



SOCIAL SERVICES DIVISION

REPORT TO:	CHAIR AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS
DEPARTMENT:	Homelessness Prevention and Children's Services and Ontario Works
PREPARED BY:	Valerie Colasanti, General Manager
REVIEWED BY:	Ronald G. Van Horne, Chief Administrative Officer
MEETING DATE:	April 21, 2021
SUBJECT:	Homelessness Prevention Team Staffing

BACKGROUND

On June 3, 2020 Council received and approved the updated County of Lambton Housing and Homelessness Plan 2020-2024 and authorized staff to implement the recommendations contained within the plan. The updated County of Lambton Housing and Homelessness Plan outlines a new vision, guiding principles, goals, objectives and targets that meet the needs of our community.

The revised vision “Every person has an affordable, suitable and adequate home,” is supported by four goals:

- Goal 1: Increase and sustain supply and appropriate mix of affordable housing.
- Goal 2: Increase access to affordable housing and supports that meet people’s needs to achieve housing stability.
- Goal 3: Coordinated housing and homelessness service system.
- Goal 4: Ending Homelessness.

Each goal has key milestones to achieve, with the main milestones being the reduction of chronic and episodic homelessness by 50% by 2024 and achieving functional zero for chronic homelessness by 2025.

Also in June 2020, Council received an information report noting that the Government of Canada had designated Lambton County as one of the six new communities selected to receive funding to prevent and reduce homelessness under the Designated Communities Stream of Reaching Home: Canada’s Homelessness Strategy.

As part of the Reaching Home report, it was noted that a fulsome Homelessness Prevention System for the County of Lambton would need to be developed and in preparation for that system's development, a review of the then Social Planning and Children’s Services Department was completed and several positions were altered to

better meet the Provincial mandates of the programs delivered by the department. At the same time, the department's name was changed to Homelessness Prevention and Children's Services. Two positions, the Homelessness System Coordinator and Landlord Engagement Support Worker were developed and are funded under the Reaching Home Program.

On November 25, 2020 Council approved the hiring of three permanent Community Support Workers within the Homelessness Prevention and Children's Services Department to work specifically with the homeless population to secure safe, affordable housing and to provide the supports to ensure those individuals remain housed. At the same time three contract Community Support Workers were hired within the Ontario Works Department to provide intensive case management supports to homeless individuals in receipt of Ontario Works with a focus on securing housing.

DISCUSSION

Council has received several reports on the work the Homelessness Prevention Team has done to assist with the increasing homelessness population, including management of an overflow emergency shelter program. Since the start of the pandemic there have been over 600 unique individuals access the shelter system. COVID-19 forced us to accelerate the development of the Homelessness System within Lambton County. Working with the homeless population takes an integrated approach and cannot be done by one department alone or one community agency.

Having staff from both the Ontario Works Department and the Homelessness Prevention Department in partnership with several community agencies work together as a system on this issue will ensure a coordinated approach to case management, reduce duplication and maximize resources. This integrated approach also supports the Province's new vision for social assistance, "To create an efficient, effective and streamlined social services system that focuses on people, providing them with a range of services and supports to respond to their unique needs and address barriers to success so they can move towards employment and independence."

In order to manage the additional staff and the new programs that have been introduced to provide enhanced supports to this population, one additional full time permanent Supervisor is required. This position would be an integrated role working with all departments within the Social Services Division.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The approval of this recommendation will have no financial impact on the levy. The estimated \$120,340 expenditures outlined for the recruitment of one full time Ontario Works Homelessness Prevention Supervisor will be funded through a more integrated budget approach and the realignment and leveraging of existing and new provincial allocations in Ontario Works and Homelessness Prevention.

CONSULTATIONS

Consultations have taken place with the Manager, Homelessness Prevention and Children's Services, and the Manager, Ontario Works, and supports the goals and objectives set out in the County of Lambton's 10 year Housing and Homelessness Plan.

STRATEGIC PLAN

Implementing the objectives of the Housing and Homelessness Plan through the hiring of an additional Ontario Works Homelessness Prevention Supervisor 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 sets a strategic direction for housing and homelessness work over the next five year period. The Social Services Division has been working diligently towards the development of a Homelessness Prevention System and the addition of an Ontario Works Supervisor dedicated to Homelessness Prevention will assist in the implementation of this system and the elimination of homelessness in Lambton County.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council approves the hiring of one permanent full time Ontario Works Supervisor with a focus on Homelessness Prevention.