



MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday, September 9, 2025

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mayor Nuttall declares State of Emergency to address encampments

(Barrie, ON) – This morning, Mayor Alex Nuttall declared a State of Emergency to address encampments across the City as the number and size continues to grow and cause significant risk and harm.

“Barrie residents have had enough,” said Mayor Alex Nuttall. “Since day one I have been clear that encampments are not acceptable in the City of Barrie. We are here to help those who want help and there are resources available today. If you refuse that help you cannot stay in these encampments. Our city will not allow lawlessness to take over our community. Barrie will protect its residents, its neighborhoods and its public spaces. It is time to take responsibility, accept the help that is there or move on.”

See Declaration of Emergency below.

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THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF
BARRIE
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"Committed to Service Excellence"

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DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY

I, **Alexander Nuttall**, MAYOR of the CITY OF BARRIE

Acknowledge that homelessness, lawlessness, mental health and drug use are complex issues in the City of Barrie that have a measurable, significant and detrimental impact on the community, including the loss of life, serious harm to people, health and safety risk, substantial damage to municipal property and infrastructure; and

Also acknowledge the impacts of encampments in the community including significant health and safety, environmental impacts, serious harm to individuals (i.e. homicide), and substantial damage to municipal lands, infrastructure (watercourses and servicing) and surrounding private property through theft and damage.

Also acknowledge that community has been dealing with:

- Double homicide
- E.coli level five times the fail rate
- Arson
- Encampments
- Overdoses
- Theft
- Trespassing on property
- Public indecency
- Open public drug use
- Invasion of parks
- Discarding of needles and drug paraphernalia
- Doorway defecation
- Assaults

As a result of this, I do hereby declare a State of Local Emergency in accordance with the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act RSO 1990, c. e. 9 s.4 (1)* to address encampments across the City as the number and size continues to grow and cause significant risk and harm.

for an Emergency Area or part thereof described as: (geographic boundary)

All property under the custody, control and care of The Corporation of the City of Barrie including but not limited to parks, boulevards, sidewalks, pedestrian ways, highways, watercourses and trail systems, parking lots, wellheads, etc.

Under s. 4 (1) of the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act RSO 1990*, I provide the following orders:

1. City staff enact its encampment protocol and amend it as required for the purposes of executing this emergency order or amendment to it. City staff are to first address sites of higher priority that pose the most risk to health and safety in the community, and secondly where encampments pose a threat to cause the most significant damage to critical city infrastructure (e.g. water, environmental), then continue to evaluate and determine action to be taken on sites that pose less risk.
2. City staff be given authority to retain staff, consultants or contractors for the purposes of social service oversight and encampment response, to ensure that appropriate services (including shelter space) are being provided to allow for the clean up of encampment sites.
3. A Task Force be created to be chaired by the Chief Administrative Officer or their designate for the coordination and enhancement of response to encampments, illegal drug use and social service.
4. The County of Simcoe be requested to open access to additional shelter spaces and provision of services for the transition of unsheltered individuals (including the repatriation of individuals to their home communities) and review current provision of services for the City of Barrie to address the increasing number of encampments in the City of Barrie by ensuring that sufficient social housing and supports are being provided to offer and assist individuals at these sites.
5. City staff explore infrastructure opportunities either individually or together with the County of Simcoe to expand services and shelter space for the transition of individuals to safer, more humane and legal accommodations in a more expeditious manner, understanding the importance of removal of these individuals from City property, throughout Simcoe County
6. A request from the City of Barrie to the Province of Ontario to review the provision of social services including shelter options and funding specifically for the City of Barrie to allow for a more immediate response for the removal of encampments to ensure that there are opportunities available for individuals to access social services (including shelter).
7. Prior to the emergency being declared completed, City staff prepare updates to existing by-laws, procedures and policies as required for Council's consideration to ensure that they reflect current process and practices related to encampment response including any new initiatives undertaken because of this declaration.

Background and Supporting Information

On December 3 2018, as MP for Barrie-Springwater-Oro-Medonte I called an emergency debate in the House of Commons regarding the opioid crisis in Canada, calling for urgent need to eliminate barriers to rehabilitation services and advocated for a non-partisan approach to addressing the crisis.

On March 4 2019 as MP for Barrie – Springwater – Oro Medonte, I did a deputation at Barrie City Council where:

- I asked for City Council to create a Task Force to address the opioid crisis in Barrie;
- I supported City Council to call a Local Emergency order on the opioid crisis; and
- I presented a legal opinion from Jim McIntosh, Barriston Law to claim that the past mayor could call a state of emergency related the opioid crisis.

The number of individuals living unhoused and/or in encampments has significantly increased in the City of Barrie since the COVID-19 pandemic. Not all these individuals are originally from the City of Barrie; several individuals have come from other municipalities to Barrie streets and/or encampment locations. An order to permit camping at Milligan's Pond was provided by the previous Mayor, this order has since expired since the COVID-19 pandemic emergency has ended.

On May 17, 2023, Barrie City Council adopted motion 23-A-052 options to address chronic homelessness in the City of Barrie. As part of this motion, there were several actions that were identified including funding, working with our partners at the County of Simcoe and the Province of Ontario, applying for federal and provincial funding when available, provision of municipal dollars for services such as a family re-unification fund, shuttle service. Small strides were made because of this motion, but the number of homeless individuals and encampments in Barrie continued to increase, posing significant threat to the health and safety to the community at large and significant damage to critical municipal infrastructure and lands.

Over the course of the past few years, City staff, as per adopted protocols, notify the County, Barrie Police Service and support agencies of complaints/concerns received by the City regarding unsheltered individuals or large encampments. In these notifications, City staff request that the County or their outreach service providers attend these locations to offer services and shelter as they are available.

Responses received by City staff confirming whether services were offered or accepted by the individuals are limited in detail thus making it difficult for the City to proceed with any next steps to ensure alignment with Superior Court decisions to trespass individuals from City property. City enforcement services staff attend sites and provide warnings to individuals related to debris, fires and open drinking all prohibited in City parks, with notice being provided to these individuals advising of what is permitted. The Use of City Property By-law does not fully address the lighting of fires, drinking or erection of tents/sunshades on municipal property outside of parks.

In the Fall of 2024, due to rehabilitation work being required at Berczy Park and the requirement to close it, the City together with the County of Simcoe and Barrie Police removed individuals from the park. 75% of these individuals remain in services or have found housing options.

In January 2025, the County of Simcoe was the recipient of funding through the Encampment Response Initiative. The County provided a portion of the funding to the City of Barrie, together with the Towns of Midland, Collingwood and City of Orillia for enforcement and clean-up of encampment sites. The deadline for this funding was March 31, 2025, and due to the weather, the funding could not be fully utilized and remaining funding had to be returned to the County then in turn to the Province. An extension to this deadline was requested but was not granted.

On and around July 30, 2025, a heinous crime was committed at Anne and Victoria Streets (Dyment's Creek), an area where several individuals had been living. A police investigation was undertaken and once concluded, the site was returned to the City from Barrie Police Services. The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) issued an order to clean up the site due to the amount of hazardous waste and serious harm it could cause to the community. Based on the order the City worked with the County on Health and Safety issues (for either those living unhoused or members of the public) to address as its highest priority and was able to provide services and shelter. The cleanup of these lands is estimated to cost several million dollars and take a number of months to rehabilitate. The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit was also notified, but did not attend the site

At the Executive Committee Meeting of August 13, 2025. A status update memo was provided by the CAO concerning the clean-up activities at Dyment's Creek location. Committee members and members of Council who were present at the meeting raised concerns about the impact of encampments in the community, associated risk to individuals and the costs of clean-up especially to those areas where city infrastructure is significantly impacted and the immediate need to address such areas.



Signed: _____

Title: _____

Dated: _____

Alun Hall

Mayor

09/08/2025

at *5:09 PM* (time)