



## SOCIAL SERVICES DIVISION

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>CHAIR AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS</b>
<b>DEPARTMENT:</b>	<b>HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES</b>
<b>PREPARED BY:</b>	<b>Ian Hanney, Program Supervisor</b>
<b>REVIEWED BY:</b>	<b>Melissa Fitzpatrick, Manager, Valerie Colasanti, General Manager Stéphane Thiffault, Chief Administrative Officer</b>
<b>MEETING DATE:</b>	<b>September 18, 2024</b>
<b>INFORMATION ITEM:</b>	<b>Homelessness Prevention "Be Part of the Solution" Campaign</b>

### **BACKGROUND**

At its meeting on May 15, 2024, County Council received an update regarding the Housing, Homelessness and Addictions (“HHA”) Summit Committee. This report recognized a key finding from this committee; that there is a significant gap in public relations and communications regarding housing and homelessness issues. Overall, the committee found that there is a lack of public awareness of the ongoing efforts and advancements made by the various agencies including the County that provide housing and homelessness prevention services. Moreover, many individuals in the public express a desire to assist with addressing the housing and homelessness crisis but may not know how to effectively contribute.

A dedicated public education and community engagement initiative emerged as a key priority action from the HHA Summit Committee. This report provides an update on the current state of this initiative.

### **DISCUSSION**

To address gaps in public communications, education and engagement regarding housing and homelessness issues, an environmental scan of Canadian homelessness and anti-stigma campaigns was undertaken alongside a local media analysis of public narratives, concerns and questions regarding homelessness. The resulting communication materials were further developed through engagement with Social Services Network partners, the Coordinated Access Collaborative Table, and individuals with lived experience from A Better Tomorrow Committee, ensuring materials were informed, equitable and relevant.

## ‘Be Part of the Solution’ Campaign

The primary outcome of this development process is a public campaign centered on three key pillars of community engagement: public education, raising awareness of ongoing and emerging housing and homelessness initiatives, and community-wide action. The campaign, titled ‘Be Part of the Solution’ aims to foster widespread community involvement and support. This initiative aligns with the HHA Summit Committee’s recommendation to create, coordinate, and implement a multimedia campaign, while emphasizing and integrating additional HHA priority areas such as humanizing the experience of homelessness and incorporating the voices of lived experience in the planning process.

Public Education – Will be delivered through accessible materials including webpages, infographics, videos and handouts. These materials will feature a poster series debunking myths about homelessness, videos from local subject matter experts and community leaders, and a frequently asked questions and answers page that will be updated monthly in response to community dialogue. Additionally, there will be an online avenue for local non-profits, businesses and community groups to request information sessions/presentations on homelessness.

Keeping the Public Informed About Ongoing Initiatives – Community members will have access to timely and easily shareable information on homelessness through social media updates from the campaign. Monthly update infographics with local data and progress markers will be made available on social media platforms and as longer-form downloadable PDF documents on the campaign’s public website.

Community Contributions and Collaborative Solutions – This pillar aims to provide community members with a host of actions, initiatives and avenues that those who express a desire to assist with the housing and homelessness crisis can take. Individuals can select the most suitable way to contribute based on their interests and capacity. Actions range from spreading accurate information and debunking myths in everyday conversations, to supporting fundraising efforts for local initiatives from addressing basic needs to supporting the development of affordable housing.

The campaign website can be viewed at: [lambtononline.ca/bepartofthesolution](http://lambtononline.ca/bepartofthesolution). The webpage will be shared through a public news release and promotion through the County’s social media and social services partner’s social media will begin on September 30, 2024.

## **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 Coordinated Access Community Collaborative Table, the internal Social Services Division team, the Communications/Marketing Co-Ordinator, and numerous social service agencies in the community.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN**

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

- Strengthening the County’s advocacy and lobbying efforts with other levels of government to raise the profile of the County and its needs to secure improved senior government supports, funding, grants, and other resources to meet emerging infrastructure and service needs;
- Consulting with the community and stakeholders on ways to increase housing options and affordability, and innovative programs and initiatives that focus on poverty reduction and promote social belonging;
- Supporting the development of a variety of affordable housing to meet demand;
- Implementing, monitoring and updating community health and wellness-related plans and priorities, including, but not limited to, the *Housing and Homelessness Plan*, *Community Safety & Well-Being Plan*, the *Long-Term Care division’s mission, vision, and values*, *Age Friendly Community Planning framework*, *Lambton Public Health’s strategic priorities*, *Lambton Drug & Alcohol Strategy*, *Lambton EMS Master Plan*, and *Child Care and Early Years 5-Year Service System Plan*; and
- Advocating for, and supporting access to, mental health and addiction services.

## **CONCLUSION**

This report provides an overview of the “Be Part of the Solution” campaign, which aims to bridge gaps in public communication, education, and engagement around homelessness. Through accessible educational resources, timely progress updates, and the promotion of community-driven actions, this campaign advances key priorities identified at the Housing, Homelessness and Addictions Summit. It addresses the need for an ongoing community resource that provides accurate, responsive, and low-barrier information on homelessness and local prevention services.