



Staff Report

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Report To:	General Government Committee	
Date of Meeting:	March 4, 2024	Report Number: PUB-003-24
Submitted By:	Lee-Ann Reck, Deputy CAO, Public Services	
Reviewed By:	Mary-Anne Dempster, CAO	By-law Number:
Prepared By:	Dave Speed, Fire Chief	
File Number:		Resolution#:
Report Subject:	Hope's Cradle	

Recommendation:

1. That Report PUB-003-24, and any related delegations or communication items, be received for information.
2. That, based upon the formal feedback recently received from Durham Children's Aid Society and Durham Regional Police Services, the Hope's Cradle Safe Surrender Site no longer be pursued; and
3. That all interested parties listed in PUB-003-24, and any delegations, be advised of Council's decision.

Report Overview

A Safe Surrender Site for infants has been installed by Gems for Gems at Clarington Fire Station 1.

Based upon formal feedback recently received from partner agencies, it is being recommended that the Site no longer be pursued.

1. Background

- 1.1 In September 2022, a Clarington resident saw a news story about Hope's Cradle on national news. She approached the local Knights of Columbus and together they made a delegation at Clarington Council to request that a safe surrender site for infants be installed in a fire station. The delegation included links to several news stories demonstrating the need for this initiative (<https://globalnews.ca/video/8389649/hopes-cradle-offers-life-saving-option-for-albertans-in-desperate-situations>).
- 1.2 At its September 12, 2022 Joint Committee meeting, Council passed the resolution that "the Director of Emergency Services/Fire Chief be directed to include the cost of installing a Hope's Cradle Safe Surrender Site temperature-controlled compartment in the costing of the design and build for any new construction at Fire Hall 1 (Headquarters)" (<https://www.clarington.net/en/town-hall/public-educations-programs.aspx>).
- 1.3 A new fitness room was installed in Fire Hall 1 in April 2023, and the costing to install a fully operational Hope's Cradle Safe Surrender Site was included. The Site was installed as part of the construction.
- 1.4 Community stakeholders were contacted to solicit their input in the development of a procedure to follow in the event the Safe Surrender Site is utilized. Stakeholders included Region of Durham Paramedic Services, Durham Regional Police Services, Lakeridge Health, Durham Children's Aid Society, and Dnaagdawenmag BinnooJiiyag Child and Family Services.
- 1.5 Following numerous meetings with each stakeholder group over the past 10 months, it was determined that there was mixed support for the Site. While Lakeridge Health and Dnaagdawenmag BinnooJiiyag Child and Family Services were supportive of its installation, and Region of Durham Paramedic Services was committed to responding once it was operational, Durham Children's Aid Society and Durham Regional Police Services had informally expressed reservations. The latter two agencies recently provided their positions in writing (Attachment 1 and 2, respectively), confirming that they are not supportive of the Site's operation.

2. Discussion

Hope's Cradle

- 2.1 Hope's Cradle is one of several initiatives of Gems for Gems, a not for profit organization that supports women who are victims of abuse. Their motto is "empowering women who empower themselves", and they have several initiatives to this end. Programs include Hope's Cradle, a scholarship program, a jewelry drive, and Thrive "to show survivors they can be the hero to their own story and to add fuel to the empowering journey they have already begun".
- 2.2 There are two Hope's Cradle Installations in Canada, located in Manitoba and Alberta. <https://calgaryjournal.ca/2023/12/21/from-tragedy-to-hope-calgarys-first-safe-surrender-site-opens-in-the-new-year/>
- 2.3 There are no safe surrender sites in Ontario, although several municipalities have expressed interest in adding one to their community.

Agency Roles

- 2.4 For a Hope's Cradle Safe Surrender Site to operate successfully it requires the cooperation and collaboration of multiple agencies and groups. Following is a summary of the roles expected from each partner agency.
 - 2.4.1. Gems for Gems: Has supplied the Hope's Cradle design that has been installed in Fire Station 1 in Clarington.
 - 2.4.2. Clarington Emergency and Fire Services: Under Section 72 (1)(11) of the [Child and Family Services Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. C.11 \(ontario.ca\)](#), Clarington Emergency and Fire Services has a duty to report to a Society that a child has been abandoned and would therefore immediately notify Durham Children's Aid Society upon an infant being surrendered at the Cradle at Station 1.

In addition to initial notification, Clarington Emergency and Fire Services would safely receive a surrendered infant, provide an initial infant medical assessment and aid as needed, would take the lead in notifying additional partner agencies to initiate the commencement of their respective roles, and would maintain and monitor the Cradle.

CEFS has been supportive of the Site's operation.

2.4.3. Durham Children's Aid Society: Under the Child and Family Services Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. C.11, Durham Children's Aid Society is required to protect children (15)(3)(b), including a child who is abandoned (37)(2)(i). During meetings with Durham Children's Aid Society, they have confirmed that abandonment of a child in a safe surrender site falls within this legislative duty, requiring them to respond upon notification from Clarington Emergency and Fire Services of a surrendered infant at the Fire Station 1 location.

Durham Children's Aid Society has provided their formal written position (Attachment 1), and they are not supportive of the Site's operation.

2.4.4. Region of Durham Paramedic Services: Following notification of Durham Children's Aid Society, Clarington Emergency and Fire Services would contact Region of Durham Paramedic Services who would be required to respond and conduct a medical assessment of the child and administer aid as required. They would then transport the child to Lakeridge Health.

Region of Durham Paramedic Services has confirmed that upon the opening of the Site and notification of an abandoned child, they would respond. They have not expressed any concerns in the Site's operation.

2.4.5. Durham Regional Police Services: Durham Regional Police Services would be notified by Durham Children's Aid Society upon notification of a surrendered child. They would help to determine, based on the circumstances of the child abandonment, including signs of child abuse, if a criminal investigation would be required.

Durham Regional Police Services has cited several concerns in their formal written position (Attachment 2) and is recommending that the Site not move forward.

2.4.6. Lakeridge Health: Lakeridge Health would receive the surrendered child and provide care and treatment. They would then work with CAS as needed.

In speaking with the Chief of Staff of Lakeridge Health on several occasions, he is fully supportive of Lakeridge Health receiving and treating any children that are surrendered in the Site.

2.4.7. Dnaagdawenmag BinnooJiiyag Child and Family Services: Under the Child and Family Services Act, if Durham Children's Aid Society "proposes to provide a prescribed service to a child who is an Indian or native person or to exercise a prescribed power under this Act in relation to such a child they shall consult with a representative chosen by the child's band or native community in accordance with the regulations" (Section 213.1).

The Board of Directors of Dnaagdawenmag BinnooJiiyag Child and Family Services has provided verbal direction to the agency to support the Site.

3. Recommendations

For the Hope's Cradle Safe Surrender Site to operate successfully, all seven agencies noted in this report are required to participate. Based on the formal written positions recently received from two of these agencies advising they are not supportive of the Site's operation, it is recommended that the Site no longer be pursued.

4. Financial Considerations

The Site will be closed to the public but will remain in place should Council direct staff to open it in the future. There are no operating costs to maintain the Site while it remains closed.

5. Strategic Plan

The recommendation in this report is consistent with the strategic priority to strengthen existing and build new partnerships with upper levels of government, academia, businesses, community groups and other sectors. There have been numerous conversations with the agencies listed in this report to determine if a path forward could be realized to operationalize the Site. While the Site is being recommended to not open, the partnerships and relationships have been strengthened.

6. Concurrence

This report has been reviewed by the Deputy CAO/Solicitor, Legislative Services who concurs with the recommendation.

7. Conclusion

It is respectfully recommended that the recommendations in this report that the Hope's Cradle Site no longer be pursued, be approved.

Staff Contact: Dave Speed, Fire Chief, 905-623-5126 ext. 2802 or DSpeed@clarington.net.

Attachments:

Attachment 1 – Letter from Durham Regional Police Services

Attachment 2 – Letter from Durham Children's Aid Society

Interested Parties:

The following interested parties will be notified of Council's decision:

Gems for Gems

Durham Children's Aid Society

Region of Durham Paramedic Services

Durham Regional Police Services

Lakeridge Health

Dnaagdawenmag BinnooJiiyag Child and Family Services