



MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday, October 16, 2025

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

City reinvests in family reunification program

(Barrie, ON) – The City of Barrie has once again provided funding to both the Elizabeth Fry Society and John Howard Society to assist with their family reunification programs. Under the Emergency Order, the City is providing \$5,000 to each organization.

In 2023, the City provided \$10,000 to each organization, and over the course of two years, John Howard Society and Elizabeth Fry Society have used the funding to assist nearly 150 individuals with transportation services to reconnect individuals with family, supports, and other resources. This additional funding of \$5,000 is expected to sustain the program for another year. At that time, the City will evaluate the program and consider further funding.

The original funding was approved by Council on May 17, 2023, to address chronic homelessness and enhance public safety in Barrie. Council approved funding for a family reunification fund to pay for the transportation costs and to help reunite individuals with families or support groups.

“Every person deserves the chance to reconnect with family and find stability,” said Mayor Alex Nuttall. “By continuing to invest in programs like this, we’re helping people take meaningful steps toward rebuilding their lives and strengthening our community.”

“The John Howard Society of Simcoe & Muskoka is deeply grateful to the City of Barrie for their generous \$5,000 Family Reunification Fund contribution,” said Hayley Murdoch-Fyke, Executive Director, John Howard Society of Simcoe Muskoka. “This fund plays a vital role in helping individuals rebuild their lives by reconnecting with family and support networks after incarceration. Since its launch in 2023, the fund has supported 88 individuals in safely relocating to communities where they can access stability, belonging, and hope. Family connection is one of the strongest protective factors against reoffending. The City of Barrie’s continued support allows us to remove financial barriers that often prevent people from taking those crucial steps toward healing and reintegration.”

“We are so grateful to the City of Barrie for renewing their support of the Reunification Funds,” said Meaghan Chambers, Executive Director, Elizabeth Fry Society Simcoe Muskoka. “Through the last round of funding, we were able to help 61 individuals return to home communities where they had family or established support systems. This renewed investment ensures we can continue to remove barriers, promote stability, and reconnect people with the networks that help them thrive.”

On September 9, Mayor Alex Nuttall declared a State of Emergency in Barrie to address growing number of encampments across the city. Since that time, the City of Barrie, in collaboration with the County of Simcoe, has taken coordinated action to address several encampment sites throughout the city. These efforts have focused on providing individuals with alternate shelter and supports, while ensuring public safety and restoring the impacted areas.

According to data from the County of Simcoe’s Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS), as of October 6, 2025 there was 619 people experiencing homelessness in Barrie.



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