

Rezoning for Transition Home  
May 27, 2022

Dear Town Council of Atikokan,

I am writing to the Atikokan Town Council in support of the Youth Transition House that is up for rezoning. I am an Indigenous community member that has lived in Atikokan since 2003. I have lived through years of being in the child welfare system, there were many times that a transition home like this would have benefited me and other youth I have known over the years. Once you age out of care, there are not many supports that are there to help set up youth for a successful life. If I would have received the supports, I needed, I may have been more successful in my life and have not gone through some of the traumatic events that I have. One of the biggest things that was missing through those times was having people show me that they truly cared for my wellbeing and help push me to do better.

There are many benefits in having a transition home for the youth but also a whole community. It will help keep youth off the streets, keep youth away from predators and out of human trafficking, and to help provide life skills that will be used as they grow into adults. This will also help with providing a safe space for youth to share their stories and work through their trauma. I believe it is time we stop turning the blind eye to these issues and start helping youth that are being forgotten about. I am in full support for the transition home to go forward with building.

Tiffany Maki  
Concerned Community Member

**From:** Lisa and Andre Fournier  
**Sent:** May 28, 2022 1:53 PM  
**To:** [dennis.brown@atikokan.ca](mailto:dennis.brown@atikokan.ca)  
**Subject:** Biskaabiiyang

Mayor Brown,

This is a very informal letter, but written from my heart. I moved to Atikokan from Toronto in Aug/2020 and part of my decision to move here was to heal from trauma.

I have since taken an interest in Biskaabiiyang youth transition housing and I feel it is a vital vessel in supporting Indigenous youth in our community.

My strong feelings for Biskaabiiyang comes from my personal experience as a Mother. My daughter was a victim of sex trafficking in Toronto and this led her on a heartbreaking dangerous path of addiction, homelessness, disconnection from family and losing her 2 children to CAS (thankfully I was able to care for my grandchildren during with devastating time). My daughter was broken, lost, unwell, and unrecognizable. She stumbled from shelter to shelter, drug addicted, and sex trafficked. I can't even explain the impact of trauma this has had on not only her but our entire family unit.

I am beyond grateful for her emergency referral to a Indigenous transitional house in Toronto, it literally SAVED her LIFE. She was able to repair, to regain herself, to heal and to be united with her children. Through an incredible amount of solid support she was able to begin a healthy healing journey. There is something very profound when given the opportunity to heal through ones culture. She drummed, she sang, she cooked, she smudged, she gathered, she immersed herself in cultural teachings, she listened to the elders, and she started to heal. It was nothing short of a miracle. She was safe. She was alive.

She now has her own home, four beautiful children, a wonderful husband, independence, self-worth, values her life and has been completely sober for 3 years. The Indigenous transitional housing was a pillar and a godsent and I honestly believe that she would not be alive today without their life changing assistance.

Because of the severity of the tragic trauma, it will most likely remain with her for life but she is alive, well, healthy and walking in a good way. Her past no longer controls her since she obtained valuable life skills from transitional housing. She can now breathe, love herself, feel whole and can look forward to a bright future.

Living in Atikokan has been a powerful source for my personal healing as a Mother, an immeasurable amount of peace, calmness, rest and being amongst nature has perhaps saved my life.

Please consider placing full support for Biskaabiiyang. Please know that trauma can happen to anyone and that healing can be possible when given the proper tools, environment and atmosphere.

-A Mother  
-Lisa Van Renselaar

**From:** Jill Legault

**Sent:** May 28, 2022 2:04 PM

**To:** [dennis.brown@atikokan.ca](mailto:dennis.brown@atikokan.ca); [sally.burns@atikokan.ca](mailto:sally.burns@atikokan.ca); [rob.ferguson@atikokan.ca](mailto:rob.ferguson@atikokan.ca);  
[jim.johnson@atikokan.ca](mailto:jim.johnson@atikokan.ca); [mary.makarenko@atikokan.ca](mailto:mary.makarenko@atikokan.ca); [liz.shine@atikokan.ca](mailto:liz.shine@atikokan.ca);  
[brian.stimson@atikokan.ca](mailto:brian.stimson@atikokan.ca)

**Cc:** Pete Sorensen

**Subject:** Transition Home

Dear Mayor Brown and Town Councillors,

We are writing you in support of the proposed transition home for youth in Atikokan.

Vulnerable Indigenous youth need safe housing and help preparing for their lives as young adults.

We urge you to consider how this home will ultimately make Atikokan a safer community by breaking the generational cycle of homelessness, addiction, and trauma.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jill and Peter Sorensen

**From:** Andre Fournier

**Sent:** May 28, 2022 2:41 PM

**To:** [dennis.brown@atikokan.ca](mailto:dennis.brown@atikokan.ca)

**Cc:** [sally.burns@atikokan.ca](mailto:sally.burns@atikokan.ca); [rob.ferguson@atikokan.ca](mailto:rob.ferguson@atikokan.ca); [jim.johnson@atikokan.ca](mailto:jim.johnson@atikokan.ca); [mary.makarenko@atikokan.ca](mailto:mary.makarenko@atikokan.ca); [liz.shine@atikokan.ca](mailto:liz.shine@atikokan.ca); [brian.stimson@atikokan.ca](mailto:brian.stimson@atikokan.ca); [jason.young@atikokan.ca](mailto:jason.young@atikokan.ca); [progress@nwon.com](mailto:progress@nwon.com)

**Subject:** The need for Biskaabiiyang Youth Transitional home is real

I would like to apologize for this long winded email. But it's my very personal story for why I feel the need for Biskaabiiyang to become a reality.

Parenting Adult children can be very difficult. Especailly when they move away and learn bad habbits and ways of life from their peers. They already know everything and everything you try to tell them is wrong or goes in one ear and out the other. Sound familiar?

That was the situation we were in with our oldest daughter as we tried coaching her into young motherhood. She had been living out west with her boyfriend while we moved to the Toronto area because I obtained full time employment with OPG, My dream job. When our daughter ended up in a bad spot and had to move back in with us for the third time. This time now with two little innocent grandchildren. We just wanted the best for our grandchildren. As things carried on with our coaching (nagging as our daughter seen it) the relationship with our daughter was spoiling. And it became harder to have conversation. Meanwhile we had two other children of our own we still had to raise. Both doing very well. One getting ready to go off to college. And the other heavily involved in competitive hockey. Our lives were very busy.

We housed all of them while our daughter got up on her feet again. Helped her get her own apartment. Meanwhile with our 12 year old son was going into playoffs. There was communication gaps between us and our oldest.

A month was all it took for her to meet the wrong people. Now living in the big city this very nieave small town girl got her self into big trouble with addictions. Meeting her human traffickers online. Yep you heard right. HUMAN TRAFFICKERS. Now a parents worst nightmare that I thought only happens in the movies.

Meanwhile our innocent little grand children ended up in care. CFS ended taking our grandchildren and placed them in our care. Now instead of being grandparents, we now became the parents again with two little toddlers moving in with us, while still parenting our other children.

Eventually our oldest managed to get away from her traffickers. But this was too late. Her children already in care with CAS. And now with all the trauma of being trafficked and having her children taken away while dealing with the addictions left by her Traffickers. How was she to rebuild her life.

Because of the severity of her situation, she was in an emergency waiting list to get into a Transitional Youth home in Toronto. The waiting list to get in was years in normal situations because of there high demand. This home had all the wrap around support structures to get her life back. Including cultural healing, specailised trafficking support and counselling was essential to move forward and getting her life back. If it were not for this Transitional Youth home, our family would have fallen apart and it would

have severed our lineage. The support that she received there no family member could have ever given her. We owe the Transitional youth home our lives.

I have more respect for my daughter now than I've ever had. The things that she went through most people never come back from. But she is now a success story. And we owe it all to the Transitional Youth home that got her back up on her feet that we as loving parents could not have done.

You see, contrary to belief these homes do not bring criminals to our community. They support our young nieave small town children so they don't fall into the trouble this world has. It's about supporting our youth so they don't become addicts or criminals.

The need for these homes like Biskaabiiyang are in huge demand in all communities. The wrap around support structures can help any youth get a good start on life no matter what thier past has been.

And we as the community of Atikokan have the opportunity to lead the way and pave a path for other communities to follow. Biskaabiiyang is needed everywhere for all nations and all walks of life. Please consider the need as we live in a fast changing world.

Sincerely,  
Atikokan community member,  
Andre Fournier

May 29, 2022

Atikokan Town of  
Box 1330, 120 Marks Street  
Atikokan, ON.  
POT 1CO

Dear Mayor Brown & Council,

We are writing this letter in response to a notice of a proposed zoning bylaw amendment put forth by the Ontario Aboriginal Housing Support Services Corporation for lands legally described as;

Plan SM 201 lots 30 to 38, 41 to 51 and RP 48R4201 Parts 1 to 19 PCL 21256 to amend Comprehensive Zoning Bylaw No 15 to 10 File#201-2022.

The purpose of the Amendment is to rezone the subject lands to permit a transitional housing facility for youth, twenty apartment style housing units.

As a tax paying citizen in the Atikokan community, I am genuinely concerned about the location of such a facility. My first concern is for the safety of our Long-Term Care residents and AGH patients directly across from the proposed Transitional Home. Many residents, family and staff use the street for walking and exercise. It is unfortunate that the families with loved ones residing in the Extended Care Wing did not receive a letter notifying them of the proposed rezoning.

Our mother owns a residence at 227 Dorothy Street. The 2022 tax levy is \$8,792.38. This leads us to believe that these lots are among the highest taxed residential properties in Atikokan.

It is our understanding that these types of projects are usually taxed at a lower rate than if they were residential lots.

We feel that the construction of such a facility will substantially devalue her property and those of other owners in the area. Personal and property safety is also of utmost concern.

Rezoning these residential lots would restrict Atikokan's potential growth. Presently, housing and accommodations are in noticeably short supply, so this is not the time to be rezoning residential lots.

Atikokan currently has a transitional house that can accommodate 4 adults. To our knowledge it is not fully occupied due to shortages in staffing and other needed support such as 24-hour policing. It is operated under the Atikokan General Hospital.

How can Atikokan provide enough support services for a 20-unit youth transitional house?

Since reading about the request for rezoning in the Atikokan Progress we have read articles pertaining to the Ontario Aboriginal Housing Support Services and its other Transitional Homes in Ontario and we would urge Mayor and Council to also read these articles. Resource links -

<https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/ontario-government-has-no-idea-how-many-first-nations-kids-it-puts-in-group-homes/> <https://globalnews.ca/news/3452436/ontario-childrens-aid-societies-call-for-inquest-into-aboriginal-youth-deaths/>

The Junot Avenue transitional housing project in Thunder Bay is currently on hold after zoning was delayed. Justin Marchand, executive director of Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services, says while the organizations proposed transitional housing facility on Junot Avenue is again delayed, “we're continuing to push at all levels to make sure the City of Thunder Bay has the resources that are needed for this development.” (Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services)

If the City of Thunder Bay does not have adequate resources for this type of project, then how can Atikokan?

We do not feel that the proposed transitional housing facility is in the best interest of our community and strongly urge the Council to deny any amendment to the zoning as requested.

We trust that the Mayor and Council will vote for the long-term health and safety of our community instead of short-term gains of construction.

Respectfully,

Brenda & Richard Wood

*Information points:*

- The Ojibwe term, biskaabiiyang [we are making a round trip], describes the journey that many Ojibwe people are taking today in their lives. They are going back and picking up what has been left along the way, the language and the culture, in order to become healthy and whole to survive and thrive in the future.

In the Ojibwe language this act of making the journey back to one's people, language, culture, worldview and spirituality is called biskaabiiyang, —we're making a round-trip|| and this journey back home was prophesized centuries ago as an act that today's generations would be involved in.

- Biskaabiiyang is designed to house 20 vulnerable Indigenous youth who are aging out of the child welfare system or exiting the justice system with no fixed address.

- Youth aged 16-24 can reside in the transition home for up to three years in preparation for their lives as young adults.

- Biskaabiiyang apartments are safe, affordable, independent, supported spaces where youth can reconnect with their culture while learning how to chart a course for their adult years.

- The Biskaabiiyang youth transition home will help break the generational cycle of homelessness, addiction, and trauma while supporting youth to live healthy lives physically and emotionally.

- The Youth Advisory Circle is involved in every aspect of Biskaabiiyang from the design of the building and rooms to the policies and practices.

We are hopping for your support in this important endeavour. Please Brian Gouliquer