



# DURHAM REGIONAL POLICE

*leaders in community safety*

January 31, 2024

Dave Speed

Fire Chief

Clarington Emergency and Fire Services

Municipality of Clarington

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## Re: Hope's Cradle

Since learning about the Hope's Cradle initiative in Clarington, we have had many conversations with stakeholders and have expressed our concerns with respect to our role and obligation as a police service.

In reviewing the staff report and in conducting our own research, we do not see a needs' assessment or any data that would suggest this is needed here in Durham Region at this time. I understand and appreciate that this project comes from a desire to protect and avoid tragedies, but it appears we are creating the problem by implementing this solution.

The promise of anonymity and building a structure that supports that promise, negatively impacts our ability to investigate. While the report mentions involvement by Children's Aid Societies and DRPS if there are obvious signs of abuse, it doesn't address challenges such as coercion or abduction which would be very difficult to investigate through this process.

It's crucial to highlight that the model of anonymous surrender of infants has not been tested by the Courts in Canada. It operates on the assumption that providing a safe drop box for anonymously surrendering a child circumvents the Criminal Code, which explicitly states the consequences of unlawfully abandoning or exposing a child under the age of ten. While the legal assumption is plausible, there is no documented legal case or formal interpretation specifically addressing these safe surrender sites.

Currently, mothers have the option to surrender their babies at hospitals but not anonymously. This process, involving a warm hand-off, ensures a thorough examination to rule out coercion or extenuating circumstances that may require investigation while providing the mother with essential support and options that could influence this life-altering decision.

Durham Regional Police Service	Tel.	905-579-1520
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Furthermore, there's an underlying assumption that individuals or mothers who choose to abandon their babies would opt for this safe surrender method instead of other means of abandonment, overlooking the involvement of the second biological parent in the decision-making process. Additionally, there are those in our society who object to this based on openness and transparency for adopted children and the ability to understand their heritage.

While we understand that Clarington Council supported the creation of Hope's Cradle and it may move forward, DRPS at this time can't endorse the implementation or enter into an MOU regarding when we will and will not investigate.

Wishing you all the best.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Spina". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

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