



St. Leonard's Society of Canada | Société St-Léonard du Canada

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Registered charitable organization | organisme de bienfaisance reconnu # 12894 6829 RR0001

March 16, 2017

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am pleased to provide this letter on behalf of St. Leonard's Society of Canada (SLSC) to offer my enthusiastic support for House of Hope – La Maison de l'Espérance in establishing a Community Residential Facility (CRF) at 157 McLeod Street.

House of Hope is an affiliate agency of SLSC, which affords me the opportunity to be regularly apprised of the excellent work done by this agency; both through communication with Tracey Cortes, Director, and through their delegated representative to the SLSC Board of Directors. In SLSC's role as a national organization dedicated to community-safety, we endorse evidence-based approaches to criminal and social justice, conduct research and develop policy, support our member affiliates, and advance collaborative relationships and communication among individuals and organizations dedicated to social justice. House of Hope is an exemplary partner and representative of the St. Leonard's network.

Part of SLSC's work involves conducting evidence-based research on best practices in housing for individuals who have been involved with the criminal justice system. Research has also focused on people with mental health problems and illness who come into conflict with the law. Recent studies demonstrate the exceptional needs within Canada's justice system to better support these individuals in a more humane, just, and informed way. The plans for House of Hope's new residence will precisely meet this need. House of Hope is a leader in being ahead of the curve with their committed to maintaining the highest standards possible for housing and mental health supports for the residents they work with on a daily basis. By doing so, they are part of the solution towards establishing safe, supported housing for marginalized individuals that ultimately contributes to the improved health and well-being of the community at-large.

Gradual, structured release from an institution is a widely accepted best practice within corrections research. It is a critical step to ensuring that people exiting prison can achieve the positive lifestyle changes necessary for leading a safe and productive life in the community. The establishment of a CRF on McLeod Street will provide housing to individuals with mental health problems and illness in an environment that has the expertise, support, and professional experience needed to make it a success. The reality is that without these supports in place, these individuals often return to the community at greater risk to themselves and the community. The opportunity for a CRF at 157 McLeod St. will not only translate into greater success for the residents, but for the surrounding community as well.

House of Hope has been operating since 1974. Ottawa is a city that prides itself on vibrant, diverse, and accepting neighbourhoods. The excellent historical record achieved by House of Hope, and the location for their new CRF in Centretown, combine a truly unique opportunity for community members to embrace an evidence-based best practice that will increase community safety, and will provide a safe and humane home for individuals who are truly in need of this service. This will be a program that the city and the residents of Centretown can be proud of.

Community Residential Facilities operate all over Canada. They quietly but diligently contribute to the safety of the neighbourhoods in which they are located, and change people's lives for the better every single day. They are a critical element of the Canadian criminal justice system, and fundamental to the concept of successful reintegration.

I have every confidence that House of Hope will continue to provide excellent services and supports to an exceptionally diverse population – many of whom have not had a fair chance to make positive changes in their lives. Should you have any questions or concerns further to what has been provided in this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anita Desai". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial 'A'.

Anita Desai
A/Executive Director
St. Leonard's Society of Canada