



SOCIAL SERVICES DIVISION

REPORT TO:	CHAIR AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS
DEPARTMENT:	Housing Services
PREPARED BY:	Kelly Hall, Manager
REVIEWED BY:	Valerie Colasanti, General Manager Ronald G. Van Horne, Chief Administrative Officer
MEETING DATE:	August 19, 2020
INFORMATION ITEM:	Housing Services Statistical Report - Quarter 2

BACKGROUND

The Housing Services Department provides rental assistance through a number of different programs. A wait list is maintained for approximately 1,350 units. Housing Services also delivers the Housing Advocacy Program which provides assistance to individuals to improve quality of life and help with maintaining their housing.

DISCUSSION

The 2020 second quarter statistical report is attached and provides a quarterly comparison over 2019.

There were 20 households that moved into rent geared-to-income (RGI) assisted housing units in quarter two of 2020. An additional 45 households received a portable housing benefit through the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) Program. The COHB program began in April 2020 and offers a portable housing benefit directly to individuals in Lambton County who are on the wait list for rent geared-to-income assistance. Without the COHB program, the housed applicants in quarter two of 2020 would have decreased by 51%. This can be attributed to the lack of affordable housing and low vacancy rates in Lambton County.

Average monthly rent arrears for the 830 County of Lambton owned units increased to \$14,774 in the second quarter of 2020 from \$2,090. This saw an average of 24 households in arrears compared to 13 households over the same period last year. The increase in the amount of arrears is partially attributed to the challenges households face during COVID-19. Staff continue to work with individuals to address the arrears, make repayment agreements and/or access funding to assist.

In quarter two of 2020, the Housing Advocacy Program assisted an average of 391 individuals. This is an increase of 234% over the previous year. While the four Community Support Workers (CSW) have caseloads that consist of many hard to serve individuals with complex needs, their responsibilities changed as a result of the Housing Services Department's COVID-19 response. In addition to assisting individuals from their caseloads, the CSWs were tasked with regular telephone check-ins for tenants living in County owned units. This contact was an opportunity to ensure tenants had access necessary supports and services.

The average number of applicants on the wait list for rental assistance has increased by 13% over the same time period last year. This increase has occurred despite 45 households being removed from the wait list following approval for the COHB program. The Housing Services Department has seen an increase in the number of eligible applicants applying for rent geared-to-income assistance. This is partially attributed to the lack of affordable housing and low vacancy rates in the area.

There have been increases in the wait times for various sized units across the portfolio.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable.

CONSULTATIONS

Not applicable.

STRATEGIC PLAN

In keeping with the Mission Statement of the County, the programs provided by this department promote an enhanced quality of life in Lambton County through the provision of responsive and efficient services.

The activities of the department 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.
- Actively pursuing joint opportunities with community partners that contribute to the well-being of the Lambton Community.

CONCLUSION

Quarterly statistics provide information which assists in the management of the wait list and rent arrears. This information will also be helpful as the County implements the *County of Lambton Housing and Homelessness Plan – 2014 – 2023*.