



Children's Aid Society of Algoma

Société de aide à l'enfance d'Algoma

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February 13, 2025

Peter Johnson CMM III, Fire Chief
Sault Ste. Marie Fire Services
72 Tancred St. P6A 2W1

Re: Hope's Cradle

Dear Chief Johnson,

Thank you for inviting the Children's Aid Society of Algoma to provide input into the study of the possible establishment of a Hope's Cradle in Sault Ste. Marie. We are aware that Hope's Cradle is intended to provide, "a safe and anonymous surrender of the baby thus protecting its life and the anonymity of the mother. Provided the baby shows no signs of abuse, the anonymity of the mother will be entirely protected."

During my discussion with you, and my discussion with Councillor Caputo, I shared concerns related to the implementation of such a program. These concerns are based on knowledge of child welfare practice, including the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017 (CYFSA)*, which is the legislation that directs child welfare practices in Ontario.

The Preamble of the *CYFSA* states, "Children and families have better outcomes when services build on their strengths. Prevention services, early intervention services and community support services build on a family's strengths and are invaluable in reducing the need for more disruptive services and interventions... Services to children and families should, wherever possible, help maintain connections to their communities." Further, the Purpose of the *CYFSA* states, "While parents may need help in caring for their children, that help should give support to the autonomy and integrity of the family unit and, wherever possible, be provided on the basis of mutual consent... Services to children and young persons should be provided in a manner that that recognizes their cultures, heritages, traditions, connection to their communities, and the concept of the extended family."

The Children's Aid Society of Algoma believes that Hope's Cradle does not afford time and opportunity for the necessary clinical services to occur to meet this statutory requirement. Additionally, the Hope's Cradle model risks that infants may be relinquished without the willful consent of a parent where that parent is a victim of violence or human trafficking.

The *CYFSA* establishes the legal framework for adoption in the province of Ontario, and establishes openness as the default approach to adoption in this province. Openness in adoption means an adopted child may maintain some degree of contact with their birth parents, siblings, extended family members, or other individuals with whom the child had a significant relationship prior to the adoption. There are numerous

benefits of openness, including opportunities for a child to have an accurate and positive sense of identity and self-worth, reducing the impact of loss and facilitating grieving, and maintaining connections to relationships that are meaningful and beneficial to the child. Openness requires the personal information of important individuals in a child's life to be obtained by the Children's Aid Society. Relinquishment of an infant through Hope's Cradle may not afford an opportunity for the parent to receive independent advice about their rights and obligations. It may also cause the loss of custodial and access rights of the second biological parent without their knowledge or consent. If a situation were to arise where an infant was relinquished by an individual to a Hope's Cradle, the Children's Aid Society of Algoma would be required to make efforts to identify the infant's parents, as well as to establish if the infant has First Nation, Metis or Inuit heritage.

The Hope's Cradle model does not afford a child access to critical information about their identity and their heritages. The *CYFSA* directs that, "If a society intends to begin planning for the adoption of a First Nations, Inuk or Métis child, the society shall give written notice of its intention to a representative chosen by each of the child's bands and First Nations, Inuit or Métis communities. If a representative chosen by each of the child's bands or First Nations, Inuit or Métis communities receives notice...each band and community may, within 60 days of the representative receiving the notice, prepare its own plan for the care of the child." Without critical identifying information, rights of First Nations, Inuit, and Metis communities to plan for the care and well being of their members may be infringed.

In a situation where an infant is relinquished to a Hope's Cradle, the Duty to Report provisions from Section 125 of the *CYFSA* requires immediate and direct reporting by any person having knowledge of the relinquishment to the appropriate Children's Aid Society or Indigenous Child Well Being Agency.

To permit infant relinquishment in a manner that addresses these considerations, the Children's Aid Society of Algoma recommends that you consult with AdoptOntario, the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, and the Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services. Such consultations may facilitate the development of processes that address these considerations.

Respectfully,



Krista Budau, Director of Services
Children's Aid Society of Algoma

cc: Tracy Willoughby, Executive Director
Dawn Dubois, Lead Council,

KB/ki



A Modern Police Service for a Safer Tomorrow

May 2, 2025

Peter Johnson, CMM III
Fire Chief
Sault Ste. Marie Fire Services
72 Tancred Street
Sault Ste. Marie, ON P6A2W1

Dear Chief Johnson

RE: Hope's Cradle

Thank you for considering the Sault Ste. Marie Police Service as a community partner in your exploration of the Hope's Cradle initiative. We appreciate the intent behind this initiative and recognize its goal of providing a safe alternative for infant surrender. However, after thorough consultation with our Statistical Analysis Unit and discussions with senior leadership, the data does not support the need for this initiative in the Sault Ste. Marie area.

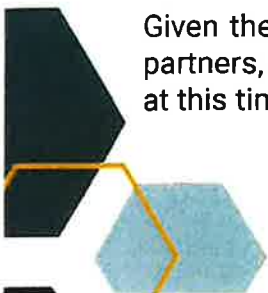
While the initiative is well-intentioned, existing legislated processes already allow for the safe and responsible transfer of child custody. These methods ensure proper oversight while safeguarding the welfare of both the child and the parent(s). Additionally, the anonymity associated with Hope's Cradle raises significant concerns, as it could hinder necessary investigative processes. In cases where there are indications of abuse, coercion, lack of consent, or underlying issues such as human trafficking or intimate partner violence, anonymity would obstruct our ability to intervene appropriately.

The Children's Aid Society of Algoma has also expressed concerns regarding the initiative. As outlined in their correspondence, Hope's Cradle does not provide the necessary time or structure for statutory clinical services to be properly conducted. I concur with Krista Budau of the Children's Aid Society of Algoma that further consultation with key stakeholders is essential before considering any steps forward.

Currently, mothers in crisis have the option to surrender their infants at hospitals through a process that, while not anonymous, ensures a warm hand-off. This approach allows for immediate medical and social assessments, ensuring that no external pressures, coercion, or extenuating circumstances are at play. It also provides the mother with access to critical support services, which could influence this profound decision.

Given the lack of data-driven justification and the concerns raised by other community partners, I am unable to support the implementation of Hope's Cradle in Sault Ste. Marie at this time.

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Phone (705) 949-6300 • TTY (705) 759-7349
www.saultpolice.ca





Sault Ste. Marie
POLICE

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Thank you again for engaging us in this important discussion. Should further consultations take place, we would be open to participating to ensure that any initiative aligns with the best interests of the community and those it seeks to support.

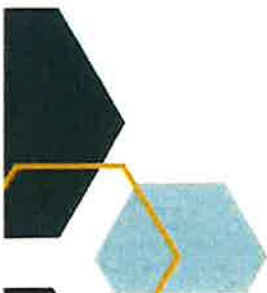
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "B. Duguay".

Brent Duguay
Interim Chief of Police

BD/II

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www.saultpolice.ca





March 31, 2025

Peter Johnson, CMM III, Fire Chief
Sault Ste. Marie Fire Services
72 Tancred St.
P6A 2W1

Re: Hopes Cradle

Dear Chief Johnson,

I want to say Miigwetch for meeting with Nogdawindamin Family & Community Services to provide input into the possible establishment of Hope's Cradle in Sault Ste. Marie. We are aware of Hope's Cradle and that it would provide anonymity for the mother to surrender her baby.

During our discussion, our agency shared concerns about implementing this program. As mentioned, we would be very concerned that these babies could have Indigenous Heritage, and Hope's Cradle would not allow a child to access important information about their heritage. We explained that historically, many Indigenous children were impacted by systems such as the 60's scoop, where children were adopted by many non-Indigenous families, and therefore, these children lost their connection to family, community and culture. This loss impacts a child's well-being and has detrimental impacts on a child's well-being.

As mentioned in our meeting, Nogdawindamin would not support the establishment of Hope's Cradle and would recommend that the city consult with the 7 North Shore Communities and other Indigenous Agencies in Sault Ste. Marie for further feedback.

Miigwetch,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Kennedy".

Karen Kennedy,
A/ Chief Executive Officer



May 30, 2025

Peter Johnson, CMM III, Fire Chief
Sault Ste. Marie Fire Services
72 Tancred St. P6A 2W1
Email: p.johnson@cityssm.on.ca

Dear Peter:

Thank you for sharing time and meeting with me last month to discuss the Hope's Cradle initiative. We would like to take a moment to applaud your effort in exploring alternate means to support birth parents and their children. While we understand the intent of the program is to provide an anonymous avenue for a parent(s) to safely relinquish their child, we are also aware that the program contradicts legislation currently laid out in *the Child, Youth and Family Services Act (CYFSA)*. The Act speaks directly to implementing prevention, early intervention and community support services for children and their families. The premise of Hope's Cradle makes it so that these guidelines would not be achievable. In short, the Adoption Council of Ontario could not support an initiative that contradicts the CYFSA. However, if further information is presented that would change the premise of the conversation, we would be happy to explore this further at that time.

If there are any future opportunities for the ACO to provide support, education or outreach to your staff or families in your community, please let us know. We strive to educate the public about adoption, connect, support and advocate families and children touched by adoption.

If we can be of any further assistance, please don't hesitate to reach out. Our office is open from Monday – Friday 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Shaw', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kaitlyn Shaw, B.S.W.
Centralized Adoption Intake
Services Manager (Interim)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Moore', with 'RSW' written in smaller letters to the right.

Karen Moore, MA (Leadership), BSDS, ECE, RSW
Executive Director