

To: Safety and Facilities Services Committee

From: Adam Grant, Commissioner,  
Safety and Facilities Services Department

Report Number: SF-24-48

Date of Report: November 13, 2024

Date of Meeting: November 18, 2024

Subject: Areas of Safe Haven at Fire Halls for Women and Girls  
Experiencing Violence

Ward: All Wards

File: 03-05

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## **1.0 Purpose**

The purpose of this Report is to provide information on the proposed areas of safe haven at Fire Halls for women and girls experiencing violence.

With the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women observed on November 25, 2024, Oshawa Fire Services is proposing to establish designated areas of refuge within our Fire Halls vestibules. These safe havens would provide women and girls facing violence with a temporary, secure environment where they can seek immediate assistance, including connecting with emergency services and local support agencies.

## **2.0 Recommendation**

That the Safety and Facilities Services Committee recommend to City Council:

That based on report SF-24-48 dated November 13, 2024, concerning Areas of Safe Haven at Fire Halls for Women and Girls Experiencing Violence that staff explore and report back on the requirements and external resources needed for establishing designated safe haven areas at Fire Halls 1, 3, 5, and 6 in Oshawa to support women and girls experiencing violence.

## **3.0 Input From Other Sources**

- UNiTE to End Violence against Women
- Statistics Canada, 2022 data on police-reported family violence and intimate partner violence
- Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability, 2023 Report

## **4.0 Analysis**

Violence against women and girls in Canada remains a significant concern, with recent data indicating a rise in femicide and intimate partner violence. The Canadian Femicide Observatory has highlighted that femicides, defined as the tragic loss of women and girls due to gender-based violence—have increased by 27% from pre-pandemic levels (2019 through 2022). On average, Canada experiences one such loss every two days, with 184 women and girls affected in 2022 alone, underscoring the need for community-wide support.

Police reported intimate partner violence also disproportionately impacts women, who make up nearly 80% of those affected. Younger women, especially those aged 12 to 24, experience the highest rates of such violence; while incidents among adults aged, 25 to 64 have increased by 32% since 2014, alongside a 163% rise in intimate partner assaults within this age group.

Oshawa Fire Services, with its strategically located fire halls, is well situated to provide immediate and secure refuge to those experiencing crisis situations. By designating these vestibules as safe haven locations, Oshawa Fire Services can offer a welcoming and protected environment, acting as a crucial first point of contact for women and girls in need. This initiative would provide not only immediate safety but also provide connections to resources essential for long term stability and well-being.

In alignment with Oshawa Fire Services commitment to community safety and well-being, these safe havens would enhance the three pillars of fire services: education, prevention, and emergency response. Through community outreach, Oshawa Fire Services can raise awareness about these available safe havens and other critical resources. By providing secure refuge, they contribute to prevention efforts, reducing the risk of further harm as locations of immediate availability; they offer a direct connection to support networks and emergency assistance for those in crisis.

Establishing safe haven areas within Oshawa's fire halls underscores the community's commitment to proactive support, ensuring that women and girls in crisis have a reliable, welcoming place to turn. This initiative aims to ease the path from immediate safety to support, linking individuals to trusted support networks and essential emergency care. The success of this initiative will rely on strong partnerships with the Region of Durham and local support networks, whose expertise and resources are invaluable in supporting women and girls facing violence. Working closely with these organizations will ensure that the safe havens operate effectively, providing a well-coordinated response that connects those in crisis to meaningful support.

This initiative aligns closely with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, observed globally on November 25. Established by the United Nations, this day emphasizes the urgent need to address and prevent violence against women and girls, encouraging communities worldwide to take concrete actions toward safety and equality. By establishing safe haven locations within Oshawa's fire halls, Oshawa Fire Services reinforces this global commitment at a local level, creating tangible support for those who may otherwise feel isolated or at risk. These safe havens not only embody the

spirit of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women but also extend its mission year-round, offering a steady presence and a dependable refuge for women and girls in need. This initiative symbolizes Oshawa's dedication to a community where every individual can feel safe, supported, and empowered to seek help without fear.

## **5.0 Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications related to this Report.

## **6.0 Relationship to the Oshawa Strategic Plan**

This report responds to the Oshawa Strategic Plan Priority Area "Care: Safe and Sustainable Environment" with the goal to collaborate and advocate for effective services, programs, and community safety and well-being support.



Stephen Barkwell, Fire Chief,  
Fire Services



Adam Grant, Commissioner,  
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