



# Joint Statement

County of Simcoe, Office of the Warden and CAO  
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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Clarification on homelessness programs and encampment response**

**Midhurst/October 3, 2025** – Essa Township and the County of Simcoe have issued this joint statement to provide clarity regarding the County's Temporary Family Shelter Program, also referred to as the Motel Voucher Program (MVP), and to address recent public concerns related to encampments in the City of Barrie.

#### **Purpose and scope of the Family Shelter Program**

The Family Shelter Program is a long-standing emergency shelter service designed to provide safe, short-term emergency accommodations for families experiencing homelessness. It is not a direct response mechanism for encampments. The Family Shelter Program prioritizes families with young children and offers dedicated support services to help families find permanent housing solutions. While the program is overwhelmingly family-focused (96%), single adults may be considered in exceptional circumstances, particularly when medical, safety, or health-based accessibility needs cannot be met through other shelter options.

Expanding capacity to support families facing homelessness or currently experiencing homelessness is a key component of the County's 10-Point Homelessness Prevention Strategy, launched in 2023.

#### **Regional administration and placement strategy**

The Family Shelter Program is regionally administered, meaning placements are not restricted by a person's current location. This ensures equitable access across Simcoe County, including communities such as Barrie, Collingwood, Orillia, Midland, Alliston, and Essa Township. Motel partnerships, including longstanding arrangements, are the primary way the Family Shelter Program is delivered throughout Simcoe County. The Family Shelter Program predates the current encampment enforcement actions being carried out by local municipalities. Motels across Simcoe County are used to support families requiring temporary shelter and are **not** designated as direct relocation sites from encampments.

As of October 1, 2025, the program is supporting 276 individuals, with 96% being part of family units. These include: 123 children, 15 youth, and 138 adults/parents.

#### **Community safety and placement considerations**

The County of Simcoe takes community context and safety into account when making placements into any of its shelter system programs. Family Shelter Program motels near schools are used for families with school-aged children. Individuals with more complex health needs are not placed in areas that could pose risks to program participants or the broader community. Essa Township currently has motels that have been longstanding regional partners

in the Family Shelter Program and continue to provide safe places only for vulnerable families with children to stay as they find permanent housing.

**Clarification regarding the City of Barrie's encampment enforcement**

The County of Simcoe confirms that **there are no plans to relocate individuals from the Barrie encampments into Essa Township motels** delivering the Family Shelter Program. Essa Township and the County of Simcoe remain committed to working together to support vulnerable residents while addressing community concerns. The County will continue to provide updates as further information becomes available.

**For further information**

Residents seeking additional information or clarification regarding the Family Shelter Program (Motel Voucher Program) or homelessness supports are encouraged to contact the County of Simcoe at [CommunityServicesDepartment@simcoe.ca](mailto:CommunityServicesDepartment@simcoe.ca).

Real-time data on shelter usage and system capacity in each of its municipalities is available to the public via the County's dashboard at [open.simcoe.ca](https://open.simcoe.ca).

**About the County of Simcoe**

County of Simcoe is composed of sixteen member municipalities and provides crucial public services to County residents in addition to providing paramedic and social services to the separated cities of Barrie and Orillia. Visit our website at [simcoe.ca](https://simcoe.ca).

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