



## SOCIAL SERVICES DIVISION

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>CHAIR AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS</b>
<b>DEPARTMENT:</b>	<b>Homelessness Prevention and Children's Services, Housing Services</b>
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<b>MEETING DATE:</b>	<b>June 15, 2022</b>
<b>INFORMATION ITEM:</b>	<b>Housing and Homelessness Plan Progress Report</b>

### **BACKGROUND**

Under the *Housing Services Act, 2011*, Service System Managers must provide an annual report to the public on the progress towards their plans by June 30th of each year. The attached Progress Report highlights the work completed over the past year on the implementation of the County of Lambton's Housing and Homelessness Plan 2020 - 2024.

### **DISCUSSION**

The County of Lambton's Housing and Homelessness Plan 2020 - 2024 frames the planning and delivery of housing and homelessness supports within our community. Each year Lambton works towards the four strategic directions outlined by the plan to achieve the vision "every person has an affordable, suitable and adequate home."

Through 2020 and 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic presented the Social Services system with unprecedented challenges, particularly in homelessness prevention and housing stability. Through strong partnerships with community agencies, Lambton was able to make significant advances towards the Housing and Homelessness Plan goals while serving an extraordinary number of households who experienced housing insecurity due to the hardships of COVID-19.

The Housing and Homelessness Plan 2020 - 2024 identifies four goals:

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;
3. Coordinated housing and homelessness service systems;
4. Ending homelessness.

Some key accomplishments during the 2021 year include the following:

**#1 Increase and sustain supply and appropriate mix of affordable housing:**

- In 2021, Council supported the creation of an Affordable Housing Reserve. \$1,975,032 was moved from the general housing reserve to the new affordable housing reserve.
- 2021 marked the sixth year of the County of Lambton's 10-Year Capital Asset Management and Funding Plan. The amount of \$4M dollars annually assists in addressing identified capital needs of the 830 County owned social housing units.
- In November of 2021, J. Consulting Group hosted a meeting providing research on supportive land use policies, and the successful development of affordable housing. Participants included local Chief Administrative Officers, Treasurers, Planners, and members of council.

**#2 Increase access to affordable housing supports that meet people's needs to achieve housing:**

- A total of 90 households in Lambton County received the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) to assist with housing stability and prevent homelessness. Individuals from the centralized wait list for rent geared-to-income assistance who were precariously housed as well as individuals who were homeless and receiving support through emergency shelter were referred to the program.
- A total of 104 households received the municipal Rental Assistance Program (RAP). RAP is a short-term supplement meant to help individuals cover the cost of rent while waiting for additional financial supports or employment to begin. This support empowers recipients to maintain their housing through difficult financial circumstances and avoid entering the emergency shelter system.
- The Community Support Workers (CSW) in the Housing Services Department assisted an average of 134 individuals monthly. In addition to assisting individuals from their caseload, the CSWs were tasked with regular check-ins with tenants living in County owned units. This contact was an opportunity to ensure tenants had access to necessary supports and services.
- In 2021, four households received down payment assistance to purchase an affordable home. The County also partnered with Habitat for Humanity and entered into an agreement for three affordable housing builds that began construction in 2021.

**#3 Coordinated housing and homelessness service systems:**

- 2021 marked Lambton's second year of federal Reaching Home funding. The County allocates these funds to six local projects through the Community Advisory Board (CAB), a local committee of homelessness service providers responsible for directing and approving coordinated access initiatives.
- In June 2021, the County of Lambton conducted a Homelessness Enumeration to serve two key objectives: participating in the national Point in Time Count (PiT)

required by both the federal and provincial governments; and conducting a Registry Week to assist with enhancing the local By Name List (BNL) of individuals experiencing homelessness.

- In October of 2021, Lambton launched the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) across local shelters to centralize the BNL data collection. This shared system between shelters allows clients to receive multiple services under one common consent.

#### **#4 Ending Homelessness:**

- An integrated team of Community Support Workers was expanded to include staff from the Ontario Works and Homelessness Prevention Departments, the Sarnia Lambton Native Friendship Centre, and the Inn of Good Shepherd. The integrated team remains focused on housing individuals, and in 2021, increased the scope of supports offered to include ongoing tenancy supports. This ensures that people can successfully remain housed in their new accommodations.
- 151 individuals experiencing homelessness were placed into their own permanent housing.
- A total of 264 individuals were successfully diverted from the emergency shelter system.
- An outreach team was enhanced by partnering with Lambton Public Health, North Lambton Community Health Centre, and the Social Services Division to offer more targeted community-level outreach.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

#### **CONSULTATIONS**

Consultations have taken place with members of the County of Lambton Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee, the internal Social Services Division team, and numerous social service agencies in the community.

#### **STRATEGIC PLAN**

Implementation of the County's Housing and Homelessness Plan is a legislated initiative delivered in keeping with 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.
- Actively pursuing joint opportunities with community partners that contribute to the well-being of the Lambton Community.

## **CONCLUSION**

The County of Lambton's Housing and Homelessness Plan 2020 - 2024 frames the planning and delivery of housing and homelessness supports within our community. The development and distribution of an annual Report via the County website fulfills the legislative requirement under the *Housing Services Act, 2011* to report annually on the progress of implementation efforts.