



SOCIAL SERVICES DIVISION

REPORT TO:	CHAIR AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS
DEPARTMENT:	HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES
PREPARED BY:	Lorri Kerrigan, Social Planner, Homelessness Prevention Anita Trusler, Supervisor, Health Promotion, Lambton Public Health
REVIEWED BY:	Valerie Colasanti, General Manager Andrew Taylor, General Manager, Lambton Public Health Stéphane Thiffeault, Chief Administrative Officer
MEETING DATE:	June 21, 2023
INFORMATION ITEM:	Housing, Homelessness & Addictions Summit

BACKGROUND

At the November 2, 2022 meeting of Lambton County Council ("**Council**"), staff was directed to facilitate a Housing, Homelessness and Addictions summit following Council's adoption of the following resolution:

#11: Bradley/White:

That the County of Lambton facilitate a Housing, Homelessness and Addictions Summit in the new year.

DISCUSSION

The Summit Planning committee included staff from the Social Services Division, Lambton Public Health (LPH) and the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Lambton-Kent. A consultant was engaged to facilitate the event and prepare an event report (Appendix 1). The Housing, Homelessness and Addictions Summit (the "**Summit**") was held on March 21, 2023, at the Lambton College Event Centre.

Attendees included senior leadership from several local organizations in the social services and health care sectors, front-line staff delivering services, faith groups, concerned citizens, First Nations, elected officials and individuals with lived experience who are members of the A Better Tomorrow (ABT) Committee.

The event, called “Stronger Together: Collaborating for a Vibrant Community” was well attended, with over 170 people in attendance. Response from the post-event feedback survey was positive as shown below:

- 94% of respondents agreed that they learned something new.
- 97% of respondents agreed that they were able to participate in the conversation.
- 97% of respondents agreed that the content was presented clearly.
- 94% of respondents agreed that they felt motivated to take action.

Summit participants indicated the following as the top priorities:

- Affordable housing
 - Increase access to affordable housing.
 - Development of affordable and supportive housing.
- Public education
 - Increase communication and collaboration among partners.
 - Increase community education.
- Improved access to services
 - Increase access to substance use services.
 - Increase access to physical and mental health care.
 - Address barriers to accessing services.
- Collaboration
 - Increase communication and collaboration among partners.
 - Address barriers to accessing services.
- Advocacy
 - Develop policies that address poverty.
 - Improve financial supports for Ontario Works and ODSP recipients and seniors.

Housing and Homelessness Plan

Council approved the County of Lambton Housing and Homelessness Plan (the “Plan”) in 2013 for the period of 2014 - 2024. The Plan was updated in 2019 and approved by Council on June 3, 2020, to reflect best practices and changes in the housing and homelessness sectors. The vision of the Plan is to ensure that “Every person has an affordable, suitable, and adequate home”.

The revised Plan has four goals, each with several associated action items to guide the work within the Social Services Division to achieve the Plan’s vision. The priorities, gaps, and opportunities identified by Summit participants correlate with the goals and action items identified in the Housing and Homelessness Plan. They include:

1. Increase and sustain supply and appropriate mix of affordable housing;

2. Increase access to affordable housing and supports that meet people's needs to achieve housing stability;
3. Establish a coordinated housing and homelessness service system; and
4. Ending homelessness.

The Plan is reviewed and evaluated through an annual report as required under the *Housing Services Act, 2011*. The annual reports are available on the County of Lambton website. Social Services staff work closely with the Lambton County Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee to ensure implementation of the recommendations within the Plan to reduce homelessness within Lambton County.

The Summit findings reinforce local data demonstrating the recent dramatic increase in housing precarity in Lambton County, particularly for the most vulnerable populations.

Lambton Public Health

The Lambton Drug and Alcohol Strategy (LDAS) was endorsed by Council on April 5, 2023, and is now being implemented through a collaborative approach with over 20 community organizations. Priority recommendations in the LDAS will address several of the gaps and opportunities identified at the Summit including:

- a) Increase access to substance use services;
- b) Increase access to physical and mental health care;
- c) Address barriers to accessing services;
- d) Increase communication and collaboration among partners; and
- e) Increase community education.

Since Council endorsed the LDAS, Lambton Public Health launched a new www.LambtonDAS.ca website to serve as an information resource for our local community. Three new implementation action tables (Demand Reduction, Harm Reduction and Supply Reduction) have met to start moving the LDAS recommendations forward. Additionally, a new Community Engagement Committee is working on developing recommendations for implementing and evaluating the strategy with the input of individuals with lived/living experience.

The LDAS strategic priorities were developed to be mental health and trauma informed; to ensure equitable access and outcomes; to provide coordinated, holistic, and easily navigated systems; to reduce stigma; to decrease use of drugs and alcohol, and to build healthy, safe and resilient communities. Community partners are committed to working together on multiple levels with individuals, within local spaces and settings, and influencing key policies, to address the mental health and addictions crisis in Lambton County.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no financial impact on the County Budget as a result of this report.

CONSULTATIONS

Policy Research and Evaluation Consultant Cassandra Vink summarized all the discussion comments from the Summit attendees to inform this report. Consultations were held with the General Manager of the Social Services Division and the General Manager of Lambton Public Health.

STRATEGIC PLAN

Facilitation of the Summit supports the County's Mission to promote an enhanced quality of life through the provision of responsive and efficient services accomplished by working with municipal and community partners.

The activities of the Division support the Community Development Area of Effort #3 in the County of Lambton's Strategic Plan, specifically:

- Advocating in a manner that raises the profile of the County and its needs in order to secure improved government supports, funding, grants, and other resources.
- Developing programs and initiatives that address poverty reduction and promote social belonging.
- Planning for and responding to the ever-changing needs of an aging population, homelessness and retaining young people in the community while supporting their transition to being employed community members and future leaders.

CONCLUSION

Partnerships and recommendations gathered through the Summit will be utilized to advise future planning and programming across these connected community concerns. This year staff will be revisiting the Plan as it expires in 2024. Findings from the Summit will be utilized to inform the revised Plan. The findings will also be used to guide the work of the Lambton Drug and Alcohol Strategy along with the implementation action tables.