

April 25, 2019

Simcoe Muskoka Opioid Strategy
c/o Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit
15 Sperling Dr.
Barrie, ON L4M 6K9

Re: Proposed Supervised Consumption Site for Barrie, ON

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to you in my role as President of Georgian College serving over 12,000 postsecondary students at seven campuses throughout central Ontario.

Working with a wide and diverse range of students from all walks of life, from over 62 countries and spanning in age from 17 years right through to seniors, we see first-hand the unfortunate outcomes of crisis, mental health and addiction. As an educator, I strongly believe that as society changes we must adapt and respond to the growing number of individuals who struggle personally.

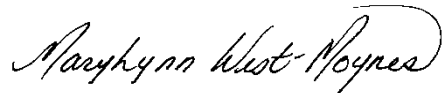
There is a compelling case that a supervised consumption site is needed in Barrie, Ontario.

Awareness about the high rate of opioid-related overdoses and deaths in Simcoe Muskoka and particularly in Barrie has grown. No doubt this is impacting the health of our community. There were 81 opioid-related deaths in Simcoe Muskoka in 2017, with 36 of those deaths in Barrie. The rate of opioid related deaths in Barrie more than tripled between 2013 and 2017. In 2017, Barrie ranked third among large municipalities in Ontario for opioid overdose emergency department visit rates. There were over 200 emergency department visits for opioid poisonings among residents of the City of Barrie in 2017 – a rate more than double that of the province. The central north area of Barrie (which includes downtown) had 10 times the rate of opioid overdose ED visits in 2017 than the provincial average, and four times the overall Barrie average. We acknowledge that Barrie is in a crisis when it comes to opioid overdoses and opioid related deaths.

In reading the above paragraph, I am moved to say “one death-- is one too many”. Statistics can de-personalize an issue. We should not forget that these are sons, daughters, colleagues and friends. Even students attending a postsecondary institution, full of promise at one time. Individuals who, with the right support, can find their back to a mainstream life.

Our region is working collaboratively to promote prevention, increase access to treatment and educate the community on ways we can all reduce the risk to individuals and maintain a safe environment. Let's make sure we are doing everything we can to help those in our community who are struggling with drug addiction.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "MaryLynn West-Moynes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large loop at the end of the last name.

MaryLynn West-Moynes
President and CEO

c: Jeff Lehman, Mayor, City of Barrie