

2015
ANNUAL
REPORT

YEAR

2



A 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan

Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys

2014-2024





Acknowledgements

The City of Stratford gratefully acknowledges the many committed and passionate service providers, community members, Mayors and City Councillors for their guidance, support, and dedication in the development and implementation of our 10-Year Housing & Homelessness Plan for Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys.

We would like to thank the following community partners for their participation in our Housing First Committee, Steering Committee, and Working Groups:

Tracy Allan-Koester	Perth District Health Unit
Betsy-Anne Barton	Community Member
Lynda Bumstead	Ministry of Community & Social Services
Kerry Lou Dickson	The Local Community Food Centre - Chair ¹
Chelsey Gordon-Edmonds	Habitat for Humanity, Heartland Ontario
Ryan Erb	United Way of Perth-Huron
Mark Gedcke	Knox Presbyterian Church
Joanne Grimes	Optimism Place
Bev Hagedorn	Stratford Perth Shelterlink
Sherry Hamilton	Hamilton Place Assisted Living
Catherine Hardman	Choices for Change
Jamie Hildebrand	Huron Perth Community Legal Clinic
Ave Karu	Canadian Mental Health Association Huron Perth
Ron Lathan	Community Member
Susan Luckhardt	Town of St. Marys
Janette Lyoness	Community Member
Nicole Martin	Choices for Change
Juli McGrenere	John Howard Society of London & District
Theresa McMurray	House of Blessing
Pirie Mitchell	Chaplain – Stratford Jail
Joanna Parker	Emily Murphy Centre
Rebecca Price	YMCA of Stratford-Perth
John Robertson	Canadian Mental Health Association Huron Perth
Mirjam Schut	Community Living St. Marys and Area - Chair ²
Aron Van de Kleut	Huron Perth Community Legal Clinic
Tracy Wallis-Best	Choices for Change

¹Chair of the Homelessness Working Group

²Chair of the Wraparound Services and Supports Working Group





We are also grateful to the number of City of Stratford Social Services Department staff who have dedicated their time and energy:

Alex Burgess
Laura Carr
Carole Desmeules

Colton Dodsley
Ramana Ganesaratnam
June Jacobs

Grant Martin
Kim McElroy
Lindsay Van Gestel





Letter from the Director of Social Services

We are committed to the vision of a community in which all people have access to housing that is safe and suitable for their needs, and have supports that enable them to remain stable in their homes. In 2013, Stratford City Council solidified our commitment through the approval of our 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan for Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys.

I am proud to present the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan Annual Progress Report for 2015 (Year 2). In collaboration with the Housing First Committee, our efforts have provided us with the opportunity to improve the way we deliver affordable and social housing and homelessness services in the City of Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys.

Safe and affordable housing is one of the foundations of a strong and vibrant community. When people have stable housing, with supports where necessary, they are empowered to seek employment and educational opportunities and integrate with the community. Providing effective responses to housing and homelessness means strategic investments in key diverse areas with the flexibility to create unique and innovative solutions that meet the needs of residents in our county. We must look at long-term planning built on strong community collaboration that is locally driven with investments from all levels of government, and participation from both public and private sectors.

As we look forward, we will continue to improve coordination of our resources to ensure people can get the help they need when they need it and be aware of how to access it. We will enhance our capacity to gather data and share information so that we can accurately know the scope of our local housing and homelessness issues and have the means to respond accordingly. Built off the success of the first two years of our plan, we will continue to invest in strategies that support people with moving into permanent affordable housing solutions and creating stability and wellness.

We know that stability starts with a home. Home is more than a roof and four walls. A home is a place where people live, where they feel safe, that they can afford and feel connected to their community.

Sincerely,

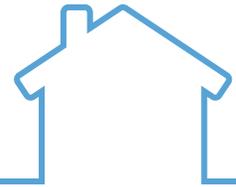
Carole Desmeules

Director of Social Services

CEO, Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation



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Key Housing Facts

Emergency Housing



438

households were provided **2,430 nights** in emergency accommodation in **2014**

378

households were provided **2,340 nights** in emergency accommodation in **2015**

Rental Vacancy Rate¹

Ontario

2.3%
to
2.4%

Increase in vacancy rate in Ontario from **2014 to 2015**

Stratford

3.5%
to
2.9%

Decrease in vacancy rate in Stratford from **2014 to 2015**

Vacancy rate in Stratford by unit size



A healthy vacancy rate is estimated to be **3%**

Rental Costs¹

1B

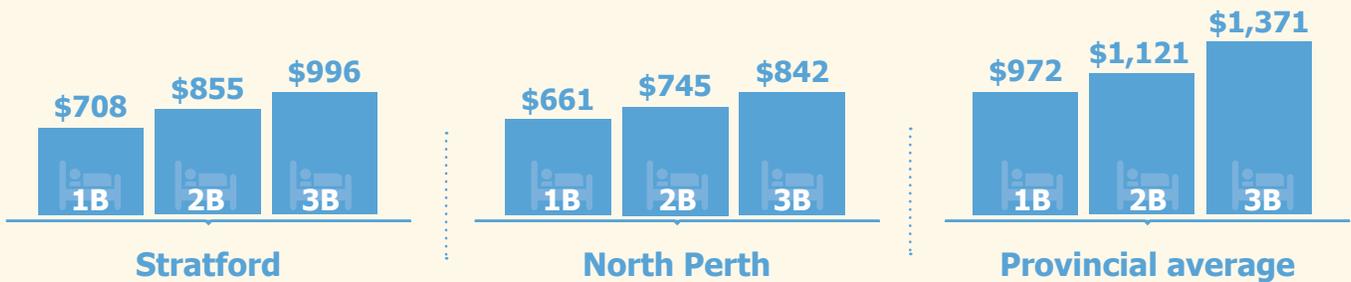
One-bedroom apartment

2B

Two-bedroom apartment

3B

Three-bedroom apartment



¹Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), "Rental Market Report Ontario Highlights" Oct 2015 CMHC and Statistics Canada, "Core Housing Need."

The rental vacancy rate and rental cost figures are for the primary rental market, from CMHC's bi-annual Rental Market Survey. The survey targets privately initiated structures with at least three rental units, which have been on the market for at least three months. Figures from October 2015.

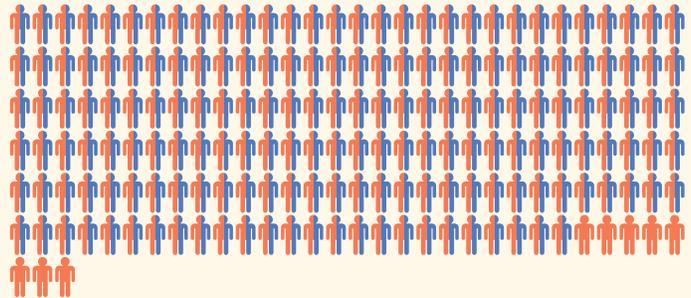




Social Housing Wait List

175 households on the waiting list as of December 2014

183 households on the waiting list as of December 2015



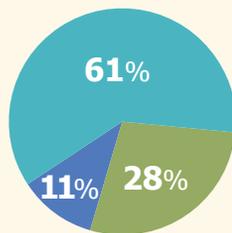
75% of households were offered housing within a year



0.6 years is the average wait time in Stratford Perth

3.8 years is the average Provincial wait time

Who was on our wait list in 2015?



Percentage (%) by households type

Household Type

- Single adults and couples
- Families
- Seniors



Average wait times in 2015

Number of New Affordable Rental Units

5 affordable rental units created in 2015

9 affordable units funded in 2015 with a completion date of 2016

3 new supportive units for individuals/families experiencing acute homelessness

12 households with lower income were able to access permanent affordable housing by purchasing their first home with the help of the Affordable Home Ownership Program





Purpose of this Report

This annual report highlights the achievements made in Year 2 (2015) of the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan (“Plan”) for Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys (2014-2024). It presents an overview of the progress made to date, according to each of the strategic priorities, as well as highlights key initiatives that are underway for Year 3 (2016) aimed at strengthening our community’s response to housing and homelessness.

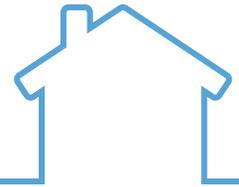
Over the past year, Social Services staff and members of the Housing First Committee have been working and meeting regularly to implement the recommendations of the Plan. Municipal investments, through the Federal-Provincial Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH) program and the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI), have been vital to the accomplishment of many of the initiatives.

“The community has moved from talking about homelessness to actively addressing it through the development of a shared vision.”

Ryan Erb
United Way Huron-Perth



Background of the Plan

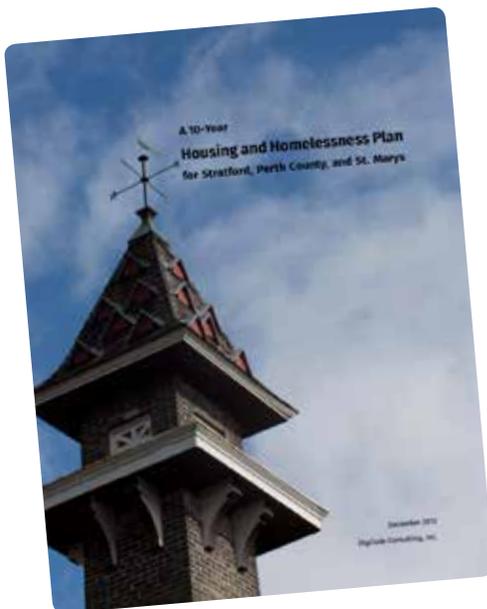


The City of Stratford is the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (“Service Manager”) for Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys. As such, the City administers provincially mandated public and social housing and homelessness programs.

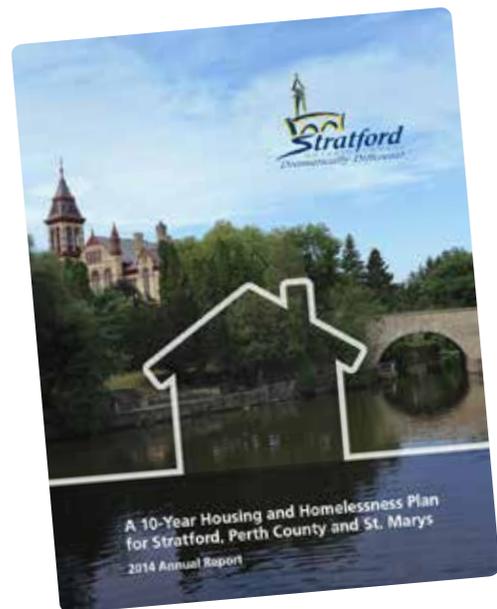
In September 2013, Stratford City Council approved a 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan for Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys. In accordance with provincial requirements, this Plan:

- Identifies current and future housing needs;
- Sets out objectives and targets (goals) related to housing needs;
- Proposes actions to meet the goals;
- Establishes a process to measure and report progress towards meeting the goals.

In addition, it is expected that the Plan be reviewed every five years, with annual public reporting on the results.



Read the City’s 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan at:
www.stratfordcanada.ca/en/insidcityhall/resources/10-Year-HHP.pdf



Read the City’s 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan 2014 Annual Report (Year 1) at:
www.stratfordcanada.ca/en/insidcityhall/resources/10-Year-HHP-2014-Annual-Report.pdf



Vision

All people have access to housing that is safe and suitable for their needs, and have supports that enable them to remain stable in their homes. People may become homeless, or face the possibility of losing their homes, but supports will be in place to help them remain in their housing or locate a permanent alternative as quickly as possible, in the community of their choice.

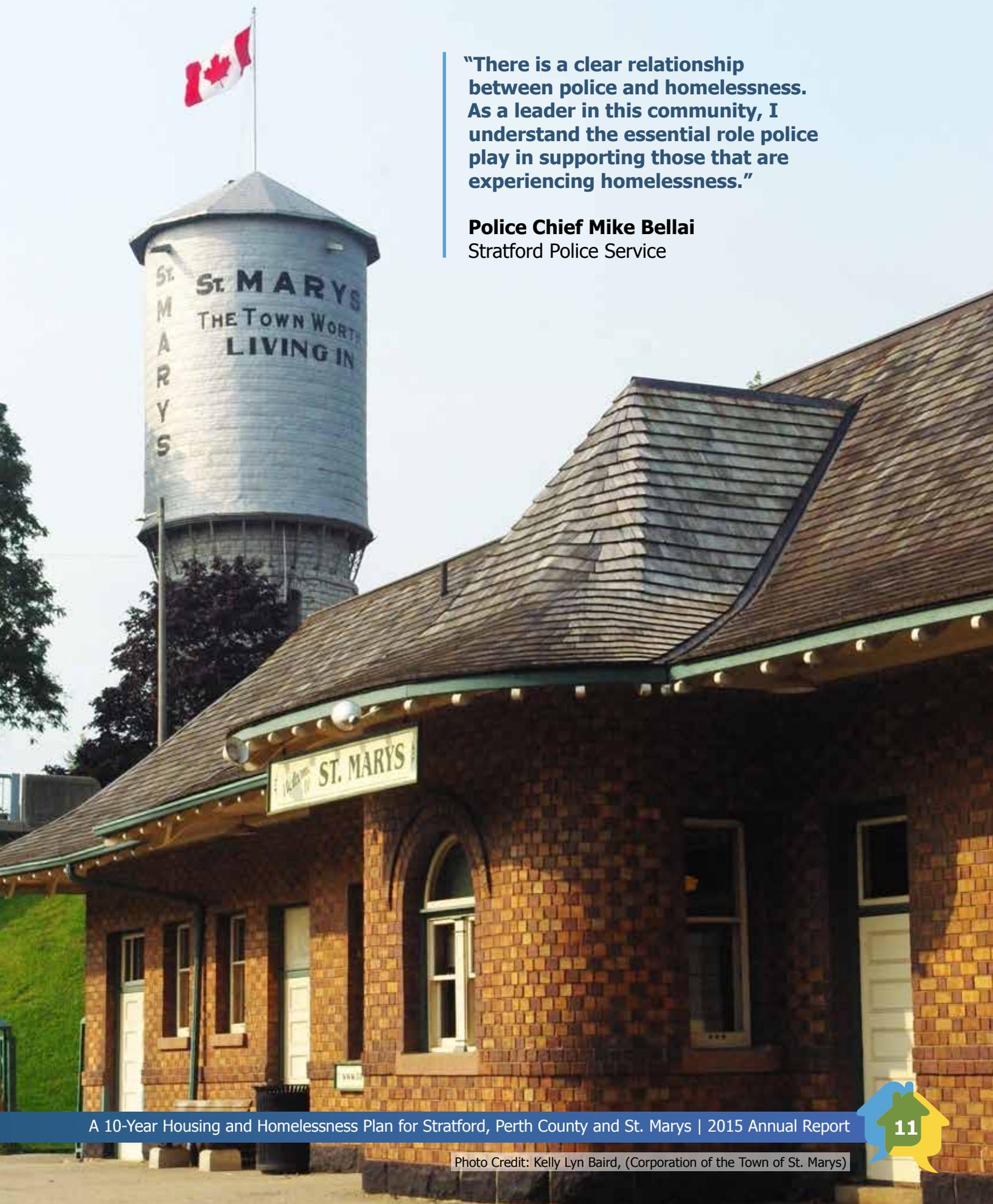


Strategic Priorities

The plan identifies five strategic priority areas:

- 1 Systems reorientation to improve coordination and collaboration in the delivery of housing services and supports;
- 2 Enhance the capacity for gathering data and sharing information between service providers;
- 3 Increase access to affordable housing options;
- 4 Focus homelessness prevention on the individuals and families who are at greatest risk;
- 5 Transform the provision of emergency accommodation in Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys to focus on helping individuals and families return to permanent housing.





“There is a clear relationship between police and homelessness. As a leader in this community, I understand the essential role police play in supporting those that are experiencing homelessness.”

Police Chief Mike Bellai
Stratford Police Service



Alignment with Provincial Priorities

We know that some individuals and families within Stratford, Perth County and St. Marys are at a greater risk than others of becoming homeless or remaining homeless. Through community consultations, six groups were identified as a priority based on either vulnerability or overrepresentation.

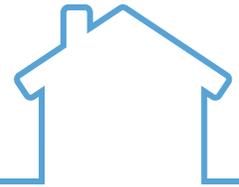
These groups include: i) Youth, ii) Working Poor and Social Assistance Recipients, iii) People with Physical or Developmental Disabilities, iv) Individuals with Compromised Mental Health, v) Women (with or without children, including those that are survivors of domestic violence) and vi) Single Men.

While addressing the unique needs of Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys, our local priorities align well with the provincial priorities and advancing the two overarching outcomes:

- Decreasing the number of people who are homeless; and
- Increasing the number of families and individuals achieving housing stability.



What is Housing First?



Identified as the foundation to our 10-Year Housing & Homelessness Plan for Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys, Housing First is an approach aimed to provide permanent housing rapidly for people who are experiencing homelessness, and then offers and links additional supports and services as needed. It is an internationally recognized and highly successful approach identified as a best practice to solving homelessness.

Housing First is an approach, with a series of interventions, rooted in the philosophy that all members of our community have the RIGHT to housing and that it is essential for recovery. Through the Housing First model, individuals and families are in a better position to make positive progress in their lives and experience improved health outcomes if they are first housed.

“One of Council’s priorities is to ensure that Stratford is a community where all people can afford to live, prosper and call home by encouraging and enabling affordable living through innovative approaches and practices.”

Councillor Bonnie Henderson
Chair of the Social Services
Sub-committee of Council
City of Stratford



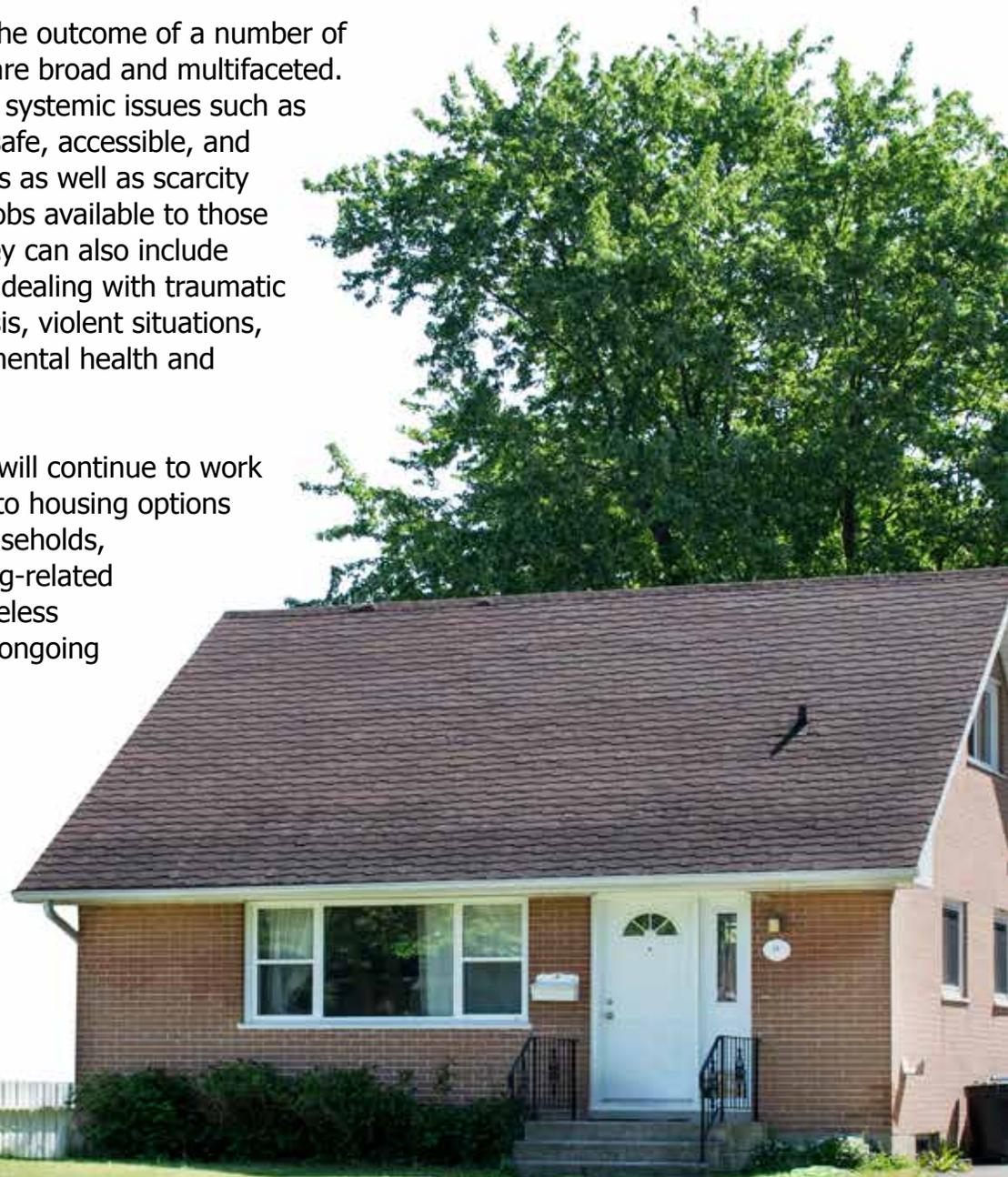


Homelessness in Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys

Homelessness is a serious issue that impacts almost every community. It refers to a spectrum that includes absolute homelessness (unsheltered, residing outdoors), emergency sheltered, those in institutional care who have no fixed address, those couch surfing or in interim housing, and those at-risk of homelessness.

Homelessness is usually the outcome of a number of contributing factors that are broad and multifaceted. These factors can include systemic issues such as an inadequate supply of safe, accessible, and affordable housing options as well as scarcity of full-time, well-paying jobs available to those seeking employment. They can also include individual factors such as dealing with traumatic experiences, personal crisis, violent situations, and/or issues related to mental health and substance use.

As we move forward, we will continue to work to ensure greater access to housing options that are affordable to households, provide a range of housing-related supports focused on homeless prevention, and promote ongoing housing stability.



Our Strategic Priority Achievements in 2015



1 Coordination and Collaboration

Goal: To improve coordination and collaboration in the delivery of housing services and supports, through systems re-orientation.

Action

1. Increased our local capacity for intersectoral collaborations.

Results

- Hosted by the Ontario Provincial Police, the City of Stratford Social Services Department and Stratford Police are founding members of the Huron Perth Situation Table and participate in weekly meetings involving human service providers such as first responders and community-based agencies.
- Worked together to create a rapid response that prevents the occurrence of crisis and promotes stability for vulnerable individuals.
- Established two working groups - Homelessness and Wraparound Services and Supports - comprised of multisector service providers and community members.





Action

2. Reviewed personnel and staffing needs within the Social Services Department - Housing Division.

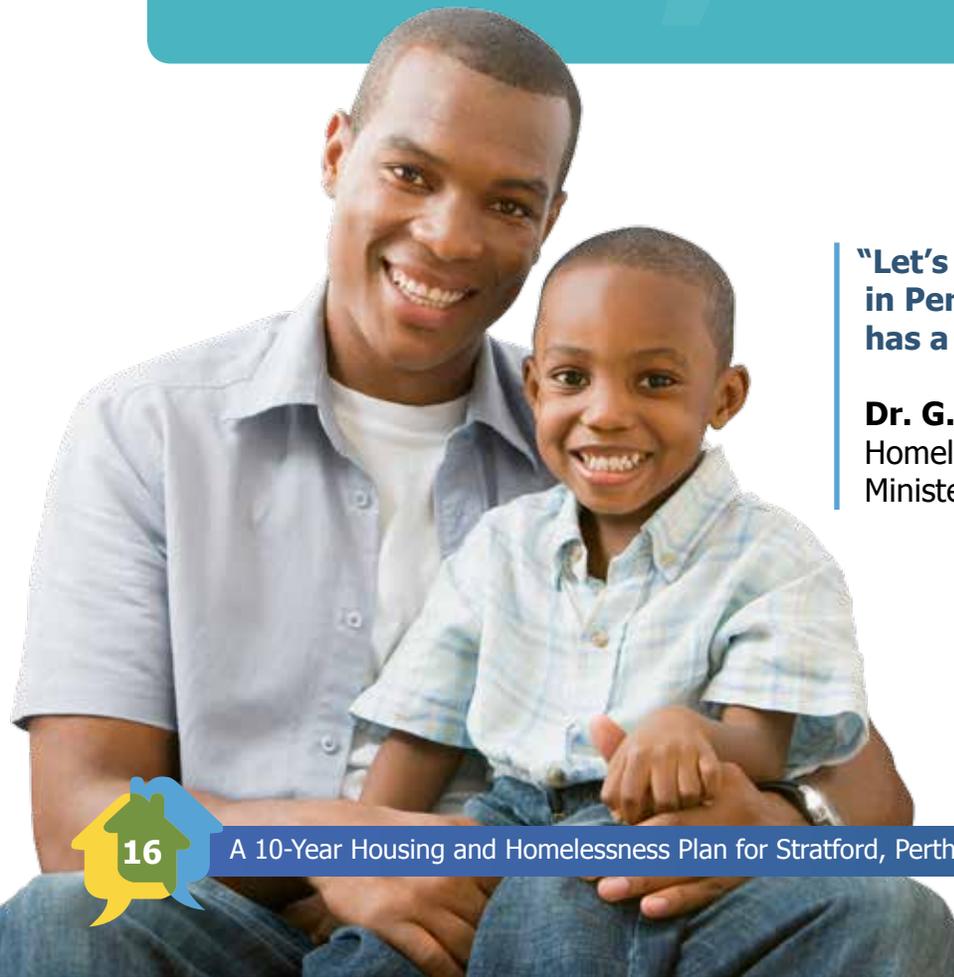
Results

- Hired a Housing Outreach worker position to create a rapid, short-term response aimed at preventing homelessness.
- Created and hired for a new Housing and Homeless Coordinator position to facilitate community involvement and implementation of "The Plan".



2,340

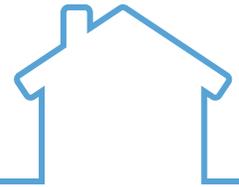
nights of emergency accommodation were provided in Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County in 2015.



"Let's solve homelessness together in Perth County so that everyone has a chance for a full life."

Dr. G. Pirie Mitchell

Homelessness Working Group Member,
Minister



2 Data Gathering and Sharing

Goal: To enhance the capacity for gathering data and sharing information between service providers.

Action

1. Initiated planning for the development of an integrated system to collect and track data about homelessness to support long-term planning and service prioritization.

2. Partnered with the Social Research and Planning Council (SRPC) on the establishment of a local data consortium.

Results

- Identified local homelessness and housing information data needs.

- Completed initial steps that will provide access to customized data tables and analytic tools from Statistics Canada and other key sources of socioeconomic data.

- Collaborated with SRPC on the establishment of an online Community Trends Platform that will help track and report on quality of life indicators that track population-level affordable housing and homelessness data.

\$3,342,100 

will be received from the Federal-Provincial Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH) program between 2014 and 2020.



3 Affordable Housing Options

Goal: To increase access to affordable housing options.

Action

Results

1. Helped reduce the rents of low-income tenants to an affordable level.

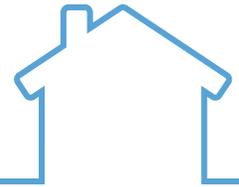
- Assisted 128 tenants by providing rent subsidies in private market units through the Rent Supplement program.
- Served 39 households, through the Housing Allowances program, by providing housing alternatives for households currently on the Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) housing waitlist.
- Supported 15 households by providing financial assistance through the In-Situ program to remain successfully housed in their present accommodation.

2. Supported the development of new permanent affordable housing units by leveraging funding from upper levels of government.

- Created 5 new affordable housing units in St. Marys.
- Started construction in Stratford on 16 new units, 9 of which will be designated as affordable housing.
- Created 3 new supportive housing units in Stratford to respond to acute housing crisis situations.

3. Assisted individuals and families on the wait list to secure RGI housing.

- Provided about 200 families and individuals with housing accommodations.
- Housed 75% of households on the wait list within a year of their application being submitted.



Action	Results
4. Initiated a professional development plan to share best practices and initiatives to foster the development of affordable housing locally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hosted over 50 community representatives at the 'Making Affordable Housing a Reality for Our Community' Event, including local developers, architects, housing providers, private sector landlords, municipal planners, councillors, city staff, and other key community stakeholders.
5. Created new municipal incentives to assist with affordable housing development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduced the property tax ratio for new multi-residential buildings by 54%, from 2.15309 to 1. The new by-law, approved by City of Stratford Council, will encourage investors to develop new multi-residential units within the City of Stratford.• Presented the new by-law for new multi-residential units to encourage housing development in other municipalities in Perth County and St. Marys.



“At Canadian Mental Health Association Huron Perth, we believe that safe and affordable housing is an essential element to mental health recovery.”

John Robertson

Canadian Mental Health Association Huron Perth



4 Eviction and Homelessness Prevention

Goal: To focus homelessness prevention on the individuals and families who are greatest risk.

Action

Results

1. Continue to assist low-income tenants with rent start-up and rent and utility arrears.

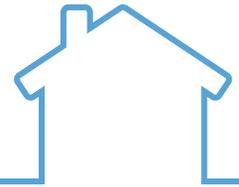
- Provided 269 households with access to funding to maintain their existing housing and avoid eviction.
- Assisted 60 households with utility repayments to maintain housing stability.

2. Provided outreach and case management services to individuals and families who were homeless or at-risk of experiencing homelessness.

- Served 74 individuals and families through various resources and services, to provide outreach services that included assistance with RGI housing applications, landlord mediation, rapid re-housing, and securing affordable and accessible units in the private market, in-home tenant support, and social integration activities.

3. Piloted a new Eviction Prevention Initiative.

- Held weekly case conferences to help identify tenants at risk of becoming homeless or evicted; as a result 69% of households were able to successfully retain their housing by resolving housing related concerns that could have led to an eviction.
- Reduced evictions by 17% from the previous year (2014).



5 Homelessness Reduction

Goal: To transform the provision of emergency accommodation in Stratford, Perth County and St. Marys to focus on helping individuals and families return to permanent housing.

Action

1. Continued to provide emergency housing help to households in need.

Results

- Provided support to 270 households, totaling 2,340 nights in emergency accommodations.
- Received 378 calls to the after hours and weekend phone line; of those calls, 212 resulted in short-term placement.
- Assisted 27 youth with 278 nights of short-term emergency accommodations for up to 14 days.



378
calls were
received
in 2015

Social Services Department, through the Shelterlink program, offers after-hours emergency community placement service. 212 of those calls resulted in short-term placement in emergency accommodation totalling 2,340 nights.



Moving Our Strategic Priorities Forward in 2016

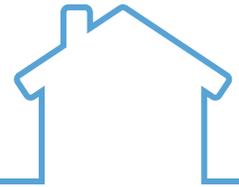
1 Coordination and Collaboration

- a. Introduce a three-year implementation strategy that turns the goals of “The Plan” into concrete tasks with specific measureable outcomes.
- b. Review and assess existing Common Intake and Assessment Tools to determine feasibility and appropriate use across community partners.
- c. Explore the feasibility of expanding points of access in Perth County through the creation of additional satellite sites and one point of entry for all Social Services Department programs.
- d. Working with the Housing First Committee, develop and implement the communication and advocacy strategy to support the activities of “The Plan”.

2 Data Gathering and Sharing

- a. Develop and implement a system for collecting and tracking housing and homelessness data for improved system planning, evaluation and reporting.
- b. Continue to actively collaborate with the Social Research Planning Council on planning and data initiatives related to housing and homelessness.
- c. Review existing databases and create a new database with common indicators for Huron and Perth County.





3 Affordable Housing Options

- a. Hold an annual forum on affordable housing development with community representatives, reviewing new incentives and initiatives to foster the development of affordable housing municipally.
- b. Establish a new Working Group that will bring together private sector housing providers and developers for the development of new affordable housing options.
- c. Leverage new investments from upper levels of government to create new, affordable housing options and address major structural repairs and renovations to existing social housing stock.
- d. Review opportunities to expand efforts to add accessibility modifications to the existing social housing stock, such as walk-in showers and ramps, to continue to meet the standards of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

4 Eviction and Homelessness Prevention

- a. Work with the Wraparound Supports and Services Working Group to improve eviction prevention strategies, and address housing outreach and support needs of vulnerable tenants.
- b. Evaluate the Eviction Prevention Initiative pilot, and continue to meet and identify effective strategies to to improve housing retention.
- c. Apply for the Provincial Portable Housing Benefit Pilot Project that will assist survivors of domestic violence find safe and affordable housing beyond traditional rent-gear-to-income (RGI) social housing assistance.

5 Homelessness Reduction

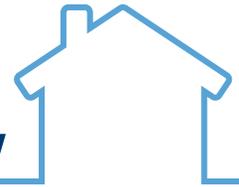
- a. Participate in the 20,000 Homes Campaign, a national advocacy movement involving over 30 communities across Canada, begin planning for a county-wide Registry Week anticipated to take place in the spring of 2017.



“There is more to what makes us healthy than the health care system, our genetics and our health behaviour choices. Factors like stable and safe housing can greatly influence our health.”

Dr. Miriam Klassen
Medical Officer of Health,
Perth District Health Unit

Affordable Housing Solutions Created Through Partnership – The Story of Andrew



This is Andrew...

He is a **47 year old father with two children** living in Perth County with a **monthly income of \$1,248**

He has several complex health issues with limited mobility and requires in-home care



He needed an accessible unit but nothing was available where he lived



He was **facing eviction**, potentially going to become homeless and lose his children

Andrew needed help so he reached out to the City of Stratford Housing Division

The Objective

To find a home for Andrew and his children that is affordable, accessible and in his hometown.

Community Response



Over the next eight months, City of Stratford staff, the March of Dimes, Ontario Home Health, Simple Dreams and a private market housing provider all came together and worked tirelessly with Andrew to find a home for him and his family.



An apartment was located, a housing allowance was provided to make it affordable, provincial funds helped with first and last month's rent, and an operating lift was installed.

The Results

Andrew and his family have a safe, accessible and affordable place to live, and are in a better position to take on future challenges and opportunities.

There are many more people and families in Perth County that find themselves in complex situations that put them at-risk of becoming homeless. All sectors must work together to provide flexible and innovative solutions to improve access to accessible and affordable housing in our community.





Glossary

20,000 Homes Campaign: A national movement of communities working together to permanently house 20,000 of Canada's most vulnerable homeless people by July 1, 2018.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA): Provincial legislation that develops mandatory accessibility standards that identifies, removes, and prevents barriers for people with disabilities.

Affordable Home Ownership Program: The Affordable Home Ownership program aims to assist low-to-moderate-income renter households to purchase affordable homes by providing down payment assistance in the form of a forgivable loan.

Affordable Housing: Dwelling costs that do not exceed 30% of total before-tax household income.

Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI): Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) is a consolidation of former provincial housing and homelessness programs into a single funding envelope under the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH). Funding can now be used by Service Managers to address local priorities to meet the needs of individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless in their communities.

Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM): A municipal government responsible for carrying out the funding and administrative responsibilities of the Housing Services Act. A CMSM could be regional government, a county or a separated city, depending on the local circumstances.

Core Housing Need: Housing that does not meet one or more of the following standards:

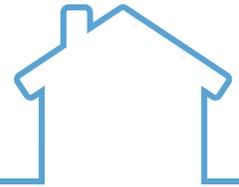
- Adequacy
- Suitability
- Affordability

Data Consortium: A gateway to data for municipalities and community sector organizations. Members access customized tables from Statistics Canada and other sources to get the evidence that supports sound decisions and social development programs.

Homelessness: An individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. Homelessness 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/racism and discrimination.

In-Situ Programs: A housing allowance program that allows households to remain in their present accommodation, providing certain eligibility requirements are met (most commonly used for mentally or physically unwell individuals and would compromise their ongoing stability to change residence).





Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH) for Ontario Programs: A program funded by the provincial and federal governments that supports new rental construction, home repair, housing allowances, rent supplements or home ownership.

Public Housing: Housing developed predominantly by the Ontario Housing Corporation (OHC) in the 1960s after the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's mandate broadened to include housing for low-income families. Downloaded from the Province to Municipal Service Managers in 2001, these are now called Ontario's Local Housing Corporations.

Rent Bank: Community-based organizations providing assistance to individuals and families who cannot afford to pay their rent. The type and range of assistance varies from organization to organization.

Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) Rent Subsidy: A subsidy paid to a social housing provider and guaranteed for the life of the mortgage. In Ontario, the RGI Rent Subsidy equals the difference between the actual rent paid by a low-income tenant and the government approved market rent of a unit.

Situation Tables: A situation table is a strategic alliance of human services (including police, and various health and social services) guided by common principles and processes in order to mitigate risk situations in a timely manner, usually within 24-48 hours.

Social Housing: Housing built with the financial assistance of governments to provide assistance to low and moderate-income households. It includes public housing, non-profit and co-operative housing and rent supplements.

Social Research and Planning Council: A division of United Way Huron-Perth 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

Subsidized Rental Housing: Financial subsidies provided to offset rental rates in market rental units for low-income households (e.g. rent supplements, housing allowances, etc.)

A 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan

Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys

2014-2024



City of Stratford

Social Services Department – Housing Division

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