

Staff Report



To	General Committee
Subject	2025 Barrie Airshow
Date	October 29, 2025
Ward	All
From	K. Datema, Director of Recreation and Culture Services S. Schlichter, Director of Economic and Creative Development
Executive Member Approval	J. Schmidt, General Manager of Community and Corporate Services B. Araniyasundaran, General Manager of Infrastructure and Growth Management
CAO Approval	M. Prowse, Chief Administrative Officer
Staff Report #	REC005-25

Recommendation(s):

1. That Staff Report REC005-25 regarding an update on the impact of the 2025 Barrie Airshow be received as information.
 2. That an additional \$30,000 be allocated from the Tourism Reserve (MAT) to increase the Barrie Airshow funding to \$140,000, with a matching \$140,000 in sponsorship revenue for a total budget of \$280,000.
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Executive Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide members of Council with an update concerning the impact of the 2025 Barrie Airshow and to request additional funds to be allocated from the Tourism Reserve for the 2026 Airshow.

A City of Barrie event, the Barrie Airshow is supported by Canadian Forces Base Borden, the County of Simcoe, Lake Simcoe Regional Airport, and the Downtown Barrie BIA. The presenting sponsor for this year's event was Pratt Homes. The Barrie Airshow returned on June 7 and 8, 2025. The weekend kicked off on Friday, June 6 at Meridian Place with a meet-and-greet with pilots and performers, a drone show over Kempenfelt Bay, and a free screening of *Top Gun*.

Key Findings:

Tourism Barrie utilized Environics Analytics Mobilescapes data technology to determine the number of unique attendees, both tourists and residents, at the 2025 Barrie Airshow.

Contributing to a total of 160,669 visits over Friday, Saturday and Sunday, 90,581 unique visitors enjoyed the event. The International Council of Air Shows uses the following framework when categorizing airshows based on attendance numbers:

- Small: less than 15,000 spectators
- Medium: 15,000 – 35,000 spectators
- Large: more than 35,000 spectators

62,945 (69.5%) of the 2025 Barrie Airshow's unique visitors were from within a 40km radius and 27,636 (30.5%) were from outside a 40km radius, designating them an official "tourist." Given the proportion of visitors that were classified as tourists exceed 30% of total audience, the 2025 Barrie Airshow would meet the threshold to be considered a tourist event.

Tourism Barrie input this data into Destinations International's Event Impact Calculator to ascertain the economic impact. Destinations International's Event Impact Calculator is the leading economic impact calculator software in North America, utilized by over 300 destination organizations. Due to its extensive use and adoption, it provides industry-wide standards and credible analysis for events.

The Direct Economic Impact (the sum of visitors' impact on an event) is calculated to be \$3,424,014 and the Total Economic Impact (the sum including indirect, B2B supply chain, and induced income spend in the local economy) totaled \$5,676,181. Beyond the event itself, the Barrie Airshow brings several other benefits to the community including a deep sense of civic pride among Barrie residents and the opportunity to showcase the city as an attractive destination for visitors.

Additionally, the 2025 Barrie Airshow included the inaugural Aviation Career & Education Fair held at General John Hayter Southshore Community Centre. With support from the County of Simcoe's Economic Development team, this event welcomed participants including Georgian College, Canadian Forces Recruiting Group Outreach Team, Smart Aviation Maintenance Services, and a VR cockpit experience. Approximately 50 to 100 high school students, post-secondary students and general members of the public attended the event.

The City's Marketing & Communications Department developed and executed a comprehensive communications plan for the 2025 Barrie Airshow. Marketing efforts were supported by the efforts of the City's partners, including the Downtown Barrie BIA and Tourism Barrie. Specifically, Tourism Barrie supported the event via Google Search ad campaigns, a social media ad campaign, Metrolinx (GO Transit) digital ads and blog, as well as promotion of the event to the Barrie Bash softball tournament attendees.

Please see Appendix A "2025 Barrie Airshow Impact Report" for marketing performance metrics.

Financial Implications:

The 2025 Airshow budget of \$220,000 is based on a \$110,000 allocation from the Tourism Reserve (MAT) and \$110,000 sponsorship and special event revenue. The 2025 Airshow ultimately achieved \$145,409 in sponsorship and special event revenue and this includes \$14,000 from the Experience Ontario grant funding. Combined with the allocation from the Tourism Reserve (MAT) this equated to total funding in the amount of \$255,409. In addition to cash sponsorship, the 2025 Barrie Airshow received in-kind support from 19 community and event partners, an increase of 35.7% from 2024.

The 2025 Barrie Airshow received a total of \$118,000 of cash sponsorship alone, a 7.7% increase from 2024. Sponsorship recruitment efforts were supported by Canadian Forces School of Aerospace Technology & Engineering Honorary Colonel, and Chair of the Barrie Airshow Committee, Wayne Hay. Through sponsorship revenue, the Barrie Airshow was able to donate \$1,180 to Living Green Barrie resulting in a minimum of 27 native trees being planted locally this fall.

Total expenses equated to \$268,750 resulting in a deficit of \$13,341. Key cost drivers include specialized insurance cost increases as well as increased costs for show requirements such as aircraft fuel and performer accommodation.

As a result, staff are requesting that the 2026 Airshow budget be increased to \$280,000 and structured as \$140,000 from the Tourism Reserve (MAT) and \$140,000 matching revenue from sponsorship and special event revenues. This will provide for the cost increases realized in 2025 and allow for performer diversification for a refreshed 2026 run of show that will attract additional tourism visits and overall impact.

Alternatives:

The following alternatives are available for consideration by General Committee:

Alternative #1 – General Committee could decline the requested budget increase for the 2026 Airshow. This alternative is not recommended as it does not account for inherent cost increases realized in 2025.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

Affordable Place to Live		
Community Safety		
Thriving Community	X	Support a vibrant downtown through activations.
Infrastructure Investments		
Responsible Governance		

Additional Background Information and Analysis:

Led by staff in the Recreation & Culture Services Department, with support from the Economic and Creative Development Department as well as support from the Barrie Airshow Committee.

The event took place on the weekend of June 6-8 with the following air display performers:

- CF-18 Tactical Demonstration Team
- CAF SkyHawks Parachute Team
- CH-146 Griffon Helicopter Demonstration from the 400 Tactical Helicopter Squadron
- Northern Stars Aeroteam
- Showcat & Wing Walking Demonstration with Mike & Sam Tryggvason
- Jet Aircraft Museum's T-33 Red Knight
- Solo aerobatic pilot Trevor Rafferty
- Canadian Harvard Aircraft Association
- Edenvale Classic Aircraft Foundation

The CF Snowbirds were required to extend their training schedule and were unable to participate in their first two scheduled shows, including the 2025 Barrie Airshow.

The safety and security of the Barrie Airshow is critical to its success. Support and partnership with emergency services including Barrie Police Service, Barrie Fire & Emergency Service, Simcoe County Paramedic Service, CFB Borden, and York Regional Police were key to this essential component.

Taking place in Barrie over the 2025 Barrie Airshow weekend was the Georgian College Auto Show which welcomed 15,000 attendees. Using Destinations International's Economic Impact Calculator, Tourism Barrie estimates that the economic impact of this event is approximately \$674,400.

Also occurring in Barrie that weekend was the Barrie Bash softball tournament which welcomed 52 teams and their families. The estimated economic impact of this event is \$1,875,281.

Together with the Barrie Airshow, the Georgian College Auto Show, and the Barrie Bash softball tournament, the total estimated economic impact of the June 6-8 weekend was \$8,225,862.

The average hotel occupancy rate from Friday, June 6 to Sunday, June 8 was 87%.

2026 Barrie Airshow:

City staff have submitted an application to host an airshow in 2026 along with an application for military performers. The tentative date for the 2026 Barrie Airshow is June 12-14, pending Council approval.

There is interest in expanding the Aviation Career and Education Fair in 2026 with more time to recruit employers and aviation organizations as well as more time to market the event to local school boards and the general public.

Consultation and Engagement:

There was no public consultation required in relation to this staff report.

Environmental and Climate Change Impact Matters:

There are no environmental and/or climate change impact matters related to the recommendation.

Appendix:

Appendix A – 2025 Barrie Airshow Impact Report

Report Author:

Kristen Eatch, Tourism Coordinator, Economic and Creative Development

Kevin Datema, Director, Recreation and Culture Services

File #:

Not Applicable

Pending #:

Not Applicable