



Tabled Documents

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**Hamlet of Gjoa Haven
P.O Box 200
Gjoa Haven, NU
XOB 1JO**

Dated: October 18, 2018

To: Honorable Joe Savikataaq, Premier Of Nunavut
Honorable Elisapee Sheutiapik, Minister of Family Services
Honorable Lorne Kusugak, Minister of Community Services
Honorable Jeannie Ehaloak, Minister of Justice
Honorable David Joanasi, Minister of Culture and Heritage
Honorable George Hickes, Minister of Health
MLA For Gjoa Haven, Tony Akoak

From: His Worship the Mayor - Joanni Sallerina,

**Subject: Request For -Regional Mental Health & Addictions Facility In
Gjoa Haven**

We are writing today to follow up on our letter of February 12, 2018 (attached for your reference) and to express the need for a Regional Mental Health & Addictions (MH&A) Center in our community of Gjoa Haven. The need for such a facility has always been great, but now, that need has grown exponentially with the legalization of Cannabis in Canada. Presently, these MH&A issues are pervasive in our communities, so this need cannot be overemphasized. Sometimes it feels like their accumulative effects have an unbreakable hold on our residence, especially the mentally ill, who struggle to find the ability to fight back. But, we as their representatives must fight back for them, and we must not give in. We must teach our people how to effectively deal with this illness and their addictions. The future of our community, and all communities in Nunavut, are dependent on us to representing them effectively. If nothing is done these types of addictions will significantly contribute to a vicious circle of poverty for future generations as they will not be given the right environment to develop properly into good contributing citizens.

The demographics of our region show that on average over 50% of the population in our communities is under the age of 16 and their mental development is being influenced by their immediate environment. A significant portion of this population, who represent our future, are being influenced every day by their peers & loved one's addictions to drugs such as cannabis and alcohol. But they are also being influenced in a negative way by other addictions like gambling and the consumption of negative products like cigarettes & poor food choices such as the overconsumption of pop. These addictions take money away from running a healthy household and their effects are far reaching and long lasting.

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These MH&A issues also have a negative effect on our education system by helping to contribute to low attendance rates. Even the students who show up to school, display very low attention spans. We must educate our children effectively if we do not want them to lose out on any opportunities that arise in our communities in the future

We also believe that the accumulation of all these types of health issues contribute significantly to the high rate of suicides of our loved ones. There are studies that show that the use of cannabis with mentally ill individuals increases the amount of schizophrenia they experience. With the passing of this new law the incidents of such will no doubt be increasing

Presently, mental illness patients need to travel down south for any required treatments and follow-ups. This travel is extremely costly and hard on the individuals and their families as a lot of young ones must be left behind to be taken care of by others. This is something that our people should not have to endure just to get treatment. Such a MH&A center would help to relieve the mentally ill and addition patients and their relatives of such a burden.

If we consider MH&A as the root of a lot of our other social problems, then we should want to focus our resources on solving these issues as opposed to spending money trying to solve the symptoms that will never go away if the root problems never get resolved. At a time when financial resources are scarce that is not a good return on investment. We need to try to do better and as the leaders of Nunavut and our individual communities, we should be trying to take some ownership of these MH&A problems and do everything we can to combat them.

Our suggested solution is to build capacity to deal effectively with these MH&A issues. The first step in doing so is to obtain the appropriate infrastructure. After obtaining that, we can then focus on recruiting the necessary qualified professionals in this discipline to help provide these services effectively and efficiently. We believe that a Regional MH&A Center is just that piece of infrastructure. We realize that the easy part is recognizing these needs but finding the resources to obtain this infrastructure is always the hard part. So how do we find the funding for such a project.

We believe that the Federal Government, being one of the primary financial beneficiaries of the legalization on Cannabis, will be earning billions of dollars in the years to come from Cannabis sales. Such sales will also be leaving us with the onerous task and increase cost of dealing with the increase in MH&A problems. Since their actions have directly



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contributed to an increase in these health problems they should be willing to contribute towards solving these problems. With that, I would like to put forth the suggestion that we collaborate as a unified group to lobby the Federal Government for resources generated from these Cannabis sales to be used to finance the construction of such a Regional MH&A Center in Gjoa Haven. Gjoa Haven is centrally located in the Kitikmeot Region and a lot of surrounding communities have relatives here. This makes Gjoa Haven the ideal location for a Regional MH&A Center.

This Center, staffed with the appropriate health care professionals, will address these addiction problems right at the grass roots level. Such a center would also have other positive spin-offs like contributing to an increase in the local employment of residents in our community. We want to express our support for any action that moves us forward towards such a project and we'll help in any way we can to bring such a project to fruition.

Thank you for your time and dedication towards perusing the health of or residents and to the Nunavut citizens at large. Your view on such a project would be greatly appreciated.

Your truly,

His Worship
Mayor Joanni Sallerina