

# Community Safety and Well-being Plan - Executive Summary

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## Introduction

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

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 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 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. 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.

## Impact of COVID-19

When we began to prepare for the development of this Plan, COVID-19 was not on the radar. But as planning for the engagements began, the pandemic became a central feature of every day life. The contents of this Plan reflect the impacts of COVID-19 on residents, both personally and professionally.

As a result of COVID-19, many extra supports were put in place (e.g., additional temporary housing, enhanced mental health supports) to address the need for physical distancing and to respond to the negative outcomes (e.g., increases 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.

## Identifying Our Priority Areas

The Plan was developed based on a combination of desktop research, input from community members and service providers, and guidance from an Advisory Committee comprised of 24 members. The specific methods used to gathering information included:

- Document, data and media reviews;
- Participation in Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) calls addressing the planning and preparation of the municipal CSWB plans; and,
- Conducting a range of virtual engagement activities:

- An online CSWB survey - a total of 1078 respondents took part.
- Focus groups and one-on-one interviews with service providers - a total of 27 sessions and nine (9) interviews took place with a total of 91 participants.
- Engagement with community members with lived experience (through focus groups or a brief survey) - a total of 28 individuals took part.

## What We Heard – Priority Areas

### Survey

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

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

### Service Agencies / Lived Experience Engagement

The key priorities identified by service providers and those with lived experience, listed by level of importance beginning with the most important, included:

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

## What We Heard – Priority Populations

The following groups were identified as priority populations due to their enhanced vulnerability as a result of social, economic and/or health related risk factors:

- Low income individuals and families
- Individuals who are experiencing homelessness/precariously housed
- Individuals experiencing mental health and/or addictions challenges
- Transitional-aged youth (16-24 years)
- Seniors
- Women and children in abusive situations
- Newcomers (immigrants and refugees)
- Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC)
- Anabaptist communities
- Children and adults with disabilities
- LGBTQ2+ community
- Those without strong social networks

## Model for Planning, Collaboration 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. 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.

Membership for the Council will include a representative from each:

- Police
  - Stratford Police Services

- Huron Perth Ontario Provincial Police
- Partner municipalities
  - City of Stratford
  - Town of St. Marys
  - Municipality of North Perth
  - Municipality of West Perth
  - Township of Perth East
  - Township of Perth South
- Shared Services
  - City of Stratford Social Services
  - Perth County Paramedics
- Key stakeholders from the following sectors (membership to be reviewed periodically as per a Terms of Reference):
  - School boards
  - Children & youth services
  - Healthcare
  - Mental health & addictions services
  - Community funders
  - Justice & legal services
  - Violence Against Women (VAW) services
  - Newcomer services
  - Indigenous services

As needed the Partnership Council will call on Action Groups for direction, support and/or communication to help implement the Plan activities. These Action Groups may already exist or may need to be created to address priority area gaps and better meet the needs of vulnerable populations.

## Community Safety and Well-being Plan Priorities

Based on what we heard, the following four (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 Group members.

## 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 - Affordable, Attainable, and Suitable 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
  - Addressing a Diversity of Needs

## 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 promoting understanding of 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 Units and 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 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 and communication 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.