

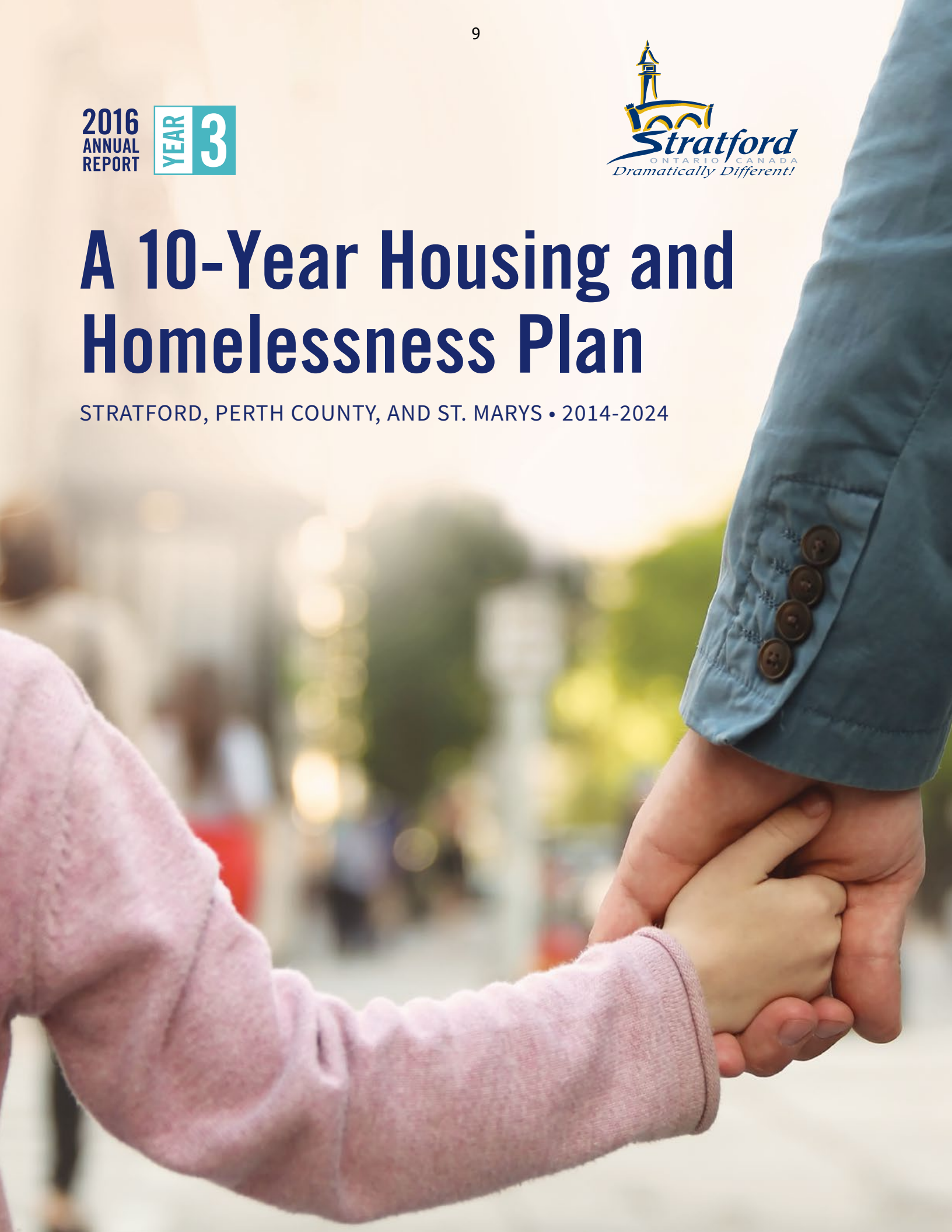
2016  
ANNUAL  
REPORT

YEAR 3



# A 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan

STRATFORD, PERTH COUNTY, AND ST. MARYS • 2014-2024





## Acknowledgements

The successes in Year 3 of the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan for Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys could not have been achieved without the countless contributions of key stakeholders.

The City of Stratford gratefully acknowledges the many committed and passionate service providers, community members, Mayors and Municipal Councillors for their guidance, support, and dedication throughout the 2016-2017 implementation period.

In particular, we would like to thank the following community partners for their participation in our various committees and working groups:

Alicia Houston	Optimism Place
Aron Van de Kleut	Huron Perth Community Legal Clinic
Ave Karu	Canadian Mental Health Association Huron Perth
Betsy-Anne Barton	Community Member
Bev Hagedorn	Stratford/Perth Shelterlink
Brent Meyers	Canadian Mental Health Association Huron Perth
Brittany Stewart	MCSS – Ontario Disability Support Program
Catherine Hardman	Choices for Change
Chelsey Gordon-Edmonds	Habitat for Humanity, Heartland Ontario
Cynthia Miller	Canadian Mental Health Association Huron Perth
Jamie Hildebrand	Huron Perth Community Legal Clinic
Janette Lyoness	Community Member
Joanna Parker	Emily Murphy Centre
Joanne Grimes	Optimism Place
John Robertson	Canadian Mental Health Association Huron Perth
Juli McGrenere	John Howard Society of London & District
Kerry Lou Dickson	The Local Community Food Centre
Lauren Gienow	Canadian Mental Health Association Huron Perth
Lynda Bumstead	Ministry of Community & Social Services



Malibe Campantero	Community Living St. Marys
Mark Gedcke	Knox Presbyterian Church
Mirjam Schut	Facile Perth
Monica Crowley	Stratford/Perth Shelterlink
Nicole Martin	Choices for Change
Pirie Mitchell	<i>Former</i> - Chaplain – Stratford Jail
Rebecca Price	YMCA of Stratford-Perth
Ron Lathan	Community Member
Ryan Erb	United Way Perth-Huron
Susan Luckhardt	Town of St. Marys
Theresa McMurray	House of Blessing
Tracy Allan-Koester	Perth District Health Unit
Tracy Wallis-Best	Choices for Change

We are also grateful to a number of staff from the City of Stratford Social Services Department who dedicated their time and energy in 2016-2017:

Alex Burgess	Jody Brown	Laura Carr
Carole Desmeules	June Jacobs	Lindsay Van Gestel
Colton Dodsley	Kelly Stone	Ramana Ganesaratnam
Grant Martin	Kim McElroy	





# A Message from the Director of Social Services

A home is more than a roof and four walls. A home is a place where people feel safe and have a sense of belonging, a place where they can set down roots and at the same time grow the wings of possibility.

With this in mind, I am proud to share with you the 2016-2017 Annual Progress Report on the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan for Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys.

This third year of implementation saw us continuing to improve resource coordination to ensure people are aware of community supports and services and can get the help they need when they need it. Through the coordinated efforts of stakeholders across the county, we enhanced our capacity to gather data and share information. By doing so, we are better equipped to understand the scope and depth of our local housing and homelessness issues and are ready to respond accordingly.

Underpinning our commitment is the recognition that stable, affordable housing is one of the foundations of a strong and vibrant community. When people have housing that meets their needs—coupled with supports where necessary—everyone benefits. Individuals and families are more engaged with their communities and empowered to seek employment and educational opportunities. Demand for high-cost emergency services and short-term solutions also decreases, allowing for a shift in public investments toward activities that enable people to thrive.

This past year, we made strides in diverting individuals and families from emergency shelter and reduced time spent in emergency accommodation where diversion was not possible. Emergency bed nights were reduced substantially by over 25%. We also planned and implemented our first Homelessness Enumeration, or Registry Week, in partnership with the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness and the 20,000 Homes Campaign. This process enhanced our understanding of local homelessness, the diversity of needs and it enriched our program planning and resource allocation. During 2016, we also initiated the Survivors of Domestic Violence Portable Housing Benefit, thanks to new funding from the provincial government. Eight families were housed before the end of 2016 and another 12 households have been supported since the beginning of 2017.

Effectively responding to housing and homelessness issues requires the flexibility to create unique and innovative solutions. Moving forward, our long-term planning must draw on best practices from the field—yet be locally tailored—underpinned by investments from every level of government, with participation from the public, private and non-profit sectors.

Sincerely,

Carole Desmeules  
Director of Social Services  
CEO, Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation



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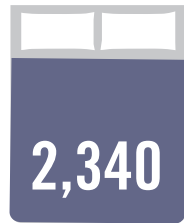


# 2016 at a Glance: Key Housing & Homelessness Facts

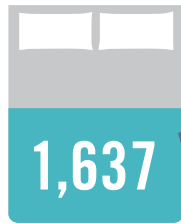
## Emergency Housing

Typically stays of less than 30 days

Nights in emergency accommodation:



nights for **378**  
households  
in 2015



nights for **370**  
households  
in 2016

This **decrease** in emergency bed nights translates into a **cost savings of over \$55,000** locally, funds which can be directed to foster housing stability and permanent housing solutions.

## Transitional Housing

Temporary stays less than 12 consecutive months

**12**  
HOUSEHOLDS

5 singles and 7 families with children were temporarily housed in City of Stratford transitional housing units

**7**  
HOUSEHOLDS

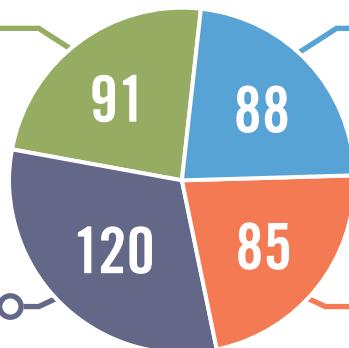
assisted to access temporary accommodations in transitional housing operated by other public and non-profit agencies

## Financial Support

To prevent eviction and to rapidly rehouse those who have become homeless.

Households assisted with funds to pay **Moving Costs** in order to relocate to more affordable and appropriate housing

Households assisted with funds to pay **Last Month's Rent Deposit** to secure housing



Households assisted with funds from the rent bank to pay **Rent Arrears**

Households assisted with funds to pay **Utility Arrears**



## Rental Vacancy Rates\*

From 2015 to 2016:

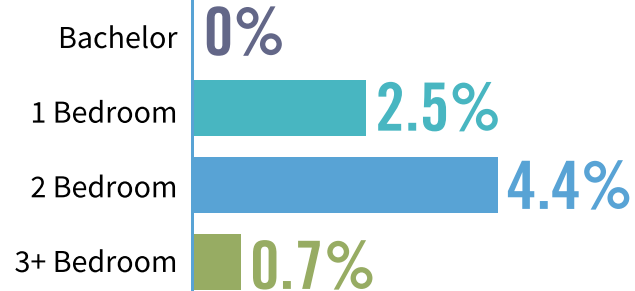
In Ontario,  
a Decrease in  
vacancy rate

FROM  
**2.4%**  
TO  
**2.1%**

In Stratford,  
an Increase in  
vacancy rate

**3.3%**  
TO  
**2.9%**  
FROM

Vacancy rates in Stratford by unit size in 2016:



3% is estimated to be a healthy vacancy rate

## Rental Costs\*

Stratford North Perth Provincial average



Average hourly wage needed to afford  
rental housing in Stratford\*\*



\*\*Assuming 35 hour work week (140 hours per month)  
and approximately 33% of gross income allocated  
for housing costs.

Income and affordability October 2016 figures:

- ▶ **\$11.40/hour** – Ontario Minimum Wage
- ▶ **\$706/month** – Ontario Works  
Single person allowance  
(\$330 Basic allowance + \$376 Shelter allowance)
- ▶ **\$1,128/month** – Ontario Disability Support Program  
Single person allowance  
(\$649 Basic allowance + \$479 Shelter allowance)

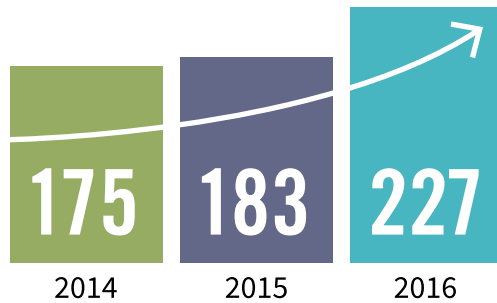
\*Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), "Rental Market Report Ontario Highlights" 2016 CMHC and Statistics Canada. Rental vacancy rate figures are for the primary rental market, from CMHC's Rental Market Survey. The survey targets privately initiated structures with at least three rental units, which have been on the market for at least three months. Figures from 2016.



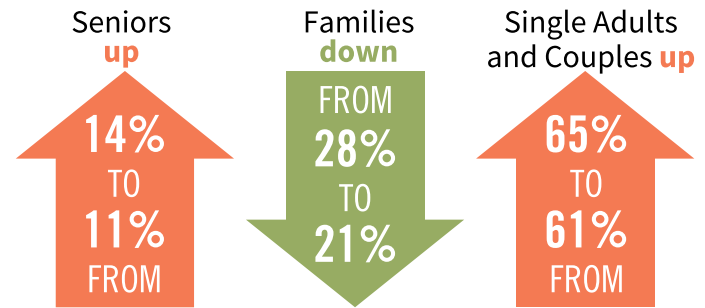
# 2016 at a Glance: Key Housing & Homelessness Facts

## Social Housing Wait List

Number of households on the wait list:



Change in percentage of households by type, on the wait list (2015 vs. 2016) :



132

APPLICANTS HOUSED FROM  
THE WAIT LIST IN 2016

Average time spent on wait list decreased from 2015 to 2016:



## New Affordable Rental Units



2

**rental units created for persons with a developmental disability** receiving support services to live independently in the community

4

**rental units funded in 2016** with a completion date of Spring 2017 for persons of low-moderate income

8

**households supported through a portable housing benefit** to secure safe, suitable housing after fleeing domestic violence, with another 12 households expected to be supported in 2017

9

households with low-moderate incomes were able to access permanent affordable housing by **purchasing their first home with the help of the Affordable Home Ownership Program**



# Purpose of this Report



This annual report highlights the achievements made in Year 3 (2016) of the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan (“Plan”) for Stratford, Perth County and St. Marys (2014-2024). It captures our progress to date, according to each of the strategic priorities of the Plan, and identifies key activities that are underway for Year 4 (2017), with the goal of strengthening our community’s approach to preventing homelessness, promoting housing stability, and fostering more housing solutions locally.

Over the past year, Social Services staff and members of various stakeholder groups have been working and meeting regularly to implement and refine the recommendations of the Plan. Municipal investments from the Federal-Provincial Social Infrastructure Fund (SIF) and the provincial Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI), coupled with in-kind support from numerous community partners, have been essential to accomplishing of many of the initiatives.

To better reflect the broader mandate and vision of the Plan, the Housing First Steering Committee underwent a renaming and rebranding exercise in late 2016 – early 2017. After many discussions, the group decided to adopt the new name of “The Stratford, Perth County and St. Marys Alliance to Prevent Homelessness and Enhance Housing Solutions,” (“the Alliance”), along with the new logo.



**The Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys Alliance  
to Prevent Homelessness and Enhance Housing Solutions**



## Background of the Plan

The City of Stratford is the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (“Service Manager”) for Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys. As such, the City administers provincially mandated public and social housing, as well as programs to prevent and address homelessness.

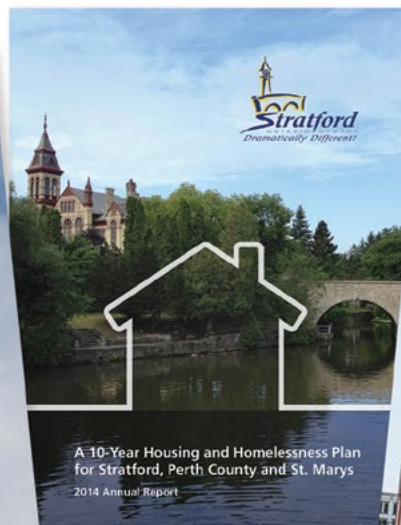
In September 2013, Stratford City Council approved a 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan for the Service Manager area of Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys. In accordance with provincial requirements, this Plan:

- Identifies current and future housing needs;
- Sets out objectives and targets (goals) related to housing needs;
- Proposes actions to meet the goals; and
- Establishes a process to measure and report progress towards meeting the goals.

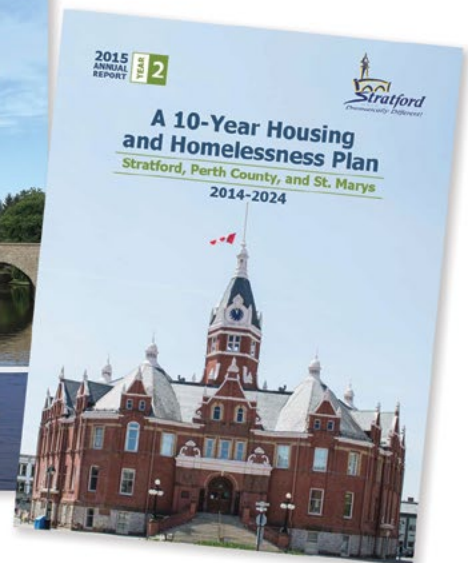
In addition, it is expected that the plan be reviewed every five years, with annual public reporting on the results.



10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan 2013



10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan 2014 Annual Report



10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan 2015 Annual Report

View them online at [www.stratfordcanada.ca/en/insidecityhall/housing.asp](http://www.stratfordcanada.ca/en/insidecityhall/housing.asp)

# Our Local Vision and Strategic Priorities



Reflecting the values and aspirations of diverse stakeholders from across the county, the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan for Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys is guided by a common vision:

All people will have access to housing that is safe and suitable for their needs, and will have supports that enable them to remain stable in their homes. People may become homeless, or face the possibility of losing their homes, but supports will be in place to help them remain in their housing or to locate a permanent alternative as quickly as possible, in the community of their choice.

The plan identifies five strategic priority areas:

1	Systems reorientation to improve coordination and collaboration in the delivery of housing services and supports;
2	Enhance the capacity for gathering data and sharing information between service providers;
3	Increase access to affordable housing options;
4	Focus homelessness prevention on the individuals and families who are at greatest risk;
5	Transform the provision of emergency accommodation in Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys.



# Alignment with Provincial Priorities and Principles

## The Ontario Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy (LTAHS)

In March 2016, the Government of Ontario released an update to its Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy. With this update, the provincial government renewed its commitment to “support social and economic inclusion, end chronic homelessness, and meet the housing needs of all Ontarians.”<sup>1</sup> The updated Strategy included a revised vision rooted in a commitment “to building a fair society that puts people first—a society where everyone has a place to call home,” through adopting a “whole-of-government-approach” where the “focus is on people-centred housing programs and on increasing co-ordination between government services.”<sup>2</sup>

More specifically, the goals outlined in the updated strategy include:

- An appropriate and sustainable supply of housing
- An equitable, portable system of financial assistance
- People-centred, efficient housing programs
- Developing an Indigenous Housing Strategy
- Ending homelessness
- Achieving an evidence-informed system

## Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI)

As part of the Province’s efforts to end homelessness, Ontario launched the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) in January 2013, with program guidelines updated in January 2017. The CHPI combines funding from former separate housing and homelessness programs into a single flexible program with the twin goals of 1) preventing homelessness among those at risk through eviction prevention and housing stabilization and 2) assisting those who experience homelessness to secure stable, appropriate housing, with supports as necessary. With the introduction of CHPI, funding can now be used by Consolidated Municipal Service Managers to address local priorities and better meet the needs of individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless in their local communities.

<sup>1</sup> LTAHS March 2016 report <http://www.ontario.ca/housingstrategy>

<sup>2</sup> LTAHS March 2016 report <http://www.ontario.ca/housingstrategy>



The Province has set a vision for the implementation of CHPI programming, striving toward:

A coordinated and holistic service delivery system that is people-centered, evidence informed and outcomes-based, and reflects a Housing First approach that focuses on homelessness prevention and reduces reliance on emergency services. This vision reflects a shift towards a system that focuses on proactive and permanent housing solutions rather than reactive responses to homelessness.

Underpinning the CHPI program are key principles that are meant to guide decisions at the local level:<sup>3</sup>



Housing First



People Centered



Partnership Based



Locally Driven



Inclusive



Fiscally Responsible



Outcome Focused

As you make your way through this Annual Report you will see evidence of efforts to align our activities and initiatives with the priorities and principles articulated within the provincial LTAHS and CHPI frameworks, at the same time taking local needs, resources, and opportunities into consideration.

<sup>3</sup> See Glossary on page 31 for full definition of terms.





# 2016-2017 Goals, Activities, and Achievements

## 1 Coordination and Collaboration



### ACTIVITY 1A

Introduce a three-year implementation strategy that turns the goals of “The Plan” into concrete tasks with specific measurable outcomes.

- Presented a draft three-year implementation strategy to the Housing First Steering Committee (now known as the “Alliance”) in November 2016 and received consent from Committee members to proceed. This strategy document will guide activities for the period of 2016-2018 and will be reviewed and revised regularly with agreement of Alliance members.

### ACTIVITY 1B

Review and assess existing Common Intake and Assessment Tools to determine feasibility and appropriate use across community partners.

- Conducted a review of available intake and assessment tools and decided to adopt and promote the companion Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) pre-screen measure and the full Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT) assessment measure. Both tools measure acuity, or the breadth and depth of barriers that impede housing stability and place people at risk of homelessness.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The former tool was created in partnership by Community Solutions in the US and Org Code Consulting of Canada and available free-of-charge to interested organizations, and the latter is a proprietary tool created and available with training through Org Code Consulting



- Coordinated and funded comprehensive training for Social Services staff and management, as well as staff from community partner organizations on the VI-SPDAT and SPDAT with a representative of Org Code Consulting (November 2016).
- Introduced the VI-SPDAT into City of Stratford's Social Services intake, case management and outreach functions when serving individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Piloted the full SPDAT with select number of Outreach participants in order to inform referrals and case planning.

### ACTIVITY 1C

Explore the feasibility of expanding points of access in Perth County through the creation of additional satellite sites and one point of entry for all Social Services Department programs.

- Data collection initiated to track reception and intake volume. Initial informal scan of public sites and facilities across the County, which may be appropriate for satellite service locations.
- Funding allocated in 2017 budget approval process to hire consultant to undertake process mapping as initial step in moving toward common point of entry for Social Service programs. Process mapping to occur in Summer-Fall 2017.
- Social Services Outreach worker co-located with Ontario Works specialized worker who focuses on clients experiencing homelessness in order to support collaborative case planning and capacity building.

### ACTIVITY 1D

Working with the Housing First Committee [the "Alliance"], develop and implement the communication and advocacy strategy to support the activities of "The Plan".

- Commissioned consultant to create initial communication plan and tools, along with draft content for different platforms (e.g., media releases, website content, print advertisements).



## 2 Data Gathering and Sharing





### ACTIVITY 2A

Develop and implement a system for collecting and tracking housing and homelessness data for improved system planning, evaluation and reporting.

- Further refined in-house database tools and tracking systems, conducted scan of tools used in other communities in Southwestern Ontario (e.g., HIFIS and HARTT). With the support of the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness and Community Solutions, developed a database tool to track and analyze homelessness enumeration results and create a registry by-name list of people experiencing homelessness to assist with prioritization for service.

### ACTIVITY 2B

Continue to actively collaborate with the Social Research and Planning Council on planning and data initiatives related to housing and homelessness.

- Participated in the Building Bridges Workshop through the University of Waterloo's Community, Health, Environment, Communications (CHEC) Initiative. This multi-disciplinary research entity is supported by the faculties of Arts, Environment, and Applied Health Sciences. The aim of the workshop was to deepen existing collaborative working relationships and identify new opportunities for collective problem solving to address local social issues.

### ACTIVITY 2C

Review existing databases and create a new database with common indicators for Huron and Perth Counties.

- Acquired software custom-designed to track CHPI data and are investigating how it might be integrated into Social Services programs in 2017-2018.





## 3 Affordable Housing Options



### ACTIVITY 3A

Hold an annual forum on affordable housing development with community representatives to review new incentives and initiatives that foster the development of affordable housing municipally.

- Two community forums were held in 2016; one in January focusing on understanding and addressing core housing needs and another in November focusing on municipal tools and incentives to foster affordable housing development. Each forum was well attended, with approximately 50 people at each event representing private, public, and non-profit sectors.

### ACTIVITY 3B

Establish a new Working Group that will bring together private sector housing providers and developers for the expansion of new affordable housing options.

- Process to date has involved a review and compilation of best practices from other jurisdictions in Ontario, and three facilitated focus groups which took place in February/ March of 2017:
  - North Perth; St. Marys/Stratford; Stratford & Area Builders' Association.
  - 25 community participants total (not including City of Stratford Social Services staff):
    - 5 municipal representatives - building/planning and economic development;
    - 3 business representatives;
    - 1 charitable agency (Community Living);
    - 16 developers/landlords.





- Issues discussed:
  - Types of planning and financial tools that are currently being used by local municipalities
  - Impact the lack of affordable housing is having on economic development opportunities
  - Challenges related to developing and being a landlord of affordable rental housing
  - Opportunities to increase the development of affordable rental housing locally (e.g. surplus land, municipal incentives/tools, and community awareness)
- We are currently exploring opportunities to work with municipal partners on the development of a package of tools and incentives that could be used to increase community awareness and promote the development of affordable housing locally.

### ACTIVITY 3C

Leverage new investments from upper levels of government to create new, affordable housing options and address major structural repairs and renovations to existing social housing stock.

- The 2016 federal budget announced the government's Social Infrastructure Fund (SIF) with provincial funding for the City of Stratford in the amount of \$724,565, which was used to create two affordable rental units for people with disabilities, four affordable rental units for people with low-moderate incomes; plus three housing allowance spots funded for eight years.





## Spotlight

### Social Infrastructure Fund – Investment in Affordable Housing (SIF-IAH, Ministry of Housing)

Projects or properties approved for funding under the Rental Housing component of SIF-IAH must remain affordable for a minimum period of 20 years. Affordability is defined as setting rents for the units in a given project that are at or below 80% of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) Average Market Rent (AMR) at the time of occupancy. Average rent is calculated using actual rents paid by tenants, combined with any rent supplements provided

Four affordable units were created within the City of Stratford in 2016.

by the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (i.e., the Housing Division of Municipal Social Services). In order to address the housing needs of people with low to moderate incomes, eligibility criteria regarding maximum income levels according to household composition and unit size are set at

the time of initial tenancy. In 2016, SIF-IAH funds were used to create four affordable units within the City of Stratford for people with low to moderate incomes.





\$892,335 was used to repair existing social housing units, which had a positive impact on the lives of 388 tenants within the Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation

- Under the SIF - Social Housing Improvement Program, (SHIP) the City of Stratford received \$892,335 towards capital repair and to preserve the quality of existing social housing units. This funding was used to complete major and outstanding capital work for the Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation (PSHC). This funding had a positive impact on the lives of 388 tenants within the PSHC who benefited from the capital improvements.

### ACTIVITY 3D

Review opportunities to expand efforts to add accessibility modifications to the existing social housing stock, such as walk-in showers and ramps, and continue to meet the standards of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

- A review of the accessible modifications required for the PSHC was completed by a professional engineer. The scope of work needed to implement these changes was identified for the majority of the multi-unit properties. Major renovations to some existing PSHC housing stock were also completed, taking into consideration tenants' accessibility needs, with more walk-in showers replacing existing tubs.







## 4 Eviction and Homelessness Prevention



### ACTIVITY 4A

Work with the Wraparound Supports and Services Working Group to improve eviction prevention strategies, and address housing outreach and support needs of vulnerable tenants.

- As noted elsewhere, offered training to community partners on the VI-SPDAT and SPDAT screening and assessment tools, along with follow-up training on Homelessness/Shelter Diversion and Housing-Based Case Management with the support of Org Code Consulting. Continued to meet regularly—typically monthly—to explore common frameworks and approaches.

### ACTIVITY 4B

Evaluate the Eviction Prevention Initiative pilot, and continue to meet and identify effective strategies to improve housing retention.

- Continued to meet regularly as an interdivisional team to collaboratively problem solve and explore ways of maximizing various resources, including CHPI funds and the support of the Social Services Outreach Worker, to prevent eviction and build housing stability.
- Documented a reduction in evictions from Public Housing properties from 15 in 2015 to 10 in 2016 (representing a 33% decrease).

# Spotlight

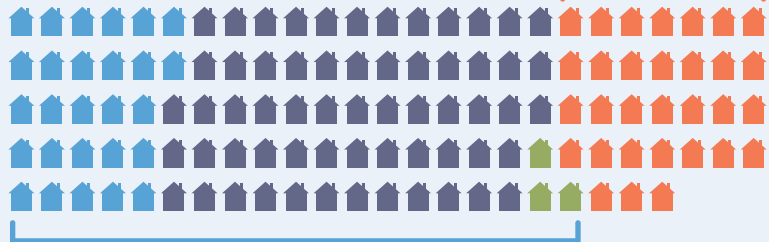


## Social Service Outreach for Eviction Prevention and Rapid Rehousing

Introduced as a permanent member of the City's Social Service team in 2015, the Social Service Outreach Worker, who plays a vital role in preventing eviction, fostering housing stability, and assisting to rapidly rehouse individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Using skills in grief counselling, interpersonal problem solving, advocacy, and mentoring, the Social Service Outreach Worker strives to provide person-centred, flexible, and responsive service to vulnerable households in our community.

**122** The total number of households served by the Social Service Outreach Worker in 2016

**31** ongoing from 2015



**91** new referrals

- 27 public housing tenants
- 61 experienced homelessness and accessed emergency accommodation
- 3 were referred for housing stability support from community partners



### ACTIVITY 4C

Applied for the Provincial Portable Housing Benefit Pilot Project to assist survivors of domestic violence find safe and affordable housing beyond traditional rent-gear-to-income (RGI) social housing assistance.

- In 2016, eight households received funding and secured safe, appropriate housing under this program. Another 12 households are expected to benefit from the program in early 2017.





## Spotlight

### Survivors of Domestic Violence – Portable Housing Benefit Case Study

In the Fall of 2016, after ending a long-term relationship marked by emotional, physical, and financial abuse, Sarah\* approached the Social Services Department for help with housing. Sarah, now a single mother of two young children, had remained in the family home after her ex-partner was removed from the household by police. But with only one income she was finding it difficult to cover housing costs on her own. Given her recent history of abuse, Sarah was granted Special Priority Status for the Coordinated Access Waiting List, which made her eligible for the Survivors of Domestic Violence Portable Housing Benefit.

Sarah decided to accept the Portable Housing Benefit, which allowed her to remain in her home while she looked for permanent accommodations that would be more affordable, thereby avoiding the disruption and related stress of having to use temporary shelter. This support allowed her to return to work and to ensure stability and consistency for her two young children. In time, Sarah was able to locate a suitable private market rental in her neighbourhood of choice. She was able to apply the Portable Housing Benefit to this new unit, as well as receive financial assistance for first and last month's rent.

With safe, affordable, and appropriate housing, Sarah and her children can now move forward in their lives and continue on their healing journey.

\* A pseudonym to protect her identity.





## 5 Homelessness Reduction



### ACTIVITY 5A

Participate in the 20,000 Homes Campaign, a national advocacy movement involving over 30 communities across Canada, for a county-wide Registry Week (homeless enumeration).

- Registered with 20,000 Homes and received regular mentorship from the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (a publicly funded non-profit organization) and from Community Solutions (an American non-profit central to the 100,000 Homes Campaign in the U.S.). Also consulted with a representative from the federal government's Homelessness Partnering Strategy on enumeration tools and methodology.



## Spotlight

### Homelessness in Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys – What we Learned from the 20,000 Homes Campaign Registry Week

During the period of April 10-12, 2017, after many months of planning and preparation, the Social Services Department and community partners undertook an enumeration of the local homeless population. We were guided by the national 20,000 Homes Campaign and the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness. As part of the new requirements funded under the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) of the Ministry of Housing, an enumeration of the local homeless population will be mandated as of 2018 and every two years thereafter. Our 2017 homelessness enumeration week served as an early learning opportunity to pilot registry methods and data collection tools to ensure a more seamless implementation once the enumeration becomes mandatory.

In order to gather relevant information about people experiencing homelessness, the 2017 enumeration pilot used a combination of two survey tools. It combined the Point-in-Time (PIT) Questionnaire from the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy with the Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT). The PIT Questionnaire collects demographic information, primarily used to help surveyors better understand the characteristics of individuals and families experiencing homelessness. The VI-SPDAT is a widely used tool within the housing and homelessness sector across North

America, designed to screen for common risk factors or barriers that can contribute to homelessness and jeopardize housing stability.

A high acuity score on the VI-SPDAT suggests the need for long-term intensive case management support to find and maintain housing.

The higher one's score on the VI-SPDAT the greater one's "acuity". In other words, the more risk factors and barriers a person experiences the more likely they will need support to find and maintain housing. More specifically, a score in the high acuity range indicates the need for longer-term intensive case management support of at least one year to find and maintain stable housing. A score in the moderate acuity range indicates





the need for short- to medium-term case management support, usually between three and nine months to find and secure stable housing. And a low acuity score indicates the individual or family will likely be able to resolve their homelessness independently, or with only minimal support.

Through the collaboration of a designated multi-stakeholder working group, a number of survey sites were identified throughout the service area and community partners were engaged to facilitate implementation. Survey sites included, but were not limited to, community meal programs, emergency shelters and transitional housing programs, provincial correctional services, social services drop-in sites, and outdoor public spaces known to be frequented by those experiencing homelessness. The confidential enumeration surveys were conducted by trained human service professionals, including The City of Stratford's Ontario Works and Housing staff, as well as staff from the partnering agencies and organizations. All participants signed a two-part consent. Part one covered the sharing of aggregate, non-identifying data and part two focused on the release of identifying information to local partners for assistance with housing and housing stability. All those completing surveys with participants signed an oath of confidentiality and were also bound by their own agencies' policies on privacy and confidentiality.

Although the findings are likely an underrepresentation of local homelessness, as it is not typically possible to reach all those who might be eligible to participate, they do shed light on the issue.



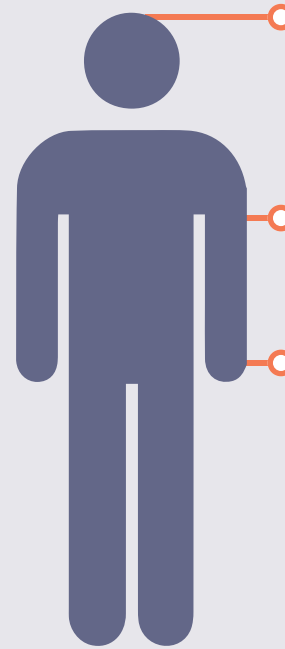
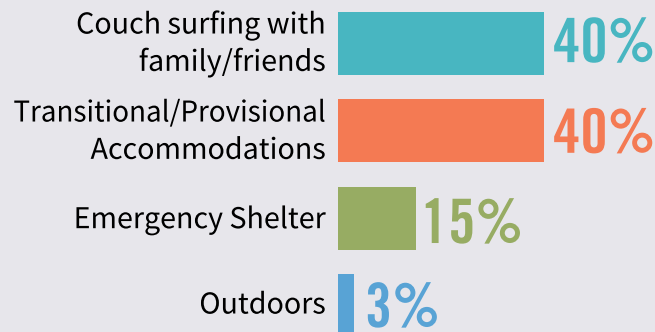
## Key demographic characteristics of survey respondents

### Characteristics of survey respondents:

#### 57 COMPLETED SURVEYS:



#### Sleeping locations:



#### Age:

Adults 25-49 years of age were the largest demographic group.

#### Sex:

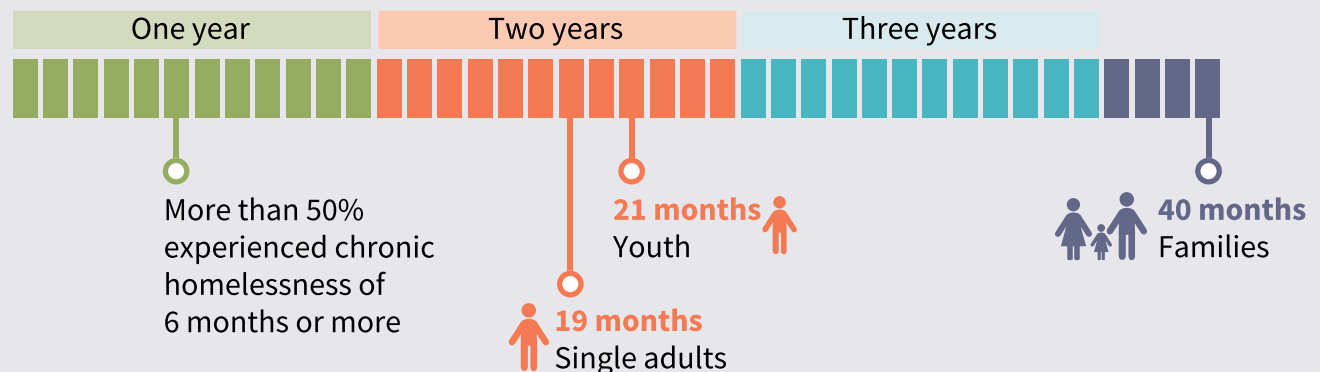
Men outnumbered women 2 to 1.

#### Ethnicity:

21% (12 respondents) identified as First Nations, Inuit, or Métis or other indigenous identity. This is proportionally higher than the general population locally.

### Chronicity, acuity and presenting risk factors:

#### Average periods of homelessness:



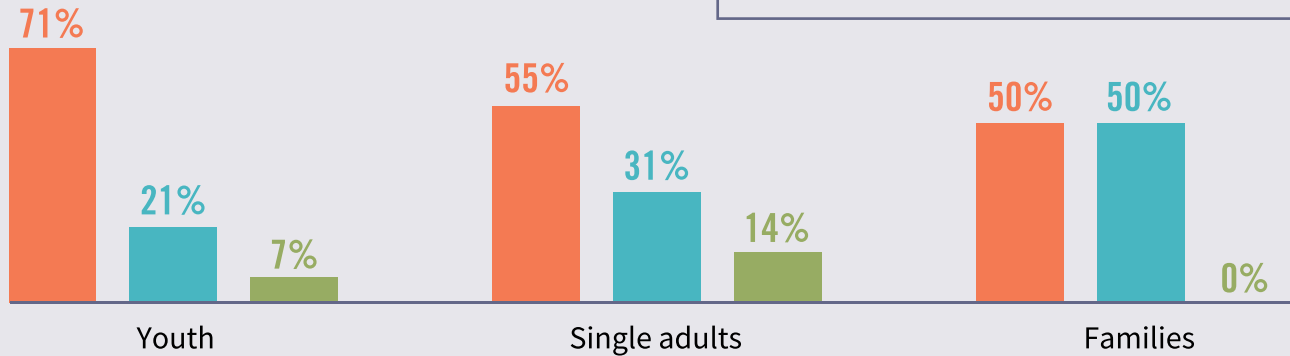




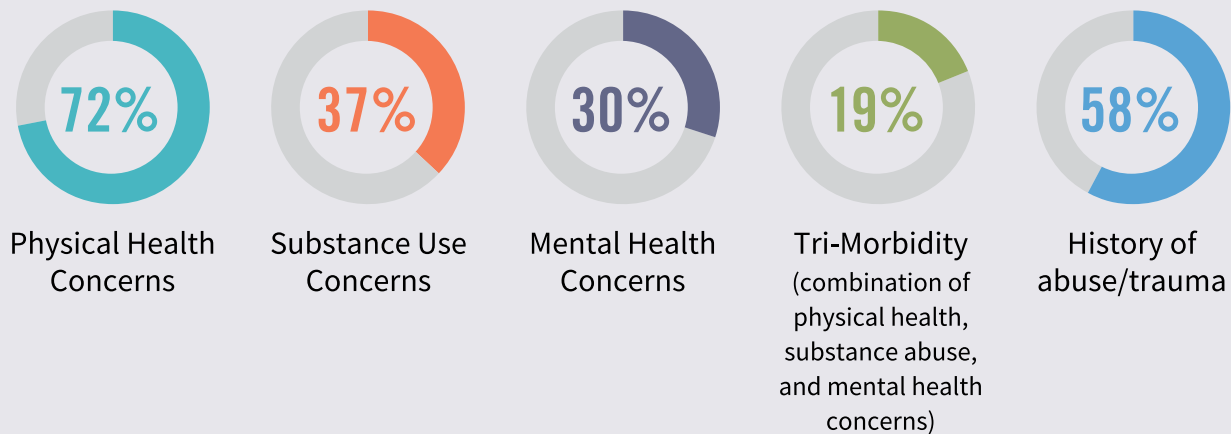
### Acuity scores:

High Moderate Low

**Acuity** is a measure of severity of an issue, in this case the barriers or factors that increase the risk of homelessness



### Key risk factors contributing to aforementioned acuity:



Taken as a whole, these findings confirm anecdotal evidence suggesting a significant proportion of individuals and families experiencing homelessness locally face complex barriers to finding and securing a home. Moreover, the findings provide some basis on which existing programs and services might be refined or tailored, and new programs created and implemented, to better meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness in Stratford, Perth County and St. Marys.



# Moving Our Strategic Priorities Forward in 2017-2018

## 1. Coordination and Collaboration

- a. Expand and strengthen membership in the Alliance to include other services and sectors with specific expertise in priority populations (e.g., correctional services, health sector, public education sector and youth serving agencies, etc.)
- b. Continue to participate in inter-agency Situation Table and advocate for coordinated and collaborative approaches to addressing complex situations
- c. Continue to foster the adoption of the VI-SPDAT and SPDAT screening and assessment tools, both within Social Services programs and services and across partnering community agencies
- d. Create and implement a central registry and prioritization process for providing housing and related supports to priority populations experiencing homelessness.

## 2. Data Gathering and Sharing

- a. Continue to foster the adoption of the Vulnerability Index - Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) and Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT) screening and assessment tools both within Social Services programs and services but also across partnering community agencies
- b. Continue to define common outcome measures and indicators that can be tracked by service providers across Perth County
- c. Explore protocols for sharing information in ways that are consistent with relevant privacy legislation and reflective of the values of person-centred, inclusive, and trauma-informed practice.





### 3. Affordable Housing Options

- a. Continue to monitor existing public and social housing programs, with goal of continuous improvement
- b. Initiate first phase of Stratford Fairground redevelopment for affordable housing
- c. Roll out additional Social Infrastructure Fund (SIF) portable housing benefits for priority populations experiencing homelessness
- d. Through the application of Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) funds, initiate new fixed-site Housing with Supports program for 10 to 15 participants identified as experiencing higher acuity, or greater barriers to housing stability
- e. Apply for provincial Home for Good funding, and if awarded initiate new fixed-site and scattered site Housing with Supports for an additional 40-60 individuals and families, with focus on, youth, people leaving provincial institutions, those experiencing chronic homelessness of greater than six months, and Indigenous people.

### 4. Eviction and Homelessness Prevention

- a. Through a combination of federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy for Rural and Remote Communities and provincial CHPI funds, create and pilot a Housing Help and Voluntary Trusteeship program with the primary location in Stratford and outreach/satellite services throughout Perth County
- b. Continue to offer professional development opportunities to Social Services staff and partnering agency and organization staff to enhance capacity to navigate systems and foster positive behavioural change
- c. Strengthen community development and tenant education activities for those living in public and social housing through partnerships with other human service providers.

### 5. Homelessness Reduction and Rapid Rehousing

- a. Continue to enhance community capacity to divert individuals and families at risk of homelessness from shelters and to rapidly rehouse within 30 days
- b. Develop print and online tools and resources that can be used by service providers and community agencies to raise awareness and enhance capacity.



## Glossary of Key Terms

**20,000 HOMES CAMPAIGN:** A national movement of communities working together to permanently house 20,000 of Canada's most vulnerable homeless people by July 1, 2018.

**ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (AODA):** Provincial legislation that develops mandatory accessibility standards which identify, remove, and prevent barriers for people with disabilities.

**AFFORDABLE HOME OWNERSHIP PROGRAM:** The Affordable Home Ownership program aims to assist low-to-moderate-income renter households to purchase affordable homes by providing down payment assistance in the form of a forgivable loan.

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING:** Dwelling costs that do not exceed 30% of total before-tax household income.

**COMMUNITY HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION INITIATIVE (CHPI):** Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) is a consolidation of former provincial housing and homelessness programs into a single funding envelope under the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH). Funding can now be used by Service Managers to address local priorities to meet the needs of individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless in their communities.

### **CONSOLIDATED MUNICIPAL SERVICE**

**MANAGER (CMSM):** A municipal government responsible for carrying out the funding and administrative responsibilities of the Housing Services Act. A CMSM could be a regional government, a county or separated city, depending on the local circumstances.

**CORE HOUSING NEED:** Housing that does not meet one or more of the following standards: adequacy, suitability, affordability.

**DATA CONSORTIUM:** A gateway to data for municipalities and community sector organizations. Members access customized tables from Statistics Canada and other sources to get the evidence that supports sound decisions and social development programs.

**FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE:** Local initiatives funded under CHPI will meet the intended purpose and outcomes of the program with due regard for economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Local strategies will reflect fiscal conditions as they evolve to promote the goals of the program and will provide value for money.



**HOMELESSNESS:** An individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. Homelessness is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household's financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination.

**HOUSING FIRST:** A Housing First approach is based on the principle that people are better able to move forward with their lives if they are first housed. As such, this approach aims to assist people who are homeless obtain and maintain permanent, affordable housing and help those at risk of homelessness remain housed. Housing is linked to flexible, appropriate support services using a people-centred approach according to people's needs.

**HOUSING HELP SERVICES:** Services that help people who do not have a place to live or who are at risk of becoming homeless. Services include support with housing searches, landlord mediation, tenant conflict resolution, and referrals to other programs and services to address barriers to housing stability (health care, children's services, etc.) in an effort to support independent living.

**INCLUSIVE:** All people have the right to equal treatment and protection from discriminatory practices that limit their housing opportunities. Local services, programs, initiatives and decision making will reflect the voices, knowledge and input of people who have experienced homelessness or risk of homelessness.

**IN-SITU PROGRAMS:** A housing allowance program that allows households to remain in their present accommodation, providing certain eligibility requirements are met. This is most commonly used for people experiencing physical or mental health challenges where moving or changing residence would compromise their ongoing stability and well being.

#### **INVESTMENT IN AFFORDABLE HOUSING (IAH) FOR ONTARIO PROGRAMS:**

A program funded by the provincial and federal governments that supports new rental construction, home repair, housing allowances, rent supplements or home ownership.

**LOCALLY DRIVEN:** Homelessness-related services, programs and housing must be locally relevant and based on people's needs. This approach provides opportunities to access affordable and safe housing, as well as employment, support services and other community resources.





**OUTCOME-FOCUSED:** All initiatives designed under this program are created with the outcomes of the person in need in mind. It is informed by the principles of Housing First, people-centred, and inclusive, while being monitored, evaluated and continuously improved to prevent, address and end homelessness.

**PARTNERSHIP BASED:** Housing and homelessness related services in Ontario require strong partnerships. Co-operation among all levels of government, non-profit and co-operative housing providers, community support services, and the people who require housing and homelessness-related supports, builds healthy, sustainable and inclusive neighbourhoods.

**PEOPLE-CENTERED:** A people-centred approach focuses on positive results for individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Housing programs, services and supports should be based on this approach. It is important for planning, program development and implementation to include consultations with people with lived experience of homelessness or who have been at risk of homelessness. This may include conducting service user satisfaction surveys/interviews, having people with lived experience of homelessness on volunteer boards of directors and as staff members,

and providing service in a manner that is respectful and directed by the needs and wishes of those accessing services.

**PUBLIC HOUSING:** Housing developed predominantly by the Ontario Housing Corporation (OHC) in the 1960s after the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's mandate broadened to include housing for low-income families. Downloaded from the Province to Municipal Service Managers in 2001, these are now called Ontario's Local Housing Corporations.

**RENT BANK:** Community-based organizations providing assistance to individuals and families who cannot afford to pay their rent. The type and range of assistance varies from organization to organization.

#### **RENT-GEARED-TO-INCOME (RGI) RENT**

**SUBSIDY:** A subsidy paid to a social housing provider and guaranteed for the life of the mortgage. In Ontario, the RGI Rent Subsidy equals the difference between the actual rent paid by a low-income tenant and the government approved market rent of a unit.

**SITUATION TABLES:** A situation table is a strategic alliance of human services (including police, and various health and social services) guided by common principles and processes in order to mitigate risk situations in a timely manner, usually within 24-48 hours.



**SOCIAL HOUSING:** Housing built with the financial assistance of governments to provide assistance to low and moderate income households. It includes public housing, non-profit and co-operative housing and rent supplements.

#### **SOCIAL RESEARCH AND PLANNING**

**COUNCIL:** A division of United Way Huron-Perth comprised of community representatives who are dedicated to the collection, analysis, and distribution of information relating to social trends and issues in Perth and Huron counties.

**SUBSIDIZED RENTAL HOUSING:** Financial subsidies provided to offset rental rates in market rental units for low-income households (e.g. rent supplements, housing allowances, etc.).

#### **VOLUNTARY TRUSTEESHIP PROGRAM:**

Financial management supports and budgeting assistance to ensure rent and other expenses are paid on time. This may involve advocating with creditors, negotiating service agreements, mediating with landlords, etc.





# A 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan

STRATFORD, PERTH COUNTY, AND ST. MARYS • 2014-2024

**Please visit our website at [www.stratfordcanada.ca/en/insidecityhall/housing.asp](http://www.stratfordcanada.ca/en/insidecityhall/housing.asp)  
to review or download these reports:**

A 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan for Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys (2013)

2014 Annual Report: A 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan for Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys

2015 Annual Report: A 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan for Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys



## **City of Stratford**

Social Services Department – Housing Division

82 Erie Street, Stratford, ON N5A 2M4

Phone: 519-271-3773 Toll-Free: 1-800-669-2948

Fax: 519-273-7191



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## MANAGEMENT REPORT

**Date:** August 9, 2017  
**To:** Social Services Sub-committee  
**From:** Barb Hobson, Manager of Child Care  
Carole Desmeules, Director of Social Services  
CEO, Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation  
**Report#:** SOC17-016  
**Attachments:** None

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**Title:** Ministry of Education Request for Capital Funding Submissions

**Objective:** To report on Capital Funding programs available for expanded Child Care and Early Learning Programs.

**Background:** On September 12, 2016, the provincial government announced a commitment to increase access to licensed child care for 100,000 children aged 0-4 years over the next five years, with a first year target of increased access for 16,000 children.

In June 2017, the Ministry of Education announced details of two related capital funding programs including:

- Requests for Early Years Capital Program (EYCP) Funding Submissions; and
- Requests for Capital Priorities Project Funding Submissions.

EYCP funding submissions are due August 4, 2017, with Capital Priorities Project funding submissions due on September 8, 2017. All funding submissions must be submitted jointly by the City of Stratford (Consolidated Municipal Service Manager Stratford – CMSM Stratford) and local Boards of Education through the Ministry of Education's School Facility Information System (SFIS).

City of Stratford Social Services management and child care staff met with representatives from both local Boards of Education during the month of June to review funding guidelines and identify potential sites and projects for inclusion in the joint funding submissions. All parties have moved quickly to respond to these two funding opportunities and prepare for the next steps.

## **Analysis:**

These capital funding programs are intended to support the creation of new child care and child and family programs designed for children aged 0-4 years. The Ministry of Education has provided detailed eligibility and submission criteria for Service Managers, Boards of Education and Child Care providers.

### **Early Years Capital Program (EYCP) Funding Submission**

Various data and indicators were used to identify target schools for new site development, including those that have an existing operator, child care waitlists, occupancy rates of existing programs, census data, internal and external space availability, and child care community planning recommendations.

The submission to the Province includes the development of five new sites to be located in various public and separate schools located throughout Perth County. If approved, 123 new child care spaces for children 0-4 years of age would be created to address the demand for childcare for infant, toddler and preschool on current waitlists. In addition, seven Family and Child Programs rooms have also been requested. If approved, these will provide space for community programs for families.

A funding decision is expected from the Ministry of Education in early 2018.

### **Capital Priorities Project Funding**

Capital Priorities requests are submitted by schools boards annually to address pupil accommodation needs, consolidation of underutilized facilities, and replacing facilities in poor repair. This project provides additional funding to include Child Care space and Child and Family room space as part of the larger school capital projects that may be undertaken.

The ministry will include joint-use school participation with community partners and a willingness of co-terminus school boards to collaborate in its criteria in reviewing all project submissions. The City of Stratford's Child Care Division and local school boards have demonstrated a strong and successful working collaboration on projects such as The North Perth Project at Westfield Elementary School. This serves as a good example of what can be achieved, and provides a model and lessons learned for future Child Care and Early Learning Programs site development.

**Financial Impact:** If approved, Ministry of Education funding if approved will cover all project capital costs, with no direct impact on CMSM Stratford operating budget.

**Staff Recommendation:** **THAT the report on Capital Funding programs available for expanded Child Care and Early Learning Programs be received for information.**





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Barb Hobson, Manager of Child Care



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Carole Desmeules, Director of Social Services  
CEO, Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation



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Rob Horne, Chief Administrative Officer



## MANAGEMENT REPORT

**Date:** August 9, 2017  
**To:** Social Services Sub-committee  
**From:** Kim McElroy, Manager of Ontario Works  
 Carole Desmeules, Director of Social Services  
 CEO, Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation  
**Report#:** SOC17-013  
**Attachments:** CMSM Stratford Ontario Works Service Plan, 2017-2018

**Title:** City of Stratford - Ontario Works 2017-2018 Service Plan

**Objective:** To provide a report on the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager Stratford (CMSM Stratford) Ontario Works Service Plan for 2017-2018.

**Background:** Every two years Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) are required to submit an Ontario Works Service Plan to the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS).

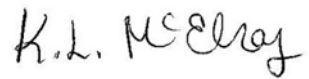
The Service Plan is intended to provide an overview of programs and services available to individuals receiving Ontario Works, and focuses on improving local outcomes for people who rely on social assistance.

**Analysis:** The Service Plan is created in accordance with MCSS guidelines and templates. As indicated, the plan focuses on key areas that assess and describe CMSM Stratford's ability to effectively deliver service to clients and meet related Ministry targets over the next two years.

The plan also provides additional details such as labour trends, caseload information, best practices, service collaboration, and detail local measures used for program management and accountability.

**Financial Impact:** Not applicable.

**Staff Recommendation:** THAT the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager Stratford (CMSM Stratford) Ontario Works Service Plan for 2017-2018 be received for information.



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Kim McElroy, Manager of Ontario Works



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Carole Desmeules, Director of Social Services  
CEO, Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation



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Rob Horne, Chief Administrative Officer



# **CITY OF STRATFORD**

## **CONSOLIDATED MUNICIPAL SERVICE MANAGER**

### **Ontario Works Service Plan 2017-2018**

Respectfully Submitted by:

Kim McElroy, BA (Hons), Manager of Ontario Works

Carole Desmeules, M.Sc., MBA, Director of Social Services &  
CEO, Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation

Revised August 1, 2017

# City of Stratford - Ontario Works Service Plan 2017-2018

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## City of Stratford - Ontario Works Service Plan 2017-2018

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### **ONTARIO WORKS VISION AND MANDATE**

#### **City of Stratford**

The City of Stratford Ontario Works Division has a vision and a service mandate that builds upon the vision and mandate for the Ontario Works program established by the Province.

#### **Vision**

The Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) is dedicated to a client-centered approach to service delivery and committed to program integrity, quality and excellence, which leads to sustainable employment and financial independence for residents of Stratford, St. Marys and Perth County.

#### **Mandate**

To improve employment outcomes for Ontario Works participants by increasing options that lead to sustainable employment and increased financial independence.

#### **Province of Ontario**

#### **Vision**

To improve employment outcomes for Ontario Works participants by increasing individual employability with the goal of sustainable employment and increased financial independence.

#### **Mandate**

To provide employment assistance and financial assistance to people in financial need. The Ontario Works program:

- recognizes individual responsibility and promotes self-reliance through employment;
- provides financial assistance to those most in need while they meet obligations to become and stay employed;
- effectively serves people needing assistance; and
- is accountable to the taxpayers of Ontario.

### **MINISTRY PRIORITIES FOR 2017-2018**

The Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services has identified three key priorities for the following two-year cycle. This section will outline the specific activities and strategies used to address these priorities in 2017-2018.

**Improved service coordination and communication between Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) delivery offices within the service area, including transfers between programs, business protocols, shared case management when appropriate, and expanded and strengthened**

## City of Stratford - Ontario Works Service Plan 2017-2018

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### **access to employment services for ODSP clients and people with disabilities within the community.**

The Stratford CMSM thrives on having a strong relationship with our local ODSP office. Strategies we continue to implement and improve to ensure client service in this area is at the forefront include:

- dedicated OW caseworkers and intake staff who specialize in transferring cases from OW to ODSP;
- specialized OW caseworker for ODSP participating adult cases; and
- ongoing bi-monthly teleconferences with ODSP manager to ensure that South West Region joint procedures and protocols are being followed, and a review of best practices semi-annual joint training for OW and ODSP staff to strengthen partnerships and explore best practice options. This is also done in conjunction with Huron County Ontario Works.

### **Stronger collaboration with local economic development organizations to identify, expand and leverage provincial investments in infrastructure and resource development to provide opportunities for Ontario Works clients, youth and disadvantaged populations to access skills training, work experience, and new jobs.**

In the Four County Labour Market Planning Board's 2016 EmployerOne survey, Perth County employers in the manufacturing sector identified hard-to-fill positions, including production workers, welder fitters, general labourers, and machinists. When asked, "Why were positions hard to fill?" the top responses were:

- Not enough applicants
- Lack of qualifications
- Lack of technical skills
- Lack of motivation, attitude or interpersonal skills

In response to manufacturing challenges, employers need to attract and retain a skilled labour force. The City of Stratford CMSM, the Planning Board, City of Stratford Economic Development office, County of Perth Economic Development office, and Employment Ontario service providers are working with the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development to explore the possibility of developing a program tailored to our local manufacturing needs through the Ministry's SkillsAdvance Ontario (SAO) pilot.

Skills Advance Ontario is a new sector-focused workforce development pilot that will support partnerships that bring together sector-based employers and employment and training providers to develop a pool of job-ready, skilled workers that meet employers' workforce development needs.

## City of Stratford - Ontario Works Service Plan 2017-2018

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The pilot will help jobseekers build the soft skills and sector-specific hard skills they need to succeed and advance in entry-level jobs in the manufacturing sector. At the same time, it will help employers fill vacancies to meet workforce needs by providing sector-focused employment services, including job matching. It is hoped that this SAO project in the Perth County and Stratford area could provide an opportunity to fill the gaps in the manufacturing sector. The curriculum will be written over the summer of 2017 with the target date to begin training eligible participants being the fall of 2017.

The Stratford CMSM continues to participate in the Partners in Resources for Employment Committee (PREP) on a quarterly basis. The mandate of this committee is to identify employment opportunities, labour market trends, new training initiatives and current gaps within our employment/training sectors.

**Establishing local partnerships with community organizations to build on and strengthen supports to Ontario Works clients, including individuals with multiple barriers to employment (i.e. long-term recipients of social assistance) marginalized or disadvantaged groups across service sectors including: health, developmental services, housing, violence against women prevention, strategies to end human trafficking or education and training.**

In early 2017, the Stratford CMSM was able to create a caseworker position to provide intensive case management to our homeless and precariously housed participants. This caseworker will work closely with the City of Stratford Housing Division, as well as multiple community partners, including the Canadian Mental Health Association Perth, Choices for Change: Alcohol, Drug and Gambling Centre, John Howard Society of London and District for reintegration support program, as well as Family Services Perth-Huron. The goal is to rapidly re-house participants if they are homeless, or to use a wraparound approach to help stave off eviction for those precariously housed. The wraparound approach simply means that if a client needs multiple services a variety of agencies will work together to move the client towards an establish goal.

A dedicated caseworker was named to work with women in our local stage-one women's shelter, Optimism Place. This caseworker will work closely with Optimism Place, as well as with the Housing Division since the City of Stratford was successful in its bid to become one of the pilot sites for the Survivors of Domestic Violence Portable Housing benefit. This program allows greater flexibility in housing options for people experiencing domestic abuse.

Human trafficking is a relatively new marginalized sector for the Stratford CMSM. In the upcoming year, we plan to have staff and management trained on the subject. An initial meeting in May 2017 will discuss how we can support these individuals at a local level, collaborating with the Perth District Health Unit, Police Services in Perth County and Stratford and City of Stratford Housing Division.

## City of Stratford - Ontario Works Service Plan 2017-2018

The caseworkers will also complete the 9 unit training module "Human Trafficking- Online Training for Service Providers."

[https://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/ovss/human\\_trafficking/](https://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/ovss/human_trafficking/)

### **ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN**

#### **Analysis**

This section of the Ontario Works Service Plan will provide an analysis of the City of Stratford's 2016 outcomes, a review of the external influences, caseload description, our local labour market trends, and include a description of how local stakeholders within our community have been engaged. As illustrated in the charts below, the City of Stratford was successful in achieving its targeted baseline outcomes for 2016.

2016 Outcome Funding Results and Baseline forecasts:<sup>1</sup>

Measure	2016 Baseline	2016 Stratford's Average	2016 Provincial Average
<b>Average Employment Earnings</b>	<b>\$708.30</b>	<b>\$736.40</b>	<b>\$772.50</b>
% of Caseloads with Employment Earnings	12%	17.92%	12.22%
% of Terminations Exiting to Employment	12.75%	19.67%	15.06%

#### **Average Employment Earnings**

The Canadian job market continues to be propelled by part-time work. In 2016, Statistics Canada year-end employment review showed that the country added 154,000 part-time positions in 2016 and only 60,000 full-time positions.<sup>2</sup> As a result, increases in the number of participants with employment earnings have not translated into increases in the average amount of employment earnings. Stratford CMSM's average of employment earnings continues to fall below the provincial average, yet the percentage of our caseload with employment earnings exceeds the provincial average.

#### **Percentage of Caseload with Employment Earnings**

Stratford CMSM's average for this measure continually exceeds the provincial average. As stated previously, Perth County's 5.5% unemployment rate falls below the provincial average of 8.33%, so this lends to the credence of this statistic. The Service Sector comprises 21.1% of Perth County's labour force<sup>3</sup>. This sector historically has seasonal, part-time, minimum-wage employment, which correlates to high rates of employment.

<sup>1</sup> Social Assistance Operations Performance Report, as of December 2016

<sup>2</sup> The Daily-Labour Force Survey, December 2016, [www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien)

<sup>3</sup> Canada NHS, 2011 for Perth County Census Division



## City of Stratford - Ontario Works Service Plan 2017-2018

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### **Percentage of Terminations Exiting to Employment**

Stratford CMSM participants continue to be affected by the 'skills gap'. There is a major demand for highly skilled workers, however our participants tend to have a low skill set that does not match the skills required for the employment available. Although we continue to look for training opportunities to address this issue, there will always be a percentage of clients who cannot secure employment, or are only employed in short-term precarious employment.

### **External Influences**

As the City of Stratford CMSM looks towards the next two years it acknowledges there are potential external influences that may impact our service delivery.

- In October 2016, the Ontario government increased the hourly minimum wage to \$11.40 and is set to increase it again in October 2017 to \$11.60. With these annual increases we are likely to see a positive effect on those clients working minimum wage jobs. This may increase the outcome measures component of average employment earnings over the next two-year cycle.
- The Stratford CMSM will also be monitoring the progress of the province's Basic Income Pilot Project, which will test how a guaranteed monthly income might benefit people with low incomes. The CMSM will be reviewing the evidence-informed findings since this may influence service delivery in the future.
- The Social Assistance Management System (SAMS) continues to require significant time and staff resources to implement new local business practices and deal with ad-hoc reports. Staff must also review fixes intended to enhance performance of the computer system as the province implements them. The Stratford CMSM continues to be dependent on the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) since this is a provincial program and decisions cannot be made at the local level.
- Pending changes to the Ontario Works Act may also impact service delivery and lead to further changes in our processes and policies. An example of this earlier this year was the exemption in social assistance calculations of CPP Orphan Benefit payments and Child Support Income which led to some realignment of Caseworker and Eligibility Review Officer duties, while partnering with the local Family Law Information Centre (FLIC).

## City of Stratford - Ontario Works Service Plan 2017-2018

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- As part of the Provincial Budget Highlights in February 2016, the government reaffirmed its intention to move ahead on modernizing the delivery of social assistance, better integration of services, reduce unnecessary intrusion into people's lives and work with delivery partners and people with lived experience. *"The objectives remain to reduce poverty, support people to participate in the economy and to provide human services in a way that makes sense to the people that need them. This process will look across government and the broader income security landscape to ensure all programs work together".*<sup>4</sup>
- There is a continued trend towards job creation that is part-time and precarious in nature. "In Ontario, approximately 22% of jobs could be characterized as precarious work, defined as having low wages and at least two of three other features: no pension, no union and/or small firm size."<sup>5</sup>

### Caseload Description

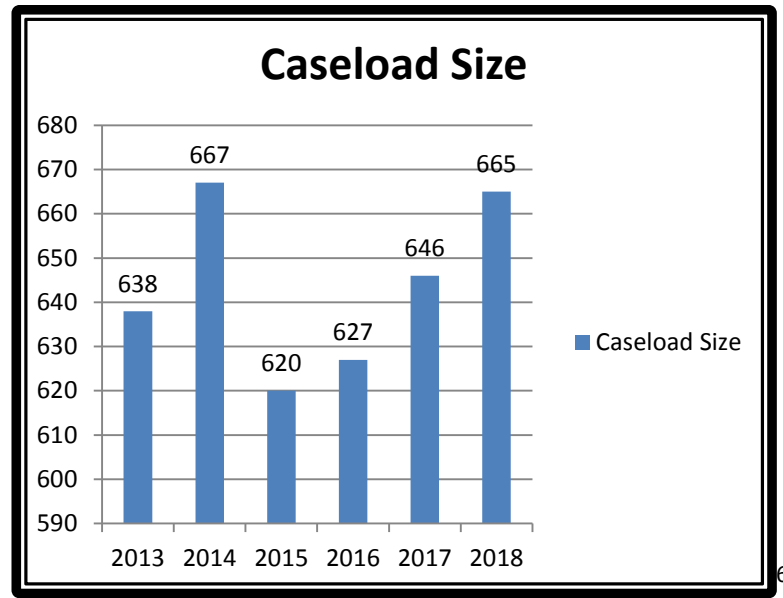
The following chart (page 9) illustrates the City of Stratford's Ontario Works caseload. We saw a minor decrease in 2015 compared to 2014 and a slight increase from 2015 to 2016. Overall, the caseload has remained fairly consistent over the last five years with minimal variance. It is anticipated there will be a 3% increase annually over 2017 and 2018 due to such factors as the 'skills gap' (the skills employers require versus the level of skill many of our clients have), the continued increase in part-time employment versus full-time employment, as well as such legislative changes as exempting child support and orphan benefits as income thereby allowing clients to continue to receive OW benefits.

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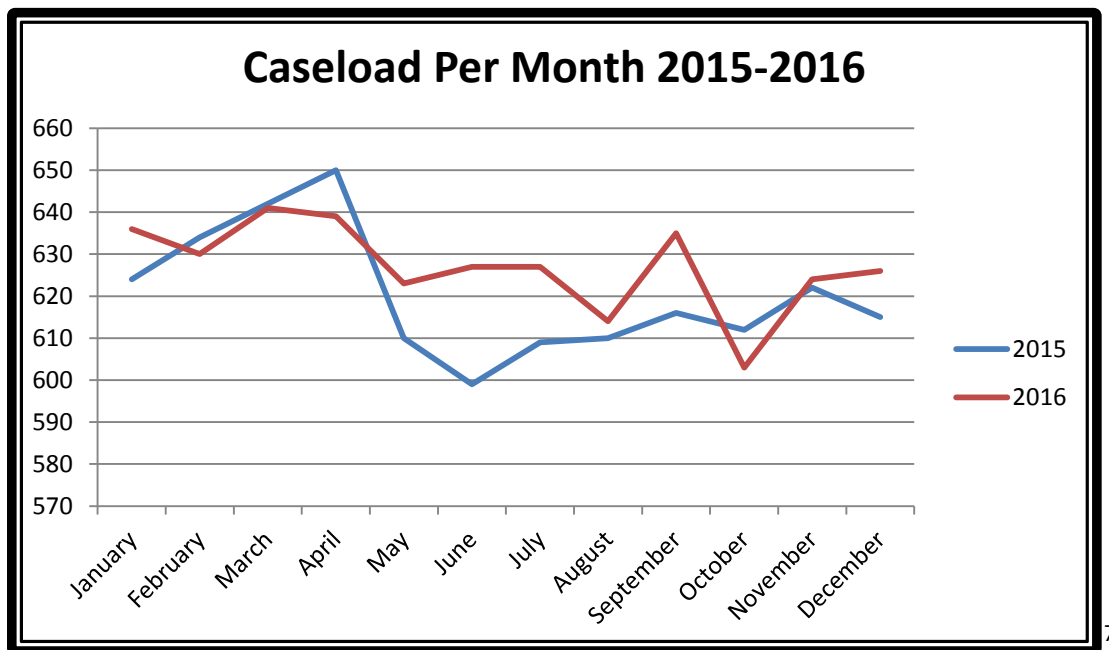
<sup>4</sup> OMSSA Information Alert, February 25, 2016; 2016 Provincial Budget Provides Good Investments in Affordable Housing, Budget Highlights

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.lco-cdo.org/en/our-current-projects/vulnerable-workers-and-precarious-work>

## City of Stratford - Ontario Works Service Plan 2017-2018



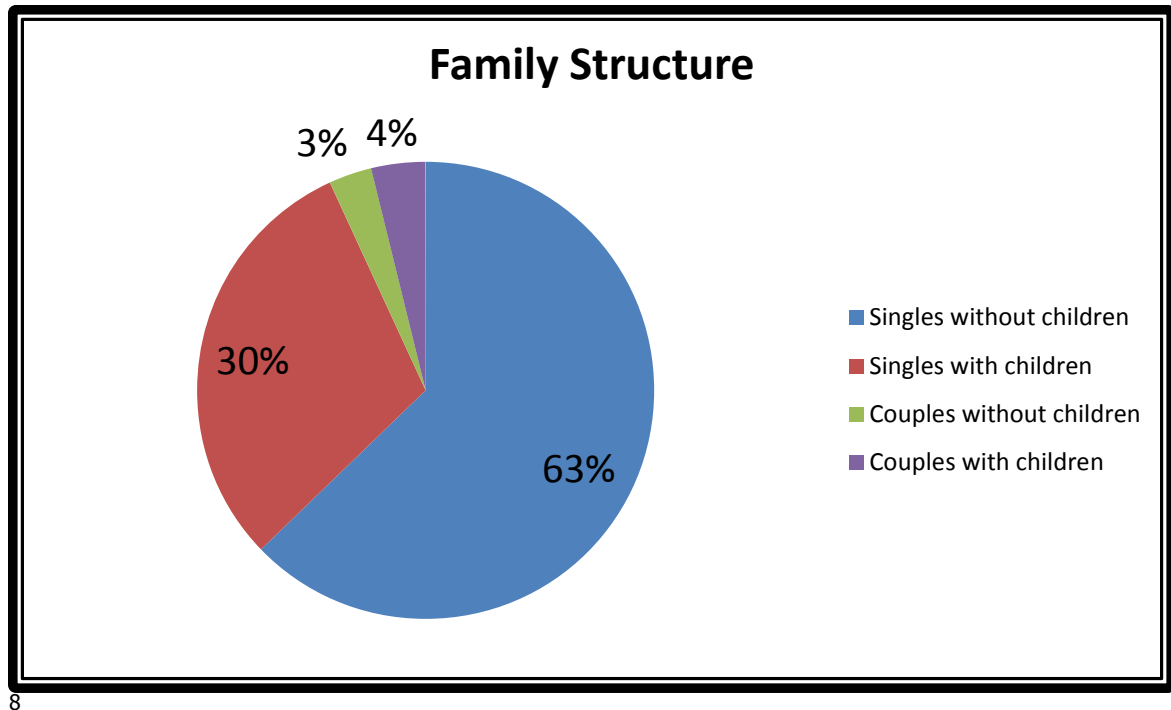
The chart below reflects the last two years of caseload by month. This data suggests there is no pattern to predict consistent spikes in caseload. June saw the lowest caseload count in 2015 and October saw the lowest in 2016.



<sup>6</sup> Social Assistance Operations Performance Report December 2016

<sup>7</sup> Social Assistance Operations Performance Report December 2016

## City of Stratford - Ontario Works Service Plan 2017-2018



The chart above shows that singles without children (63%) continue to dominate our caseload. This poses significant challenges finding affordable housing options for single-income clients. When planning service delivery for this two-year cycle we continue to keep this group front and center since it accounts for over half our total case count.

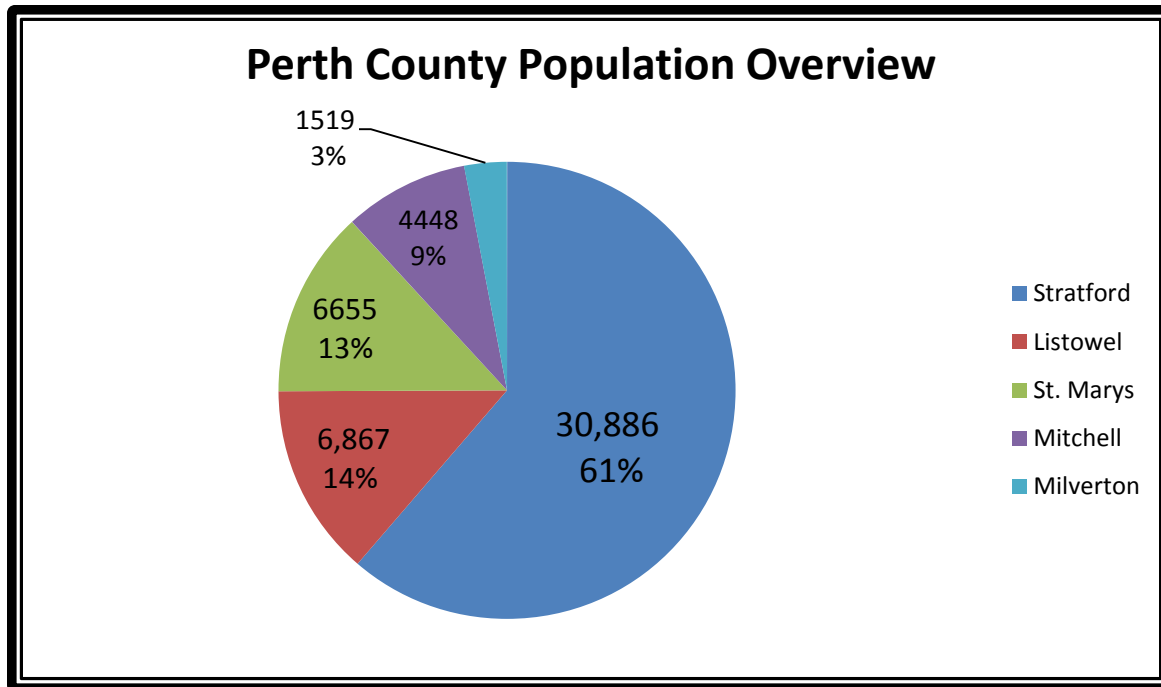
### Local Labour Market

According to *The Migration Characteristics and Trends Perth County*,<sup>9</sup> published by the Four County Labour Market Planning Board in September 2016, Perth County attracted 13,309 people through in-migration and lost 13,093 to out-migration, with net-migration resulting in a modest increase of 216 people between 2009 and 2014. The 0 to 17 age cohort accounted for the greatest net gain of people, at 504, while the 18 to 24 cohort accounted for the greatest net loss. The greatest net gain of people (390) into Perth County was from foreign countries, followed by Waterloo, Huron and Wellington County.<sup>9</sup> Overall, Perth County saw a 1% growth for this time period, which is far below the provincial average of 5.7% and the Canadian average of 5.9%.

<sup>8</sup> Ontario Works Caseload at a Glance

<sup>9</sup> "Migration Characteristics and Trends," Four County Labour Market Planning Board, September 16 pgs.3-6

## City of Stratford - Ontario Works Service Plan 2017-2018



According to Canada Census data from 2011, Perth County's regional population was 75,112, which constitutes a 4% population increase since 1996. We look forward to seeing more current data in the 2017 service plan as 2016 Census data is due to be released later this year.<sup>10</sup>

### Labour Force Participation Rates

	Perth County @ 42,455	Ontario
In the labour force	71.0%	6,864,990
Participation rate	67.1%	65.5%
Employment rate	5.5%	60.6%
Unemployment rate	4.6%	8.3%

The Canada National Household Survey in 2011 showed that statistically Perth County has a higher participation rate and employment rate than the Province of Ontario as a whole.<sup>11</sup> As recently as April 2017, the unemployment rate was at 4.6% for Perth County, which is the lowest unemployment rate of any region in Ontario.<sup>12</sup> The province shows an unemployment rate of 6.4% for March 2017.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Canada NHS, 2011 for Perth County Census Division

<sup>11</sup> Canada NHS, 2011 for Perth County Census Division

<sup>12</sup> [http://srv129.services.gc.ca/ei\\_regions/eng/scentont.aspx](http://srv129.services.gc.ca/ei_regions/eng/scentont.aspx)

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux>



## City of Stratford - Ontario Works Service Plan 2017-2018

### Labour Force by Population Perth County

Occupation	# Employed	% of Workforce
Sales and Service	8,840	21.1%
Trades, Transport and Equipment Operators	7,620	18.2%
Business, Finance and Administration	5,600	13.4%
Management Occupations	5,130	12.2%
Manufacturing and Utilities	4,065	9.7%
Education, Law, Social, Government & Community	3,460	8.5%
Health Occupations	2,805	6.7%
Natural Resources , Agriculture & Related Occupations	1,660	4.0%
Natural and Applied Sciences	1,525	3.6%
Art, Culture, Recreation and Sport	1,075	2.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>41,780</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above chart outlines Perth County's top 10 occupations within the labour force, with Sales and Service holding the dominant spot within the county.<sup>14</sup>

In 2014, The Four County Labour Market Planning Board released a study, *Understanding the Skills Gap in Perth County*. The primary undertaking of this study was to examine the existing labour force and to forecast employers' future skill requirements. This was intended to help identify labour pool gaps critical to the sustainability and growth of existing and future employers in Perth County.<sup>15</sup>

These are the occupational skills local employers were looking for:

- Team work
- Verbal communication
- Organizational skills
- Written communication
- Social/interpersonal skills
- 

Employers expressed having difficulty finding employees with the following skill sets:

- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Leadership skills
- Organizational skills
- A small number of employers are experiencing challenges in specific sectors (health, agriculture, construction, education).

<sup>14</sup> Canada NHS, 2011 for Perth County Census Division

<sup>15</sup> The First Step - Understanding the Skills Gap in Perth County  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/276269083\\_The\\_First\\_Step\\_-\\_Understanding\\_the\\_Skills\\_Gap\\_in\\_Perth\\_County](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/276269083_The_First_Step_-_Understanding_the_Skills_Gap_in_Perth_County)

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Opportunity Lives Here<sup>16</sup>, a website launched in 2015 by Perth County, Stratford and St. Marys, highlights local job opportunities and training supports. Opportunity Lives Here completed a report aimed at transforming the local labour market by 2020. The goal is to have employers, individuals and local service providers tackle the ongoing labour market challenges. The report indicates that across industries there is significant demand for both general labour and skilled trades. This demand points to the existence of 'two tracks' of labour market demand in Perth County, Stratford and St. Marys. On the one hand, employers are struggling to find, recruit and retain highly skilled individuals, particularly skilled tradespersons, truck drivers, and engineers. At the same time, manufacturing and construction firms in the region are also struggling to recruit suitable individuals for lower wage general labour employment.<sup>16</sup>

### **In-demand occupations**

- **Agriculture/Farm:** Machinery operators, drivers, seed specialists, general labour
- **Construction:** Site supervisors, drivers, finishers, skilled trades, labourers
- **Financial Services:** Accountants, bank tellers, investment specialists
- **Health and long-term care:** Personal support workers, registered nurses, administrative staff
- **Hospitality:** Front desk personnel, kitchen and restaurant staff
- **Manufacturing:** Skilled trades, CNC Setters, engineers, welders, millwrights
- **Not-for-profit:** Early-child educators, personal support workers, fundraisers
- **Retail:** Store management, cashiers, drivers
- **Services:** Customer service, sales executives, IT technicians
- **Transportation:** Truck drivers, mechanics, administrative staff<sup>17</sup>

With this knowledge, we are able to tailor training for our participants to meet the needs of the local employers.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

It is of utmost importance that the City of Stratford CMSM collaborates and has strong partnerships at every level of the organization. Recognizing that, we are investing significant time networking at the local level with Partners in Resource for Employment in Perth County (PREP), the Huron-Perth Mental Health and Addiction Network, at the regional level working with Southwest Employment Supports, the Business Process and Technology working group, and the Strategic Management Group. As previously mentioned in the "Ministry Priorities" section we continue having a strong partnership with our local Ontario Disability Support Program, case conferencing on files that are

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<sup>16</sup> [http://opportunityliveshere.ca/wp-content/uploads/LM\\_2020Report\\_Final.pdf](http://opportunityliveshere.ca/wp-content/uploads/LM_2020Report_Final.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> [http://opportunityliveshere.ca/wp-content/uploads/LM\\_2020Report\\_Final.pdf](http://opportunityliveshere.ca/wp-content/uploads/LM_2020Report_Final.pdf)

## City of Stratford - Ontario Works Service Plan 2017-2018

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being transferred and ensuring that we are able to provide excellent customer service to the client during this process. At the provincial level, we're collaborating with the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association and the Addiction Services Initiatives advisory committee. These partnerships allow us to stay abreast of current issues that may impact our service delivery and ensure we are implementing best practices in a timely manner to improve client services. As we move forward with the human service integration model we continue to look for partnerships that can help us coordinate services and better serve our clients. Outlined below are a few of our coordinated efforts and projects:

### **Child Care Improvements**

For many years we have been completing a joint intake for subsidized childcare. The child care intake worker works with the Ontario Works caseworkers and case conferencing is used to ensure families are informed of all childcare options as they move forward in their outcome planning. In September 2017, we will be initiating a new program called 'Eat, Play and Learn' for our sole-support participants with pre-school-aged children. An Ontario Works caseworker will be working in partnership with a resource teacher one morning a month to deliver this program. It will teach parenting skills, identify healthy eating options and include an employment life-skills component.

### **Housing Initiatives**

There are multiple projects currently underway with the City of Stratford Housing Division and the Ontario Works Department as the City moves towards the integration of services between these two departments and implements the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan for Stratford, Perth County and St. Marys.

- From April 10-13, the City of Stratford completed its Homelessness Enumeration Registry Week for the 20,000 Homes Campaign. The 20,000 Homes Campaign is a national movement of communities working together to permanently house 20,000 of Canada's most vulnerable homeless people by July 1, 2018. Multiple community agencies participated and lent their time and space so we could identify a Point in Time (PIT) count of Perth County's homeless population. Once we have identified the people with the highest acuity, the Housing Division will commit 10 units for rapid rehousing these individuals.
- The Ontario Works and Housing Divisions continue to meet on a bi-weekly basis to review clients at risk of losing their housing. In many cases we are able to bring in wraparound supports to help mitigate some of these circumstances, while leveraging the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative Funds (CHPI).
- As previously mentioned, Ontario Works has dedicated an intensive case management caseworker to work in conjunction with the housing outreach worker and the Housing Division in hope of rapidly re-housing these individuals and providing them with wraparound supports to improve their employment outcomes.

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### **Integration of Social Services**

In keeping with provincial frameworks, the City of Stratford Social Services Department continues to move toward the creation of a modern, responsive, efficient and cost-effective and sustainable service delivery system that is client-centred and supports integration across our Ontario Works, Housing, and Child Care Divisions.

The department established the following deliverable as part of strategic directions presented to Council for 2017-2018: **Improve system and service integration to enhance citizen service in social services.** This will include an assessment of existing space through a feasibility study that will establish a one point access for Social Services clients, and a review of all department services with view to streamlining.

### **Financial skills development**

It is understood that many clients experience difficulty managing their finances. In many cases these individuals find themselves at risk of being homeless, or having their utilities cut off. The Ontario Works department, in partnership with the Housing Division and The Local Community Food Centre ('The Local') are currently working on a plan to leverage funding to create a "voluntary trusteeship program," a service for participants on Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Support Program and federal government pensions. This program would provide money management assistance, while teaching life skills and financial management that could enable participants to eventually move towards independent lifestyles.

### **Advancing employment**

The City of Stratford has been actively involved in helping develop the Skills Advance Ontario pilot locally. Local manufacturers have indicated they do not have enough skilled workers to fill the positions they have available. This sector-focused workforce development pilot has brought together local manufacturers, local Employment Ontario Providers, the economic development departments, the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD) and Ontario Works in an effort to develop a program that could provide training to jobseekers building their soft skills and manufacturing-specific hard skills so they can successfully attain an entry level job in the local manufacturing industry. Program implementation should begin in the Fall of 2017.

In late 2016, Ontario Works caseworkers have resumed their quarterly meetings with Conestoga College, one of our local Employment Ontario providers. This creates an opportunity to tweak processes, review referrals and case conference on some of our most difficult cases and scenarios.

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### **Intensive supports for clients who have multiple barriers**

The City of Stratford caseworkers will look at intensifying our supports to those clients who present with multi-barriers and have been on assistance for a period of more than one year. The Ontario Works employees were trained in April 2017 in "Mental Health First Aid," to enhance their skills and knowledge in this area. Although we currently refer to local psychologists for Cognitive Assessments and Mental Health Assessments we will concentrate on this referral process and increase this service for clients. In many cases after these assessments from the reports received the caseworker is able to identify what type of work the client would be successful at and gear the Outcome Plans job search towards successful employment for the client.

### **Gaps**

In 2016, the House of Blessing, a Stratford-based non-profit organization providing food, clothing and support programs to people in need, decided to end their 'Cooking on a Budget' and life skills programming. Although this initially appeared to create a service gap for our participants, we have attempted to enhance other services already available to accommodate this ongoing need. Our contract with Family Services Perth-Huron, which provides individual counseling on family issues for our participants, will now incorporate additional supports into their one-on-one service if and when required, covering such topics as money management. In September 2016, our program 'Eat, Play, and Learn,' will include a component on healthy cooking, and 'The Local' continues to offer programming pertaining to healthy eating choices.

## **PROGRAM MANAGEMENT**

### **Intake**

We currently have four intake staff whose duties include completing Ontario Works applications. They gather as much data as possible during the intake in order to streamline the eligibility process when they meet with a caseworker. Intake is completed in person, over the phone and online. Referencing December's Social Assistance Performance Reports (2016), it shows we completed 774 applications in 2016, averaging 65 a month. Averages of 10.4 are completed online, representing just over 6% of the total applications. We continue to progress towards an integration of services within the intake role. By the end of 2017, a space assessment will have been completed to allow for housing, childcare and Ontario Works applications to be centralized and completed by one unit.

### **Emergency Assistance**

This is an area where the Stratford CMSM has made an effort to increase service delivery since January 2017. We assigned a caseworker to specialize in clients who are homeless or precariously housed. This caseworker does not have set intake appointments, but instead sees clients on an emergency, as-required basis. The



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caseworker also works closely with the Housing Division and the outreach worker to maximize the community supports required to acquire stable housing.

### **Eligibility Determination**

December's Social Assistance Performance Reports (2016) shows our average number of business days from screening to a financial eligibility decision is 5.33. Although this is above the legislated 4 days, we are pleased to see we have been able to reduce this number from our previous average of 6.75 days in 2015. The office will continue to look for ways to reduce the time it takes. Some of our strategies include implementing a 'wait appointment,' for those people who can't get appointments with a caseworker within 4 business days. To remedy this situation, these people are given assigned times to come into the office so they're ready to take an appointment left vacant by any 'no-show' existing clients. If there are not any 'no-shows', the person is seen by another case worker. We will also be implementing an emergency caseworker position so these participants will not take up regular intake times.

### **Eligibility Review and Verification**

Eligibility determination is made during the caseworker's intake interview. At this time, the City of Stratford continues with the 'Super-worker' model where the participant has one caseworker who monitors their ongoing financial eligibility, as well as manages their outcome plan to meet legislative requirements. We currently have specialized workers in the following areas since this increases service delivery for these populations: Victims of Domestic Violence, Addiction Service Initiative, Youth (under 25 years of age, as well as LEAP), ODSP participating adults, as well as the homeless or precariously housed. And since our North Perth population can find transportation a barrier to service, a Stratford caseworker goes up to Listowel two to three times per week.

The Eligibility Review Officer (ERO) also works in a proactive manner to mediate complaints before they escalate. This past year, we have concentrated on the ERO working closely with intake staff to review any initial issues so they are addressed in a timely manner. We abide by the Province's policies with respect to portability of overpayment process. Every terminated case with an overpayment is reviewed by the ERO to ensure the overpayment assessment is accurate and is noted accordingly in SAMS.

The Eligibility Verification Process Worker (EVP): The Ministry re-launched EVP in April 2017. The Stratford CMSM decided to put one dedicated worker in this position, with administrative support offered by the intake team and back-up duties assigned to the ERO. The Stratford EVP's process was reconfigured to meet Ministry requirements. The

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audit coordinator role was assigned to the ERO and the Auditor role is assigned to the dedicated EVP worker. Both the Audit Coordinator and the Auditor are participating in the bi-weekly teleconferences to ensure that best practices are adopted and the implementation of this program goes smoothly.

### **Family Support**

Acknowledging pending legislative changes that were then forthcoming in February 2017, making Child Support exempt as income, we realigned the new mandate for family support functions among caseworkers and the ERO. We have also developed a strong partnership with the local Family Law Information Centre (FLIC) to support our clients if they wish to pursue child support.

### **Participation Agreements**

In the Stratford's CMSM, the caseworker's schedule is between five and nine appointments per week in order to review participant outcome plans and meet legislative requirements. All employment-related benefits are explained to the participants and once a collaborative agreement has been reached referrals are made to appropriate partnering agencies to increase their employability. For those participants who require childcare, licensed and unlicensed options are outlined, and the fee-subsidy childcare program is reviewed. As stated previously, some of our caseworkers carry specialized caseloads since they have specific training to ensure they can understand a participant's needs, offer support, and promote self-reliance through employment.

### **Oversight Strategy**

The City of Stratford places a high priority on delivering the Ontario Works program in accordance with legislative requirements, program directives and delivery standards. Our oversight strategy includes a number of ongoing checks and balances to ensure program integrity is maintained, and we use risk management techniques to prevent negative outcomes and ensure day to day operations run smoothly. These are some of the ways we implement the oversight strategy to identify risks and improve processes:

- Consultative decision making in new processes with staff
- Randomized file reviews by the ERO
- New staff have their files reviewed by the ERO for the first 3 months to ensure they are meeting legislative requirements
- Regular staff meetings to review legislation, clearinghouses and discuss current local business practices
- Staff sit on sub-committees within the office to review policies, procedures, and changes that need to be implemented due to SAMS or legislative changes
- Monthly meetings with the South West Business Processes and Technology Working Group (BTP) to discuss common issues and interpretation of new legislation, or SAMS-related processes

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- Pay lists are reviewed daily by staff, as well as the financial clerk, to ensure payments are correct
- Liaising with the Provincial Program Supervisor to discuss emerging issues or interpretation of Ontario Works legislation.

### **Subsidy Claims**

In October 2016, the City of Stratford submitted its first Subsidy Claim Submission to the province after the Ministry's hiatus in this program. Prior to submission the claim is reviewed by four of our staff members to ensure accuracy. A local process was developed using a timeline to ensure each claim was submitted by the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month with supporting documents. Since then, we have had very few issues as we are following the Subsidy Claim Guidelines. Because we are a small CMSM it is crucial to have back-up for each role, as well as strong communication around when employees are off work to ensure both Ministry guidelines and timelines are met.

### **Analysis of Resources**

For 2017, the Stratford CMSM is hiring a Supervisor of Social Services, who report to the Manager of Ontario Works. Duties will include supervising the daily work of staff, operations and service delivery in accordance with corporate and legislative requirements/standards. This includes client intake, placement, related record keeping and reporting, complaint resolution, legislative compliance, as well as acting as a lead technical resource for SAMS.

### **Supportive Approaches through Innovative Learning (SAIL)**

In February 2017, the City of Stratford CMSM sent a caseworker to Toronto to participate in the pilot for the new SAIL curriculum. The three-days training emphasized:

- Problem solving
- Discretionary decision making
- Conflict management
- Conflict resolution
- Four-step problem solving
- Negotiating
- Confrontation
- Adapting behaviours

We look forward to the Ministry revitalizing this program and look for opportunities to collaborate and participate in the future.

### **Overview of Learning Supports**

The City of Stratford CMSM continues its commitment to providing staff with relevant

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training opportunities that can enhance service delivery. Some of the training opportunities staff have participated in or will be participating in include:

- Core legislative training for new hires
- OMSSA Zone 1 training
- Community guest speakers at staff meetings
- Motivational interviewing (Housing Intensive Caseworker)
- Theory and practice of trauma informed services (Housing Intensive Caseworker)
- Mental Health First Aid (all front line workers)
- Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT)
- Joint process training with Huron Ontario Works and ODSP
- Engaging challenging clients working with specialized populations in addictions (ASI caseworker)
- Counseling techniques in addiction practice (ASI caseworker)

### **Strategies to Deliver French Language Services**

We have one caseworker fluent in French and print off applications in French when required. The Director of Social Services is also bilingual and able to address and review any issues in both official languages.

### **Business Practices**

In 2016-2017 the Stratford CMSM reviewed many of our local business practices to ensure we were meeting the standards of service delivery. One area of concentration was to review employees' roles and responsibilities and to implement a safeguard, ensuring there was at least one backup employee trained for each role. Although we have not yet completed this task on all levels, we have ensured that the most critical areas with the greatest risk management are covered (e.g. financial clerk, local systems support clerk and intake clerk trained to produce daily payments).

## **STRATEGIES AND OUTCOMES**

### **Service Strategy**

The caseworkers carry between 90 and 100 cases, with the exception of the Intensive Case Homelessness Caseworker and the Addiction Services Caseworker, who carry reduced caseloads of approximately 35 and 70 respectively.

Keeping the caseloads in this range is key to improving our clients' outcomes in regards to employment and earnings. It allows for caseworkers to see clients on a timely basis and provide one-on-one service. Through employment outcome planning, the Ontario Works participant and caseworker can work together on a plan that can increase participants' employability. The Outcome Plans are designed to be tailored to each participant's unique requirements. The first goal is employment, and this one-on-one service helps people find and keep jobs. With the completion of the MCSS assessment

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the caseworker can identify what supports are required and what employment path to commence. This may take the form of caseworker support in an independent job search, or making an appropriate referral to a community partner agency. In many cases, the client may be referred to multiple partnering agencies to increase their employability. If clients do not have their Grade 12 then a referral to Basic Education can be made in conjunction with a referral to Employment Ontario to help with job search techniques.

Once clients have achieved employment, the caseworkers provide ongoing support helping them achieve financial independence. As per our Social Assistance Operational Reports, at any given time there may be up to 20% of the caseload working, but not earning enough to take them off Ontario Works. At this point, the caseworker helps the client to modify the outcome plan, accommodating their employment while encouraging them to pursue additional options. This might include increasing their hours through a second job, continuing the job search for higher paid employment, volunteering to gain new work experience, or starting a training program (Basic Education) that could increase the skill level needed for a higher paid position. These strategies and measures may eventually lead to financial independence

As part of our holistic approach to employment outcomes, the City of Stratford works in partnership and collaboration with a number of agencies and services as outlined on page 22. Clients are referred to the services and program listed in order to help increase their employability and move towards the goal of employment and earnings.



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### Linking Strategies to Outcome Measures:

Measure	2016 Baseline	2016 Stratford's Average	2016 Provincial Average
Average Employment Earnings	\$708.00	\$736.00	\$772.50
% of Caseload with Employment Earnings	12.0%	17.9%	12.2%
% of Terminations Exiting to Employment	12.8%	19.7%	15.1%

Measure Baseline 2017	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual Average
Average Employment Earnings	\$702	\$776	\$727	\$657	\$716
% of Caseload with Employment Earnings	15.6%	15.6%	15.6%	15.6%	15.6%
% of Terminations Exiting to Employment	9.2%	14.3%	14.3%	14.3%	13.0%

The chart above was first presented in the Environmental Scan section. It indicates Stratford's 2016 averages, as well as our projections for 2017.

### Average Employment Earnings

As previously stated in the Environmental Scan, part-time positions are showing the highest growth. This coupled with the fact that the sales and service industry tends to be a lower-paying sector and accounts for 21% of Perth County's labour force, make this earnings outcome more challenging. Although we met our target last year this is one area where we fall below the provincial average. As a result of the continued trend in part-time and precarious employment we have predicted a conservative baseline for 2017. Our strategy to meet this outcome will be addressed in the following ways:

- Caseworkers will continue to support clients who are employed part-time and encourage and promote the benefits of full-time employment
- Employment-related benefits will be promoted (Full-Time Employment Benefit, Earnings Exemptions, Extended Employment Health Benefits)
- Caseworkers will work closely with the Childcare Division and help facilitate formal as well as informal child care
- Caseworkers will work closely with our Employment Ontario Providers to encourage employment that results in increased earnings
- Clients will be encouraged to attain their Grade 12 diploma if they do not have it, or increase their employment skills in an area that would secure higher paid employment.

**Monitoring:** The monthly Social Assistance Operations Performance Report will be referred to, ensuring we are meeting our outcome target. Random file reviews will be conducted to ensure that data is being captured accurately in SAMS.

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### **Percentage of Caseloads with Employment Earnings**

In this outcome measure we surpass the provincial average. We projected a baseline of 12%, but we averaged 17.9%. The provincial average is 12.2%. This statistic coincides with the low unemployment rate in our region. Since we surpassed our expectation for 2016 we plan to increase this outcome to 15.7% in 2017. Strategies to meet this goal are as follows:

- Caseworkers will use the MCSS assessment tool to ensure clients are referred to appropriate supports
- Caseworkers will meet legislative requirements of updating clients' outcome plans every three, four and six months, as required
- Strong liaising with the Employment Ontario sites to ensure employment is an outcome measure for clients and that they are developing relevant skills, and knowledge of the labour market
- Employment-related benefits will be promoted (Full-Time Employment Benefit, Earnings Exemptions, Extended Employment Health Benefits)
- Where clients are working and not exiting due to employment earnings, we will look for opportunities in training and education which can increase their employability
- Clients who are deferred will be encouraged to participate in part-time employment, if feasible.

**Monitoring:** The monthly Social Assistance Operations Performance Report will be referred to, ensuring we are meeting our outcome target. Random file reviews will be conducted to ensure data is being captured accurately in SAMS.

### **Percentage of Terminations Exiting to Employment**

In this outcome measure for 2016 we forecast 10% and managed to improve our statistics to 19.7%, which is above the provincial average of 15.1%. Our forecast for 2017 is 13.1%, which is a 0.5% increase over 2016. Strategies that we will use to increase our baseline for this measure will include:

- Ensuring caseworkers are capturing exit reasons
- Following up with Employment Ontario providers on employment outcomes
- Employment-related benefits will be promoted (Full-Time Employment Benefit, Earnings Exemptions, Extended Employment Health Benefits)
- Working closely with clients so they inform us when employment is attained.

**Monitoring:** The monthly Social Assistance Operations Performance Report will be referred to, ensuring we are meeting our outcome target. Random file reviews will also be conducted to ensure data is being captured accurately in SAMS.

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### **Action Steps and Resources**

In order to successfully implement the above strategies, it is important that our caseload ratios remain consistent. This will allow staff to effectively serve the people needing assistance. It is also important for staff to have strong working relationships with partnering agencies, as well as clients, in order to ensure that outcome targets are being met and data captured accurately.

To achieve improved employment outcomes for Ontario Works participants it is crucial that staff keep up to date with the training the Ministry provides and promotes. Most notably, we will be looking forward to the re-launch of SAIL and implementing those competencies. Further training will focus on a holistic approach with education around supporting those with multiple barriers to employment (Mental Health First Aid, Housing First Philosophy, and Bridges Out of Poverty). For the caseworkers serving our more complex cases, motivational interviewing and counseling will be offered.

The Stratford CMSM continues to work in conjunction with local community partners, while actively seeking and embracing any partnerships or services that can positively increase client outcomes. As this report mentioned earlier, we are involved in the current pilot project with Skills Advanced Ontario and the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development and we are trying to get funds to develop a Voluntary Trustee Program for recipients of OW, ODSP and government pensions that could teach clients life skills and financial management skills.

### **Stakeholder Linkages and Building Quality Relationships**

The City of Stratford CMSM perseveres to serve our participants' in a holistic manner. It is recognized that not all participants are 'job ready' when they first come on assistance. It is therefore important that we build trusting, quality relationships with our clients so their outcome planning leads to effective referrals where they can address barriers and move along the employability spectrum. Similarly, it is of utmost importance to maintain and strengthen quality relationships with our community partners in order to leverage our funding and services in ways that best serve these clients. With this in mind, the Stratford CMSM employees sit on various local committees whose terms of reference deal with varying aspects of how poverty affects individuals. These include food security, housing and homelessness, mental health and addictions, employment and training. Having a voice at these tables, as well as individual meetings with our partnering agencies, help us to build strong partnerships, identify service gaps, and implement new programming and services that can enhance our clients' lives. For example, the Community Legal Clinic covers transportation costs to help get OW clients to their internal appeals for ODSP. In addition, for those clients seeking the Community Legal Clinic's advice on eviction prevention, transportation costs are accessed through the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI).

Strong communication with our partnering agencies is also key to ensuring clients are following through with the referrals being made. Proactive measures like booking the

## City of Stratford - Ontario Works Service Plan 2017-2018

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appointment with the referral agency during the outcome plan, or doing monthly follow-ups to confirm the client is participating, are important strategies to confirm the delivery partner is helping achieve the employment outcomes of employment and earnings. Fortunately, in many cases the partner agency phones us when they have lost contact with the client, or they provide us with monthly updates and outcomes so we can mitigate the situation quickly.

This is also being done at an inter-departmental level as the City of Stratford moves towards the Human Service Integration model. As we start integrating Ontario Works, Childcare, and Housing, we are streamlining our services, building stronger partnerships inter-departmentally, and reducing duplication of services.

### **Addressing Service Gaps**

One of our key areas of concern is how to best service clients with multiple barriers to employment. Although the City of Stratford has strong partnering agencies, many of these clients have not been progressing as quickly as hoped towards the goal of sustainable employment. There will be two approaches to addressing this area of concern. The caseworkers will increase their referrals to locally contracted psychologists for assessment and employment recommendations. We have also decided to address this issue in-house by having some caseworkers carry specialized caseloads. For example, a caseworker is performing intensive case management with our homeless and precariously housed, since a client without a place to live is especially difficult to employ. It is hoped that with these interventions clients can be rapidly re-housed into stable housing, barriers to employment can be reduced and the potential cost to the government of re-housing avoided.

### **Increased Employability Strategies**

Increasing our employability strategies can strengthen the Ontario Works vision of increasing individual employability, with the end goal of sustainable employment and increased financial independence.

Guaranteeing our employees take a holistic approach means clients are supported in every aspect of their pursuit for financial independence, thus increasing opportunities to break the cycle of poverty.

As we move forward in increasing our client services with intensive case management for specialized populations, while enhancing our collaboration with City of Stratford Housing, Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development and the Employment Ontario sites, our outcomes for 2017 should reflect our efforts to increase participants' employability.



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### **Monitoring Service Strategies**

The Manager of Ontario Works monitors the achievement of outcome strategies on a monthly basis using the Social Assistance Operations Performance Reports. Quarterly progress reports are sent to the local Ministry office. Any target anomalies will be addressed with the Ministry's program supervisor to ensure they are dealt with in a timely matter and that proper targeting is achieved. Caseworkers will ensure their SAMS data is entered accurately, and random file reviews by the ERO will confirm closure reasons.

### **SUMMARY**

The management and staff of the City of Stratford Ontario Works Division are committed to providing quality, holistic services to all Ontario Works participants.

The Ontario Works Division will continue to work with community partners to identify gaps and find ways to fill them either with existing services or new programming to address them.

The CMSM will also continue to support and work diligently with the Province on any forthcoming projects or mandates.

The City of Stratford Ontario Works Service Plan has been prepared in accordance with the Ministry Guidelines, Ontario Work Policy Directives, and Memorandums. The 2017-2018 Service Plan is respectfully submitted to the South West Regional Office of the Ministry of Community and Social Services for approval.



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## MANAGEMENT REPORT

**Date:** August 9, 2017  
**To:** Social Services Sub-committee  
**From:** Kim McElroy Manager of Ontario Works  
Carole Desmeules, Director of Social Services  
CEO, Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation  
**Report#:** SOC17-014  
**Attachments:** Social Assistance Service Modernization Strategy (MCSS)

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**Title:** Social Assistance Service Modernization Strategy

**Objective:** To provide a preliminary report on the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) Social Assistance Service Modernization Strategy.

**Background:** The Ministry of Community and Social Services has made a commitment to modernizing the delivery of social assistance supports and systems for Ontario residents. This is intended to improve the client experience, and achieve administrative efficiencies that will enable staff to have greater time and focus when working with clients.

In 2016, MCSS established a Service Delivery Modernization Working Group (SDMWG) to develop a roadmap for modernizing social assistance delivery. The Ministry will launch the Social Assistance Service Modernization strategy and a related 5 year roadmap in September 2017.

The strategy and roadmap outlines improvements to address program issues which have been raised by staff and delivery partners and also builds on the foundation Social Assistance Management System (SAMS) has provided as a modern technology platform.

The strategy recognizes that clients expect modern, client focused services that meet their complex needs. The clients are looking for a more respectful client experience with greater

flexibility and improved access to their case file information including, but not limited to, 24/7 and self-serve options.<sup>1</sup>

**Analysis:** The Ministry acknowledges that multiple channels and tactics will provide several opportunities for managers, staff and clients to contribute to and engage in activities related to service modernization.

The current vision statement for the Social Assistance Service Modernization Strategy is as follows: “A modern, responsive, efficient, cost-effective and sustainable service delivery system that is client-centred and supports integration across programs.”

The Objectives outlined through the strategy are as follows:

- Focus on high impact activities; realize cost reductions through administrative efficiencies while removing work from the system;
- Shift from enforcement focus to a risk-based paradigm;
- Improve experience, access and usability; and
- Modernize tools, process and policy while fostering enterprise-wide and private sector partnerships.

The Ministry has identified two goals in the Modernization Strategy, the first being to improve experience and outcomes for clients, and the second is to realize administrative efficiencies.<sup>2</sup>

The changes will be made in priority areas including intake, client communications, benefits delivery, digital tools and processes and payment administration.

By concentrating on these areas the strategy will enable:

- Increased outcome and service planning with clients;
- Faster application process and easier access to benefits through a risk-based approach;
- Additional self-serve options for clients, such as Mobile Solution;
- Reduced manual administration and paper based processes, phone calls and paper cheques; and
- Electronic access to case files.<sup>3</sup>

As Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM), the City of Stratford Social Services Department would regularly liaise with Ministry, staff and service delivery partners in regards to implementing and supporting the modernization strategy.

The management team will also facilitate discussions with staff in order to advise the Ministry of our local perspectives and ideas in the implementation of the initiatives. As a

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<sup>1</sup> Social Assistance Service Modernization Strategy “empowering people through modern client-centred service” 2017

<sup>2</sup> Social Assistance Service Modernization Strategy, empowering people through modern client-centred service, 2017

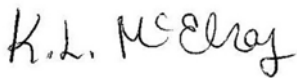
first step, Ontario Works management and staff will work collaboratively to complete the Social Assistance Modernization Strategy Roadmap Workbook in order to provide initial feedback to the Ministry in August.

This Social Assistance Modernization Strategy will be implemented in conjunction with the management team's Social Service Integration initiative. As the Department continues with the business review process to streamline services and enhance client experience, learnings from Social Assistance Modernization will be incorporated into the Integration initiative.

Additional reports and updates will be provided to Subcommittee and Council as information is available.

**Financial Impact:** The financial impact is unknown at this time at the local level. In 2018 the Ontario Works program will be funded 100% provincially, therefore it is projected this will have minimal financial impact locally.

**Staff Recommendation: THAT the preliminary report on the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) Social Assistance Service Modernization Strategy be received for information.**




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Kim McElroy, Manager of Ontario Works




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Carole Desmeules, Director of Social Services  
CEO, Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation




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Rob Horne, Chief Administrative Officer



# Social Assistance Service Modernization Strategy

Empowering people through modern client-centred service

## Vision

A modern, responsive, efficient, cost-effective and sustainable service delivery system that is client-centred and supports integration across programs

### Goals



**Improve experience and outcomes:** make services better, easier and more respectful for clients to access



**Realize administrative efficiencies:** automate and modernize processes and change the way work is done to allow staff to focus on high impact interactions with clients

### Objectives



Focus on **high impact activities:** realize cost reductions through administrative efficiencies while removing work from the system



Shift from enforcement focus to **risk-based** paradigm



Improve **experience, access and usability**



**Modernize tools,** process and policy while fostering enterprise-wide and private sector partnerships

### Priority Areas for Change

Intake

Client  
Communications

Digital Tools  
and Processes

Payment  
Administration

Benefits  
Delivery

### Guiding Principles



Access and Usability



Service System Efficiency



Service & Functional Integration

### Current Realities



Complex caseloads



Too much time spent on paper processes



Too many calls and voicemails



Lengthy intake process



Limited resources



Changing client needs

### Our Future



Applying for and receiving benefits is faster and easier



More 24/7 self-service channels for clients



Fewer unscheduled client walk-ins and phone calls



Less administration and more focus on our clients



Case documents and records are easier to access and available electronically

### Our Approach



#### Co-design

Pilot + prototype on small scale before implementing across the province

Working together to design solutions that make sense



#### Support

Provide tools and training before and after changes are implemented.

Corporate and local change leads

Ongoing engagement and communication



#### Evaluate

Measuring our business KPIs to ensure we are achieving our objectives, such as:

- More time and focus on client service
- Increased client and staff satisfaction

Join the conversation and help shape modern SA service delivery across Ontario



E-Mail



Call/Text



Survey



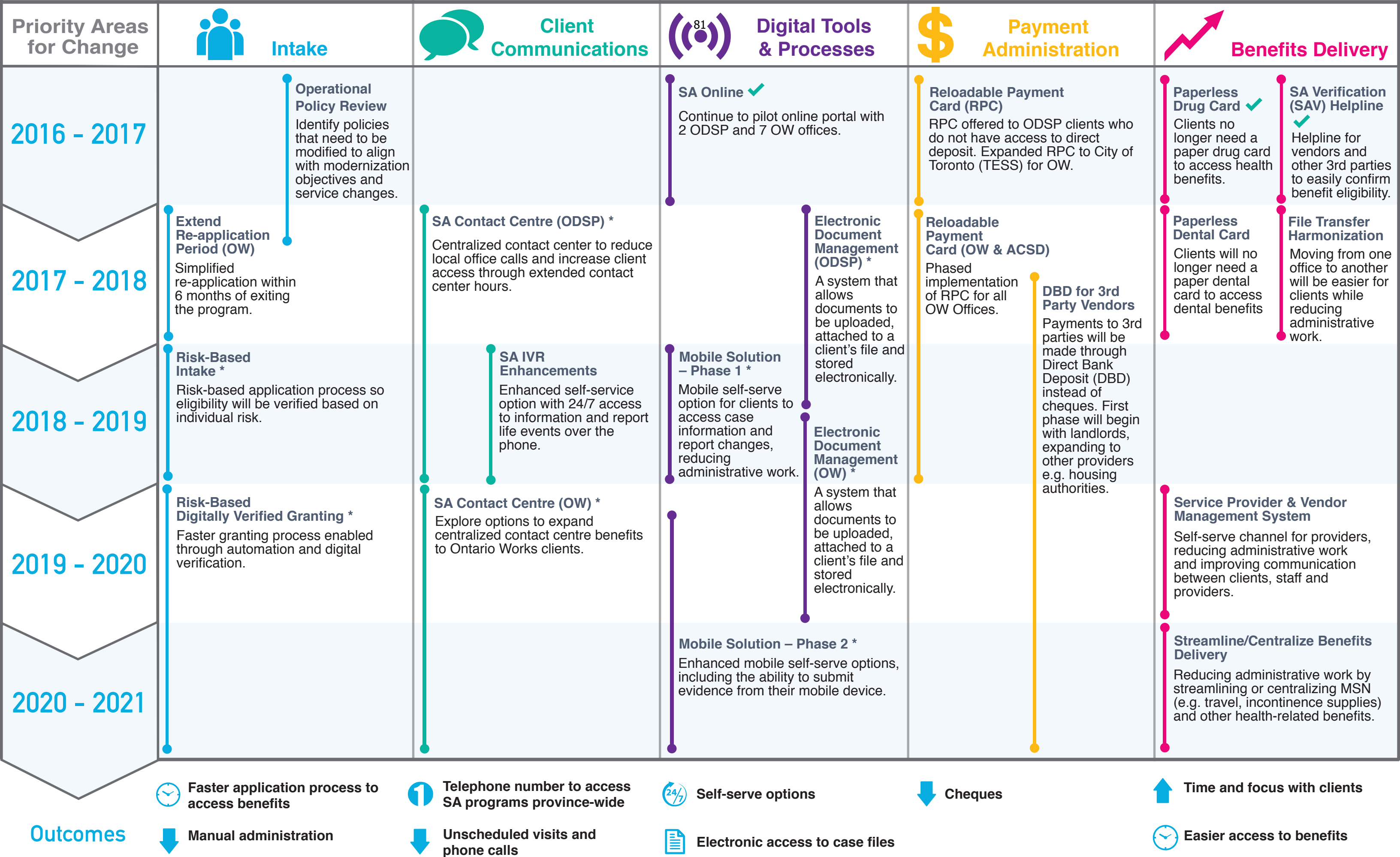
WebEx



Focus Groups

More information will be available on the SA Extranet in September 2017.  
In the meantime, if you have any questions, please speak with your manager or email [SASMB@ontario.ca](mailto:SASMB@ontario.ca)





\*Project will be piloted, assessed, and incrementally implemented where feasible. Prototypes will be developed prior to larger development on selected solutions such as SA contact center and Mobile Solution.