

February 29, 2024

Mayor Foster and Clarington Council,

My name is Lynn Jeffs; I am a local Ambassador for GEMS for GEMS, a National Organization dedicated to supporting women who are facing abuse. In the fall of 2021, myself and Fred Horvath, Grand Knight of the Newcastle Knights of Columbus, met with Mayor Foster and the previous Fire Chief Perini to propose a Hope's Cradle be built into a fire station in Clarington. Currently there are three of these Cradles in Canada, two in Alberta and one in Manitoba. The Cradle both supports women and prevents the unsafe abandonment of babies. This one in Clarington is to have been the first of its kind in Ontario. Both Mayor Foster and the Fire Chief were extremely supportive, and a proposal to install one into Clarington Firehall #1, as part of their planned expansion, was put before Council in September of 2022 by Councillor Zwart; it was adopted unanimously.

The Cradle was built by GEMS into Firehall #1 in May 2023 and was supposed to be officially opened later that year. The MOU's for operation of the cradle, between Emergency services and Children's Aid, kept being delayed, but GEMS was led to believe that talks were ongoing, progress was being made and that another meeting was planned for March 2024. On February 28, near the end of the business day, I was contacted by Fire Chief Speed to say that this current proposal, to no longer pursue the Hope's Cradle, was being put before Council on March 4. The Hope's Cradle team of GEMS have not been officially informed. There is an active letter of intent between Clarington Fire Services and GEMS to both construct and operate this Hope's Cradle.

Since GEMS, in good faith, built the Cradle and were led to believe that both the MOU's and the Cradle opening were still being actively pursued, and only I was informed, at the very last minute, that this proposal was before Council, we are asking that the vote be tabled until the next meeting in order that GEMS might adequately prepare a delegation to address the concerns put forward by Children's Aid and the DRPS as listed in their attachments.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.



Lynn Jeffs

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