

Advocates Demand Action and Accountability on Housing and Homelessness in Barrie

Sept 19 (Barrie, ON) - Frustrated advocates in Barrie have come together to demand action and accountability from the City of Barrie and the County of Simcoe.

The newly formed [Barrie Housing and Homelessness Justice Network \(BHHJN\)](#) is a multidisciplinary network advocating for the right to housing and the elimination of chronic homelessness in Barrie. The group seeks immediate action to address the predictable yet premature and preventable deaths resulting from the inadequacies and injustices in the shelter and housing sectors.

Some housing and homelessness services come from the City of Barrie. However, most are provided by the County of Simcoe. Advocates indicate that this split makes accountability very difficult.

The BHHJN are looking for accountability on eight actions they see needed, including increased affordable housing options, improved systems for homelessness prevention, a pause on evictions of people living in tents on public property as a matter of survival, improved plans during extreme weather, better public washroom and drinking water access, and a program to provide healthcare to people experiencing homelessness.

“Municipalities have human rights obligations related to housing, whether they choose to acknowledge them or not. We are providing accountability on those obligations, asking to see their progress in improving access to housing and meeting the needs of those who don’t have housing,” says Jennifer van Gennip, a local housing advocate. “Everyone deserves a place to call home. In the meantime, our systems need a lot of improvement so that people are safe and provided dignified options.”

"Many community agencies, including faith communities across the city, have been steadily increasing their support for people trying to survive on the margins of our community," added Rev. Susan Eagle. "But we are all deeply aware that survival band-aids do not provide human dignity nor respect the basic human rights of community citizens."

The group is aware that some efforts are underway that align with these demands. They will be asking Barrie City Council to update what action is being taken and to support their request for the same accountability from the County. Community members can endorse this effort at www.bhhjn.ca/take-action.

About the Barrie Housing and Homelessness Justice Network

The BHHJN is a network of housing and homelessness advocates fighting to see the right to housing realized in Barrie.

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