



## SOCIAL SERVICES DIVISION

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>CHAIR AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS</b>
<b>DEPARTMENT:</b>	<b>HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES and HOUSING SERVICES</b>
<b>PREPARED BY:</b>	<b>Melissa Fitzpatrick, Manager Kelly Hall, Manager</b>
<b>REVIEWED BY:</b>	<b>Valerie Colasanti, General Manager Ronald G. Van Horne, Chief Administrative Officer</b>
<b>MEETING DATE:</b>	<b>June 16, 2021</b>
<b>INFORMATION ITEM:</b>	<b>Housing and Homelessness Plan Progress Report</b>

### **BACKGROUND**

At its meeting on June 3, 2020, County Council supported the following motion from the May 20, 2020 Committee P.M. meeting:

*#7: Broad/Stark:*

- a) *That the County of Lambton Housing and Homelessness Plan 2020 - 2024 be approved.*
- b) *That staff be provided with the authority to implement the recommendations contained within the County of Lambton Housing and Homelessness Plan 2020 - 2024.*

*Carried.*

Under the *Housing Services Act, 2011*, Service Managers must provide an annual report to the public on the progress against 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'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."

In 2020, 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 2020 year include the following:

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

- Through the Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative, \$1.3M in funding has been secured for an affordable modular housing development. Construction of a 24 unit build at Maxwell Park Place will include six barrier-free units.
- 2020 marked the fifth 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. Work is required for each major building component including substructure, shell, common area interiors, services (mechanical, electrical, plumbing, HVAC), site work and unit interiors.

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

- A total of 77 households in Lambton County began receiving 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 19 households received the newly established 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 the hardships of entering the emergency shelter system.
- The Community Support Workers (CSW) in the Housing Services Department assisted an average of 255 individuals on a monthly basis. 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 2020, three households received down payment assistance to purchase an affordable home. Habitat for Humanity Sarnia-Lambton also completed two affordable homeownership builds. The County also partnered with Habitat and entered into an agreement for three affordable builds that will take place in 2021.

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

- In 2020, the County of Lambton was chosen as one of Canada's six new Designated Communities under the Federal Reaching Home Strategy, providing additional annual funding.
- Lambton was successfully selected as one of six new Built for Zero Communities, joining a national change movement to end chronic homelessness in Canada.
- The implementation of a Coordinated Access System, a community-wide system that streamlines the process for people experiencing homelessness to access housing and supports was initiated.

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

- Established an integrated team in Social Services with six Community Support Workers who work together across both the Ontario Works and Homelessness Prevention Departments, to assist individuals experiencing homelessness through the housing continuum to find, secure, and maintain housing.
- Established a Landlord Engagement Support Worker position whose role is to engage with social services staff, agencies, property managers and landlords on behalf of clients to find and create sustainable housing solutions within Lambton County.
- A total of 136 individuals were successfully diverted from the emergency shelter system with the help of the newly established diversion process.
- Established an outreach team by partnering with Lambton Public Health 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.