

October 30, 2020

To the City of Barrie Mayor and Council:

RE: Supervised Consumption Services Update

This status report is intended to inform the Barrie City Council about the current state of the opioid crisis in the City of Barrie and summarize the key actions taken by the Supervised Consumption Services (SCS) Site Selection Advisory Committee over the past year, as well as highlight next steps in the community consultation process. We begin by highlighting a few key messages from this detailed status report.

The Opioid Crisis

There were 44 confirmed and probable opioid-related deaths in Simcoe Muskoka in the first five months of 2020, which was 50% higher than the comparable average for the previous three years.

The City of Barrie has been disproportionately impacted by this recent increase, with 19 (or 43%) of these deaths occurring in Barrie, despite only accounting for 25% of the Simcoe Muskoka population. Opioid use and overdose are occurring in all parts of the city, however the central north area of Barrie, which includes Ward 2, continues to have the highest rates of harm.

The Supervised Consumption Services (SCS) Site Selection Advisory Committee

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) and Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) resumed meetings of the SCS Site Selection Advisory Committee in July 2020 after a brief pause in the early months of the pandemic. The Advisory Committee completed a fulsome review of potential locations for consideration of a Consumption and Treatment Service (CTS) / SCS site in Ward 2 Barrie.

SCS Site Search Boundaries

The SCS site search [boundaries](#) were selected based on the paramedic and emergency department visit data as well as input provided by persons with lived experience, community service providers and Advisory members – they are based on highest need and closest proximity for people who use drugs.

SCS Site Selection Criteria

Criteria used to identify viable options for a SCS site were based on a combination of the Ministry of Health's [Consumption and Treatment Services Guidelines](#) and recommendations of the SCS Site Selection Advisory Committee. Details of these criteria can be found at the following link: [Site Selection Criteria](#).

Site Search and Selection Process

Four hundred and nine (409) letters were mailed to property owners/managers for properties that minimally met the site selection criteria. Ten responses were received as a result of this mail out, leading to the identification of 7 potential locations. Based on site selection criteria, ranking of the seven qualifying addresses resulted in two properties being selected as most viable for consideration, *31 Toronto Street (building at the back of the property) and 110 Dunlop Street W, unit 4.*

Community Consultation Process

The survey component of the community consultations will gather feedback from anyone who lives, works, owns a business, or goes to school in Barrie regarding a SCS/CTS in the two specific locations.

Barrie City Council

The online survey opened on October 7th and closes on October 30th. The survey feedback will inform the facilitation component of the process, which involves virtual neighbourhood consultation sessions, for addresses/occupants within 250 metres of the site options. The virtual neighbourhood consultation sessions will be scheduled once it is confirmed whether a third option outside of Barrie's historic downtown area will be added, as suggested by some members of Council.

Moving Forward

CMHA and SMDHU, with the support of the Advisory Committee, are seeking to engage with all of Council regarding the process and identified sites to date and potential next steps. We look forward to the continued conversations with the Barrie City Council about the best way forward and we are committed to ensuring that all communication channels are optimized, to ensure that information is flowing freely and that we coordinate our efforts to achieve the best possible outcomes for the city, our local businesses, the public and our most vulnerable citizens.

An SCS is part of a compassionate, effective response to challenges that exist in our community, and we look forward to the opportunity to explore this process with you further. We welcome your comments and questions.

Regards,

Original Signed By:

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VG/LS:pd

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DETAILED STATUS REPORT

The Opioid Crisis

The opioid crisis has not abated during COVID-19, and in fact the measures in place to reduce the transmission rate of the virus may have had negative implications on people who use drugs. According to local community partners working closely with this population, they are reporting that clients are more like to overdose because of the poorer quality of the substances sold on the street level, using more substances in response to stress, and being at risk of using alone due to physical distancing measures.

There were 44 confirmed and probable opioid-related deaths in Simcoe Muskoka in the first five months of 2020, which was 50% higher than the comparable average for the previous three years. The City of Barrie has been disproportionately impacted by this recent increase, with 19 (or 43%) of these deaths occurring in Barrie, despite only accounting for 25% of the Simcoe Muskoka population.(1) Data from the Barrie Police Service also shows a dramatic increase in suspected drug overdose deaths attended by police in the first half of 2020 when compared with previous years (approximately twice as many deaths as expected).(2) The increase in deaths in Simcoe Muskoka, and Barrie specifically, seem to have started prior to the pandemic and have continued.

Opioid use and overdose are occurring in all [parts of the city](#), however the central north area of Barrie, which includes Ward 2, continues to have the highest rates of harm. In 2019, it had eight times the rate of opioid overdose emergency department visits than the provincial average and three times the overall Barrie average. This number includes 50 visits among those identifying themselves as homeless, which accounted for 58% of all visits for this zone in 2019(3). Additional data on opioid ED visits and mortality up to 2019 are attached to this email (Appendix A).

Our Progress over the Past Year

In August 2019, a SCS Community Advisory Committee was created to advise and support the Barrie SCS applicants (CMHA Simcoe County Branch, lead applicant; SMDHU, co-applicant) in the development of a successful SCS application, through exploration and review of viable site options in Ward 2 of Barrie, and through advising on neighborhood engagement (4). Regular meetings were held between September 2019 and January 2020 and a SCS Site Selection Subgroup was formed to draft site selection criteria, an educational package for potential landlords, and to support completion of the site search.

Meetings of the SCS Site Selection Advisory Committee were then placed on hold between March and June 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and resumed on July 24, 2020. The SCS Site Selection Advisory Committee reconnected with the commercial realtor and began meeting regularly to review the identified potential site locations for a SCS.

Additionally, SMDHU's website provides a detailed timeline on the [SCS/CTS application history](#) and ongoing updates on the [SCS Site Selection Advisory Committee](#) work.

SCS Site Search Boundaries

The [SCS site search boundaries](#) were selected based on the paramedic and emergency department visit data as well as input provided by persons with lived experience, community service providers and Advisory members.

The site search boundaries identify the preferred area for an SCS, based on highest need and closest proximity for people who use drugs. However, it is acknowledged that it is reasonable to consider sites up to 1 km (or 15 min walk) from the highest area of drug use, in keeping with the Advisory Committee's site selection criteria.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and potential impacts that it may have had on the opioid crisis, in particular areas in which people are using drugs, updated maps were requested and received from the County of Simcoe in September 2020 (Appendix B). These detail EMS calls to suspected opioid

overdose events during the time frame of six months prior to the pandemic (October 2019- February 2020), the six months of the pandemic for which data was available (March 2020 – July 2020), and the entire year of 2019. The information gained from these maps continue to reinforce the need for locating the SCS in the Ward 2 area of Barrie. Of interest however, were additional areas of high need during different time periods, such as that shown in the pandemic time period March – July of 2020, for the area of Essa Road and Tiffin Street. This could be the result of some individuals experiencing homelessness having relocated to the newly created shelter system, in light of the pandemic.

SCS Site Selection Process

In January and February of 2020, a commercial realtor began a review of available properties in Ward 2 of Barrie that met criteria for a SCS based on zoning and unit size. In total, 409 [letters](#) were mailed to property owners/managers of the properties meeting these criteria. Properties that were in close proximity but outside of the SCS Site Search Boundaries were still considered in the search methodology, in an effort to be inclusive. A scorecard was created based on the site selection criteria allowing for the ranking of the seven qualifying addresses, resulting in the two properties being selected as most viable for consideration, 31 Toronto Street (building at the back of the property) and 110 Dunlop Street W, unit 4. An infographic detailing this process can be found on the SMDHU website at this link: [Summary of the process to date.](#)

All of the potential site options were reviewed using the same criteria and ranked accordingly. Details of this process, including the rationale for the scoring can be found on the SMDHU website at this link: [Details of the selection process of the two potential site locations.](#)

SCS Consultation Process

Previous stages of SCS consultation in Barrie are detailed on SMDHU's website ([SCS/CTS application history](#)).

The current consultation process focuses on the identified site options. The first component of the consultations are to gather feedback from anyone who lives, works, owns a business, or goes to school in Barrie regarding a SCS/CTS in the two specific locations. This portion of the consultation process includes an online survey posted to the SMDHU webpage, open from October 7 – 30, 2020. Paper copies of the survey are being made available at community partner locations where possible, for populations that do not have easy access to the internet and also are available on request by calling SMDHU mailbox #7333.

The second component of the process will be virtually facilitated large group neighbourhood consultation sessions, for addresses/occupants within 250 metres of the site options. These addresses will receive a mailed invite to attend one of two session dates. A third party consulting firm, Optimus SBR Inc., has been hired to provide virtual group facilitation, analysis of the data, and a written report to be included in the SCS/Consumption and Treatment Service (CTS) application.

Next Steps

Results of the online survey regarding the two site options will be analyzed after the survey closes on Oct 30, 2020. To date, direct feedback from some members of Council have suggested a preference for the addition of a third site option for consultation, outside of Barrie's historic downtown area. CMHA and SMDHU, with the support of the Advisory committee, are seeking to engage with all of Council regarding the process and identified sites to date and potential next steps, within the next month.

The virtual neighbourhood consultation sessions will be scheduled once it is confirmed whether a third option will be added, and – if so – the specific site.

References

1. Office of the Chief Coroner - Data effective Aug 17, 2020.
Population data: Statistics Canada Annual population estimates by age and sex, July 1, 2006 to 2019, Census Subdivisions, Ontario; accessed from:
<https://communitydata.ca/content/annual-population-estimates-age-and-sex-july-1-2006-2019-census>
2. Analysis and interpretation conducted by the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit. Data provided by the Barrie Police Service (Peter Dewsnap, Inspector #2852) August 14, 2020
3. Ambulatory Visits [2019], IntelliHealth ONTARIO, MOHLTC; Canadian Census 2016, Statistics Canada)
4. [SCS Site Selection Advisory Terms of Reference, Sept 23, 2019](#)