

MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: January 9, 2024
To: Social Services Sub-committee
From: Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works
Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services
Report Number: SOC24-001
Attachments: Building Safer Communities in Stratford - Findings and Recommendations

Title: Building Safer Communities in Stratford - Findings and Recommendations

Objective: To provide Council with an update regarding the findings and recommendations gleaned during the Building Safer Communities Fund research and evaluation that was completed by Taneja Consulting Inc. in June of 2023.

Background: As detailed in report SOC23-045 and COU23-102, the City of Stratford has been selected by the Federal Government of Canada to receive funds for a program targeting crime prevention and intervention activities. The purpose of this program is addressing gun and gang violence prevention and intervention programs for gang members, children, young adults, and youth-at-risk.

The Stratford community was identified for funding based on a ranked list of two major elements: data sets for crime severity (using a set of statistical indicators including homicides by firearm, incidents of firearms offences, and organized crime/street gang-involved crime) and population density.

In order to receive the funding, the City submitted a prevention and intervention plan to combat gun and gang activities to Public Safety Canada. The plan outlines how our community plans to spend our funding allocation.

To achieve a better understanding of the gaps in services within our community, consulting firm Taneja Consulting Inc., completed an environmental scan of the service area, interviews with service providers, and an analysis of the youth experience in Stratford and Perth County. The findings indicated that youth are an underserved segment of the population within the service area and the research completed by Taneja Consulting Inc. directly informed the proposed plan to the Federal government.

The initial environmental scan was completed under strict timelines, leaving less than 8 weeks between RFP award and due date to the federal government, meaning that the scan was only as fulsome as the time that was allotted by the federal government. This report highlights the findings and recommendations that were made evident during the environmental scan and summarizes the findings of the research that was completed.

Analysis: The report, titled “Building Safer Communities in Stratford: Findings and Recommendations” is attached to this report and was completed in November 2023 at the request of the Social Services Department. The research and evaluation that was completed in June 2023 lead to an informed plan which was endorsed and accepted by the Government of Canada as well as the release of an RFP in October, 2023 allowing local agencies to apply for funding to directly deliver services that benefit youth in the catchment area. The Social Services Department continues to work with the applicant of the RFP to create meaningful and informed programming which meets the needs of the community as well as the outcomes and goals put forth in the plan submitted to the Government of Canada.

The Social Services Department’s next steps include:

- Developing a Safer Communities Targeted Task Force that works in collaboration with relevant community partners with a focus on youth.
- Co-creating safe spaces for youth to build relationships (with programming to support youth after school hours)

The attached report highlights the background which lead to the creation of the report, limitations to the research due to the tight timelines, emerging themes, and actionable next steps that the City of Stratford can take when developing a youth strategy which addresses the most prevalent issues identified in the report.

Financial Implications:

Financial impact to prior year operating budget:

The total cost for the report was \$14,633.50 plus HST and was fully funded through the 2023 budget (consulting in Social Services Administration). There was no impact to the municipal tax levy because of the work completed to finalize and present the attached report.

Financial impact on current and future year operating budget:

There is no impact on future year operating budgets regarding the next steps, as these are funded from provincial funding envelope.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities:

Strengthening our Plans, Strategies and Partnerships

Partnering with the community to make plans for our collective priorities in arts, culture, heritage and more. Communicating clearly with the public around our plans and activities.

Alignment with One Planet Principles:

Health and Happiness

Encouraging active, social, meaningful lives to promote good health and wellbeing.

Equity and Local Economy

Creating safe, equitable places to live and work which support local prosperity and international fair trade.

Culture and Community

Nurturing local identity and heritage, empowering communities, and promoting a culture of sustainable living.

Staff Recommendation: THAT the Building Safer Communities in Stratford - Findings and Recommendations Report by Taneja Consulting Inc. be received;

THAT staff be directed to develop a Safer Communities Targeted Task Force that works in collaboration with relevant community partners with a focus on youth;

AND THAT staff be directed to look into co-creating safe spaces for youth to build relationships (with programming to support youth after school hours).

Prepared by:	Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works
Recommended by:	Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services
	Joan Thomson, Chief Administrative Officer