



## **Overnight warming centre in Barrie opens this week following a dedicated cross-sector collaboration**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 19, 2022**

After a couple of false starts, an overnight warming centre in Barrie will launch Jan. 21, according to John Howard Society of Simcoe and Muskoka's (JHSSM) Executive Director Suzanna McCarthy. The centre, hosted by Catholic Family Services of Simcoe County (CFSSC) at its 20 Anne St. S. location, will be open to the public from 8 p.m. to 7 a.m. seven days a week.

This announcement follows on the heels of McCarthy's confirmation last week of a daytime warming centre at Trinity Anglican Church, which is set to start at 9 a.m. on the same day and run Monday to Friday into March.

"I'm delighted CFSSC has stepped up to serve this vulnerable population," said McCarthy, whose agency received a \$20,000 grant from the City of Barrie to deliver the shelter program. "I so appreciate the other local businesses who offered their locations, even though their spaces weren't able to satisfy the fire and health inspectors for this purpose.

"Through these new community partnerships, we will be able to offer those experiencing homelessness a consistent and 'round-the-clock' escape from the frigid temperatures they have already been dealing with this winter."

McCarthy's staff and volunteers will take over CFSSC's program room each night to provide access, enforce public health pandemic protocols and otherwise support the dozen or so individuals who are expected to attend the warming centre each night. Throughout the remainder of the season, she estimated 30 unique individuals will be served. As of last week's count, there were 68 people in total sleeping on the city streets, she added.

"Our program room is warm and empty each night and it just makes sense to put it to such good use," said CFSSC Executive Director Michelle Bergin, whose accredited and registered charity provides fully inclusive counselling and mental wellness programs across Simcoe Muskoka. "We've partnered with Suzanna and the John Howard Society on other initiatives before and are confident those who seek shelter on our premises will be well served."

Local realtor Peggy Hill is hoping for a permanent placement for the warming centre so those who need it will have access much earlier in the season year over year. In addition to her own \$10,000 donation to JHSSM, she has set up an online fundraiser and challenged other realtors to do the same toward a goal of \$100,000. Donations can be made to the program through Hill's fundraiser at <https://bit.ly/3fD6O3X>.

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**Cutlines to attached photos follow on the next page.**

### **Media inquiries**

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## **Suggested cutlines of attached photos:**

### ***Headshot:***

Suzanna McCarthy, Executive Director of John Howard Society of Simcoe and Muskoka, leads the warming centre initiative in Barrie.

### ***Photo of building:***

John Howard Society of Simcoe and Muskoka (JHSSM) has secured a host for its overnight warming centre for the rest of the winter. Located at 20 Anne St. S. in Barrie, Catholic Family Services of Simcoe County (CFSSC) has offered its program room to JHSSM each night into March. The centre, accessible through CFSSC's side door (as noted on the image), will run from 8 p.m. to 7 a.m. seven days a week.

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