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May 31, 2022

Delivered by email
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The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

The Honourable Karina Gould, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Families, Children and Social Development
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau and Minister Gould:

Re: Town of Aurora Council Resolution of May 24, 2022
Motion 10.1 - Councillor Humfryes; Re: Private Member's Bill C-233 "Keira's Law"

Please be advised that this matter was considered by Council at its meeting held on May 24, 2022, and in this regard, Council adopted the following resolution:

Whereas violence against women is a Canadian public health crisis that demands urgent action; and

Whereas one in four women experience domestic violence in their lifetime. One woman or girl is killed every other day, on average, somewhere in our country; and

Whereas the most dangerous time for a victim of abuse is when she separates from her partner. According to research from the U.S. Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, when there is a history of coercive control, violence and a recent separation, a woman's risk of domestic homicide goes up 900 times; and

Whereas the current Canadian court system is not equipped to protect women. According to the National Judicial Institute, there is no mandatory education for Judges on domestic violence. Judges need education on what constitutes domestic violence or coercive control. A formal education program would ensure

another line of defense for victims, as well as preventing violence and abuse before it happens; and

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the domestic violence crisis. Women's shelters and crisis centres have reported a marked increase in requests for services this year. The concerns for children are significant. According to recent research from The Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, doctors have seen more than double the number of babies with serious injuries as this time last year. These include head injuries, broken bones or in some cases death. Institutions across the country are reporting a similar trend; and

Whereas, according to Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, children must be protected from "all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has care of the child." Our current family justice system often fails our children in this regard; and

Whereas, in worst case scenarios, children are killed by a violent parent. As reported by the Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative, recent separation and domestic violence are the two biggest risk factors for domestic violence related child homicides; and

Whereas custody disputes are an additional risk factor. Each year in Canada, about 30 children are killed by a parent. Mothers are responsible about 40 per cent of the time, often due to postpartum depression or mental illness. In the 60 per cent of cases where fathers are the murderers, anger, jealousy or post-separation retaliatory revenge are the usual motivations; and

Whereas Keira's Law is named after four-year-old Keira Kagan, who was killed while in the custody of her father, in 2020; and

Whereas many cases of domestic violence are inappropriately labelled as "high conflict" in the family court system. According to research by Rachel Birnbaum, a Social Work Professor at the University of Western Ontario who specializes in child custody, approximately one third of cases called "high conflict" by the court had substantiated evidence of valid concerns about domestic violence. These cases must be recognized and treated differently by judges; and

Whereas voting in favour of "Keira's Law", contained in Private Member's Bill C-233, will not only protect victims of violence and children, it will save lives by

amending the *Judges Act* to establish seminars for judges on intimate partner violence and coercive control;

- 1. Now Therefore Be It Hereby Resolved That Aurora Town Council calls upon the House of Commons to support Member of Parliament Anju Dhillon's Private Member's Bill C-233, that will raise the level of education on domestic violence and coercive control for federally appointed Judges; and**
- 2. Be It Further Resolved That a copy of this resolution be sent to: The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada; The Honourable Karina Gould, MP, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development; The Honourable Candice Bergen, Interim Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada; Yves-Francois Blanchet, MP, Leader of the Bloc Quebecois; Jagmeet Singh, MP, Leader of the New Democratic Party; MP Tony Van Bynen; and MP Leah Taylor Roy; and**
- 3. Be It Further Resolved That a copy of this resolution be circulated to all Ontario municipalities and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM).**

The above is for your consideration and any attention deemed necessary.

Yours sincerely,



Michael de Rond
Town Clerk
The Corporation of the Town of Aurora

MdR/lb

Copy: Hon. Candice Bergen, M.P., Interim Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada
Yves-François Blanchet, M.P., Leader of the Bloc Québécois
Jagmeet Singh, M.P., Leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada
Tony Van Bynen, M.P. Newmarket—Aurora
Leah Taylor Roy, M.P. Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill
Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)
All Ontario municipalities