

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Barrie Fire, Police to be equipped with life-saving naloxone kits**

(Barrie, ON) Starting in February, all front-line Barrie Fire and Emergency Service (BFES) personnel and Barrie Police officers will begin being equipped with the life-saving, anti-opioid drug naloxone. This decision comes as a response to the growing number of opioid overdoses happening both across Canada and in Simcoe County. Barrie Fire and Emergency Service (BFES) will be the first fire department in Ontario to administer this medication, which is fully supported by BFES Medical Director, Dr. Ian Young.

"Our primary concern is always the safety and well-being of those involved in any emergency we respond to," says Barrie Fire Chief Bill Boyes. "BFES is already attending these calls so there will be no increase in medical responses as a result of our ability to administer naloxone. It will allow us to provide a life-saving intervention in a timely manner."

An overdose of opioid drugs, such as fentanyl, morphine, heroin, methadone or oxycodone, can cause a person's breathing to slow or stop. Naloxone can reverse negative opioid effects so the person can breathe normally and potentially regain consciousness. A healthy person given a dose of naloxone would not notice any negative side effects. Naloxone works in 1 to 3 minutes, lasts 30 to 90 minutes and can neither be abused nor cause overdose.

Barrie Police Chief Kimberley Greenwood believes that "through collaborative efforts between the Barrie Police Service and Barrie Fire and Emergency Services, we will be able to provide enhanced health and safety to our community and personnel in response to fentanyl induced emergencies."

Barrie firefighters and police officers are completing special training, which includes an overview of naloxone and its function, plus practical instruction on the medication delivery. In the future this training will become part of each organization's annual medical training program.

**Quick Facts**

- In 2014, one of every eight deaths in Ontario (ages 25 to 34) was related to opioids according to a report released by the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences (ICES) & Ontario Drug Policy Research Network (ODPRN).
- In 2014, in Simcoe County alone, the coroner reported 23 deaths from opioids, 11 of those in Barrie.
- Statistics in Simcoe Muskoka:
  - 29 per cent greater opioid death experience relative to the rest of Ontario
  - 11 per cent of Grade 7 to 12 students have tried opioids recreationally at least once
  - 109 deaths from opioid use in Simcoe Muskoka from 2000-2009
  - In 2012, there were 31 overdose deaths of opioids in the region
- In June 2016, the National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities' (NAPRA) reclassified naloxone as a Schedule II drug when used in an emergency opioid overdose situation. This change was effective immediately in Ontario and people at risk of an overdose (or their concerned family members or peers) do not need a prescription and do not pay anything when receiving naloxone.
- Many pharmacies in Barrie provide naloxone free of charge and without a prescription to eligible residents.
- A number of fire services in Western Canada carry naloxone on their apparatus including Vancouver, Surrey, Richmond, Coquitlam and Nanaimo. Barrie Fire and Emergency Service will be the first department in Ontario to administer this medication.

***For more information contact:***

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