



## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Mayor Bonnette and Members of Council

**FROM:** Erin Burger, Community Development Supervisor – Event and Neighbourhood Support

**DATE:** March 10, 2021

**MEMORANDUM NO.:** MEM-RP-2021-0002

**RE:** Pregnancy and Infant Loss (PAIL) Community Initiatives

### **PURPOSE OF THE MEMORANDUM:**

The purpose of this Memorandum is to provide Members of Council information regarding staff's efforts to support pregnancy and infant loss (PAIL) community initiatives.

### **BACKGROUND:**

In 2020, Halton Hills residents raised awareness through social media of pregnancy and infant loss (PAIL) within the Halton Hills community.

The PAIL Network of Ontario (Sunnybrook) provides leadership to efforts of education, awareness, and support to grieving individuals and families who have experienced pregnancy and infant loss. Those who have experienced these types of losses have profound, overwhelming, and unique grief over the short and long term. Sadly, because PAIL is not widely discussed or understood individuals and families grieving in this way can go unrecognized and feel misunderstood.

Through staff's consultation with invested community members it was realized that there is a clear need to support local connections between families experiencing the loss of a pregnancy or the death of an infant in our community. In addition, strategies are needed to reduce the stigma experienced by bereaved families, improve awareness, and establish an area for reflection and healing for individuals and families with lived experience of PAIL.

As a result of the insights brought forward by Halton Hills residents, staff are supporting the development of a local group that can set the direction of pregnancy and infant loss community initiatives including establishing a memorial space and a corresponding annual event.

## **COMMENTS:**

The intended outcome of work around pregnancy and infant loss is to gain a clear understanding of established supports, areas for opportunities and to assist community members in building community connections, creation of a memorial space, and organizing of an annual event.

Outlined below are the objectives as well as details regarding next steps.

### 1. Community Connections

The importance for families to feel a connection to others who have experienced a similar loss is recognized. Peer support, loss recognition, sharing of stories and reducing stigma will aid in “normalizing” pregnancy and infant loss in our community and will assist in the healing process for these individuals. Town staff will assist community members with organizing and formalizing a group that would provide leadership to these initiatives of PAIL.

### 2. Memorial Space

Town staff will work with the PAIL community group to create a memorial for families who have suffered the loss of a pregnancy or the death of their baby/babies. The purpose of the memorial is to provide a well-loved space that will offer a place for self-reflection, remembrance, healing, honouring of lost children, increasing awareness and a gathering place for public ceremonies/events.

### 3. Annual Event

October 15<sup>th</sup> is Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day. The international “Wave of Light” event is hosted annually on this date throughout the world. This event invites families, loved ones, friends, and supporting organizations who have experienced a loss of a baby, to join the world-wide illumination commencing at 7:00 p.m. in each time zone. Candles, buildings, landmarks, monuments, and venues are illuminated individually as well as in groups. Town staff will assist the PAIL community group through the Public Events process to bring the local “Wave of Light” event to fruition.

## Next Steps:

Staff will prepare and launch a “Let’s Talk” survey discussing the concepts of the above PAIL community initiatives. This survey will seek local connections for the development of an organizing group, gauge interest in the features that may be included in the memorial space as well as its potential location and generate interest in a PAIL annual memorial and awareness event.

Subsequently, staff will explore PAIL memorials in other municipalities as well as work with the PAIL community group to ensure a potential location and memorial elements are respectful and have received collective input.

Lastly, staff will support the group in the annual awareness and memorial event planning for this October 2021. This will include ongoing assessment of details based on current conditions, whether to postpone, cancel, or significantly reduce the number of attendees for gatherings, as the pandemic continues.

**CONCLUSION:**

Staff are working with residents and stakeholders to establish PAIL community connections, a memorial space, and an annual event for the Halton Hills community. Staff will ensure Council is apprised of outcomes and as part of any projects to be brought forward.

Reviewed and approved by,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mandy Keller".

Mandy Keller, Senior Manager of Community Development

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Warren Harris".

Warren Harris, Commissioner of Recreation and Parks

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chris Mills".

Chris Mills, Acting Chief Administrative Officer