

NEWS RELEASE



For Immediate Release

NTI Reacts to the 2021 Federal Budget

(April 20, 2021, Iqaluit, Nunavut) In the midst of a citywide lockdown and growing COVID-19 case counts, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI) is cautiously optimistic with the 2021 federal budget.

"Since the establishment of the Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee in 2017, Inuit priorities have been increasingly recognized in the federal budgets. I am optimistic with commitments made in the budget for an Indigenous Community Infrastructure Fund, early learning and to address gender-based violence. The pandemic has identified weaknesses in each of these systems" said Aluki Kotierk, President of NTI.

"Given the clear role of housing in preventing the spread of communicable diseases, like COVID-19 and tuberculosis, I am also surprised and disappointed there is no clear investment in Inuit housing for Nunavut," said Kotierk.

Nunavut Inuit were not included in the Government of Canada's investment of \$400 million in Inuit distinctions-based housing in 2018. Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. formally submitted a \$500 million ask for Inuit housing in Nunavut in the fall of 2020, on the basis that the housing need in Nunavut is the same as the rest of Inuit Nunangat combined.

"As a result of the high overcrowding rate in Inuit homes, self-isolation has become a matter of quarantining whole communities. We will continue to advocate for meaningful investments in Inuit housing," said James Eetoolook, Vice-President of NTI.

NTI expects additional details to be shared in the coming weeks and Inuit be consulted or involved in many of the initiatives through Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee or bilaterally.

Nunavut's vulnerability to the COVID-19 pandemic is the result of long-standing social and economic inequities faced by Nunavut Inuit.

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Backgrounder

The March 2017 Senate Committee report, *We Can Do Better: Housing in Inuit Nunangat*, noted that the lack of housing has serious public health repercussions throughout the Inuit homeland. Respiratory infections, in particular, are already rampant, with high levels of tuberculosis at a rate of over 250 times that of non-Indigenous Canadians, and high levels of respiratory infections among Inuit children, including chronic lung disease, after lower respiratory tract infections, which are linked to crowding and poorly ventilated homes.

In October 2020, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated released *Nunavut's Infrastructure Gap*. It found, in all 18 of the priority infrastructure areas measured, Nunavut faces a significant and quantifiable infrastructure gap with the rest of Canada. The gap has significant adverse impacts on Nunavut Inuit and attention, investment and action are required to close the gap.