

Request for Decision

MODY's Mission

MODY serves its residents by providing the highest quality services through effective, efficient, and ethical stewardship of the resources and assets entrusted to us by our citizens.

File	Barb's Bench Awareness Campaign
Submitted to	Council at Committee of the Whole
Submitted by	Mark Blinn, Community and Economic Development Officer
Date	March 06 2025
Recommendation	Move that the Municipality of the District of Yarmouth procure and install 2 Barb's Benches (total cost \$4,000 plus non-refundable HST); one at Cape Forchu in a highly visible area not vulnerable to sea level rise & storm surge AND one in a highly visible location near the Administration Building; that the project be categorized as a "Marquee Council Project" in the Place Making Grants program per Section 5.7 of the Grants Policy G-068-09 in the 2025-26 fiscal year.
Background	<p>The Municipality has been approached by a citizen asking if Council wishes to partake (financially and/or ceremoniously) in the placement of two benches in the Town of Yarmouth to raise awareness of intimate partner violence. The benches will be placed in Frost Park and Seal Lander Park and a dedication ceremony will be held on June 4th, 2025. The funding request to participate in the Frost Park event does not have to be for a specific amount – rather at the discretion of Council.</p> <p>In addition, the request includes another option for MODY to purchase additional benches and to place in the municipality.</p> <p>The cost of the bench is \$1500 and the cement pad and shipping is \$500 for a total of \$2000.</p> <p>Barb's Benches are purple benches featuring a plaque showing emergency numbers to contact for people experience domestic violence and the commemoration of Barabara Baillie and other domestic homicide victims. For a brief history on how this initiative came about, please see attached documents.</p>
Key Assumptions	This initiative could fall under Council's PR budget, Diversity Equity and Inclusion efforts or Place Making (Grants).
Legislative Authority	N/A
Relevant Municipal Policies/By-laws (i.e. MPS)	Grants Policy G-068-09

Request for Decision

Accessibility Plan linkages	The bench could be used by members of society who have difficulty walking for extended periods of time.
Strategic Plan linkages	This initiative falls under the People pillar of the current strategic plan. Specifically, Accessibility, Diversity & Inclusion and Placemaking.
Options available to Council	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Decline all participation. 2. Attend the ceremonies of June 4th and don't commit financially. 3. Attend the ceremonies of June 4th and commit financially making an \$XXX contribution. 4. Buy on or more benches and place in high visibility areas of the municipality 5. A Combination of any option 2, 3 or 4.
CAO Comments	<p>Intimate Partner Violence has a negative impact on communities and is prevalent in Nova Scotia. Recently there have been several reports of death due to intimate partner violence across NS and in Yarmouth County in particular.</p> <p>Public safety is a key municipal service. Pro-active measure around public safety are critical to reducing crime and harm to municipal residents.</p> <p>The Barb's Bench initiative is a tangible reminder that everyone in a community has a role to play in reducing this type of crime.</p> <p>The CAO supports the recommendation of the Community and Economic Development Officer.</p>
Review of CAO	March 7, 2025.
Appendix	Letter to the Municipalities About Barb's Bench

Appendices

Letter to the Municipalities

Feb 4, 2025

To: The Municipality of Yarmouth, The Municipality of Argyle

In the past year we have seen an increase in intimate Partner Violence with recent tragic events affecting our local community. This year marks the 30th Anniversary of another incident and the loss of a friend who was killed in South Ohio, Yarmouth County. As a community advocate, I asked myself what we can do to support the residents of Yarmouth who may be dealing with these issues as well as remember those who have.

“Barb’s bench” is an international initiative in partnership with Silent Witness Nova Scotia. The program provides awareness and support for those experiencing Domestic Violence / Intimate Partner Violence. “Barbs Bench” is a purple bench that is placed in communities, started in Nova Scotia and now with benches located across Canada and as far away as Australia. These benches not only provide a solace, but they also include contact information for help and support with a contact information for our local transition houses.

Attached is more information on the bench and its origin.

I started with the vision of one bench located in Frost Park. With the support of the Town of Yarmouth Councillor Gil Dares and MLA Nick Hilton the idea has grown. With the goal to make this reality as early as this spring. We are planning an event for June 4th, 2025. This event will include local stake holders like Juniper House. This event is designed not only to bring awareness to the benches and their location but to bring a voice for those who may need it.

Although this idea started as one bench, we recognize that everyone from the Municipality of Argyle and the Municipality of Yarmouth are as affected by intimate partner violence and would like to invite both Municipalities to participate in this project. Placing one and possibly two benches within the town of Yarmouth provides a central location for all citizens of the Municipality and town to demonstrate that we stand as region, united.

We are willing to put in the work to make this happen, however there is a cost of approx. \$2000 to procure each bench plus the cost of installation. We are asking the Town of Yarmouth, the Municipality of Yarmouth and the Municipality of Argyle to assist in offsetting this cost. We are asking that you consider covering the cost of two benches between all 3 of you, in full or in part.

In addition to purchasing the benches, there will be an unveiling ceremony. If you are unable to assist in covering the cost of the benches, we would appreciate any in-kind contributions to assist with the project such as decorations or possible food and beverages for the reception that will follow the event.

On June 4th, 2025, we would love to do a joint unveiling and awareness campaign showing the support of all three municipalities. We know this community has suffered and this would be a way of supporting each other during this difficult time.

We appreciate you considering this request and look forward to hearing from you. We hope you will consider this request at your February meetings.

I am also available to answer any questions that you may have in this regard.

Ina Comeau-Collins

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About Barb's Bench



About The Barb's Bench Project

Long Lake Park was a special place for Barbara Baillie. She enjoyed being in nature and walking her dog, often pausing to sit and enjoy the calm of the water.

To some, park benches are simply a place to stop while on a walk, but to Barb they were a refuge from the abuse she endured from her husband and father of her five children. A comfortable bench in a peaceful public place offered physical rest, but also insurance that she would be safe in the line of sight of unknowing passers-by.

On October 19, 1990, Barb's husband of 25 years strangled her to death in their home in Spryfield Nova Scotia. This tragedy shook the lives of her children, family and friends who continue to mourn the loss of their giving and caring daughter, mother, sister and friend.

In 2015, with the 25th anniversary of Barb's death approaching, her daughter and eldest child Denenia set out to start a memorial project to honour Barb.

With the help of the MLA in her community at the time, Brendan Maguire, Denenia was able to start Barb's Bench project – starting with the first purple bench placed in Long Lake Park. Since the projects inception, four benches have been placed throughout Nova Scotia.

Communities are now able to place purple benches featuring a plaque showing emergency numbers to contact for people experience domestic violence and the commemoration of Barabara Baillie and other domestic homicide victims.

