

May 10, 2017

Hope Russell Pottage

► **Mr. Wayne Emmerson**

Chairman & CEO
The Regional Municipality of York
Office of the Chair
17250 Yonge Street
Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1



Dear Chairman Emmerson,

Somewhere, at this very moment, there is a family who has just had their world turned upside down. Their worst fears have come true. Their child has cancer. Unimaginable for most people, it is even scarier for a parent. In an instance, their child's life is flashing before their eyes. You may not be able to imagine the raw emotions, the self-doubts and the uncertainties facing these parents, but I can. In fact, just 18 months ago I was this parent.

At 5:14pm, on Thursday, October 29, 2015 our pediatrician called instructing me to take our middle daughter, Lillian, straight to the emergency room of our local hospital. Several hours and numerous blood draws, tests and examinations later, Lillian and I were loaded onto an ambulance and transported to Sick Kids Hospital. By 9:23am on Friday, October 30th my sweet little girl, with pigtails in her hair, was being admitted because 'blasts' were found in her blood. In layman terms, Lillian had Leukaemia and treatment needed to begin immediately.

While a cancer diagnosis is terrifying for anyone, hearing that your sweet, innocent, very young child has it is scary beyond words. Over the last 18 months, our family has faced many challenges. We have learned so much about the world of cancer, about the health care system, our community, our friends, and ourselves as individuals, parents, a couple, a family, but most significantly, as advocates for childhood cancer and the need to fight for our children.

In May of 2016, Queen's Park officially proclaimed September as Childhood Cancer Awareness Month in Ontario, and the gold ribbon as the official symbol. Last year, many communities and organizations raised an awareness flag, held their own proclamation ceremony, or lit up their buildings in gold such as the Bridal Falls (Niagara Falls), Harmony Square (Brantford), Calgary Tower, the CN Tower, and Parliament Hill (Ottawa) to name but a few. Lillian and I were honoured to stand with the Mayor of Barrie, representing those children in the community who are still fighting cancer.

With that, I am writing to request that York Regional Council make a proclamation recognizing September as Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, in conjunction with a flag-raising ceremony. Acknowledging September as Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, and raising a flag with the gold ribbon is a means of demonstrating your support for these amazing little warriors and their families and acknowledging that they are not alone in their fights to beat cancer. My family would be honoured to join you in a flag-raising ceremony in September. Staff from Southlake's Pediatric Oncology Clinic and other childhood cancer families from across York Region would also be happy to join you.

Far too many children and families are faced with the reality of childhood cancer. These children and their families are in our neighbourhoods, schools and workplaces. What our experience has taught us is that no child fights alone. Families, neighbours, classmates and work colleagues all rally to support these amazing children and their families. Community support through awareness campaigns have a huge impact on our children and truly means the world to them. When Lillian sees someone wearing a gold ribbon, she will excitedly exclaim "Look mama, they know a superhero just like me who is kicking cancers butt!". A simple gold ribbon to some, they are a symbol of strength and solidarity for our families, letting us know that we are not alone in our battles to beat, and one day end childhood cancer.

Sadly, our story is not unique. Our family will continue to support, raise awareness and advocate for those children and their families that are faced with a childhood cancer diagnosis. I thank you for your time and consideration of this request. Should you require further information, or wish to arrange to meet in person, I can be reached at hope.russell@gmail.com.

Sincerely,



Hope Russell Pottage
<https://www.facebook.com/love4lillian/>
#endkidscancer