



February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020

The Honourable Paulie Chinna  
Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs  
Minister Responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation  
Minister Responsible for Addressing Homelessness

**Re: Decision Against Supporting the Arnica Project**

Dear Minister Chinna,

On February 14<sup>th</sup>, I received notification from the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) that our application for funding to purchase the Arnica Inn for the purpose of providing supported housing services to forty-two homeless individuals was rejected. In a meeting with CMHC on February 18<sup>th</sup>, I learned that they had met with the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation (NTHC), and that NTHC had indicated that they were not supportive of the project. In the ten months that we have been discussing this project with the NTHC, this was the first time we had heard that there was a lack of support.

I am disappointed that our community will be missing this opportunity. The Yellowknife Women's Society currently supports sixty individuals in various types of supportive and transitional housing arrangements; only 10% of these individuals are originally from Yellowknife, with the majority coming from other communities throughout the Northwest Territories. We have a waitlist for our Housing First program of more than one hundred individuals, and this option would have allowed us to immediately house at least forty-two highly vulnerable homeless individuals at a fraction of the cost-per-unit of a new build. While there were CMHC requirements for energy efficiency upgrades and accessibility that would have made some renovations necessary as part of the funding agreement, the building is in good condition and could potentially have started providing housing immediately after purchase. This project would have met the needs of a key demographic of homeless individuals, who need the social support and safety of in-house staff to help them meet their day to day needs, and who currently have no option but to reside long-term in emergency shelters, sleep in stairwells and other unsuitable places, or stay in abusive, exploitative or otherwise unsafe situations in order to obtain shelter.

Homelessness remains a serious issue in Yellowknife and throughout the Northwest Territories, and the purchase of the Arnica was a simple, turn-key solution that would have had vulnerable people in homes before next winter. No similar option exists in the city, and any purpose-built building would be far more costly and take years to complete. In rejecting this project, the Government of the Northwest Territories is opting instead to allow forty-two vulnerable individuals to continue to suffer the health, social and psychological consequences of homelessness for years to come.

Sincerely,

Bryany Denning  
Executive Director  
Yellowknife Women's Society