

November 9, 2020

Mayor Jeff Lehman
City Hall
70 Collier St.
Barrie, ON L4M 5R5

Re: Homelessness and the need for a COVID-19 Response Equity Action Plan

Dear Mayor Lehman,

We, the Simcoe County Alliance to End Homelessness (SCATEH), are grateful for the response to COVID-19 in Simcoe County. With support from all 4 levels of government, we were able to adopt a motel model of shelter for those experiencing homelessness in our communities - one of the earlier adopters of what became a best practice across the country. Through our collaborative efforts, there has not been a single case of COVID-19 in our shelter system county-wide.

However, we are now in a critical window. With life-threatening temperatures on the way, we have a matter of weeks, if not days, to respond to an unmet need heightened by this pandemic: our Barrie shelter capacity is full every night, and through our outreach programs, member agencies are serving an additional 40-50 individuals who remain unsheltered but have indicated a desire to come into housing for the winter. These individuals are at greater risk and less able to practice COVID-19 control measures. As shared by the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) on October 26th, our region has experienced an additional 281 cases since Thanksgiving weekend, and COVID-19 cases continue on an incline as of October 27th.

The staff at the County of Simcoe have been a significant support to the regional shelters throughout the duration of the pandemic in addressing a COVID-19 response for those experiencing homelessness in our communities and we appreciate their dedication to this work thus far. While the County of Simcoe is committed to funding the motel model of shelter for as long as funds are available to do so, there are elements of a COVID-19 Response Equity Action Plan that fall to our cities and towns. We submit these asks for Council's consideration and support:

1. Taking into account the increased impacts of the pandemic on a number of marginalized communities, including those experiencing homelessness, that Barrie Council commits to an equity lens for Barrie's COVID-19 recovery planning by seeking opportunities to expedite housing for individuals.
2. If meaningful housing options cannot be provided, to continue to direct by-law enforcement officers to be lenient and be given more discretion in the enforcement of by-laws that would



infringe upon the human rights of a person experiencing homelessness who has found temporary shelter on city property, including encampments.


3. To call on the Government of Canada, the Government of Ontario, and the County of Simcoe to develop a COVID-19 Response Equity Action Plan.
4. To consult with the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit and SCATEH Barrie member agencies and others working with marginalized populations to develop a Barrie COVID-19 Response Equity Action Plan that consolidates existing advice, strategies, and initiatives and includes for each recommendation or action the status, timeline, and lead agency, and requests of other governments. This could include investments and/or support for rapid affordable housing infrastructure purchases.
5. To call on the Government of Ontario to suspend residential evictions throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Everyone deserves a home, and when that is the case, our entire city benefits. The many agencies that make up SCATEH are uniquely positioned to respond to those experiencing homelessness in our communities, but we need increased support from Council in your roles as liaison to other levels of government, in infrastructure development, and by-law enforcement.

Thank you,



Sara Peddle
Chair, SCATEH



Jennifer van Gennip
Chair, SCATEH Barrie Chapter

