

## **Proposal Overview**

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# **Cornwall Compassion Centre Maternity Home**

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## **THE CORNWALL COMPASSION CENTRE**

The Cornwall Compassion Centre is a not-for-profit corporation that was founded in 2007 to service unmet needs in the City of Cornwall and the Counties of Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry, as well as Akwesasne. The compassion centre is governed by a Board of Directors.

## **THE PROJECT BEING PROPOSED**

The Cornwall Compassion Centre is proposing the creation of a maternity home in Cornwall to serve eighteen (18) mothers and their children from Cornwall, the Counties of Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry, and Akwesasne.

The model:

- Creates three (3) residential pods under one roof, sharing the staff in order to minimize operating costs as much as possible.
- The pods will be separated by doors that can only be accessed by staff so that a smaller home atmosphere can be maintained in each pod.
- Each pod will include six bedrooms and will be furnished as a complete home.
- Each pod will include a visitation room for families.
- At any given time it is anticipated that there will be eighteen (18) mothers, twelve (12) infants of varying ages (two (2) whose mothers are in the transition to community phase), and six (6) children soon to be born.
- A complete summary of services to be offered is included in the full proposal.

## **THE NEED / WHY IT IS NECESSARY**

In meetings of the planning committee with representation from:

- The Eastern Ontario Health Unit
- The Children's Aid Society of SD&G
- The Cornwall Community Hospital – Child and Youth Mental Health
- The Glengarry Interagency – Early ON Child and Family Centre
- The City of Cornwall – Children's Division,

the need for a maternity home to service SD&G, the city of Cornwall, and Akwesasne has been identified as critical.

The Cornwall Compassion Centre has letters of support from each of the above agencies, with a strong endorsement from Dr. Paul Roumeliotis of the Eastern Ontario Health Unit.

- ✚ According to Dr. Paul, in 2017 alone, 360 HBHC prenatal screens were completed to identify high risk families. Of those, 56.7% were identified as high risk.
- ✚ In the city of Cornwall in 2016 there were 2,835 Lone-Parent families. Of those, 2,285 were Lone-Female Parents.
- ✚ Dr. Paul stated in his letter of support that social determinants of health such as access to education and improved socioeconomic conditions are only but a few of the benefits that this maternity home could provide to help reduce the negative impact of health inequities experienced by this population, and help these families achieve their full potential.
- ✚ Cornwall has a very high incidence of teen pregnancy.

**There is one home in Ottawa – St. Mary's. Based on our attempts to identify and speak to the directors of other homes, the next closest home is in Ajax.**

## **THE BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT**

1. Opening a maternity home in Cornwall will reduce the current service catchment area for St. Mary's home in Ottawa to Prescott/Russell and the greater Ottawa area.
2. The smaller residential pods will create a home environment rather than an institutional atmosphere for mothers and their newborn children.
3. People who cannot afford to drive or take the bus to Ottawa to visit their family members will have the opportunity to be more available to support the mothers and their newborn children, particularly those who have emotional, physical, and developmental challenges.

It is reported by the agencies that sit on the Planning Committee that in some cases mothers who need the services offered by the maternity home in Ottawa refuse to go, because they do not want to lose the support of their families and friends.

4. Many women in Cornwall and the surrounding area find themselves living in unsafe environments. These situations are fueled and perpetuated by poverty. They result in sub-standard housing and hangers on that consume their resources. The maternity home will provide a safe environment.
5. Mothers will be eligible for services from their second trimester of pregnancy until their newborn child reaches the age of nine months.
6. The smaller residential pods will allow mothers to form friendships with the other ladies they live with. These friends may become natural, unfunded, supports as they move back into the community.
7. Mothers who transition from the maternity home will be encouraged to mentor other mothers who are either receiving services or who are preparing to transition to the community.

## **UNIQUE FEATURES**

1. This proposal presents a model of funded, cost efficient, services that are viable in areas like Cornwall that are financially depressed and unable to fundraise the necessary moneys to offset the annual operation costs required to make these essential services possible.
2. Cornwall has an unusually high incidence of people on ODSP and Ontario Works because the housing costs are low and people are encouraged to move here from other communities. This creates a greater need for the services offered by the home.
3. The services will be provided in the actual location of the need rather than having people relocate to communities outside their counties of origin. Close proximity to family and friends is important to support positive mental health for the new mothers and children.
4. The residents of Akwesasne will be able to use services that are close to home.

5. The consistent collaboration of agencies in Cornwall, SD&G, and Akwesasne over the years is exemplary and that collaboration makes it possible to partner with each other and the maternity home to provide seamless services, without duplication, in the most cost efficient manner possible.
6. Post natal admissions will accepted up to six weeks following delivery.
7. Self-referrals will be eligible for admission.
8. The Cornwall Compassion Centre's child care centre will offer child care, as required, for the children of the residents of the home who have appointments or who are attending continuing education classes.
9. Mothers will be given the opportunity to continue their education.
10. In addition to being taught parenting skills, the mothers will be made aware of generic community services and how they can be accessed. This will allow them to live more independently and reduce their dependence on government funded support services that can then be freed up and offered to others who are in need.

## **BENEFIT TO THE TAXPAYER AND THE PROVINCE**

Over the period of a year, the requested funding equates to \$30.01 per mother per day over and above their ODSP or Ontario Works funding.

1. It has been the experience of the agencies represented on the planning committee that mothers who are uprooted to other communities to receive the supports being proposed reduces their chances of success.
2. Mothers who refuse to leave their home community to receive training and support have a greater probability of having their children taken into care. The cost of foster care is \$200 per day.
3. The cost of care for mothers under the age of eighteen who are taken into care is \$200 per day.
4. The cost on average for Children's Aid to transport a family member from Cornwall to St. Mary's Maternity Home in Ottawa to see a mother and child is \$100 per day, plus lunch. Family member visits can be monthly or even weekly, including visits with other children that the mom may have.
5. Children's Aid staff travel a minimum of once a month to visit and interview the mothers they place at St. Mary's in Ottawa. The travel cost is .50c per kilometer (Approximately \$120) each time. In addition, the CAS budget absorbs two and a half hours of staff wages for travel time each time they go to Ottawa. If the proposed maternity home is opened in Cornwall, that staff time can be used to support other people on their caseloads.
6. Mothers who complete their education will be better prepared to find meaningful employment and as a result come off ODSP or Ontario Works.
7. In addition to the financial benefits listed above, all the training and services that would be offered to mothers at a funded drop-in resource centre, case management, and the development and implementation of transition plans will be provided as part of the home's services for the \$30.01 per day funding being requested over and above ODSP or Ontario Works funding.

# ACTUAL STORIES

## SUCCESS STORY

A young mother attended the St. Mary's Maternity Home in Ottawa in March 2018. This mother has had an extensive history with child protection services with the previous children. There were significant concerns around her parenting capacity, unhealthy relationships and ability to meet her children's overall needs. As such, she began working with the Children's Aid Society of SD&G prenatally. Because this young mother needed extensive support, the workers explored the possibility of her attending St. Mary's Maternity Home so she could receive hands on 24/7 support with her child. This mom needed to leave Cornwall in order to attend the home. This mother was afraid to go because, in her words, it was a new place, new town, and new people. When asked what her biggest fears were about attending the home she spoke about being disconnected from her family, her other children, and not being around her other community supports.

Even though this young mother was faced with many fears she decided to attend the home, as she had very limited options in Cornwall allowing her child to remain in her care. While at St. Mary's the Children's Aid Society of SD&G supported her in coming home for weekends by providing her with rides back and forth to Cornwall. This mother said while it was nice to come home, it always made Sunday nights hard because she knew she would have to leave again.

When this mother was discharged from St. Mary's in August 2018, she was able to leave with her son in her care. This mother reflected on her experience and stated that there was a lot of support helping her with her new born baby. She stated that staff was welcoming and helpful and she felt the staff was there to help her. She felt that if she had not attended the home she would not have her child in her care today. She also felt she had made significant connections at the home with both staff and other mothers that attended. She feels that if the home would have been in her home community she would have maintained these connections as a support system. Overall, this mother stated that she feels that the experience made her a better mom and she wishes that more moms had the opportunity to attend such a supportive place.

## A STORY OF STRUGGLE

A young mother was involved with the Children's Aid Society of SD&G. She had had extensive involvement with child protection services and had had previous children removed from her care. This young mother was looking for different options to help her with parenting her expectant child. She presented St. Mary's maternity home as an option to the workers involved.

This mother attended the home in Ottawa in July 2017 and she was there prenatally for about five days. While she felt supported and accepted by the staff and other mothers in the home, it was very difficult for her to be away from her family. She decided to go back to her mother's

home. She was given every opportunity to return and re-engage at St. Mary's leading up to her child's birth and shortly after, but she decided that she was not willing to be that far away from her family.

Unfortunately, given the significance of the concerns her child was placed outside of her care after the birth. When reflecting on why she did not stay at St. Mary's, she spoke about being disconnected from her friends and family as the ultimate reason.

## **PROJECT FUNDING**

### **START UP FUNDING PROVIDED BY THE SPONSOR**

The Cornwall Compassion Centre will raise funds to:

- Purchase the building to house the home – price still to be negotiated
- Complete the required renovations - estimated at \$80,000 to \$100,000
- Furnishings – estimated at \$73,610

### **ANNUALIZED FUNDING REQUEST**

Our research has shown that maternity homes across the province have tried to survive by fundraising their operating budgets. They just can't make it work and they are forced to close.

The annualized operating budget of our project is projected to be \$473,071.

The annualized per diem revenues and donations are projected to be \$275,888.


The required annualized government funding is \$197,183. (\$30.01 per day, per mother, over and above ODSP or Ontario Works funding)

It is our understanding, by speaking with the director of a home in Montreal, that the Quebec Government funds their maternity homes.

The Cornwall Compassion Centre is suggesting that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services consider funding this project and using it as a model that can be replicated to provide these essential services in other economically challenged communities across Ontario.

We speak of a model and not a pilot project because the funding for pilot projects can expire after a year or two and as you can see by the start up funding investment, the Compassion Centre cannot initiate a project that will not be sustainable without annualized funding.

Respectfully Submitted by,



Richard D'Alessio

President,

Cornwall Compassion Centre