



House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance – Pre-budget Consultations 2013

This brief is submitted by:

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK)

an organization

Organization name: _____

or

an individual

Name: _____

Topic: Education and skills training

***Recommendation 1: Please provide a short summary of your recommendation.**

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami values the commitment by the Government of Canada to improve outcomes in Aboriginal education. Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada served as a member of the unprecedented cooperative initiative that produced the June 2011 National Strategy on Inuit Education. Working from that foundation, we propose that the federal government support the implementation of the strategy, priorities of which include a national parental engagement campaign, and a focus on research, early childhood education and exploring standardization of the Inuit language writing system.

Expected cost or savings: From the pull-down menus, please indicate the expected cost or savings of your recommendation to the federal government and the period of time to which the expected cost or savings is related.

unknown

Immediately

Federal funding: Please provide a precise indication of how the federal government could fund your recommendation. For example, indicate what federal spending should be reallocated, what federal tax measure(s) should be introduced, eliminated or changed, etc.

A well-educated and well-trained workforce is an essential component of sustainable economic prosperity in the Canadian Arctic. The federal government bears a responsibility for funding for early childhood education, research, Aboriginal language initiatives and initiatives that form the legacy of healing from the impact of residential schools, all of which form the basis of the implementation of the National Strategy on Inuit Education. Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami asks the federal government to play a meaningful role in the transformation of Inuit education systems in Canada.

Intended beneficiaries: Please indicate the groups of individuals, the sector(s) and/or the regions that would benefit by implementation of your recommendation.

This initiative is the first of its kind in that it is driven collaboratively by the Inuit of Canada rather than individual jurisdictions working in isolation and duplicating efforts. It has brought together national and regional Inuit organizations and provincial and territorial governments, all working to benefit Canada's 59,000 Inuit -- not only children, who make up half that population, but also their parents, grandparents, neighbours and prospective employers. It also seeks to benefit future generations of Inuit by preparing them to participate in the 21st century economy.

General impacts: Depending on the nature of your recommendation, please indicate how the standard of living of Canadians would be improved, jobs would be created, people would be trained, etc.

The Inuit population in Canada is much younger than the population of Canada as a whole. The number of Inuit in the prime employment cohort (20 to 60) will show steady growth in coming decades. Successfully attracting and sustaining optimal Inuit participation in employment and other economic opportunities will contribute in tangible and important ways to both Inuit economic self-reliance and Canada's overall economic performance.

Topic: Health

Recommendation 2: Please provide a short summary of your recommendation.

The disparities in mental wellness outcomes between Inuit and other Canadians is staggering. The lack of mental wellness treatment capacity for Inuit includes conspicuous gaps in the area of addiction and substance abuse. Inuit work closely with Health Canada, and together produced the December 2009 Alianait Inuit Mental Wellness Action Plan, a roadmap for the implementation of an Inuit-specific continuum of care. Implementation of this plan will require immediate and sustained federal support if we are to make meaningful strides in addressing Inuit mental wellness.

Expected cost or savings: From the pull-down menus, please indicate the expected cost or savings of your recommendation to the federal government and the period of time to which the expected cost or savings is related.

unknown

Immediately

Federal funding: Please provide a precise indication of how the federal government could fund your recommendation. For example, indicate what federal spending should be reallocated, what federal tax measure(s) should be introduced, eliminated or changed, etc.

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami takes the view that while the planned expansion of the federal prison system would provide much-needed detention facilities in the Arctic, a long-term approach to successful community development would put a sustained focus on mental wellness, including funds to support a comprehensive continuum of programs, special needs programs, youth counselling and mental health infrastructure. Inuit support a positive program approach, which seeks to empower individuals, and support connections to language and culture as a means to bring about safe and healthy communities.

Intended beneficiaries: Please indicate the groups of individuals, the sector(s) and/or the regions that would benefit by implementation of your recommendation.

As it is mainly youth who die by suicide, the impact on Inuit communities is considerable. Suicide is among the 10 leading causes of death in Canada. According to 2001 figures from Health Canada, the suicide rate among Inuit is 135 deaths per 100,000 people – 11 times higher than the national rate of 12 per 100,000. Some 83% of suicides among Inuit are committed by people under 30. The suicide rate among Inuit is a national tragedy and any measures to address Inuit mental wellness will benefit all Canadians.

General impacts: Depending on the nature of your recommendation, please indicate how the standard of living of Canadians would be improved, jobs would be created, people would be trained, etc.

Mental wellness encompasses mental health, mental illness, suicide prevention, violence reduction and reduction of substance abuse and addictions. Injections of funding into mental wellness programs and infrastructure have a direct and immediate impact on the health of families and communities. Mental health can bring about improvements to physical health, to one's ability to participate fully in employment or education, to one's ability to care for one's children, to secure effective housing and nutritious food. Failing to address mental health issues magnifies the effects of poverty.

Topic: Poor, poverty and income inequality

Recommendation 3: Please provide a short summary of your recommendation.

The housing crisis in Inuit communities remains deeply distressing and wouldn't be tolerated in Southern Canada. According to The Conference Board of Canada, "virtually all social and health problems increase dramatically when combined with overcrowded housing." Canada needs a national Inuit housing strategy to address immediate short-term needs for social housing and a long-term plan that includes plans for both ongoing construction of social housing and the development of a private home ownership program.

Expected cost or savings: From the pull-down menus, please indicate the expected cost or savings of your recommendation to the federal government and the period of time to which the expected cost or savings is related.

unknown

Immediately

Federal funding: Please provide a precise indication of how the federal government could fund your recommendation. For example, indicate what federal spending should be reallocated, what federal tax measure(s) should be introduced, eliminated or changed, etc.

Canada has overcome this problem before. The 1960s and '70s were a real boom period. The population had undergone a rapid expansion, requiring immediate injections in housing and education, among other things. Returning soldiers and growing families needed somewhere to live. That is where Inuit are today. Unlike any other region in Canada, our population is booming, requiring urgent injections in social services, including public housing. Canada has responded to this challenge before and can leverage the political will to do so once again.

Intended beneficiaries: Please indicate the groups of individuals, the sector(s) and/or the regions that would benefit by implementation of your recommendation.

As noted above, these issues are intertwined in that injections in this one area have immediate and life-changing benefits in other areas as well. Increased availability of housing in Inuit communities will improve Inuit health and well being. Inuit have defined this issue as the single most important factor in improving Inuit well being. Injections in this one area will pay dividends in virtually every other area of life in the Canadian Arctic. As the Inuit population continues to grow, the housing situation will only get worse. Delays now mean greater injections will be required in future.

General impacts: Depending on the nature of your recommendation, please indicate how the standard of living of Canadians would be improved, jobs would be created, people would be trained, etc.

Northern development forms one the priorities of this federal government. But for Northerners or, indeed, Southerners to take advantage of economic development opportunities in the Canadian Arctic, they must have someplace to sleep. In this way, housing is a foundational issue and new funding will have an impact at every socio-economic level of society. It will provide children a place to study and improve chances of completing education, reduce the prevalence of communicable disease, allow young Inuit to grow and build new lives and help businesses recruit new employees.

Please use this page if you wish to provide more explanation about your recommendation(s).

Inuit Nunangat, the Inuit homeland in Canada, makes up one-third of Canada's landmass and half its shoreline. This area, governed by a set of Constitutionally entrenched modern treaties contains much of Canada's natural resource potential.

The Government of Canada is relying heavily on resource development projects to propel economic growth in Canada, including increased wealth, expansion of employment and improved levels of productivity. Inuit welcome such projects at a scale and rate that strikes a balance between economic development and social development.

At the same time, the socio-economic gaps that separate Inuit from other Canadians in the core measurements of education, health, housing, employment and income are stark and worthy of attention.

Given the special responsibilities of the federal government toward the Aboriginal peoples of Canada -- Constitutional, legal, political, moral and historical -- we urge the government to make the ongoing problems faced by Aboriginal peoples, communities, businesses and families a high and central priority in all federal economic policy making and policy administration.

Inuit have a long history of working cooperatively with the Government of Canada and remain hopeful that the necessary funds will be made available in the forthcoming budget to address these foundational issues for Inuit well being, and arguably the well being of Canada as a whole.

*Please note that at least one recommendation must be provided