

Feb 15 2021

Harmony House  
1765 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Prince George BC

To the Honourable Mayor and Council members

I am Maria, the Coordinator of Harmony House, and the promoter of the concept of Harmony House: a supportive house for pregnant women or newly parenting women who are struggling with mental health and /or substance misuse and are in danger of losing their child(ren) to the Ministry. Our main aim is to prevent the apprehension and to reunify their children with their mothers. We do this by allowing the women to be with us for up to one year. The expectation is for the women to maintain sobriety by attending many classes dealing with relapse prevention, parenting, social and life skills.

Most of our women self-identify as Indigenous, so this project is part of our community's effort of reconciliation. So far, the foster system has failed the Indigenous children and families. they are overrepresented in our foster care system and we at Harmony House attempt to change this: so far we have an 89% success rate, meaning women and their children are living independently, (we remain in touch via our outreach program) and are providing a safe and encouraging home for their children.

Many Harmony House residents wrote letters of support for the rezoning application of a new and expanded Harmony House. Their letters were written from the heart but being too personal could not be accepted by Mayor and Council. So I am submitting the main messages received from the women:

"Harmony House has been my greatest blessing."

"Now I can keep my children."

"Harmony House helped me to get my life on track."

"I would have never gotten my son back if it was not for the support I received from harmony House."

"I could work on my issues while my children were looked after by their childminding program."

"We have beading and singing and drumming, which connects me with my culture."

"Harmony House has an awesome Art program." (We have a contract with The Art Gallery.)

I hope that you can see that we fill a void, not just for mothers in Prince George ; but indeed for the whole of the North, and not just for Indigenous women, but for all who fit our mandate.

Thanking you for your consideration,

Maria Brouwer RN BScN, Coordinator Harmony House, Redacted