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## **Croftonbrook Housing Announcement - April 2017**

Island Women Against Violence is delighted to be partnering with BC Housing, CRD and Island Health on this much-needed affordable housing project, we particularly appreciate that it will allow us to provide safe and secure housing for some of Salt Spring's more vulnerable residents.

The funding announcement of \$4.5 million from the BC Housing- CRD Regional Housing First Program (RHFP) will provide capital funding towards the creation of an additional estimated 52 units of affordable housing at Croftonbrook. Currently, there are 20 units of affordable housing for independent seniors and people with disabilities at Croftonbrook.

The housing crisis in our community is profound – everyone in our community is aware of or has been affected in one way or another. Too many of our community members are living in poverty, are homeless, living in precarious situations and at risk of becoming homeless – which includes seniors, single parents, women experiencing violence and the underemployed.

There is great momentum here to take a community response approach to this crisis; our expanded housing at Croftonbrook will provide an important step forward. Housing has been top of mind for IWAV for many years, so this is great news to be part of the community's strategy to end homelessness.

The new housing will be mixed-model housing, which will include people experiencing homelessness, seniors, family and workforce housing. The unit design and variety of unit sizes will accommodate a range of incomes, ages, and family structures, and allow for flexibility in meeting the needs of the community as the demographics change over the next 20 years.

IWAV is especially proud to be breaking new ground with a sustainable approach to water resources and conservation, with plans for licensed groundwater and rainwater harvesting that will reduce pressure on the Island's community water system while ensuring no negative impacts on neighbours' water supplies. We hope this can prove to be a sustainable model for other projects locally as well as water-stressed communities throughout the province.

For 25 years, Island Women Against Violence has been dedicated to helping women and their children throughout the Southern Gulf Islands, whose lives have been affected by poverty, violence and abuse, through our core programs: transition house, second stage housing, counselling and outreach programs; and our social enterprise, the Transitions Thrift Store.



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Another key purpose of IWAV is to provide affordable housing for households in financial need. IWAV holds a deep sensitivity to the issues of poverty, vulnerability and homelessness, and our desire is to be able to provide even better care in our community. We know through serving our clients, and literature reviews support that, stable and affordable housing is critical to the health and well-being of individuals. Without safe and affordable housing, our clients are unable to advance their independence and achieve stability. Given the work that IWAV does, it makes sense that we care about supporting vulnerable individuals in our community. Croftonbrook's expanded development helps us do just that.

Aside from the client groups we serve, we also hear consistently how difficult it is for the work force in our community to find affordable housing. The need is clear across the retail and service industries as well as health and social sectors. Many businesses and organizations are having difficulty in providing their services or products due to housing challenges. We know that when we can house individuals in one area, that opens up the available housing elsewhere – relieving the pressure points. IWAV wants to be a part of the solution in also creating some stable and affordable workforce housing options in our community.

Following the capital funding approval and announcement last week, IWAV is excited to enter into these next steps: having some deeper conversations with our current residents, our neighbours and our community, and to begin work with our architect and design team to bring our vision to reality.

The key eligibility criteria for these affordable housing units is income threshold; of low to moderate income households as determined by BC Housing. Additional next steps include creating a partnership with Island Health and co-creating the referral and criteria processes for the units set at income assistance shelter rates.

IWAV believes that affordable housing is a cornerstone of community sustainability and quality of life, and we look forward to the day when every Salt Spring resident has safe and affordable housing.