

February 1, 2021

Dear: Dear Prince George Mayor and Council,

Re: Harmony House Rezoning Zelkwas Avenue

On behalf of the Perinatal Program in Northern Health (NH), please accept this letter of support for the rezoning at 606 Zelkwas Avenue to facilitate the development of supportive housing for the Phoenix Transition Society's Harmony House program.

The Perinatal Program supports the Northern Perinatal Mental Health and Substance Use working group that is committed to support perinatal mental health and substance use supports across the region. Harmony House is a collaborative partner in this work to ensure access to safe, evidence-informed supports and housing. Harmony House is connected with the Provincial Perinatal Substance Use Project, funded by Ministry of Health, and is one of three northern funded agencies that have demonstrated improved outcomes through short-term provincial project funding.

Together with community partners, Harmony House works to enhance parenting, social and life skills as well as a general sense of confidence and self-esteem of the individuals they serve. The program also works alongside women/individuals to prevent the apprehension of children and assist with reunification of children with their mothers. Programming supports the cultural safety of families with Elder support and cultural events (i.e. Elders story telling of traditional women helping women during pregnancy, birthing and child rearing).

Expansion with a larger home and additional beds will promote further reach and support for this growing need, while promoting mother/baby togetherness. Harmony House has served women and families within PG and across the northern region who need a safe place to support them in their substance use challenges, their pregnancy and the transition to parenthood. Harmony House has successfully operated their current six-bedroom house for four years and has served 94 women from across northern BC. 89% of the women who participated in the Harmony House Program have successfully completed the program and are living independently with their children. They have outgrown their space and require a larger housing option to continue their great work to support women/individuals and their babies. This is one important opportunity to respond to the opioid crisis in the north and advance health and healing of women experiencing substance use challenges.

We urge you to support this rezoning application, as it serves a critical need in our community and region. From a land use perspective, this development is in an ideal

location as most of the mothers living in Harmony House will not have vehicles and therefore having services, schools, and parks within walking distance is important.

Thank you for considering this letter of support.

Sincerely,

Redacted

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Vanessa Salmons
Executive Lead, Perinatal Program
Northern Health