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THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF BARRIE

Mayor's Office

The Honourable Premier Doug Ford  
Premier of Ontario  
Legislative Building, Queen's Park  
Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1A1

September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Dear Premier Ford,

On behalf of the City of Barrie, I am writing with an update on the Declaration of Emergency in our City due to the growing number of homeless encampments.

Like many municipalities across Ontario, we have been experiencing a rise in homelessness since the COVID-19 pandemic. While we understand homelessness is a complex issue, these encampments have resulted in health and safety issues for our community, a negative impact on the environment and damage to municipal property. With more than 21 separate encampments throughout our City with an estimated 650 homeless individuals, a majority are not from Barrie or Simcoe County, this issue has reached a breaking point. In the last two months alone, we have had:

- A double homicide in an encampment
- E. coli levels reaching almost five times the failure concentration in our streams leading down from the encampment to our beaches
- A major increase in tents along city streets
- Multiple fires being set
- A tent found with Drug Money, Drugs, multiple cross bows and a pistol
- Assaults
- Rampant drug use
- Overdoses

- Theft
- Exposure to needles by citizens cleaning the downtown
- Defecation in doorways as well as human waste in the fountain at City Hall, resulting in its closure
- Public indecency

Municipalities like ours have been on the front lines of this crisis but in the City of Barrie the County of Simcoe is responsible for our social service portfolio, not us. As a result, we have not been able to manage or respond adequately to this emergency. Until now.

With this Declaration of Emergency, we will be commencing with the following:

- Immediately test all waterways near or abutting encampments to understand how many other waterways are being contaminated with human feces, resulting in incredibly high e-coli readings.
- Remove encampments beginning with those that are closest to our most critical infrastructure and public spaces.
- Create a position to oversee the implementation of social services and coordination of services between the various government agencies responsible to remove any and all silos between administrations.
- Give our City the ability to retain additional staff and contracted services as required.
- Request the County of Simcoe to immediately open access to additional shelter throughout the County to allow for space to be available for the people living in these tents.
- Provide Barrie staff with the ability to retain space, if the County of Simcoe does not have any accessible.
- Provide Barrie staff with the ability to explore infrastructure opportunities with the County of Simcoe or individually, if required.
- Request the Province of Ontario provide immediate funding to support this initiative.
- Prior to completion of this order, have staff prepare updates to existing by-laws, procedures and policies as required for Council's consideration to reflect our encampment response measures.
- Commission a report to clearly delineate how we got here and make recommendations of next steps to end this emergency in Barrie.

We cannot face this crisis alone. The City of Barrie is requesting the Government of Ontario strengthen the existing system of mandatory community-based and residential mental health care and to expand service to treat those who have severe and debilitating addictions.

Due to the extreme challenges our community is facing I am asking you to come visit our city, tour the affected areas, and meet with me and my team. I look forward to working closely with you and the Government to address this crisis in Barrie. I am happy to accommodate your schedule to have this coordinated as soon as possible. Please feel free to contact my office at [officeofthemayor@barrie.ca](mailto:officeofthemayor@barrie.ca) or 705-792-7900.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Nuttall', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Mayor Alex Nuttall

City of Barrie

c.c. MPP Andrea Khanjin

MPP Doug Downey

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Minister Rob Flack

Minister of Health, Minister Syliva Jones

Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, Minister Vijay Thanigasalam