



MEDIA RELEASE

November 09, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

City, County, Police, RVH, and Health Unit leaders issue joint letter under the Barrie Health Accord in full support of the Barrie SCS/CTS application

The Barrie Health Accord's senior leadership have issued an urgent letter to all levels of government urging speedy approval of the SCS/CTS application at 11 Innisfil Street (80 Bradford Street) in the city of Barrie. The leaders signing the letter are City of Barrie Mayor Jeff Lehman, County Warden George Cornell, RVH President and CEO Janice Skot, Barrie Police Chief Kimberley Greenwood, and Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Charles Gardner.

As the opioid crisis escalates, the signatories of the Accord are aware that Barrie has been disproportionately impacted by a significant raise in opioid related overdoses and deaths. The numbers paint a grim picture especially within the context of the COVID 19 pandemic – there were 58 opioid deaths in Barrie in 2020, more than double the 26 from 2019, and 85% higher than the average from 2017-2019. The crude opioid mortality rate for Barrie in 2020 was 38 deaths per 100,000 population, which was the third highest among all municipalities in Ontario with populations over 100,000 residents.

"As leaders in our community, we are joining forces to call on the Province of Ontario and Government of Canada to immediately approve the SCS/CTS application for Barrie," said Mayor Jeff Lehman. "This facility is needed immediately to prevent deaths due to poisoned drugs and help get people into treatment."

The Barrie Health Accord is committed to working with all stakeholders to focus on the long-term health of our community, a commitment that was solidified in October 2020 with all five organizations signing the 10-year agreement. In addition to supporting the application for an SCS/CTS, the Accord is also fully supporting the existing regional effort of the Simcoe Muskoka Opioid Strategy (SMOS) and its pillar activities.

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For more information, please contact:

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November 4, 2021

The Honorable Jean-Yves Duclos
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The Honorable Carolyn Bennett
Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, Associate Minister of Health
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The Honorable Christine Elliott,
Minister of Health, Deputy Premier
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Dear Minister Duclos, Minister Bennett and Minister Elliott,

Re: Strong support for the Supervised Consumption Site (SCS) / Consumption and Treatment Services (CTS) site applications for the proposed location of 11 Innisfil Street (80 Bradford Street, Unit 940) in Barrie, Ontario

As leaders in our community, we write to you today with regards to the devastating opioid crisis affecting the City of Barrie, and together, to ask urgently for your approval of a Supervised Consumption Site in Barrie.

In October 2020, the Barrie Health Accord was signed by senior leadership from the following organizations: the City of Barrie, the County of Simcoe, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, the Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre and the Barrie Police Service. The Barrie Health Accord is focused on the long-term health and wellbeing of the community, through collaborative efforts, to address the root causes of health disparities that negatively impact the overall health and wellbeing of residents of the municipality.

The signatories of this Accord are very aware that the City of Barrie has been disproportionately impacted by a significant rise in opioid related overdoses and deaths as a result of what is believed to be a poorer quality of substances being sold on the street level, compounded by individuals using more substances in response to stress, and the risk of using alone due to COVID-19 preventative measures. There were 58 opioid deaths in Barrie in 2020, more than double the 26 from 2019, and 85% higher than the average from 2017-2019. The crude opioid mortality rate for Barrie in 2020 was 38 deaths per 100,000 population, which was the third highest among all municipalities in Ontario with populations over 100,000 residents. In 2020, Barrie's crude rate for opioid overdose emergency department visits was 181.2 per 100,000 population, which is more than double the provincial crude rate of 85.0 per 100,000 population.

We are deeply saddened and frustrated by this worsening crisis. We believe that this issue is of the utmost importance for the wellbeing of our residents, and that every effective tool needs to be implemented as soon as possible.

We believe that an SCS/CTS in Barrie at the proposed location of 11 Innisfil St (80 Bradford Street, Unit 940) is the next pressing need in responding to this crisis. It will benefit the City of Barrie and people who use drugs by preventing overdoses, providing enhanced pathways to the available community health, treatment, and social services for individuals in need, reducing drug use in public spaces within the downtown core, reducing the risks of contracting HIV and Hepatitis C through shared needles and equipment, and through harm reduction education and supports for the clients accessing the services of the site.

In addition to strongly supporting the applications for an SCS/CTS in Barrie, our membership recognizes and participates in the regional efforts of the Simcoe Muskoka Opioid Strategy (SMOS) pillar activities with ongoing commitment to:

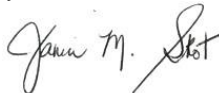
- Raise awareness of the root causes of substance use and addiction through education on neuroscience and toxic stress.
- Support prevention through early mental health intervention, education and awareness.
- Promote anti-stigma messaging and education to address stigma associated with substance use and addiction and the barrier it presents to seeking support.
- Address large-scale distribution of the illicit drug supply through collaborative enforcement measures.
- Increase access to addiction and treatment services within the community.
- Advocate for regional access and expansion of needle exchange and naloxone programs and services.

An SCS/CTS is an effective harm reduction strategy that can help provide a compassionate community response to the severe and urgent opioid crisis in Barrie. In light of this, we ask that you promptly review and approve the SCS/CTS application for Barrie, so that our community can begin to benefit from the services it will provide.

Sincerely,



City of Barrie
Mayor Jeff Lehman



Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre
Janice Skot, Chief Executive Officer



County of Simcoe
Warden George Cornell



Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit
Dr. Charles Gardner, Medical Officer of Health and Chief Executive Officer



Barrie Police Service
Chief Kimberley Greenwood

cc: Doug Shipley, MP, Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte
John Brassard, MP, Barrie–Innisfil
Hon. Doug Downey, Attorney General, MPP, Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte
Andrea Khanjin, MPP, Barrie–Springwater
Exemptions (Health Canada)
Addiction and Substances (Ministry of Health)