



SOCIAL SERVICES DIVISION

REPORT TO:	CHAIR AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS
DEPARTMENT:	HOUSING SERVICES HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES ONTARIO WORKS
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MEETING DATE:	May 15, 2024
INFORMATION ITEM:	Homelessness Prevention and Affordable Housing Update

BACKGROUND

At its meeting dated April 3, 2024, Lambton County Council asked that staff *provide brief monthly updates on its affordable housing projects and homelessness prevention efforts within the community.*

As the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager ("**CMSM**"), the Social Services Division is responsible for the delivery of homelessness prevention services as well as housing services.

This report is an update on the current state of each program area.

DISCUSSION

Ontario Works

Ontario Works ("**OW**") provides financial assistance to those in financial need including emergency assistance to individuals and families at risk of becoming homeless. Financial assistance is provided to assist with living expenses including food, rent and utilities. OW is often the first point of contact for someone who is at risk of becoming homeless and in addition to financial support, action plans are developed, and referrals are made to prevent homelessness. This plan may include housing applications, childcare applications, life stabilization supports and employment readiness activities. Hundreds of households receive these supports monthly.

For the month of March 2024, the OW caseload was 2992. This represents a slight decrease of 0.2% over the February 2024 caseload but an increase of 4% from March 2023. During the same time frame, the OW emergency applications received were 117, this is a 13% increase over February 2024 and a 108% increase over March 2023. In addition to this, 72 households were supported through the Housing Stability Assistance benefit. This includes households in receipt of OW, Ontario Disability Support Program (“**ODSP**”), low-income families not in receipt of social assistance and seniors. OW data is extracted from the provincial database called the Social Assistance Management System (“**SAMS**”), and April data is not yet available.

Housing Services

The Housing Advocacy Program is an eviction prevention program. Community Support Workers (“**CSWs**”) within this program provide outreach and supports to tenants and their families by advocating on behalf of tenants to improve their quality of life while maintaining their housing. The CSWs have caseloads that consist of many hard to serve individuals with complex needs.

During the month of March:

- 151 unique tenants were assisted to maintain their tenancy.
- 291 visits/contacts were made.
- 22 evictions were prevented.

Within Housing Services, the following data was collected during Q1 of 2024:

- 34 applicants were housed from the centralized housing wait list.
- 47 applications were received for the centralized wait list.
- 842 households remain on the centralized wait list.
- 48 months is the average wait time on the list for a one-bedroom unit.
- 4 Lambton Renovates conditional letter of approvals were issued.
- 1 Home Ownership conditional letter of approval was issued.

Work is ongoing to facilitate the multi-year strategic development plan for affordable and supportive housing, including the release of a Request for Proposal for a supportive housing agency to partner with to advance the supportive housing component of the plan.

By-Name-List

The By-Name List (“**BNL**”) is a comprehensive, real-time list of every known and consenting individual experiencing homelessness. This number includes individuals or family without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect means and ability of acquiring housing. As of April 30, there were 328 individuals on the BNL. This represents a decrease of 17 individuals or 4.9%. 185 individuals were experiencing chronic homelessness, which represents a decrease of 13 individuals or 6.6%. Chronic homelessness refers to individuals who are currently experiencing

homelessness and have a total of at least six months of homelessness over the past year. Approximately 72 individuals are experiencing absolute homelessness, or “living rough”.

Integrated Homelessness Prevention Team

The County’s integrated homelessness team contains CSWs that serve as either Intensive Housing Case Managers or Rapid Rehousing Workers. Intensive Housing Case Managers support lower caseloads of households that are experiencing chronic homelessness, often facing concurrent complex mental health and addictions challenges, to secure and retain permanent housing.

Rapid Rehousing Workers support larger caseloads of households that are newly or episodically experiencing homelessness, to retain or quickly resecure permanent housing. Both forms of CSW offer life stabilization supports, and work in close partnership with several local multidisciplinary teams to ensure the health and social needs of these households are supported.

During the month of April:

- 170 unique individuals received services from a CSW.
- 562 visits/contacts were made.
- 16 individuals/families were moved into more permanent housing.
- 9 rent supplements were approved to assist individuals move into more permanent housing.

Community Outreach Workers

The Community Outreach Workers provide assertive community outreach to households experiencing homelessness. The team’s efforts are primarily directed toward individuals that are experiencing absolute homelessness. The housing case management provided through this team is brought to households experiencing homelessness, wherever they are, and is often delivered outside. Assistance is concentrated on progressing the household along the housing continuum for long-term success. While addressing the basic needs of this vulnerable population is a vital component of the service, the primary goals of engagement are housing centric. Tools for engagement are commonly used to meet immediate needs including food security, temporary shelter, hygiene, health, and sanitation.

During the month of April:

- 72 unique individuals were served.
- 202 contacts/visits were made.
- 2 individuals moved from the street to more permanent housing (some individuals may have entered the shelter system for several nights).
- 80% of the above-noted contacts took place at or were related to Rainbow Park, In the City of Sarnia.

- 19 successful referrals to external services were made.
- 9 coordinated visits with partner outreach teams occurred.

Top (4) reasons individuals provided for sleeping rough:

Reason for sleeping rough	Count	Proportion
Chose not to stay in shelter, personal relationships	19	24%
Chose not to stay in shelter, service provider conflict	13	17%
Chose not to stay in shelter, substance use	20	26%
Chose not to stay in shelter, mental health	14	18%

Emergency Shelter Capacity.

The County provides funding to the Inn of the Good Shepherd to operate the following shelter services:

- The Good Shepherd's Lodge – 35 beds. 87.6% occupancy during April.
- Out of the Cold Program – 28 temporary beds. 44% occupancy during April.
- Haven Youth Shelter – 9 beds. 38.1% occupancy during April.
- Overall system occupancy for the month of April was 64.6%.

Landlord Engagement Worker

The County Integrated Homelessness team contains a landlord engagement support worker role. This position focuses on directly engaging local property managers and landlords for the purposes of strengthening communication and cooperation related to households supported by case managers. This work better enables mediation to maintain existing tenancies and securing private market rental opportunities for housing case managers.

During the month of April:

- 28 landlords were engaged.
- 55 tenancy concerns were addressed.
- 8 apartment units were viewed with individuals experiencing homelessness.

The total number of unique individuals experiencing homelessness that progressed into permanent housing with assistance from the integrated homelessness prevention team during the month of April was 21.

Housing and Homelessness Resource Centre

- 124 unique individuals were provided supports at the centre.

- 599 visits were made to the centre.
- 37 referrals were made to support services and community partners.

Referrals include but are not limited to, Canadian Mental Health Association, Community Legal Assistance Services, St. Michael's Men's Hospital Toronto, assisting with ODSP and OW issues including the transferring of files to Lambton County, connecting clients with their doctors and setting up telephone and virtual appointments, meeting with clients and possible landlords, referrals to Bluewater Health mental health and addictions services, calling The Lodge for beds (male and female), attending appointment with client at Saini Domiciliary Hostel to review rules and expectations, assisting client with reconnection of hydro, assisting with income tax preparation, and connecting with IMPACT for wellness checks on clients that have not been seen or staff have concerns about.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable.

CONSULTATIONS

Not applicable.

STRATEGIC PLAN

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

This report provides a snapshot of the work the three Departments within the Social Services Division delivered through an integrated program delivery approach. It includes the outputs and outcomes of each program. It does not include the longer-term systems

related planning occurring within the Division and with community partners on an ongoing basis to address the underlying issues of homelessness.