

Hay River Dene Band

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Mr. Sam Gargan
M.L.A. for Deh Cho
Legislative Assembly
Yellowknife, N.W.T.
X1A 2L9
Fax:920 - 4735

March 1, 1993

Dear Mr. Gargan:

During the past seven years our Band Council has vigorously pursued the need to address the social housing issues in our community. Uniquely, on the Reserve not affordability but availability of any housing at all is a problem. We all agree that housing is an integral part of the solution to all social problems. Adequate housing fosters pride and self worth, which in turn leads to higher achievement at school and at work. In our community there are several cases of three or more families being sheltered in housing units intended for a single family. New family formations annually are leading to a more acute need for social housing. Many of the existing older housing units are a complete write-off, and while they are being lived in this adds to creation of a larger social problem, particularly with families who have young children of pre-school and school age.

You are aware that in the seventies, new housing units were not provided to the Reserve, as such this created a housing gap which was never addressed. While it may be perceived that our community is making good economic progress, the current need for social housing will not be alleviated solely with the creation of job opportunities. Many of the needy families are single mothers and middle aged males who would not normally qualify for housing under the current programs.

In the latter part of the 80's the Federal Government through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation invited preliminary proposals from non-profit groups which would like to develop

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projects under the Federal Aboriginal non-profit social housing program. Our Band submitted an application, developed a community land use plan, surveyed the property, and surrendered the land in order that the project would proceed. However, since this was an on Reserve project, the final approval was subject to obtaining a ministerial guarantee. This type of guarantee is available to any Reserve in Canada, subject to the normal criteria, that the community has a good tract record, there is an acute need for social housing and that the Reserve's leadership and management capabilities are of a high standard.

Basically, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation would insure and underwrite the loan. The Reserve through a Non-Profit Housing Society would borrow the funds from a commercial lender such as a trust company or bank, and Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation through the Aboriginal Social Housing program would provide an annual grant for repayment of the loan over a 25 year period. The Non-Profit Housing Society would manage the project with operating and maintenance funding provided by the tenants by way of rent based on income earned.

While at the initial stages of our application, the project appeared to meet all the criteria, but was lost in the maze of conflicting and confusing interpretations as to which level of government (Federal or Territorial) was responsible for delivery of on-reserve housing, and would have to provide the appropriate ministerial guarantee required by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation for on-reserve projects.

There is no doubt that if this project would have proceeded, it would have gone a long way to solve the social housing problem on the Reserve. It is clear that due to the confusion with respect as to which level of government was responsible for providing the guarantee, our community lost an opportunity to take advantage of a Federal Government program designed to provide social housing for aboriginal people. We understood that approval of the project would not have cost the Territorial Government any money nor would it affect the funding allocated for housing by the Federal to Territorial Government.

The Reserve has expended a vast sum of money for legal costs relative to this project for land surrender, and you will also recall that you joined us and our lawyer for a meeting with the Ministers' Deputy in Ottawa in April 1991. Mr. Jake Heron represented Mr. Tom Butters who was unable to attend the meeting due to other commitments. While we gained some valuable information at this meeting, no follow-up action was taken by the Government of N.W.T.

I sincerely hope that you will once again bring this issue to the attention of the Government of the Northwest Territories.

Please let me know if you feel that we should meet with the Government leader and the Minister of Housing in the very near future.

Once again thank you for your untiring effort and hard work that you constantly put forth on behalf of the Hay River Dene Reserve.

Yours very truly

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pat Martel". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Pat Martel
Chief

