



Minister for Crown Indigenous Relations, the Honourable Carolyn Bennett
Minister for Indigenous Services Canada, the Honourable Marc Miller
Minister for Public Safety, the Honourable William Blair
Minister for the Status of Women, the Honourable Maryam Monsef
Chairperson, Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP, Michelaine LaHaie

Via Email

June 23, 2020

Dear Ministers Bennett, Miller, Blair, and Monsef and Chairperson LaHaie,

It is one year since the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls issued its final report, and Canada still has no national action plan to address the human rights crisis of violence. As advocates for the human rights of Indigenous women, and parties with standing at the National Inquiry, we are very concerned about the delay. We write today to draw to your attention two actions that can be taken immediately to assist Inuit women who are victims of violence.

First, more than 30 cases of police racism and violence against Inuit women in the North have been reported by CBC in its recent investigative series on the RCMP. The Legal Services Board of Nunavut has documented these cases and demanded a systemic review of policing. The Board notes that the “persistent racism” of the RCMP towards Inuit women has resulted in numerous incidents of police abuse; unnecessary and excessive violence; and “humiliating and degrading” strip searches. This systemic behaviour is a gross violation of the basic human rights and freedoms of Inuit women.

RCMP racism and violence towards Indigenous peoples is well-documented in public inquiries, commissions, investigations and in the available data. Most recently, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls found Canada – including all levels of government and their agencies – guilty of genocidal practices against all Indigenous peoples, but especially targeted against Indigenous women and girls. Inuit women and their representative organizations have raised abusive policing towards Inuit women both before the National Inquiry and in their recent report on policing and gendered violence in Inuit territories. Yet, these abusive practices have clearly continued.

We support Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., Nunavut MLAs, and the Legal Services Board of Nunavut, in their calls for a full public review of RCMP policing practices in Nunavut.

The review must be completely independent of the RCMP, and include the participation and oversight by Inuit women and their legal experts; as well, it must ensure open access to RCMP disciplinary files, complaint files, relevant reports and investigations, and all statistical and other data required to conduct this review. It is long past time to hold RCMP perpetrators of racism and violence to account.

This call echoes the recommendations of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its causes and consequences, Dubravka Šimonović, who in her 2018 report on Canada specifically recommended:

- (1) independent civilian oversight of RCMP treatment of Indigenous victims of sexual assault;
- (2) an external review, in cooperation with Indigenous communities, of the high levels of racism, abuse and violence by police towards Indigenous women; and
- (3) a zero tolerance policy for excessive use of force or sexual harassment and assault by RCMP.

Second, we ask you to immediately grant Pauktuutit's request for an investment of \$20 million for five new shelters for Inuit women and children. \$20 million would build five desperately needed multi-purpose shelters and transitional housing units in Nunavut and in the Inuvialuit, Nunavik and Nunatsiavut regions, as well as in Ottawa, which has the highest urban Inuit population in Canada.

As Pauktuutit has documented in its submissions to the National Inquiry, the need for shelters for Inuit women and their children, that will assist them to escape intimate partner violence, is extreme. This modest financial contribution can help save Inuit women's lives.

We hope that you will respond positively to these urgent concerns. We look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shelagh Day', written in a cursive style.

Shelagh Day
Chair, Human Rights Committee,
Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action

Dr. Pamela Palmater
Chair in Indigenous Governance, Ryerson University

Kaitlin Schwan
Co-Chair,
Women's National Housing and Homelessness Network

Arlene Hache
Executive Director
Keepers of the Circle Aboriginal Family Learning Centre