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Joining Forces – Collective Action to Combat Homelessness in Barrie

August 12th, 2024

Acting as a representative for the business community and residents of Barrie, the [Barrie Chamber of Commerce](#) recognizes the urgent need to address the growing humanitarian crisis affecting our city and the province. [Ontario's Big City Mayors \(OBCM\)](#) have launched the '[Solve the Crisis](#)' campaign, highlighting the alarming rise in homelessness, unsafe living conditions, the severe impact of mental health and addiction issues across Ontario. This crisis is visibly affecting our downtown districts and public spaces while placing a significant burden on our most vulnerable community members.

Barrie, like many cities in Ontario, has been contending with these challenges for an extended period. Despite investments and endeavors by governments to finance diverse programs and offer assistance, the situation continues to deteriorate. It is now imperative for a concerted effort across the province to effectively address this crisis.

Getting Involved:

We invite our community members to support the 'Solve the Crisis' campaign by visiting solvethecrisis.ca and completing the form. The form will generate a letter and send it to your Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) on your behalf. You can play a role in urging the province to take decisive steps. Together, we can make progress in ensuring that all residents of Ontario have access to safe housing, mental health support, and essential addiction services.

The 'Solve the Crisis' initiative is a step in that direction. OBCM is urging the government to establish a dedicated ministry and Minister with the necessary resources and authority to address a wide range of housing, mental health, and addiction needs. This leadership is vital to tackle these interconnected issues. The Barrie Chamber of Commerce fully backs this effort, understanding that while programs like Ontario's Roadmap to Wellness are important, they are not sufficient on their own.

OBCM's call for a dedicated ministry goes beyond enhancing coordination—it seeks to empower local communities with the necessary resources to assist individuals in transitioning from encampments to stable housing. The suggestion to invest in 24/7 Community Hubs or Crisis Centres is especially important, providing a needed alternative to the emergency services currently handling these



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challenges.

Additionally, we endorse the formation of a task force comprising representatives from municipalities, healthcare, first responders, community services, the business community, and the tourism industry. This collective approach is essential to developing a 'Made in Ontario' Action Plan that addresses the unique challenges faced by our communities. As part of the [Ontario Chamber of Commerce](#) network, the Barrie Chamber has consistently advocated for the Ontario government to empower first responders to effectively support individuals in crisis.

While we appreciate the progress made thus far, it is evident that more work lies ahead. The Barrie Chamber of Commerce is committed to working alongside OBCM, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, and other stakeholders to address this pressing issue. By pooling our resources, we believe we can devise innovative solutions that address both the immediate crisis and lay the foundation for long-term, systemic change.

The Barrie Chamber of Commerce stands ready to do its part in this critical effort. The time for action is now through collaborative efforts, we can resolve this crisis and create a safer, healthier environment in Barrie—and across Ontario.

Best regards,

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