

CITY OF HAMILTON

MOTION

Audit, Finance and Administration Committee: March 20, 2025

MOVED BY COUNCILLOR M. SPADAFORA

SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR

Interval House Funding

WHEREAS, rural women experience intimate partner violence at rates 5 times higher than rural men and 75% higher than urban women (CWF, 2022);

WHEREAS, in 2021, the rate of gender-related homicide in Canada was 2.5 times greater in rural areas compared to urban areas (1.13 versus 0.44 per 100,000 women and girls. (Sutton, 2023);

WHEREAS, there are more firearms in rural homes than in urban homes and, in Ontario, it is reported that an abuser living in a rural area is 2.5 times more likely to use a firearm to kill their partner;

WHEREAS, rural women experience more challenges when a victim of domestic violence including isolation, lack of transportation, a lack of services, cultural norms and beliefs and practices amongst rural communities;

WHEREAS, according to city data, 'about 80%' of Hamilton's land mass, close to 220,000 acres (Shaker, 2024) and approximately 68% of this land has a rural zoning;

WHEREAS, in Wards 9,10, 11, 12, 13 and 15 there are 206,950 residents with 50.9% identifying as women;

WHEREAS, the rise in the number of domestic gender violence situations has so dramatically increased that Hamilton City Council in 2023 declared intimate partner gender-violence to be a crisis;

WHEREAS, Interval House was founded in 1986 to provide a response to assist women and childhood victims of domestic gender violence;

WHEREAS, in 2009 the Flamborough Women's Resource Centre (FWRC) opened in Waterdown to support women and children experiencing intimate domestic gender-based violence in the Waterdown and Flamborough area;

WHEREAS, Interval House is recognized by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) as the lead agency for the provision of rural domestic gender abuse services in Hamilton;

WHEREAS, Interval House provides the only rural outreach to the victims of domestic gender-based violence living in the Flamborough Waterdown area, through the provision of NO charge counselling, safety planning, group program support, legal advocacy including in-court support, housing and income navigation, employment readiness training and a mobile responses as occasionally required;

WHEREAS, in 2024, through temporary funding, the Women's Education and Rural Support (WEARS) program was piloted by Interval House Hamilton to support all rural women experiencing intimate partner violence;

WHEREAS, the WEARS program focuses on interagency collaboration, public education, professional education and advocacy outreach, with the goal of decreasing the risk of lethal harm, increasing, and making a survivor's sense of safety and well-being a priority and providing when necessary, a mobile response to a person in distress, including no-charge safety planning, counselling, access to necessary resources, transportation assistance, housing supports and legal navigation;

WHEREAS, the WEARS program works closely with Hamilton Police Services and Hamilton's child welfare system to ensure high risk women and their children are identified and provided with necessary surrounding services;

WHEREAS, since WEARS inception, the program has negotiated 14 safe spaces across Wards 9,10,11,12, 13 and 15 and remains both active and visible throughout the rural Wards;

WHEREAS, in 2025 a rural HUB will be established which WEARS and the FWRC will share space, providing a safe location to access services, including legal and housing supports. Emergency transportation assistance will also be provided to all rural women, if required, thus ensuring access to the HUB; and,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

- (a) That a grant in the amount of \$250,000 be made available to Interval House Hamilton to facilitate the expansion of the WEARS program and hiring of rural crisis support workers for a twelve-month period, to be funded from the Former Municipality Reserve for Flamborough - Account # 108032;
- (b) That funds be exempt on a one-time basis and not be counted toward any formula that restricts regular funding from the City including the City Enrichment Fund (e.g. the City's 30% formula);

- (c) That Children's and Community Services staff be directed to incorporate key deliverables and metrics into the funding agreement with Interval House Hamilton, and work with Interval House to report back to the Emergency and Community Services Committee in Q2 of 2026 with the outcomes of this funding support and recommendations for the continuation of any additional funding for subsequent years; and,
- (d) That the General Manager, Healthy and Safe Communities, be authorized and directed to execute any required agreement(s) and ancillary documents, with such terms and conditions in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor