



County of Lambton

Social Services Division

519-344-2062





Presentation Agenda

1. County Council #1 Priority
2. Shelter Demand
3. Local Data
4. Overflow Mitigation Strategies
5. Emergency Services Data
6. Housing Opportunities
7. Closure
8. Accurate Information



County Council Top Priority

At the July 5, 2023 Council meeting, County Council established **shelter** as part of its number one priority.

#3: Bradley/White: That County Council publicly endorse making affordable housing and shelter the number one priority of County Council.

At the May 7, 2025 Council meeting, County Council reaffirmed **shelter** as part of its number one priority, notably adding supportive housing.

#8: McRoberts/Cook: That County Council publicly endorse making affordable and supportive housing and shelter the number one priority of County Council.



Shelter Demand

- Demand for emergency housing (shelter) remains very high
- The Overflow Shelter had an average occupancy of 85% over the past year
- In most of these months, the monthly average occupancy was above 90%
- This is a dynamic cohort of occupants, and not a static group
 - The shelter is being utilized, and resultant housing placements are high

85%+
Annual Average
Occupancy



Local Data

October 15, 2025

LAMBTON'S MONTHLY

Homelessness Data



Total Homelessness (Individuals per Month)

284 Jul. 296 Aug. 314* Sept.



*This includes everyone in shelters, transitional housing, living unsheltered, or precariously housed (e.g., couch surfing), tracked through a [comprehensive, real-time list](#). It is compiled using HIFIS, in strong collaboration with local agencies, and verified by information known to Social Services through our delivery of Ontario Works.



Partnerships & Contingencies

Shelter Mitigation Strategies

- Security & Monitoring
- Structural & Environmental Enhancements
- Client Engagement & Behavioural Management
- Cleaning Measures
- Neighbourhood Relations & Community Engagement
- Service Coordination & Flow Management
- Multi-Agency & Enforcement Partnerships

Appendix A:

Briefing Note: Mitigation Strategies at the Overflow Shelter

Date: October 2025

Subject: Comprehensive Overview of Operational Contingencies

1. Executive Summary

The Overflow Shelter remains a vital component to Lambton County's response to homelessness, fulfilling a component of County Council's top strategic priority of providing shelter. The site, including by way of the Housing and Homelessness Resource Centre (HHRC) serves as the driving force behind Lambton's markedly high housing placements, and near-unique low rates of unsheltered homelessness within Ontario. It is significantly more difficult to progress individuals along the housing continuum when they are residing in encampments, compared to shelter settings. The negative community externalities borne from encampments are the primary crisis currently faced by most Ontario communities.

Since its inception, the Overflow Shelter has directly addressed widespread public demand for increased shelter capacity. Occupancy has remained high, consistently at 80-90% even across the summer months. The residents in shelter are not a static cohort of individuals, but reflect ongoing, significant demand for local homelessness services, despite very strong local housing outcomes. Were it to close, there would be more than 30 individuals who would almost certainly reside in scatter-site encampments across the City of Samia, and all member municipalities would be limited in their ability to enforce local encampment protocols.

Since its inception, the County has implemented extensive, proactive mitigation strategies, often at great expense, in direct response to concerns from neighbouring residents, especially the Melrose Community Group, whose feedback has informed ongoing site adaptations. This briefing outlines a detailed list of all current operational mitigation interventions.



Partnerships & Contingencies

- Sarnia Police Services are an active partner in facilitating requests and feedback from the community.
- Frequently partner with CHIC and IMPACT to offer proactive service
- Sarnia Police Services data demonstrates a consistent and steady decline in events tagged by officers related to the Overflow Shelter within its general geographic region since June 2025.
- Lambton EMS data that demonstrates a notable decrease in calls regarding behavioural concerns, including those related to alcohol or drugs.
 - 60% reduction in such calls to Lambton EMS in the first three quarters of 2025, compared to the last three quarters of 2024.



Impending Housing Opportunities

- **Maxwell Park Place**
 - **8** of the vacated units within community housing resulting from placements into this new build will be offered to individuals experiencing homelessness.
- **HART Hub**
 - This new program includes **14** private market rental supplements supported by CMHA, and **12** units in existing community housing buildings to be supported by a new multi-disciplinary team of Indwell staff. These units will be exclusive to individuals experiencing homelessness.
- **Additional Units**
 - Further rent supplements are being negotiated for **10** additional units, dedicated to individuals that may be on the Centralized Wait List and potentially By-Name List.



Early Closure Impacts

- Decrease in housing placements, and an increase in overall homelessness
- Significant, sudden increase in encampments in the City of Sarnia
- Increased burden on emergency services
 - i.e., Police Services, EMS, By-Law Enforcement, Hospital Services
- Significant health impacts for individuals experiencing homelessness



Photo courtesy: Gerry Dewan/CTV News London



HOMELESSNESS MYTHBUSTERS

People experiencing homelessness are **from here.**

People experiencing homelessness exist in our community. They are members of Lambton County, and may be your co-workers, friends, neighbours or family members.





County of Lambton

Social Services Division

519-344-2062

