobs than non-Inuit, are less likely to have basic or higher education than non-Inuit, and are far less likely to be in positions of authority and decision making in employment and politics than non-Inuit. The lack of job opportunities in remote communities is a challenge and increases pressure on women to leave their communities and their support network to seek gainful employment.

Food sovereignty, and reducing living costs, is fundamental to combatting poverty and the economic exclusion of Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit, while also promoting sustainable livelihoods.

Pauktuutit calls on the federal government to support economic development activities that are led by Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit in urban regions and in Inuit Nunangat. Inuit-specific income support programs focused on Inuit women and their children, that promote the objective of income security and uphold Inuit societal values including self-reliance and providing for one's family and community, will be key to the success of any response.

This means empowering Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit to decide their futures and providing them with the necessary resources to engage in local communities and economies. It also means investing in access to safe affordable housing, improving food security and infrastructure, as well as providing access to meaningful employment opportunities without barriers. In addition, removing systemic barriers like racism and sexism that continue to oppress Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit, while also ensuring the protection of Inuit culture, traditions, and values, will also be of utmost importance.

With improved basic income levels and raising of the standards of living, we anticipate that barriers impacting the ability of Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit to participate and succeed in today's wage economy will improve. This may include better accessibility to educational opportunities, housing, increased child wellbeing and care, and better access to health services. In addition, those who were experiencing poverty will be less likely to be adversely affected by their socio-economic status in matters relating to educational attainment, housing, child welfare and care, and health services.

RECOMMENDATION #4: Empower Inuit women's leadership

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

- The implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP); and
- 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.

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 the 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 encourage 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 #5: Support Inuit-Led solutions to improve the safety and security of Inuit women, gender-diverse Inuit, their families and their communities

To begin to address the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the justice system, Pauktuutit strongly encourages the federal government to support and amplify Inuit-led justice solutions. Emphasis must be placed on the amplification of concepts like cultural safety, trauma-informed approaches, and Indigenous-led solutions. Solutions must also be focused on the revitalization of Inuit justice systems to ensure safety and self-determination for Inuit women, gender-diverse Inuit, their families and their communities.

Inuit-led solutions also require flexible funding models that: a) reflect the unique needs of Inuit women and their communities; b) reduce administrative burdens; and c) better support community-controlled initiatives. Long-term funding for Inuit justice supports and services are necessary to ensure that Inuit have access to comprehensive justice services and to address the overrepresentation of First Nations and Inuit in the justice system. Regional collaboration on justice solutions will also be fundamental to positive systemic change, as will Inuit-Specific legal aid services developed and tailored to the unique needs of Inuit communities.

A lack of disaggregated Inuit-specific data obscures the full scope of the issue, limiting the ability to implement effective, culturally-appropriate interventions. There is a pressing need for better data collection instruments to understand the experiences of Inuit, First Nations, and Metis, and intersectional identity groups in the justice system.

Pauktuutit encourages the federal government to support the development of mandatory Inuit-specific data collection instruments to inform policy and funding decisions, ensuring full transparency and responsiveness to community needs.

It is essential to incorporate Inuit societal values, Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles, and traditional Inuit approaches when addressing violence and the overrepresentation of Inuit within the justice system. Inuit women often rely on family, Elders, and community supports before accessing formal legal services, and solutions must align with these cultural practices to be effective. Funding and support to Indigenous-led organizations to provide training for justice system practitioners to improve their awareness of Indigenous history, culture, and circumstances will be fundamental to systemic change.

In 2020, Pauktuutit published a landmark report, Addressing Gendered Violence Against Inuit Women: A review of police policies and practices in Inuit Nunangat, which called for a fundamental shift in northern policing to address the pervasive violence experienced by Inuit women. Pauktuutit's report presents 15 recommendations aimed at transforming police officers from "community outsiders" into collaborative community allies. Key recommendations include recruiting and retaining significantly more Inuit police officers, implementing culturally competent and trauma-informed policing practices, creating Inuit advisory committees, establishing gender-based violence training and protocols for RCMP members (including ensuring female officers are present when taking statements in violence cases), and adopting an overall decolonized approach grounded in Inuit knowledge and worldviews.

To improve the safety and security of Inuit women, gender-diverse Inuit, their families and their communities, Pauktuutit calls on the federal government to begin implementation of these 15 recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION #6: Provide further supports toward the strengthening of the Inuit Child First Initiative and Inuit-specific child welfare solutions developed and informed by Inuit women and communities

Inuit children are disproportionately represented in Canada's child welfare system, making up a significant percentage of children in care despite Inuit comprising a small fraction of the national population. This crisis is deeply rooted in the ongoing impacts of colonization, systemic discrimination, and inadequate access to culturally appropriate support services. The forced removal of Inuit children violates fundamental human rights enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), particularly Article 7, which affirms the collective right of Indigenous peoples to live in freedom and security without forced removals.

The removal of Inuit children from their families and communities has long-term consequences for identity, language retention, and overall well-being. Many Inuit children in care are placed in non-Inuit homes, contributing to cultural disconnection and loss of language, contravening Article 13 of UNDRIP, which affirms the right of Indigenous peoples to transmit their languages and traditions to future generations.

Child removal impacts families and causes lasting effects - up to seven generations.

Jordan's Principle mandates equitable access to services for Indigenous children but has been inconsistent and under resourced, resulting in an insurmountable backlog of requests. The Inuit Child First Initiative, the Inuit-specific version of Jordan's principle has only short-term funding, with an uncertain future in the evolving political climate.

Addressing this issue requires urgent policy reform, Inuit-led solutions, and substantial investments in social determinants of health, such as housing and food security. Upholding the MMIWG Calls to Justice, particularly Call 12.4, which demands distinctions-based and culturally appropriate child welfare systems, is critical to ensuring Inuit families remain together.

Pauktuutit calls in the federal government to provide further supports toward the strengthening of the Inuit Child First Initiative and Inuit-specific child welfare solutions developed and informed by Inuit women and communities, with particular attention to strengthening the role of Inuit women in advocating for and directing child welfare policy and program development at community, regional, and national levels.

This will also be key to the implementation of new programs and investments under the Federal Pathway to Address Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) and 2SLGBTQIA+ People, as well as the MMIWG Inuit Action Plan. There also must be increased federal and provincial accountability in ensuring Inuit children receive culturally appropriate services, consistent with UNDRIP and the MMIWG Calls to Justice.

The mechanisms of care delivery must be enhanced continuously, and systems must be developed that cater to the unique needs of our children and our communities. The Inuit Child First Initiative is not just a service; it is a promise to our future generations, a pledge that we will ensure their wellbeing, and a vow to uphold our ancestral legacy.

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