

MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: May 13, 2025
To: Social Services Sub-committee
From: John Ritz: Supervisor of Homelessness and Housing Stability
Kim McElroy: Director of Social Services
Report Number: SOC25-006
Attachments: Homelessness and Housing Stability Infographic

Title: Homelessness and Housing Stability Update

Objective: To inform and update Sub-committee of recent achievements and progress regarding homelessness and housing stability.

Background: The City of Stratford works collaboratively with community agencies towards a shared goal of ending homelessness. This report is intended to provide updates on recent achievements and ongoing progress on this collaborative effort. These achievements include the creation of the 3-year pilot Community Safety and Well-Being By-law Officer role, collaborations with the Perth County Mobile Integrated Health Team, the Town of St. Marys and the Municipality of North Perth, and the implementation of the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System.

Analysis: The Community Safety and Well-Being By-law Officer role was created in January 2024 as a three-year pilot, funded from federal program funding. This position is intended to be an additional resource for community members and local businesses to contact, to provide information, or to act as an alternative to the use of police. It has had a positive impact on the community and its citizens using education and diversion, resulting in 52 diversions from formal enforcement.

The continuation of the Community Paramedic Program in partnership with the Perth County Mobile Integrated Health Team has been a success across the service area and has had over 420 individuals supported. This program is a collaborative effort between organizations to provide health-based outreach supports and system navigation tools to under-resourced and vulnerable populations. Additional services offered through the program include medication reviews, providing food resources through local partnerships, collaborating with the Unattached Care Clinic to refer individuals to a family doctor, as well as referring and working collaboratively with community partners and organizations to ensure they are connected to the appropriate supports.

The introduction of the Community Developer roles in St. Marys and North Perth has helped to support local needs and assist with system navigation. These positions provide local support and increase community programming. In 2024, they served over 140 unique households.

In addition to new positions and partnerships, there has also been a growing need to track data and respond to trends occurring in the community. To facilitate this, the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) is being implemented. Developed by the Government of Canada, Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) is a Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) designed to support the day-to-day operational activities of Canadian homelessness service providers. As described on their website, HIFIS is a comprehensive data collection and case management system. HIFIS enables participating service providers within the same community to access, collect, and share local real-time homelessness data to ensure individuals and families accessing services are prioritized and referred to appropriate services at the correct time. Over the past 12 months, Social Services outreach staff have been testing the system internally and will soon begin implementation with local service providers. The implementation of HIFIS has necessitated a transition in how individuals accessing rooms for rent are categorized and they will begin to be considered housed rather than provisionally accommodated. This change will ensure that those with the highest needs are given the highest priority.

In 2024, there were 115 households housed as well as 135 newly identified individuals and households entering homelessness during this time. These statistics are important to recognize as successes and as a reminder that there is ongoing work that needs to be done.

Financial Implications:

Financial impact to current year operating budget:

Initiatives and programs identified in this report have been included in the 2025 budget.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities:

Build Housing Stability

These initiatives contribute to the strategic priority of Build Housing Stability by supporting individuals and families exit homelessness and maintain their housing stability.

Alignment with One Planet Principles:

Health and Happiness

This report aligns with the Health and Happiness Principal as it is focused on how to best support vulnerable community members in becoming active, social, and meaningful members of their community.

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Homelessness and Housing Stability Update" (SOC25-006), be received for information.

Prepared by: John Ritz, Supervisor of Homelessness and Housing Stability

Recommended by: Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services

Adam Betteridge, Interim Chief Administrative Officer