

Open Letter to Barrie City Council

Re: Warming Centres and Homelessness

November 19, 2024

Dear Honorable Mayor and Barrie City Council,

We are writing to ask you **urgently** for **more access to safe warming areas for the homeless** population in Barrie as soon as possible.

As the temperature drops, the number of people on the streets who at risk of illness, including hypothermia and other ailments from harsh weather increases. There are currently not enough shelter beds to house the homeless population in Barrie. This results in a significant number of preventable emergency department visits simply for people seeking shelter. Our emergency department is already crowded and we are not able to provide beds to those who are shelter seeking. We therefore would ask you to help us encourage people to seek shelter in the most appropriate venue by opening warming centres now.

Historically, warming shelters have opened only on the coldest days. This is not adequate given the lack of bed space in shelters, and the number of patients that suffer from hypothermia or other cold-related health issues at less extreme temperatures. Our city is growing and we need 24/7 access to warming spaces to support the rising number of homeless people. We are already seeing an increase in patients seeking care for issues of shelter. The time to act is now!

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

RVH Emergency Department Physicians