

**Subject:** Pregnancy and infant loss advocacy request

Good afternoon, I have a request to make for a non profit I am getting established. Our focus is stillbirth, miscarriage, pregnancy and child loss and the bereavement care surrounding early loss. The background of how I got to here is a bit long, bear with me...

My daughter, Grace, was born under dire circumstances at 26 weeks back in 2013. She was an unexpected, late in life surprise, and originally she was a twin. We found out early that the twin had the possibility of a Trisomy disorder. Due to a food borne illness that I contracted at 17 weeks, my water broke, the twin didn't survive, and Grace had a long haul at the IWK before being released at seven and a half months old. Fast forward three years, and Grace is a happy, healthy, normal child, with only a bowel issue as a remnant from her NICU days, and even that had been downgraded in early December to just minor followup.

Then, December 28, we took Grace in to emergency with what EVERYONE thought was just another minor bacterial infection to her bowel, only to have her die 18 hours later. It turned out that, between a rare disorder that no one knew she had, and invisible scar tissue forming around her bowel that no imaging could detect, her bowel was compromised and caused her death.

Upon the advice of a grief councilor, I got away for awhile, so went to family in the UK. While there, I happened upon a couple of memorial gardens, one for premature infants, stillbirths and miscarriages, and another for organ and tissue donors and recipients, both that parents and families could add names to. Coming home, I wasn't really able to find anything similar, so, I guess you could say a cause of sorts was born.

I and a number of both former NICU mothers and bereaved mothers who have either had stillbirths or miscarriages have formed a non profit group to try and advocate for bereaved parents with the provincial hospitals, the government, and communities, as well as establish memorial gardens around the province where parents could name their lost children if they so wish...a VERY important part of the grieving process, when years down the road, families can acknowledge the fact publicly that their child WAS, as well as making miscarriage, stillbirth and child death something less of a taboo. We are in contact with the IWK, the leading advocacy group in the UK, a group called SANDS, who have been around for 40 years...they will be aiding us in any way they can. We have also consulted with the leading group from Ontario, PAIL, and they are assisting our efforts, as well.

One of our aims is our proposed gardens. The other aims would be coordinating with local hospitals and counseling groups to improve access to both families and professionals, and improve how child death, still birth and miscarriage are dealt with in public, workplaces, etc, bereavement photography, memory boxes...

Another area of focus is International Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day, which is October 15. MLA Tim Houston attempted to introduce a bill in the legislature last year to recognize this day provincially, but unfortunately, the bill didn't go anywhere. He has been reelected, and we have been consulting with him to reintroduce the bill in the next sitting. The difference this year will be the effort we will be making to create a larger awareness of how serious this situation really is. Ontario has passed a groundbreaking Bill 141 that does just that, as well as putting a large amount of funding into research and care...we would like Nova Scotia to follow suit!

We have been approaching town councils around the province to ask them to make proclamations recognizing October 15, and we will try and get as many landmarks lit up in pink and blue as possible on the evening of October 15, for the hour from 7-8, as part of the International Wave of Light, where candles are lit for one hour in every time zone around the world, creating a continuous wave of light to commemorate the lost children and honor their grieving families. We have already approached and gotten approval for the Mahone Bay churches, Halifax City Hall and Truro Library.

And that brings us to YOU! We would like to submit an official proclamation request to your council, as well as/or having council consider if there are any buildings in the community that could be lit on October 15th.

Our group is called Gardens of Grace...feel free to check it out...

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/gardensofgrace/?ref=bookmarks>

If you could get back to me on your thoughts regarding this, or, if you have any questions or would like to discuss it further, we would really appreciate it.

Thank you for your time, I look forward to hearing from you.

Paula Harmon

Gardens of Grace

Date: July 20, 2017

Dear Mr. Frost,

Municipality of the District of Barrington

I am making a proclamation request as a representative of Gardens of GRACE. We would like to ask that the Municipality of the District of Barrington officially recognise October 15<sup>th</sup> as Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day.

This is something that affects 1 in 4 pregnancies. Each year thousands of families across Canada mourn the death of their babies. In 2011 1,810 infants died within the first year after birth and 2,818 babies were stillborn. Parents get isolated in their grief; the stigma around the death of children prevents society from speaking about the devastating effects on parents and their families.

Gardens of Grace aims to create awareness and advocate for families suffering from miscarriage, stillbirth, pregnancy and infant loss. Our mission is to work with community, health care and government to bring about positive change.

For your consideration, attached are various sample proclamation wording suggestions to allow you to declare the day in a manner that can allow the council to fit the proclamation within your mandate.

Thank you for your time, we appreciate your consideration.

Paula Harmon

Gardens of GRACE

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**WHEREAS:** the Day is observed with remembrance ceremonies and candle-light vigils, concluding with the International Wave of Light, a worldwide lighting of candles at 7pm; and

**WHEREAS:** the town of \_\_\_\_\_ wishes to recognise the profound grief experienced by families who lose a baby.

**NOW, THEREFORE, I,** \_\_\_\_\_, Mayor of the city(town) of \_\_\_\_\_, do hereby declare the day of October 15<sup>th</sup> as Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day in the City(town) of \_\_\_\_\_.

**WHEREAS:** October 15<sup>th</sup> is recognized worldwide, and in other regions of Canada as Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day, to symbolise our support of Nova Scotia's Bill 179, Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Act; and

**WHEREAS:** each DAY in Canada, 5 babies die within their first year and 8 babies are stillborn; as many as 1 in 5 pregnancies end in miscarriage, one family in Nova Scotia per day experience the pain of losing a child as a result of miscarriage, stillbirth or neonatal loss; and

**WHEREAS:** there is a need to develop a greater awareness and understanding about the causes of pregnancy and infant loss, so we can improve the healthcare provided for pregnant mothers and their babies; and

**WHEREAS:** the existence of the babies and infants deserves to be recognised; and

**WHEREAS:** increased awareness of the causes and impacts surrounding pregnancy and infant loss may lead to greater understanding, support and resources in communities across Nova Scotia; and

**WHEREAS:** this declaration acknowledges the unique grief of bereaved parents and demonstrates support to the many families across Canada who have suffered a loss through miscarriage, medical termination, stillbirth or the death of their infant during delivery or shortly after birth; and

**WHEREAS:** promoting awareness of pregnancy and infant loss increases the likelihood that these families will receive understanding and support as they face the challenges of their distinctive bereavement; and

**WHEREAS:** a day of remembrance honours the lives of the children, and supports grieving parents, grandparents, siblings and other family members whose lives are forever altered by the heartbreak of losing a child; and

**WHEREAS:** such activities emphasise the City's(town's) commitment to supporting sensitivity and encouragement to bring this cause to light; and