

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing this letter to offer my support for the establishment of a Community Residential Facility by House of Hope – La Maison de l'Esperance at 157 McLeod Street. I have lived in Centretown for the past 18 years and been a citizen of Ottawa since 1985. As well, I am a current member of the Ottawa Parole Office Community Assessment Team (CAT) serving as the community representative for more than 15 years, and I have previously provided support to House of Hope at the Bronson Place location in Centretown by assisting the offenders and their spouses prepare job resumes, write letters and learn basic computer skills.

As the CAT community representative I am very concerned that safety of the community is a major priority, while also recognizing that most offenders are eventually going to be released from a correctional institution and return to our community at some time. With that in mind, I strongly support the gradual structured release of offenders from a correctional institution that is provided by the Community Residential Facility of House of Hope, where the offender continues to be strictly controlled and not released directly into our community from the correctional institution. It is undoubtedly the safest and most effective way to reintegrate offenders back into the community and achieve the highest rate of success for non-repeat offending. I am aware that House of Hope has a strict set of admission criteria that includes: the absence of institutional charges and violent behaviour against correctional staff; an established network of community support and defined plans for parole; the successful completion of programs inside prison to address any risk factors; and a clean record of not offending on any prior conditional releases. For many years the Ottawa House of Hope has been providing education and employment assistance, individual and group counselling, life skills and community transition supports. They have also provided tailored assistance to those with mental health issues to ensure positive reintegration and lifestyle changes. Centretown has long been home to a wide variety of organizations like House of Hope who provide services and supports to an exceptionally diverse population. Community Residential Facilities like the House of Hope are a key step in an offender's successful transition from a federal correctional facility back into the community.

In closing I wish to repeat my full support and appreciation to the Director and staff of House of Hope for their many years of excellent work in safely and successfully reintegrating offenders back into our community. I am very confident that plans to expand the House of Hope services to include community based correctional services for our mental health population will be a major safety and social benefit for the betterment of the Ottawa community. It will be a win win for all of us, and without doubt make our community a safer place to live and work.

Sincerely,

Gordon McDermid