

Community Safety and Well-being Plan

Roadmap For Collaboration: 2021-2024





Messages from the Mayors



The City of Stratford is proud to partner with our neighbouring municipalities

to develop a joint Community Safety and Well-being Plan that reflects the diverse needs of our citizens. The plan is guided by the principles of respect, equity, collaboration, inclusion, commitment and compassion, and those things are important to everyone, whether you live in an urban area or a rural one.

Only by working together can we address some of the key priorities and challenges that we all have in common — the need to build communities that are safe, healthy, accessible, affordable, supportive and welcoming.

Mayor Dan Mathieson, City of Stratford

Now, more than ever, it is important that we work with our municipal partners to

acknowledge the social problems facing our communities. It is time to develop a collaborative approach that improves the wellbeing of our communities. The Community Safety and Well-being Plan is designed to coordinate efforts with our social agency partners while managing the growing challenges we all face in our communities. The Plan intends to enhance partnerships and dedicate resources efficiently when and where they are needed most.

The Town of St. Marys looks forward to the next step we can take together to improve the safety and well-being of our community.

Mayor Al Strathdee, Town of St. Marys



The Municipality of North Perth is a diverse place where rural and urban

characteristics combine to make the community that our residents are proud to call home. In North Perth, we are passionate about the safety and well-being of our community and our residents. We are eager to move forward initiatives on access to health care services, community security and safety, adequate and affordable housing, food security, and recreational opportunities.

We are committed to working together with our neighbouring municipalities to make sure our community is protected and healthy through the Community Safety and Well-being Plan. The events of 2020 have proven that we care about our most vulnerable residents and are stronger when we act together.

Mayor Todd Kasenberg, Municipality of North Perth



West Perth is a municipality that balances rural and urban. We celebrate our agricultural heritage, our abundant outdoor spaces and our strong sense of community.

The Community Safety and Well-being Plan (CSWB) was developed to allow us to outline strategies and actions required to meet the needs of everyone in West Perth.

Many thanks to the many community partners that have come together to develop this Plan and who continue to make West Perth a safe, clean and comfortable community where parents are comfortable raising their children and allowing them to thrive.

Mayor Walter McKenzie, Municipality of West Perth

The CSWP will allow us to work with our partners and respond to the needs of our residents to ensure their safety and wellbeing. Our number one priority is ensuring our residents feel safe where they live. There are a number of collaborative initiatives that are already underway and we need to continue to build and strengthen those partnerships.

This plan will help us better coordinate our efforts for the future and we look forward to continue working together with the community to ensure our residents are safe, thriving and to improve their quality of life.

Mayor Rhonda Ehgoetz, Township of Perth East



The Township of Perth South is a mostly rural community that provides a home for a variety of people and occupations. We look after our neighbours and are proud of the area we live in. Perth South is a producer of many agricultural products and is proud of our agricultural heritage. The Township promotes and fosters a collaborative approach to working with our residents as well as our municipal neighbours.

We are happy to see this same approach being used in the Community Safety and Well-being Plan. The Township feels that this Plan will help to continue to keep Perth South and all of Perth County a safe environment and a place where all residents can find the support they need to achieve the security we all deserve.

Mayor Robert Wilhelm, Township of Perth South



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Creating the Roadmap



Background

In January 2019, new requirements for Community Safety and Well-being (CSWB) planning came into force. The *Police Services Act, 1990 (PSA)* was amended, and municipalities across Ontario were given time to develop and adopt a plan. As part of the legislation, municipalities were required to develop and adopt a community safety and well-being plan in partnership with many stakeholders and groups.

This multi-sectoral approach to community safety and well-being recognizes that complex social problems cannot be addressed by the police alone, that local service providers working in areas such as health/mental health, education, community/social services and children/youth services play an integral role. The CSWB Plan provides a guide for partners to communicate, collaborate and coordinate interventions and initiatives aimed at reducing risks and improving safety and well-being for residents.

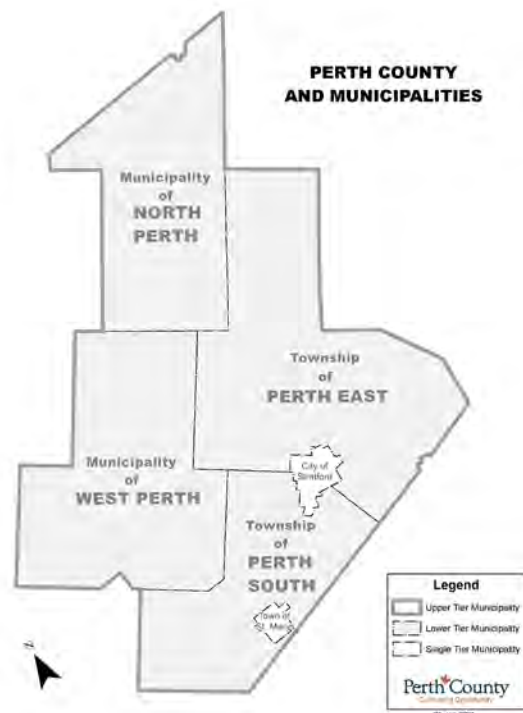
The CSWB Plan is a tool to address key social priorities for safety and well-being ranging from mental health to poverty, to safe movement around the city, to employment, to social isolation and much more. It is a way to work together through multi-sectoral partnerships towards sustainable communities where everyone feels safe, has a sense of belonging and opportunities to participate, and where individuals and families are able to meet their needs for education, health care, food, housing, income, and social and cultural expression.

CSWB Plan Partnership

This CSWB Plan represents a partnership between the City of Stratford, Town of St. Marys,

Municipality of North Perth, Municipality of West Perth, Township of Perth East, and Township of Perth South. Given their close proximity within the centre of Southwestern Ontario and their shared services and supports, the six partner municipalities have opted to create a joint Plan, that will help them respond to the unique needs of the area.

The Plan reflects the areas of concern and vulnerable populations identified during the engagement activities and further corroborated by published



community research reports and data. It also proposes an approach to community safety and well-being that was identified and discussed frequently in focus group sessions and individual interviews — one that supports diverse individuals and agencies working together in a coordinated manner to improve outcomes and maximize impacts for residents.

Impact of COVID-19

The global COVID-19 pandemic and the provincial state of emergency declared in March 2020 significantly affected communities in Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County through program and service closures, job losses, increased isolation and anxiety, loss of life, and uncertainty about what the future holds. Many residents have indicated their physical and mental health has worsened since the start of the pandemic.

The pandemic has altered how we live our lives. What hasn't changed, is the commitment of residents, service providers and organizations to take action to support the health and safety of our most vulnerable members. By coming together, we have been able to respond to critical challenges and needs and contribute to the public good.

When we began to prepare for the development of this Plan, COVID-19 was not on our radar. But as we began to plan the engagements necessary to inform the direction of the Plan, the pandemic became a central feature of everyday life. The contents of this Plan reflect the impacts of COVID-19 both personally and professionally.

It is also important to note, that as a result of COVID-19, many extra supports were put in place (e.g., additional temporary accommodations, enhanced mental health supports) to address the need for physical distancing and to respond to the negatives outcomes (e.g., increase in domestic violence, decrease in mental wellness) associated with the pandemic. These supports often addressed a need identified by those who took part in the engagement process. The Plan builds on those additional programs and services.

CSWB Roadmap

The CSWB Plan provides a roadmap for the six partner municipalities to work together to support a more inclusive, connected and coordinated approach to safety and well-being. It presents a model for collaboration, planning and action that helps determine how we respond to current and emerging issues in our communities. The Plan builds on existing successful initiatives by leveraging and maximizing existing community assets while at the same time working to address gaps in the system in order to strengthen the responsiveness and supportiveness of services network. The Plan and its implementation are guided by a set of values that support fair-mindedness, diversity, kindness and belonging.

Guiding Principles

The Plan is guided by the following set of principles:



The CSWB Planning Approach

The Ministry of the Solicitor General created a CSWB Framework to help support the development of the Plan. The Framework identifies the four levels of intervention that must be included in each plan to ensure it is as efficient and effective as possible in making communities safer and healthier.

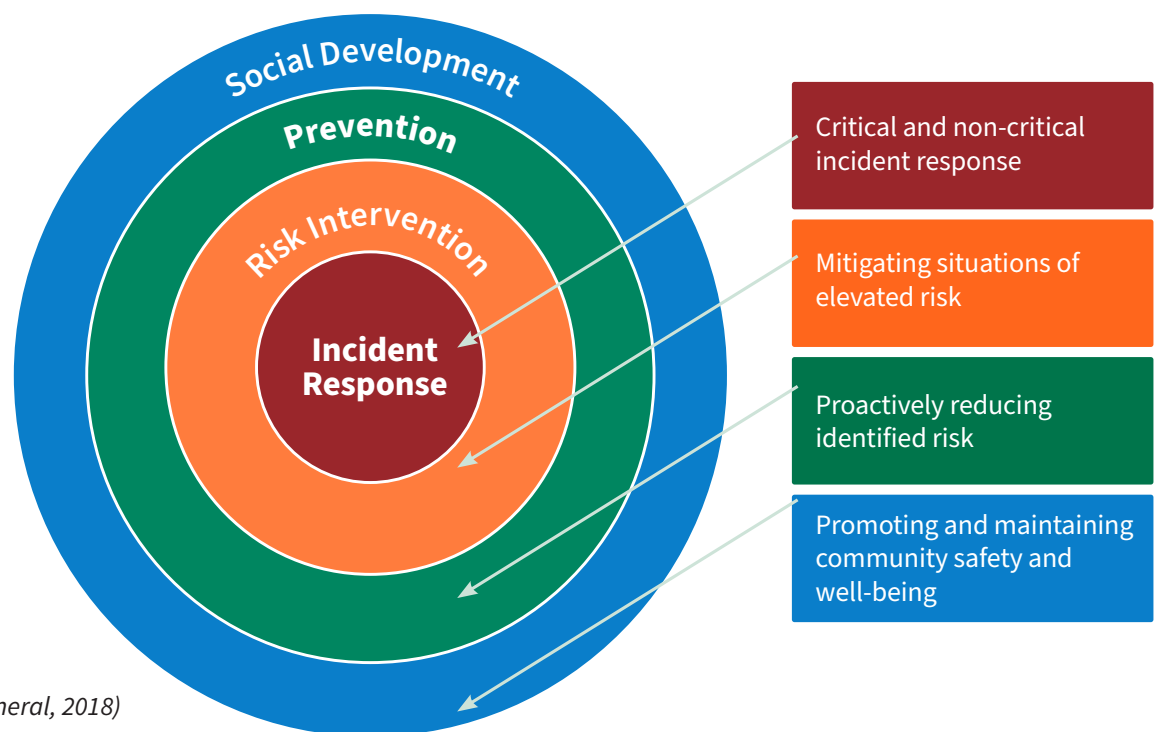
Social development: Addresses underlying causes of social issues through upstream approaches that promote and maintain individual and community wellness.

Prevention: Applies proactive strategies to known and identified risks that are likely to result in harm to individuals or communities if left unmitigated.

Risk intervention: Identifies and responds to situations of acutely elevated risk and mobilizes immediate interventions before an emergency or crisis-driven response is required.

Incident response: Requires intervention by first responders such as police, paramedics, and other emergency-driven services.

Community Safety and Well-being Planning Framework



(Ministry of the Solicitor General, 2018)

While this CSWB Plan details all four levels, it recognizes that maximizing social development strategies will help to mitigate risks before they need to be addressed through prevention, risk intervention and incident response. By working together to ensure

community members are aware of easily accessible programs and services, and timely supports offered closer to home, municipalities will be more responsive to local needs.

Identifying Our Priority Areas

The Community Safety and Well-being Plan was developed based on a combination of research, a review of existing data and reports, and input from community members and service providers. This included:

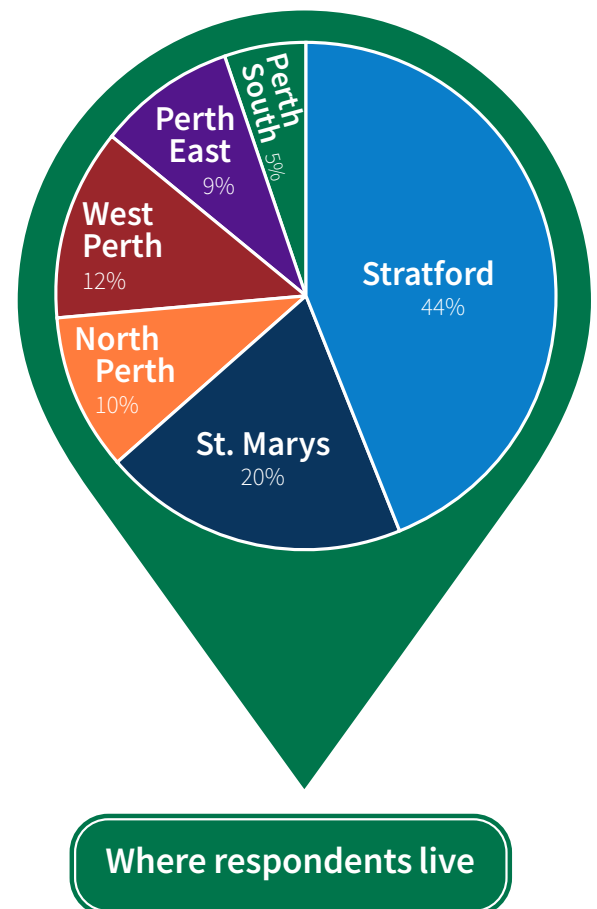
- Reviewing existing CSWB plans in Ontario,
- Participating in Ontario Municipal Social Services Association calls addressing the planning and preparation of municipal CSWB plans,
- Examining community-based data and documents,
- Reviewing existing Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County strategic plans and initiatives as they relate to safety and well-being,
- Reviewing media releases, and
- Conducting engagement activities with a wide range of stakeholders living and working in the six partner municipalities.

Engagement Activities

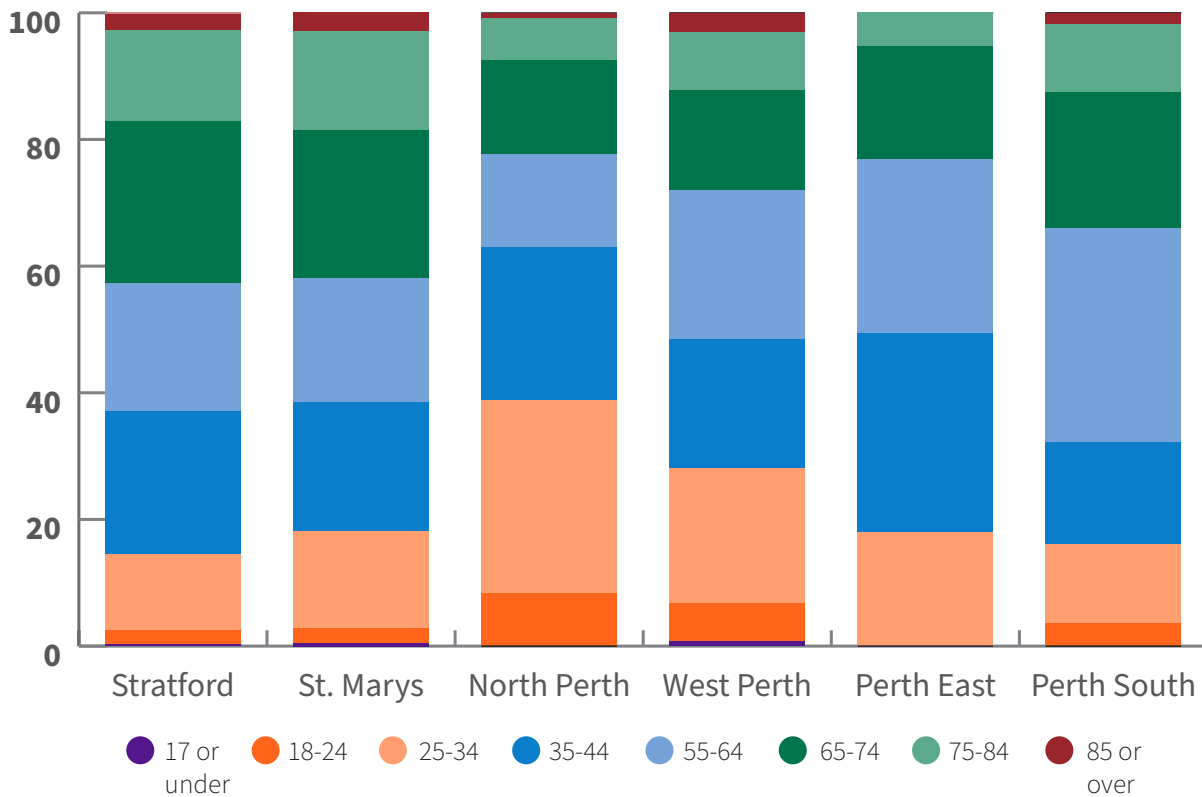
The objective of the stakeholder engagement was to gather feedback from a wide range of stakeholder groups across Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County. The engagements sought to explore community strengths, assets, protective factors, partnerships, risks, gaps in services and supports, as well as new ideas for enhancing community safety and well-being and reducing risks. The engagements helped ensure multiple voices and diverse perspectives, opinions and experiences were considered in the development of the Plan.

An online CSWB survey was developed to gather public input on the CSWB Plan from the residents of the six partner municipalities. The survey was advertised to the public through media releases (with a link to the survey) posted on the websites and social media accounts of the partner municipalities. The

survey was launched at the end of July and remained open until mid-September 2020. Hard copies of the survey were also made available for individuals without computer access. Residents from all partner municipalities participated in the survey, with the majority of respondents (63.6%) residing in Stratford and St. Marys. The survey consisted of 55 items and included questions on the demographic information of respondents, as well as open- and closed-ended questions concerning respondents' perceptions of community safety and well-being issues, and the priorities that they would like to see addressed. A total of 1078 respondents took part.



Age of Respondents (%)



Facilitated sessions and one-on-one interviews were conducted via teleconference or the Zoom video-conferencing platform due to COVID-19 physical distancing restrictions. An Advisory Committee supported the identification of session participants. The sessions and interviews were organized in the following areas:

- Police Services Boards
- Police Advisory Committees
- Ontario Provincial Police (OPP)
- Victim Services and Supports
- Housing and Homelessness
- Health Care
- Mental Health
- Education
- Fire Departments
- Income and Employment
- Business Improvement
- Leisure and Recreation
- General Community Support
- Disability Services
- Family/Child Social Services
- Child Care/Programming
- LGBTQ2+
- Food Security
- Seniors Services
- Community Justice
- Rotary Clubs

- Libraries
- Mobility Services
- Agriculture
- Transportation

Sessions involved broad discussions on participants' views of the safety and well-being needs and risk factors in their communities, as well as strategies and actions that participants would like to see included in CSWB Plan. A total of 27 sessions and nine (9) interviews took place between September and December 2020, with a total of 91 participants. Additional sessions were planned by identified participants who were not available to take part.

Community members with lived experience took part in focus groups or completed a brief survey to share their stories about feelings of safety and well-being in Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County. A total of 28 individuals took part.

COVID-19 impacted our engagement activities. Due to competing personal and professional demands, not all interested stakeholders from the six partner municipalities were able to take part. As such, there was less representation from some municipalities than others. That being said, many of the service agency stakeholders who participated spoke about the safety and well-being concerns from the perspective of all municipalities as opposed to just one.

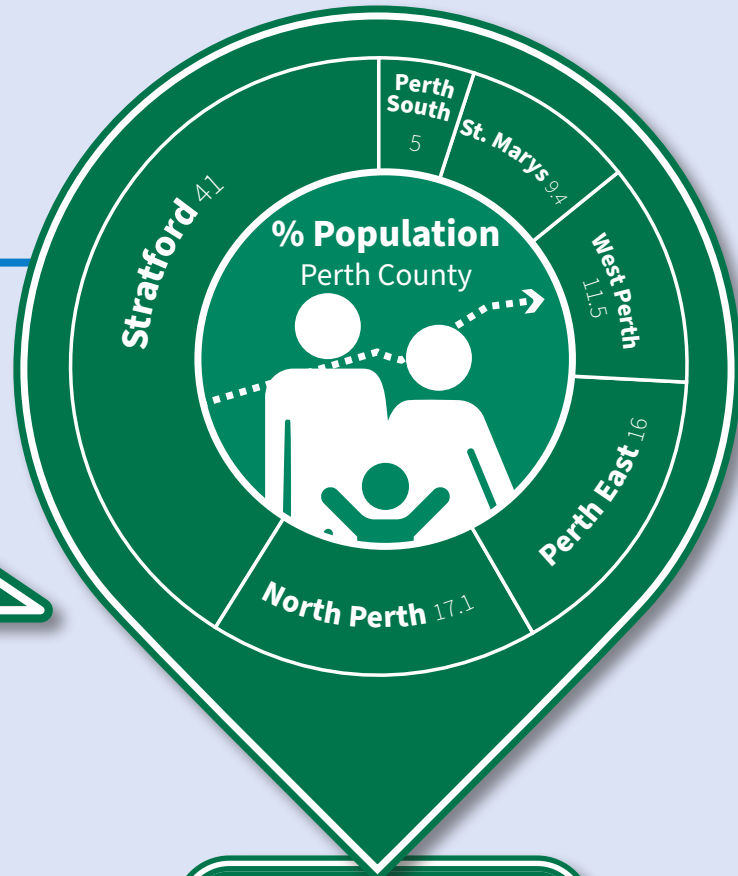
The development of the Plan was guided by the Advisory Committee. Membership included 24 representatives from:



- Partner municipalities (6)
- Stratford Police Services (2)
- Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) (4)
- City of Stratford Social Services (1)
- Huron Perth Children's Aid Society (1)
- United Way of Perth-Huron/Social Research and Planning Council (SRPC) (2)
- Avon Maitland District School Board (1)
- Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board (3)
- Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance (2)
- Huron Perth Public Health (2)



Where We Are



20.2%
of households spend
30%
of pre-tax income on shelter expenses

Housing

An individual accessing Ontario Works would need to spend

85% of their monthly income on shelter



Rental vacancy rates have steadily decreased in the last 5 years in Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County

Education and Employment

84.2%
age 25 to 29 have graduated high school

67.0%
Employment rate

4.0%
Unemployment rate



Population Age

42.4
Median age

18%
under 15

40.9%
50 and older

Income and Poverty

\$76,364

Median income after taxes

11.1%

Living on low income based on the Low-Income Measure (after tax)

Low income

Lowest - Perth East Highest - Perth South

\$17.55

Hourly wage needed to cover family's basic expenses (e.g., food, housing, utilities, childcare, and transportation) in Stratford, Perth County and St. Marys



Ethnic Diversity

8.9%

Foreign born

~7.0%

Anabaptist Communities
North Perth and Perth East

1.4%

Indigenous
51% in Stratford

Homelessness*

103

Local households experiencing homelessness



84%

Experiencing chronic homelessness

74% 48% 46% 11%

Single adults Women Men Indigenous

*As of December 31, 2020

Community Safety

34.5

2020 Crime Severity Index (Ontario 60.0)

90.2%

Feel safe walking alone after dark



Community Belonging

79.5%

reported a somewhat strong or strong feeling of belonging



Health (Pre COVID-19)

58.2%

12 and older rate their overall health as very good or excellent

71.1%

12 and older rate their mental health as very good or excellent

94.8%

12 and older with a regular health care provider

Well-being (During COVID-19)



Decreases in:



- self-assessed indicators including mental health, employment satisfaction, personal safety, physical health, and personal finances
- mental health across age groups but most significant in those under 40 and specifically 18-29

Sources:

1. Statistics Canada 2016 Census
2. Smale, B. & Holiday, C. (2020). A Profile of Wellbeing in Perth and Huron Counties: Benchmarking Indicators of Wellbeing based on the CIW. A Report by the Canadian Index of Wellbeing prepared for the Social Research and Planning Council operated by the United Way Perth Huron. Waterloo, ON: Canadian Index of Wellbeing and the University of Waterloo.
3. Perth District Health Unit. (2012). A Descriptive Profile of Amish and Mennonite Communities in Perth, 3rd Edition. (cited in City of Stratford. (2020). Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys Housing and Homelessness Plan: 5-Year Update, 2020-2024).
4. City of Stratford. (2020). Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys Housing and Homelessness Plan: 5-Year Update, 2020-2024.
5. City of Stratford. (2020). Stratford-Perth-St. Marys By-Name-List.
6. Duncan, L. (2021). Rural response to COVID-19: University of Guelph Research Project – Mental Health Findings Overview.[3600 surveys completed by Perth and Huron County residents]
7. Social Research and Planning Council, United Way Perth-Huron and Computer systems Group, University of Waterloo. (n.d.). MyPerthHuron. <https://myperthhuron.ca/index.php>



What We've Learned



This section reflects the perceptions and lived experiences of residents living and working in the City of Stratford, the Town of St. Marys and Perth County prior to, and during, the COVID-19 pandemic.

We heard:

- that for all residents to feel safe and physically, mentally, and spiritually healthy, their basic needs must be met.
- that safety and well-being means residents feel they belong, they are welcome, they are respected, and they are connected to others in the community.
- there are a number of vulnerable individuals and families in our communities who need additional help to enhance the quality of their lives.

- there are many excellent social, health and recreational/leisure programs and services available to residents in and across the six partner municipalities.
- that not all residents are able to access the services and supports they need, when they need them, and where they need them.

Key Priorities

The key priorities are based on survey responses, engagement with service providers, and people with lived experience.

Key Priority	Stratford	St. Marys	North Perth	West Perth	Perth East	Perth South
Access to health care services	1	1	1	1	1	1
Adequate and affordable housing	2	2	3	4	5	3
Food security and access	3	4	4	5	4	4
Overall community security and safety	4	3	2	2	3	2
Protection from discrimination	5					
Recreational activity opportunities		5	5	3	2	
Employment and employment skills						5

Survey participants identified the five most important safety and well-being priorities in their communities. They are presented above in ranked order. There is a very high level of consistency in the priorities identified by residents from each of the six partner municipalities.

The key priorities identified by service providers and those with lived experience are listed below by level of importance beginning with the most important. While stakeholders from all six partner municipalities participated in focus groups, interviews and a brief survey, the majority tended to speak about safety and well-being concerns from the perspective of all municipalities as opposed to just one.

1. Adequate, affordable, and attainable housing
2. Mental health and addictions supports
3. Poverty
4. Systems planning and integration
5. Access to health, social/community and recreational services

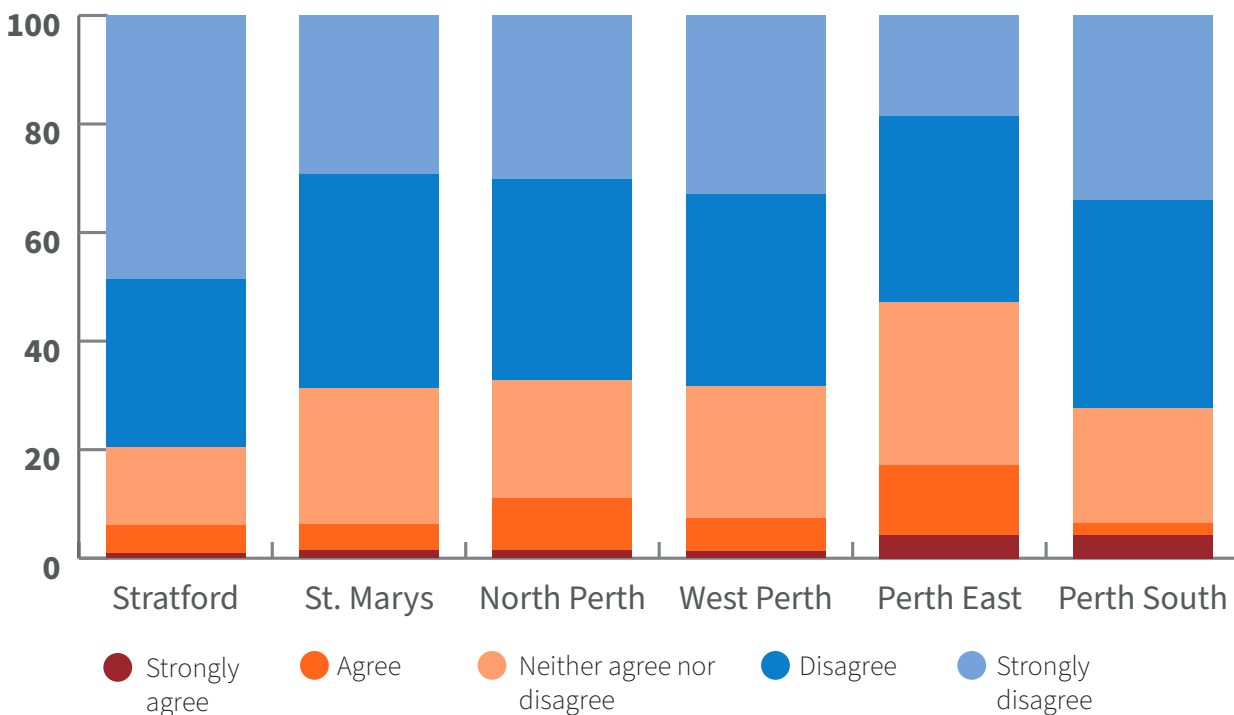
6. Affordable and accessible transportation
7. Social isolation
8. Community belonging
9. Community safety

The section below describes in more detail what we heard about the priority areas.

Adequate, Affordable and Attainable Housing

Many of the individuals we spoke with commented on the considerable challenges some residents face in finding adequate, affordable, and accessible housing. They noted that over time, housing has become less accessible and less affordable for low income individuals and families. They also mentioned that the demand for subsidized housing has increased and that the availability of supportive housing is insufficient to meet demand. It was noted that some individuals are forced to live in housing that is unsuitable (major

I believe there is sufficient availability of affordable housing in my community (%)



repairs are required), inadequate (e.g., too few bedrooms) or unaffordable.

Just over 100 households in our communities are experiencing homelessness in any of the following ways:

- Unsheltered, or absolutely homeless and living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation,
- Emergency sheltered, including those staying in overnight shelters for people who are experiencing homelessness, as well as shelters for those impacted by family violence, or
- Provisionally accommodated, referring to those whose accommodation is temporary or lacks security of tenure. This includes individuals who are staying temporarily with family or friends (e.g. “couch surfing”), living in temporary rental accommodations (e.g. motels), or those who are currently in an institution (e.g. jail, hospital, rehabilitation centre) and have no place to live upon their release.

Many of these individuals and families may also be dealing with traumatic experiences, personal crisis, violent situations, or issues related to mental health and addictions. Those we spoke with noted that without a proper place to call home, many often feel unsafe and disconnected from others in the community.

“ Homelessness describes the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household’s financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination. Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant, unhealthy, unsafe, stressful and distressing. ”

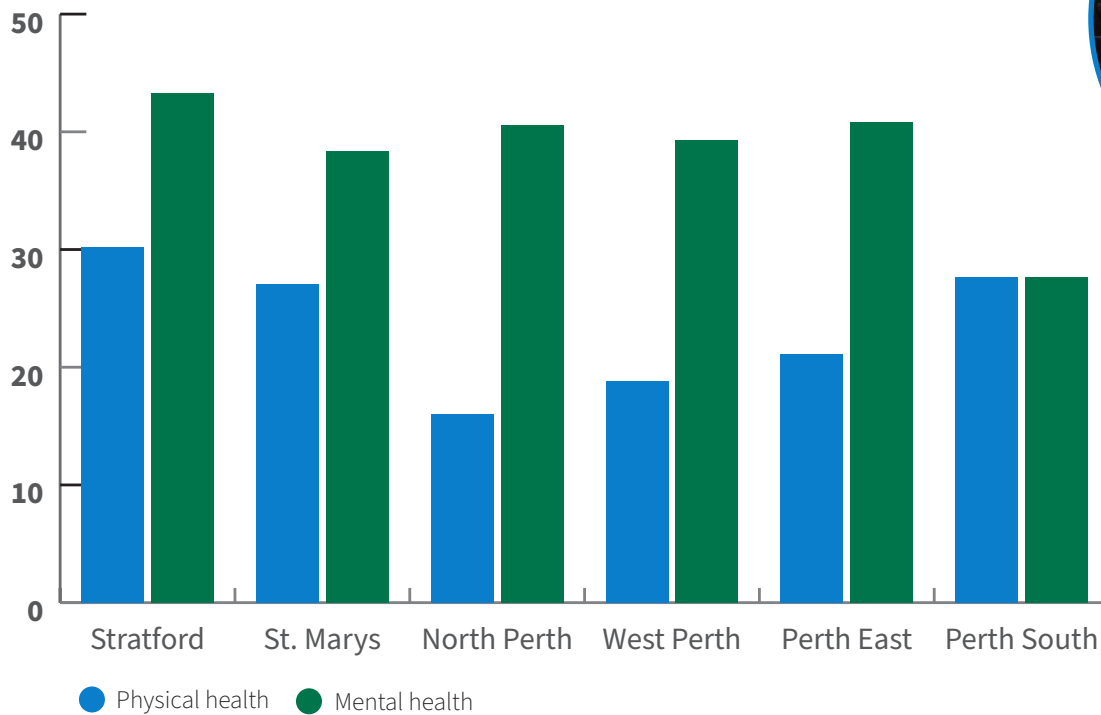
(Gaetz, et al., 2012)

Mental Health and Addictions Supports

A number of consultation participants spoke about the growing number of individuals in our communities who experience mental health and addictions issues. Many individuals spoke about the need for more mental health and addictions specialists, group supports, targeted programming (e.g., youth, seniors), and counselling options in our communities. They also spoke about the need to address the stigma associated with mental health since it often isolates people and stops them from reaching out for help.

People pointed out services and resources such as Choices for Change, Huron-Perth Centre for Children and Youth, Phoenix Survivors, school-based services, and the mental health toolbox for farmers that was launched in Listowel which were making a difference for those experiencing mental health and addictions issues. While the pandemic has had a negative impact on the mental health of our residents, it has also resulted in increased funding which will help improve mental health services in our communities and support our residents living with mental health and addictions challenges (Huron Perth Child and Youth Mental Health Leadership Team, 2020).

My physical and mental health have worsened since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (%)



Poverty Response

Financial vulnerability affects a growing segment of our communities and includes women, children, youth and seniors. Some of the people we spoke with mentioned the impacts of not earning enough, including food insecurity, poorer physical and mental health, limited transportation options, lack of stable housing, and lack of access to programming (e.g., childcare). Individuals mentioned that the pandemic has created increased financial stress due to job loss/layoffs or job uncertainty.

Access to Health, Social (Community Support) and Recreation Services

While most community members feel they can access adequate health care close to home, there are others who are unable to access the physical or mental health supports they need. Residents identified the following factors as impacting their ability to receive proper care:

- Cost/affordability
- Program/clinic location
- Program/clinic accessibility
- Program/clinic hours of operation
- Feelings of being unwelcome or judged in a program or clinic
- Lack of transportation to a program or clinic

Residents also spoke about the shortage of family doctors, long waitlists/wait times, and lack of walk-in clinics (in Stratford).

Residents in the rural communities were identified as most significantly impacted by a lack of accessible healthcare. It was mentioned that improving access through virtual engagement is a key focus of the Huron Perth and Area Ontario Health Team and that the pandemic has actually fast-tracked its roll out. While virtual care is important, in-person care was

also considered essential. The Huron Perth Ontario Telemedicine Network (OTN) Primary Care Nurse Practitioners Program, which provides primary care services to individuals with mental health issues or addictions and complex frail elderly individuals, was identified as providing both in-person and virtual services.

While there are numerous social and community services available across the communities, it was noted there are gaps in programming for seniors, transitional aged youth, families, newcomers and Black/ People of Colour/Indigenous populations (e.g., child care, culturally specific and sensitive programming). Additionally, not all residents are aware of the existence of these services or how to access the services they need.

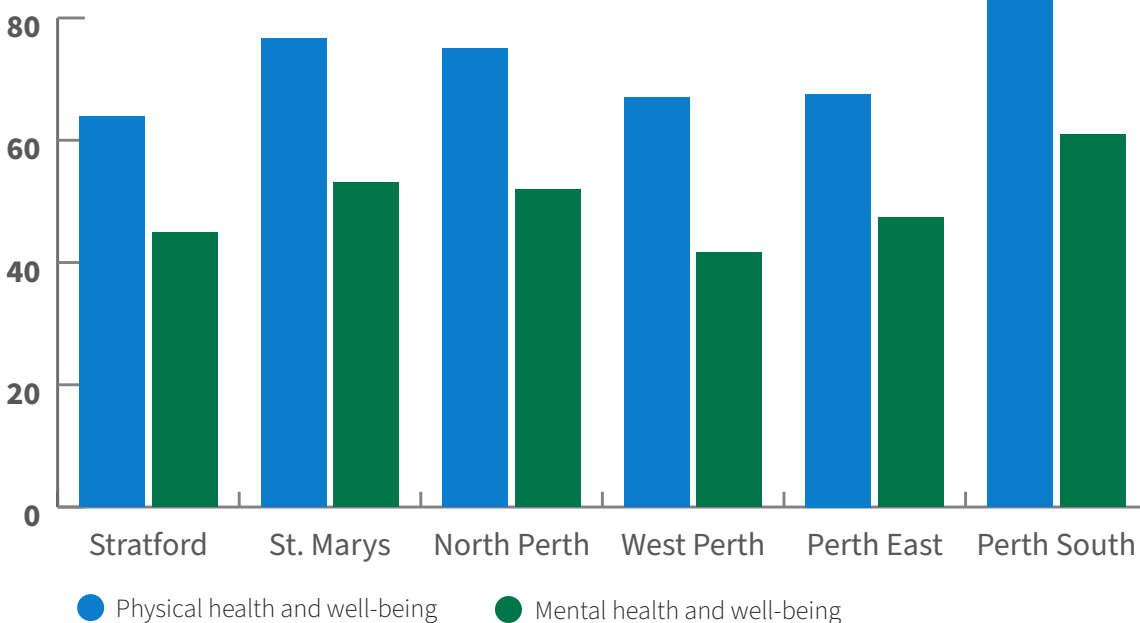
Residents recognized the importance of recreation for positive health and wellness. They stated that their ability to participate in recreation and leisure activities was affected by factors including:

- Cost
- Lack of awareness of activities
- Facility or activity hours of operation
- Facility or activity location
- Facility or activity accessibility
- Feelings of being unwelcome
- Lack of transportation
- Concerns about safety

Residents expressed a need for more outdoor activity areas (due to COVID-19), in well-lit areas, especially for youth. They also spoke about a need for free or affordable opportunities for low income individuals and families to exercise and take part in both formal and informal social activities.



I feel I can access supports in my community for... (%)



Affordable and Accessible Transportation

Even if the necessary services, supports and activities are in place, they can be inaccessible to those in our communities who lack the transportation to get there. Transportation in rural communities and for those living on less than a living wage, is a major social and health issue. Services available in large centres, such as Stratford, may be inaccessible to someone who lives only a few miles outside town, has no means of transport, or someone who does not have enough money to afford to own a vehicle or pay for transportation services (e.g., taxis).

To help address transportation barriers, initiatives such as the following are available:

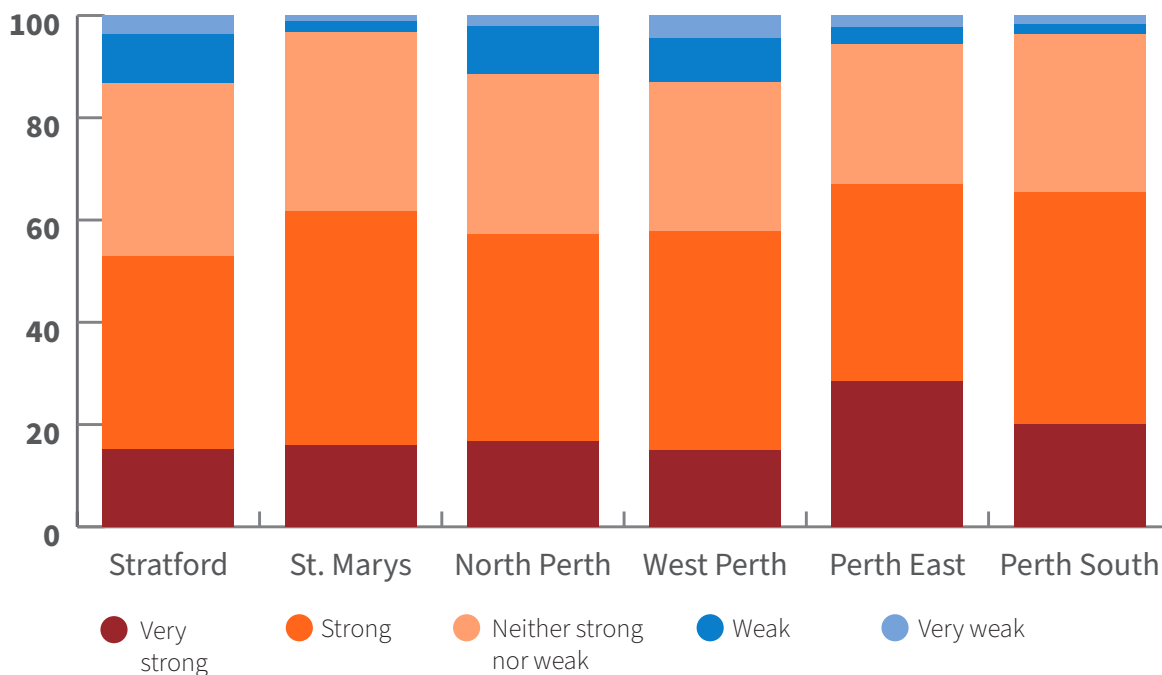
- Perth County Connect is a new bus service designed to provide residents with affordable transportation options within Perth County and surrounding areas,

- Support agencies providing services at satellite offices, and
- Transportation provided by health and social service agencies.

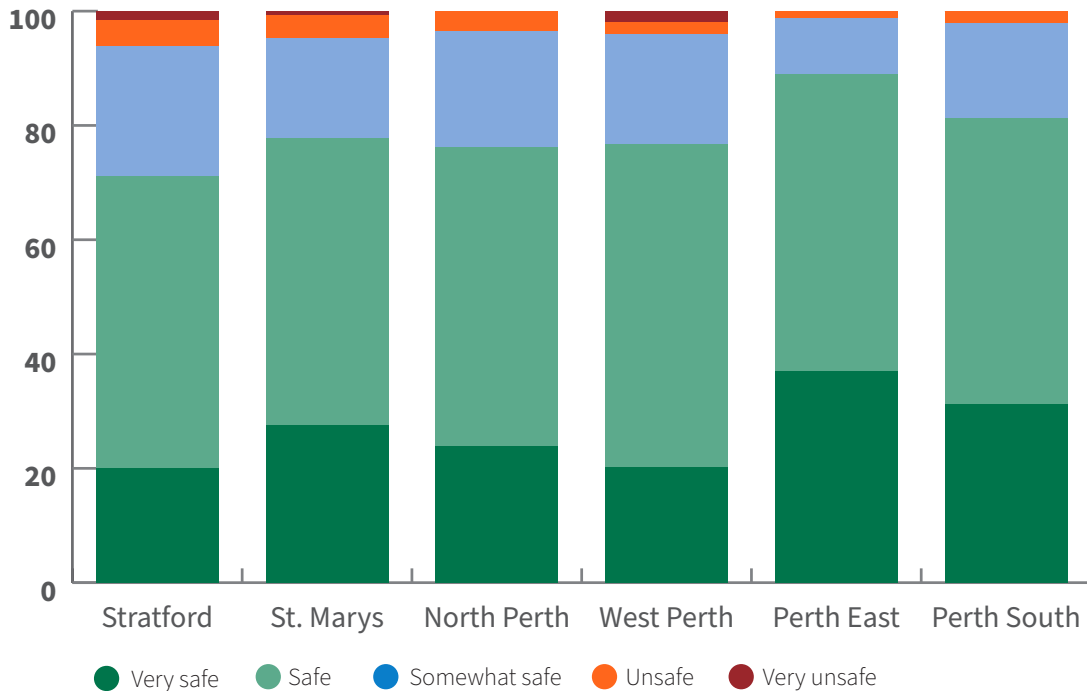


The pandemic has also resulted in expanded virtual and telephone-based services so that individuals are not required to travel for supports.

How would you describe your feeling of belonging to your local community? (%)



How do you feel about your personal safety in your community? (%)



Social Isolation

Social isolation has serious physical, mental and emotional consequences. It was noted that residents of our communities who are socially isolated are at a higher risk of developing health problems, experiencing poverty, facing mental health challenges and having a poorer quality of life. Groups such as seniors, newcomers, people with disabilities, individuals experiencing mental health and addiction issues, and those who are homeless or precariously housed, were identified as more likely to become socially isolated. COVID-19 was said to have intensified the sense of social isolation for some groups (e.g., seniors and single mothers).

Community Belonging

Most of the people who responded to the survey said they had a very strong or strong sense of community belonging. However, people we spoke with men-

tioned that groups such as youth, those experiencing homelessness, and members of the LGBTQ2T+ community often feel they do not belong. Feeling a sense of connectedness and belonging was identified as integral to community safety and well-being.

Community Safety

While most residents who took part in the engagement indicated that they feel safe in their community, there are some who do not. Reasons why they feel unsafe include: increasing prevalence of drug use and addiction/fear of those experiencing mental health and addictions issues (due to their actions and behaviours); inadequate presence of police officers in the community and on the streets; discrimination (e.g., age, gender, sexual orientation, race, disability, geographic location) by public organizations and the police; domestic violence; and presence of human traffickers.

Residents noted they feel more unsafe walking alone after dark because of: youth congregating at night; lack of lighting in public spaces; harassment and assault; presence of homeless individuals in public spaces; presence of drug use and intoxicated individuals in public spaces; and theft, particularly in rural areas. Residents also expressed concern that crime in our communities has increased over the last three years.

Systems Planning and Integration

Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County have a large number of provincially and municipally funded agencies and not-for-profit and private organizations that currently provide a broad range of social, health and justice programs and services to their residents. While there are some wonderful examples of representatives from different groups partnering to provide more integrated services and supports (refer to the section on Where We've Already Been), there are instances in which agencies and organizations are working in isolation from one another. This tends to result in a duplication of services, lack of communication between providers, and increased costs. It is also challenging for the vulnerable members of our communities who are often left navigating their way within and between agencies and organizations.



Priority Populations

Community safety and well-being is important to all residents of Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County. There are some individuals and groups however, who are more vulnerable due to social, economic or health related risk factors. These include:

- low income individuals and families,
- individuals who are homeless or precariously housed,
- individuals experiencing mental health or addictions challenges,
- transitional-aged youth (16-24 years),
- seniors,
- women and children in abusive situations,
- newcomers (immigrants and refugee),
- Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC),
- Anabaptist communities,
- children and adults with disabilities,
- LGBTQ2+ community, and
- those without strong social networks.

For vulnerable members of our communities, there is often a gap between the challenges they face and the resources they can access when they face those challenges. This vulnerability is by no means a reflection of the characteristics of these individuals, but rather it speaks to their lack of ability to connect with the services and supports they need to feel safe and well.

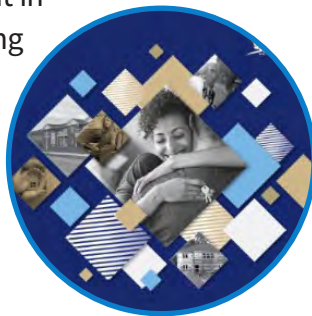


Where We've Already Been

There are a number of collaborative initiatives already underway that are helping to enhance safety and well-being in Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County. A few examples that highlight some of the key priority areas are listed below. This list is by no means exhaustive.

Coordinated Access System Leadership Group (CASLG) for Stratford-Perth-St. Marys

Tasked with developing an integrated system of care with a Coordinated Access System at its centre, the group is a community-wide strategy to help prevent homelessness and match individuals and families experiencing homelessness to housing and support services. The CASLG supports a community approach to co-ordination and care that includes mapping and leveraging all the existing resources and expertise to achieve optimal housing placements and supports for those experiencing homelessness in Perth County. The CASLG membership is represented by organizations providing services directly to individuals experiencing homelessness in Perth County.



Supported Housing of Perth Program (SHOPP)

This highly collaborative Housing First program serves the City of Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys. The program intends to provide housing assistance and support services to people who are experiencing homelessness from the following priority areas: chronic homelessness (including Indigenous Peoples), youth, families with depen-

dent-aged children and individuals transitioning from provincially-funded institutions and services systems (e.g. hospitals and prisons). The Supported Housing of Perth Program (SHOPP) model of service is based on the cooperation and collaboration of the partnering agencies as well as strong engagement from other sectors and local housing providers with specific leadership provided by the City of Stratford – Social Services Department.



The Huron Perth Addiction & Mental Health Alliance

Established in 2012, this collaborative service model serves the addiction and mental health population in Huron and Perth Counties. The objectives of the Alliance are to: provide easier access to mental health and addiction services in Huron Perth; ensure optimal use of resources; and create stronger working relationships to improve client experience. Members of the Alliance include: Alexandra Marine and General Hospital; Canadian Mental Health Association Huron Perth; Canadian Mental Health Association Elgin Middlesex; Choices for Change: Alcohol, Drug & Gambling Counselling Centre; Huron Perth Centre for Children and Youth; and, Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance — Mental Health Services.



Huron Perth and Area Ontario Health Team

This is one of the provincial teams implementing a new model of organizing and delivering health care that better connects patients and providers in their communities to improve patient outcomes. With approximately 60 partners, the team will integrate a full suite of health care services across Huron Perth and the surrounding area. Through the Ontario Health Team (OHT), patients will experience easier transitions from one provider to another, including, for example, between hospitals and home care providers, with one patient story, one patient record and one care plan.



Mobile Crisis Rapid Response Team (MCRRT)

The Stratford Police Services, the Perth and Huron County OPP and the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance collaborate to provide this enhanced service for people who may be experiencing mental health issues. This proactive initiative involves the pairing of a police or OPP Officer with a Mental Health Crisis Case Worker who is a mental health specialist. Recipients of MCRRT service include individuals presenting with symptoms of mental illness, addiction, behavioural disorders, or people in acute crisis situations.



STOP Violence Against Women (V.A.W.) Coordinating Committee of Perth County

The committee works collaboratively to educate and provide information about services available to the community, and works towards ending violence against women in Perth County. Partners include: Emily Murphy Centre, Family Services Perth-Huron, Huron Perth Children's Aid Society, Ontario Provincial Police Perth County, Optimism Place, Probation & Parole, Huron Perth Public Health, Regional HIV/AIDS Connection, Stratford Police Service, Supervised Access Program Huron-Perth, Victim Services Bruce Grey Perth, Victim Witness Assistance Program, Huron-Perth Catholic School Board, Stratford General Hospital Sexual Abuse Treatment Program, and City of Stratford Social Services.



Social Research and Planning Council (SRPC)

The Council is operated by United Way Perth-Huron and is comprised of community representatives who are dedicated to the collection, analysis and distribution of information relating to social trends and issues in Perth and Huron County. Research enables United Way to discover and understand the root causes of issues affecting Perth-Huron and in turn mobilize the community. SRPC, United Way Perth-Huron and Computer Systems Group at the University of Waterloo also partner to operate MyPerthHuron, an online resource to help track the



well-being of our communities, where we are doing well, and where our communities may be facing challenges.

Frail Seniors Strategy

This strategy is focused on individuals, typically over the age of 65, experiencing increased vulnerability resulting from a combination of physical, cognitive, social and emotional factors that influence their ability to withstand life stressors. Working together across sectors, and with delivery partners and communities in the South West Region, the goal of the strategy is to build the capacity, infrastructure, and relationships necessary to provide coordinated care to this population.



Huron Perth Situation Table

This is a proactive tool used to mitigate risks of individuals and families through the collaboration of multiple agencies. The table is hosted by the Ontario Provincial Police and Stratford Police. Membership of the Table consists of representatives from a variety of health, mental health, social service and justice agencies that work together to create a rapid response that prevents the occurrence of crisis and promotes stability for vulnerable individuals and families.



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The Table is used when all other resources have been exhausted and still nothing is working to reduce the risks for the individual or family. Two working groups have been established — Homelessness and Wraparound Services and Supports — comprised of multisector service providers and community members.

Perth County (PC) Connect

Perth County, its member municipalities of North Perth, West Perth, Perth East and Perth South, along with the City of Stratford and the Town of St. Marys, worked in partnership to secure funds to establish a new public transit system for a pilot period of five years. The pilot, which began operations on November 16, 2020, was designed to provide residents with affordable transportation options within Perth County, and surrounding areas, including Stratford, St. Marys, Kitchener/Waterloo, and London.





Where We're Going

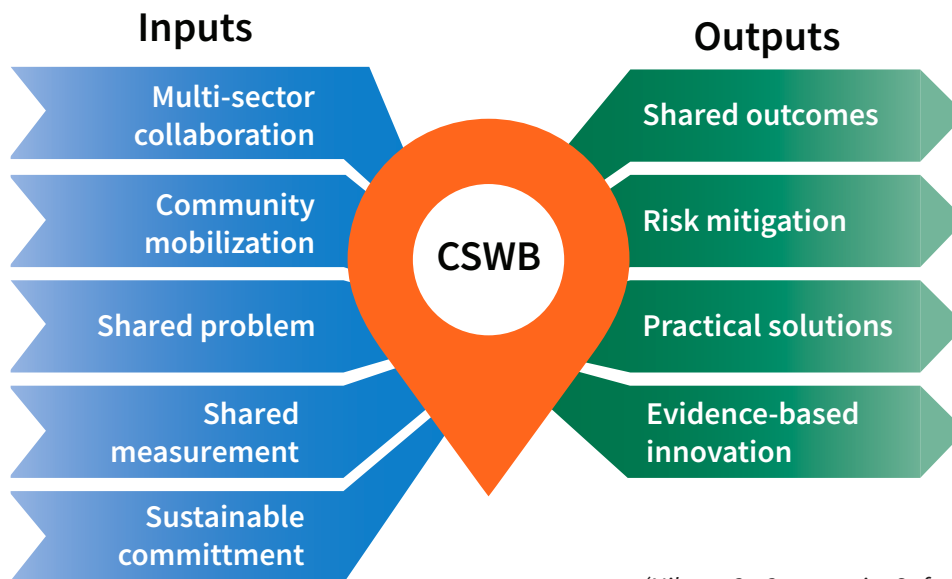


The CSWB Plan provides an approach to strengthen the effectiveness of coordinated municipal and community services to improve safety and well-being for vulnerable individuals and the communities they live in.

The fact that significant resources are in place, and yet reportedly strained and disconnected, points to the need for a more effective community-based response system and thus more collaborative efforts like the ones identified above. The Plan provides a framework for more efficiently mobilizing appropriate resources to address complex situations. The Plan supports more equitable outcomes for residents living in Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County by paving the way forward to addressing common priorities, collectively.

This approach retains what works well – recognizing the strengths that already exist within and across municipalities and organizations – while enhancing effectiveness by creating more strategically aligned and formalized alliances. These relationships provide opportunities for individual agencies to collectively tackle challenges and achieve meaningful results that they could not do alone or do as effectively alone. This approach helps to improve integration, enhance capacity, reduce duplication, and promote coordination and collaboration.

Inputs and Outputs of Community Safety and Well-being



(Nilson, C., Community Safety Knowledge Alliance, 2018)

The CSWB Plan, through strategic inputs—multi-sector collaboration, community mobilization, shared problem ownership, shared measurement, and sustainable commitment—sets the stage for meaningful outputs. Shared outcomes, risk mitigation, practical solutions, and evidence-based innovation help reduce vulnerability and build resilience.

There are many benefits to taking a coordinated and collaborative approach to community safety and well-being that ultimately result in increased individual and family success. These include better coordination, more timely response to need, less service duplication, increased knowledge and awareness of available services, more integrated approaches to care, and greater ability to share information.

Benefits of Collaboration



Model for Collaboration, Planning and Action

To ensure an integrated approach to community safety and well-being promotion, proactive risk prevention, risk intervention and incident response occurrences, the implementation of the CSWB Plan will be led by a Partnership Council.

The Council represents an alliance among people and organizations from multiple sectors for a common purpose. It provides an opportunity for partners to share their opinions and experiences and to influence the direction of prevention, intervention and capacity building activities. The Council helps coordinate and mobilize key community groups, agencies and initiatives through effective communication channels and undertakes a problem solving approach that identifies risk factors and gaps that, left unchecked, have the potential to compromise the safety and well-being of vulnerable community members.

The goals of the Partnership Council are to:

- Implement the Community Safety and Well-being Plan,
- Build supportive systems that identify effective linkages to relevant programs and services, and
- Enhance coordination across municipalities and service providers.

Functioning as an overarching governing body, the Partnership Council will support the formation of a fully integrated safety net, with mechanisms in place to bring key decision-makers and funders to the table in an ongoing process to ensure efforts are effectively aligned and mutually reinforcing.

To help ensure collective impact, the following components will be in place:

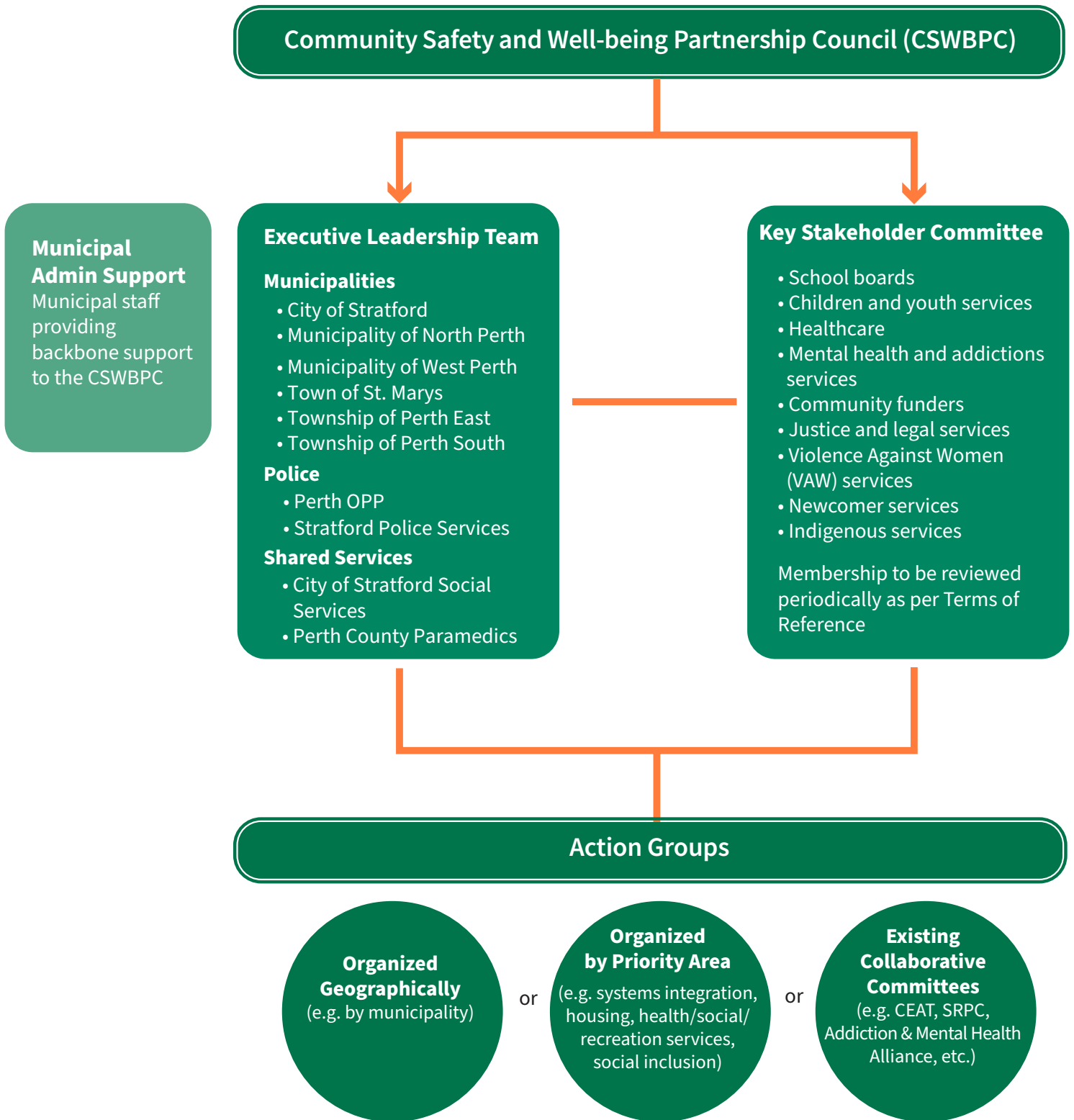
- Common agenda among partners,
- Shared measurement to assess impact,

- Mutually reinforcing activities aligned with priority objectives,
- Continuous communications among stakeholders to maintain trust and alignment,
- Clearly articulated roles, responsibilities and timelines, and
- Backbone organization that provides supports required to coordinate and convene partners.

Similar to the Advisory Committee composition, the membership of the Partnership Council will include multi-stakeholder and multisectoral representation (see Figure 4).

As needed the Partnership Council will call on Action Groups for direction, support or communication to help implement the Plan activities. These Action Groups may already exist (e.g., CASLG, StopVAW Committee) or may need to be created to address priority area gaps and better meet the needs of vulnerable populations. A Memorandum of Collaboration (MoC), created by the Partnership Council using a cooperative process, will provide a framework for collaboration, outlining who will be involved in the collaboration and how partners will work together on actions and mechanisms to improve the safety and well-being of residents. It will identify specific interrelated roles and responsibilities within and across Action Group members.

Governance Structure and Membership of the Partnership Council





CSWB Priorities



Based on the key areas of concern and the vulnerable populations, the following 4 priority areas and their associated goals and objectives have been identified for the CSWB Plan. The implementation of the actions will take place with guidance from the Partnership Council and support from municipal staff as well as existing and new Action Groups.

Priority Area #1: Systems Planning and Integration

Goal 1.1: Improved access to programs, services, supports, and resources by simplifying pathways and coordinating efforts.

- Objective 1.1.1: To increase resident knowledge and awareness of existing programs, services, and supports through improved communications.
- Objective 1.1.2: To establish collaborative pathways between programs, services, and supports, so that service providers can work together more effectively and are better equipped to guide individuals and families to the social, health, economic, and education supports they need.

Goal 1.2: Enhanced prevention and protection for safer communities.

- Objective 1.2.1: To increase police presence through proactive community-oriented interventions.
- Objective 1.2.2: To work with municipal partners to support pandemic planning and preparedness for the City of Stratford, Town of St. Marys, and Perth County.

Priority Area #2: Adequate, Affordable and Attainable Housing

Goal 2.1: Increased availability and accessibility of affordable, safe, and suitable housing.

- Objective 2.1.1: To work with the Coordinated Access System Leadership Group (CASLG) as well as other government and private sector partners to support the strategic objectives identified in the updated *Housing and Homelessness Plan for Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys (2020-2024)*:
 - Ending homelessness,
 - Creating attainable housing options,
 - Sustaining community housing, and
 - Addressing a diversity of needs.

(City of Stratford Social Services Department, 2020)



Priority Area #3: Affordable and Accessible Health, Social, and Recreation Services

Goal 3.1: Improved availability and accessibility to healthcare services and supports.

- Objective 3.1.1: To work with partners such as the Huron Perth Addiction and Mental Health Alliance and the Huron Perth and Area Ontario Health Team to support planning and implementation of mental health and addictions services and supports for residents in Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County.
- Objective 3.1.2: To provide more opportunities for residents, especially those in rural communities with limited physical and mental health services, to access care in-person and through virtual healthcare technology.

Goal 3.2: Improved knowledge and awareness of crisis response triage options.

- Objective 3.2.1: To work with municipal and service agency partners to increase residents' knowledge and awareness of crisis response options (e.g., Huron Perth Helpline, 911 and 211) and when it is most appropriate to use each option.

Goal 3.3: Increased availability of affordable transportation options.

- Objective 3.3.1: To implement new cost-effective transportation initiatives for low-income and rural residents to support improved access to healthcare, social services, and recreational activities.
- Objective 3.3.2: To determine the effectiveness of the Perth County Connect public transit pilot in providing residents with affordable and accessible transportation options within Perth County, and surrounding areas, including Stratford, St. Marys, Kitchener/Waterloo, and London. Focus on ridership of rural community members and low-income residents.

Priority Area #4: Social Inclusion

Goal 4.1: Increased application of equity, diversity, and inclusion practices across all partner agencies.

- Objective 4.1.1: To continue to build partner agencies' understanding of equity, diversity, and inclusion principles and practices through education and training.

Goal 4.2: Promote understanding of diverse groups.

- Objective 4.2.1: To develop, promote, and organize innovative community engagement and public strategies/campaigns aimed at reducing stigma and promoting understanding regarding mental health, addiction, racism, and discrimination.
- Objective 4.2.2: To support efforts of the Stratford Police Services' Community Equity Action Team (CEAT) and the OPP's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Unit to provide the community with a forum to discuss their interactions with police, critically examine local policing policies and procedures, and make recommendations for changes that will address potential issues related to systemic racism within police services and the broader community.

Goal 4.3: Enhanced sense of community belonging.

- Objective 4.3.1: To create and maintain safe, welcoming, and inclusive public spaces that promote opportunities for use by individuals of all identities, backgrounds, and experiences.
- Objective 4.3.2: To increase inclusion and access to activities and community events for populations that face constraints to participation (e.g., youth, people with disabilities, newcomers, BIPOC, LGBTQ2+ persons, and low-income families and individuals).



Moving Forward



The CSWB Plan represents the interest and commitment that municipal stakeholders and community members have in making the City of Stratford, Town of St. Marys, Municipality of North Perth, Municipality of West Perth, Township of East Perth, and Township of Perth South places where residents feel safe, connected, and physically and mentally healthy.

The CSWB Plan lays the groundwork for the six partner municipalities to work together in a coordinated and collaborative way to promote the safety and well-being of all residents in our communities. The Plan builds on existing municipal and community strengths and assets, while also addressing gaps and challenges that particularly affect the more vulnerable members of our population. While the Plan identifies specific goals and objectives we hope to achieve or make progress on over the next three years, it is also adaptable, allowing us to respond to emerging needs in our communities in a more proactive manner.

The next steps are to:

1. Develop an Implementation Plan that identifies the parties responsible for supporting the execution of the CSWB Plan goals and objectives.
2. Prepare an Evaluation Plan that helps assess the success of the Plan goals and objectives and identifies priority areas requiring additional attention.

With leadership from the Partnership Council, support from new and existing Action Groups, and ongoing engagement with community partners and residents, implementation of the Plan will provide the opportunity to promote individual and community safety and well-being, proactively prevent harms and mitigate risks, and when necessary, respond effectively to crisis situations.





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We would like to thank the many local organizations and agencies that contributed to developing our Community Safety and Well-being Plan.

We extend special thanks to all the residents who participated in the survey and engagement sessions. Their shared opinions and experiences were invaluable to the development of the Plan.

Advisory Committee

This committee included representation from the following municipalities and organizations:

- 📍 City of Stratford
- 📍 Town of St. Marys
- 📍 Municipality of North Perth
- 📍 Municipality of West Perth
- 📍 Township of Perth East
- 📍 Township of Perth South
- 📍 Stratford Police Service
- 📍 Ontario Provincial Police
- 📍 United Way of Perth-Huron
- 📍 Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance
- 📍 Huron-Perth Children’s Aid Society
- 📍 Huron Perth Public Health
- 📍 Huron Perth Catholic District School Board
- 📍 Avon Maitland District School Board

