



Stratford • St. Marys • North Perth
West Perth • Perth East • Perth South

2025-2035

Community Safety and Well-Being Plan

Charting the Next Chapter: Empowering Safe
and Connected Communities





Acknowledgements

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that 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 are positioned on the traditional territory of the **Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe and the Neutral (Attawandaron) peoples**. We are reminded that our Townships, Municipalities and City are situated on treaty land that is steeped in rich Indigenous history and home to many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples today. We are grateful to have the opportunity to live, work, and play on this land.

Acknowledgement

The Community Safety and Well-Being Plan (CSWB Plan) relies on collaboration with community partners and residents to successfully build safe and healthy communities. The Plan creates a model that will enhance our ability to respond to issues in a coordinated manner by building on efforts that contribute to a strong sense of community safety and well-being in Stratford, St. Marys, North Perth, West Perth, Perth East, and South Perth. The Co-Chairs of the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan, the Director of the City of Stratford Social Services Department, Kim McElroy, and the Chief of Stratford Police, Greg Skinner, would like to thank and commend the efforts of residents, community partners, and member municipalities for their work in contributing to the plan and efforts to build community safety and well-being within all of Perth County.

Joint Statement from Community Safety and Well-Being Co-Chairs

As we advance to the next stage of our Community Safety and Well-Being Plan, we leverage the substantial insights garnered over the past five years of dedicated focus on systems planning and integration. This period has equipped us with data and a refined understanding of persistent social challenges, notably in enhancing mental health services and securing adequate, safe, and affordable housing—core goals of our initial plan. The pandemic has intensified the urgency to confront these foundational issues, as well as the critical matters of intimate partner violence and gender-based violence.

With the benefit of our accumulated knowledge and robust partnerships, we are strategically positioned to tackle these priority areas. The resilience of our community and the steadfast collaboration of our partners are pivotal as we continue our mission to protect the safety and well-being of all residents. Together, we are committed to formulating comprehensive solutions to effectively address these urgent social issues within our community.



Greg Skinner

Police Chief for the City of
Stratford, Town of St. Marys
and South Perth



STRATFORD
POLICE SERVICES

Kim McElroy

City of Stratford,
Consolidated Municipal
Service Manager and
Director of Social Services



Messages from the Chief Administrator Officers



Community safety and well-being are essential to building a strong, inclusive, and vibrant Stratford. As a municipality, we are committed to creating an environment where all residents feel supported, valued, and connected. This commitment is not achieved in isolation. It is built through meaningful collaboration with community partners, service providers, and neighbouring municipalities who work every day to improve the lives of those most in need. By focusing on prevention, early intervention, and the social determinants of health, we can address complex issues before they escalate, making Stratford a better place for everyone. As Interim CAO, I am proud to support the shared vision that underpins our regional Community Safety and Well-Being efforts. Together, we can create the conditions that allow individuals and families to live safely, access opportunities, and contribute fully to our community.

Adam Betteridge

Interim CAO, City of Stratford



Since 2019, when the Province implemented requirements for Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) planning, the Township of Perth East has been grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with community partners to improve the safety, health, and well-being of our residents. The development of the CSWB Plan served as an important call to action to address areas of concern and focus attention on our most vulnerable residents. As the Chief Administrative Officer for the Township of Perth East, I continue to believe that no one sector or organization can address complex social and economic challenges alone. This is a responsibility that is shared by all members of a community. The CSWB partnership has brought subject matter experts and key service providers together. Multi-sectoral partnerships and expertise are essential to developing strategies to help mitigate risks and improve the overall prosperity of communities. Perth East council and staff will continue to work towards building and sustaining complete communities where all feel safe and have every opportunity to not only survive but thrive.

Michael Givens

CAO, Township of Perth East



Dear Readers,

As the Chief Administrative Officer of the Township of Perth South, I am proud to introduce our Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Plan. This initiative is vital for fostering a safe, healthy, and inclusive environment for all residents. By addressing root causes of social issues and enhancing collaboration among local agencies, we aim to build a resilient community where everyone can thrive. The CSWB Plan reflects our commitment to proactive measures that ensure the well-being of our citizens, reduce crime, and promote social cohesion. Together, we can create a brighter future for Perth South, where safety and well-being are at the forefront of our community's growth and development.

Your truly, **Fred Tranquilli**
CAO, Township of Perth South



As Chief Administrative Officer for the Municipality of West Perth, I am proud to support the implementation of the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan. This initiative reflects our shared vision for a safe, inclusive, and thriving community. This plan has guided meaningful collaboration across sectors, aligned local priorities, and enhanced our collective ability to respond to complex social challenges. Through this framework, we have strengthened service coordination and improved access to supports for residents of all ages and backgrounds. Initiatives such as the Encampment Response Team and the Public Outreach Coordinator Position exemplify how the CSWB Plan is being brought to life by fostering proactive, compassionate connections that meet people where they are and help them thrive.

Daniel Hobson
CAO, Municipality of West Perth



The Community Safety and Well-Being framework supports corporate strategic planning by aligning goals with community needs, addressing existing gaps, and facilitating positive impacts. This strengthens North Perth's ability to grow sustainably and have the resources and assets required to offer residents a high quality of life and a sense of place. This strategic initiative embodies our commitment to enhancing the safety, health, and quality of life for every resident of North Perth by seeking to prevent crises before they occur, rather than reacting to them. This approach has allowed us to prioritize inclusivity, aiming to support the most vulnerable groups in our growing community as we navigate evolving social challenges.

Kriss Snell

CAO, Municipality of North Perth



Rural Southern Ontario continues to see strong population growth, a trend that is being experienced in Perth County. While this has a significant positive outcome of creating a wide range of diversity within our communities, the needs of our residents are becoming more complex. The Community Safety and Well-Being Plan has resulted in tremendous success in allowing us to better understand these complex needs in our community, and to tailor community specific solutions to help address them. The Plan has been an excellent tool to allow for collaboration not only across the municipal sector within the County of Perth, but also between municipalities and the agencies who serve our residents. The Town of St. Marys is looking forward to the next iteration of the plan which will allow us to collaborate and create strong communities within the County of Perth.

Brent Kittmer

CAO, Town of St. Marys



Contents

Background 8

Partnership..... 9

 CSWB Partnership Council 9

 Guiding Principles 9

 Governance Structure and Membership
 of the Partnership Council10

The CSWB Planning Approach.....11

Update12

Collaborative Initiatives13

CSWB Priority Areas18

 Overview18

 Identifying Our Priority Areas.....19

 Engagement19

 Engagement Activities19

 Insights Gained from Engagement.....20

 Housing and Homelessness21

 Intimate Partner Violence/
 Gender Based Violence23

 Mental Health and Addictions26

The Financial Implications of
Addressing Priority Areas29

Next Steps.....32

Moving Forward.....34



Background

In January 2019, new requirements for Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) planning came into force. The *Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019* legislatively required municipalities across Ontario to develop and adopt a plan in partnership with many local service providers and community groups.

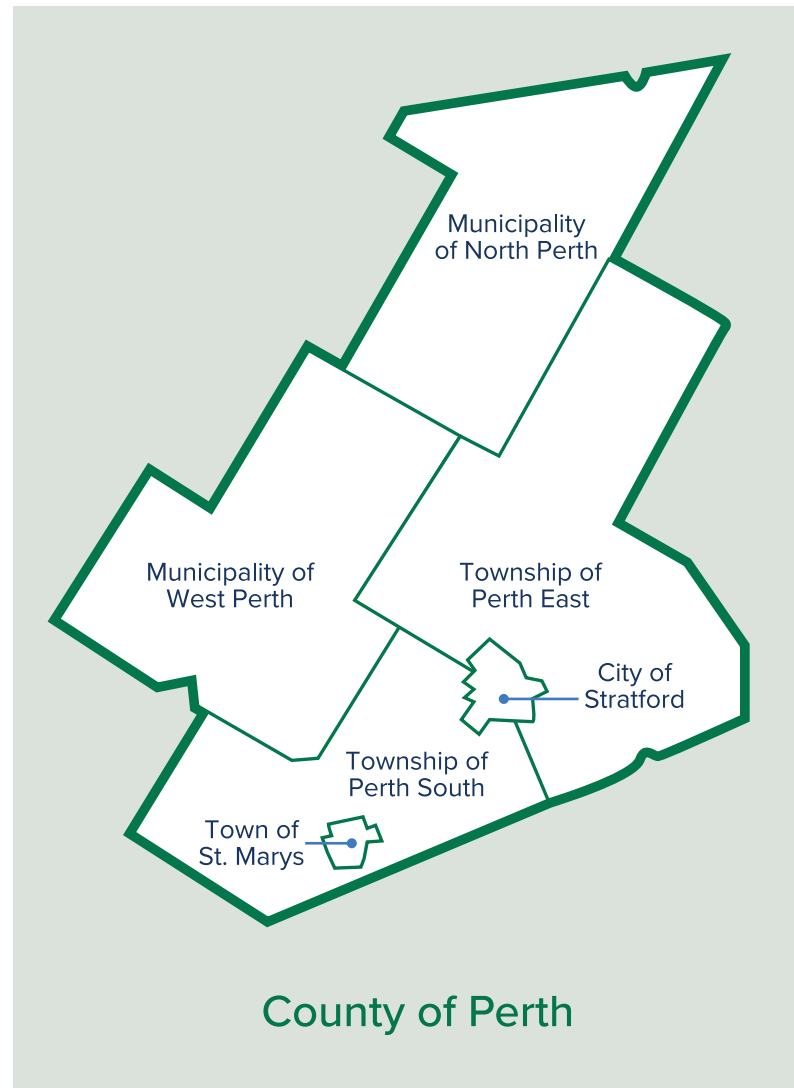
The plan acknowledges that complex social problems cannot be addressed by the police alone. Local service providers working in areas such as health/mental health, education, community/social services, and children/youth services also play an integral role. The CSWB plan provides a guide for community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

Partnership

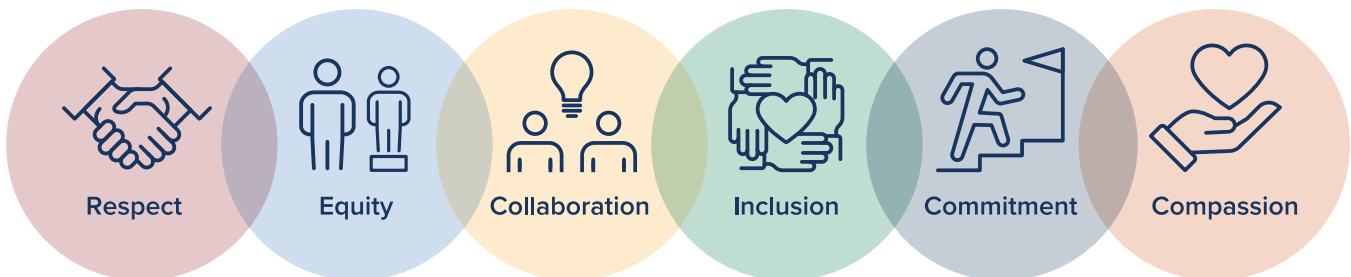
Given their close proximity within the centre of Southwestern Ontario and their shared services and supports, the six partner municipalities of: City of Stratford, Town of St. Marys, Municipality of North Perth, Municipality of West Perth, Township of Perth East, and Township of Perth South, opted to create a joint Community Safety and Well-Being Plan.

CSWB Partnership Council

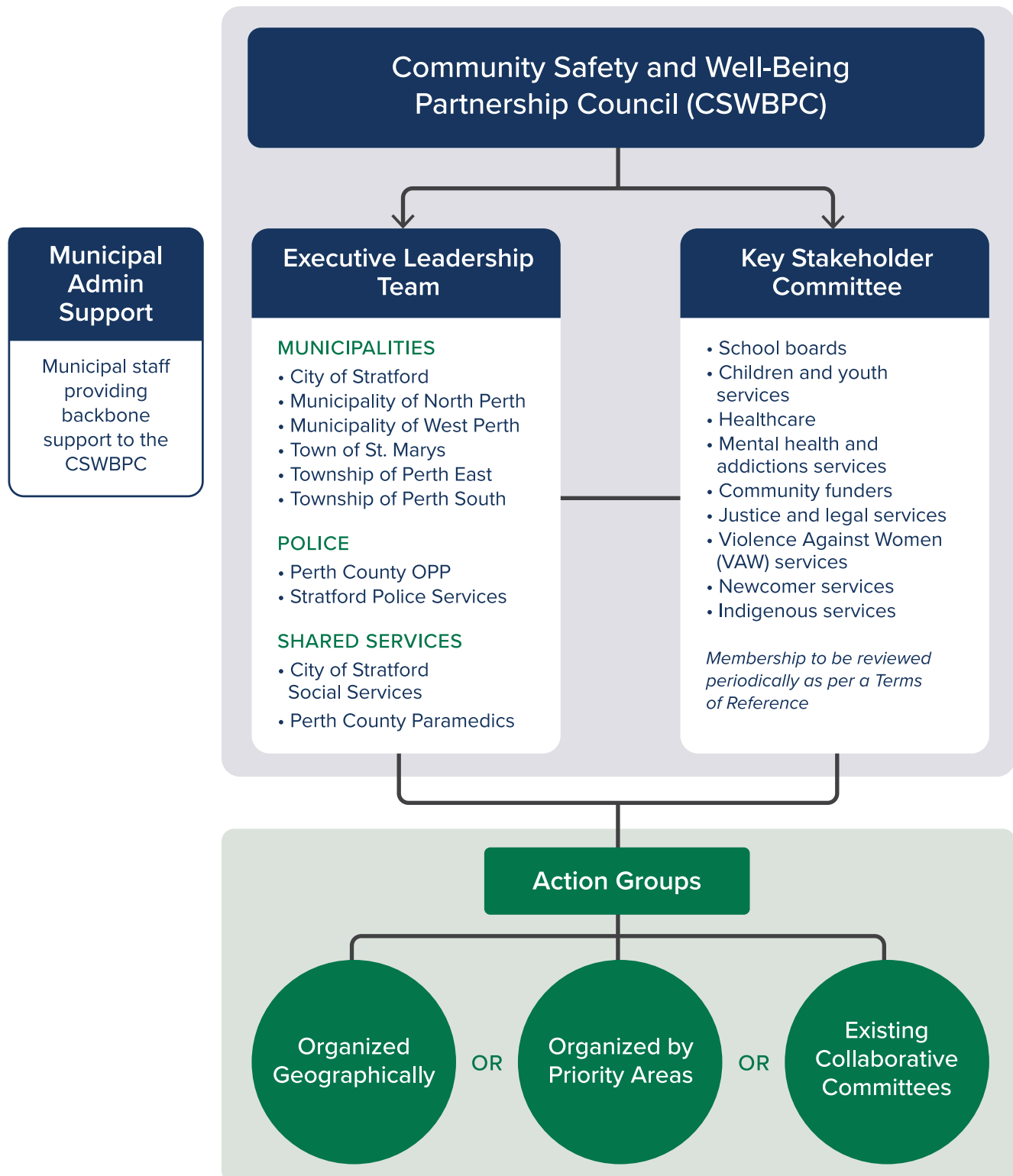
The Council serves as a strategic alliance uniting individuals and organizations across multiple sectors with a shared mission. It enables partners to exchange insights and experiences, contributing to prevention, intervention, and capacity-building efforts. Through robust communication channels, the Council coordinates and mobilizes key community groups, agencies, and initiatives, employing a problem-solving approach to identify and address risk factors. If these gaps remain unaddressed, they could jeopardize the safety and well-being of vulnerable community members within our participating Municipalities.



Guiding Principles



Governance Structure and Membership of the Partnership Council



The CSWB Planning Approach

The Ministry of the Solicitor General created a CSWB Framework to help support the development of the CSWB Plan. The Framework identifies 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:

1. Social development: Addresses underlying causes of social issues through upstream approaches that promote and maintain individual and community wellness. An example of social development being Community Outreach Workers, who work in the community to connect individuals with supports and resources.

2. Prevention: Applies proactive strategies to known and identified risks that are likely to result in harm to individuals or communities if left unmitigated. An example of prevention being health-based outreach support to vulnerable populations.

3. Risk intervention: Identifies and responds to situations of acutely elevated risk and mobilizes immediate interventions before an emergency or crisis-driven response is required. Examples of risk intervention include Community Tables that are case-specific and require a systems approach to intervene.

4. Incident response: Requires intervention by first responders such as police, paramedics, and other emergency-driven services. Examples of incident response include mental health workers assisting first responders when responding to acute crisis situations.

While the CSWB Plan addresses all four levels of intervention, it recognizes that maximizing efforts on developing and/or enhancing strategies in the social development and prevention areas will help to ensure that risks are mitigated before they become a priority that needs to be addressed through risk intervention or incident response. To better put this in perspective, we will provide examples within our communities of the different work being completed within the framework.

Community Safety and Well-Being Planning Framework:





Update

The partnering municipalities of the City of Stratford, Town of St. Marys, Municipality of North Perth, Municipality of West Perth, Township of Perth East, and the Township of Perth South are committed to working collaboratively to address community safety and well-being. The first CSWB Plan, *Road Map for Collaboration*, sought to recognize the strengths that already exist within and across municipalities and organizations, while creating and enhancing strategically aligned and formalized alliances. This can be seen through the establishment of the Community Safety and Well-Being Partnership Council, which consists of 20+ senior decision makers from various sectors, including area municipalities, healthcare, public health, non-profits and local schoolboards. This collaborative approach helps to improve integration, enhance capacity, reduce duplication, and promote coordination of planning efforts.

The CSWB plan has played a significant role in creating and fostering relationships between and across municipalities. Establishing these relationships has allowed for increased resident

knowledge and awareness of existing programs through collaborative pathways between programs, services and supports. This is demonstrated in the collaborative initiative section below, which highlights the collective efforts of our communities in addressing complex social problems. These collaborative efforts have led to service providers working together more effectively to become better equipped to help individuals/families align with the supports they need.

Charting the Next Chapter: Empowering Safe and Connected Communities is the next chapter in the local CSWB plan and will build off the collaboration established within the *Road Map for Collaboration*. Maximizing efforts on developing and/or enhancing strategies in the social development and prevention areas will help to ensure that risks are mitigated before they become a priority that needs to be addressed through risk intervention and incident response.

Collaborative Initiatives



The Huron Perth Addiction & Mental Health Alliance for Stratford-Perth-St. Marys

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 - Mental Health Services; Canadian Mental Health Association Huron Perth; Canadian Mental Health Association Thames Valley; 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 Response Team (MCRT)

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 a mental health crisis. This proactive initiative involves the pairing of a police or OPP Officer with a Mental Health Crisis Case Worker who is a Social Worker, Registered Nurse, or Occupational Therapist. Recipients of MCRT service include individuals presenting with symptoms of mental illness, addiction, behavioural disorders, or people in acute crisis situations.

Ending Homelessness Leadership Group

With the support of the Consolidated Municipal Services Manager, the purpose of the Ending Homelessness Leadership group is to: create, implement and maintain robust plans to end homelessness in Stratford, Perth and St. Marys; support objectives of the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness; and support the objectives of the Community Safety and Well-Being plan.



Huron Perth Situation Table

The Huron-Perth Situation Table is a partnership representing diverse community sectors and agencies within the region. Each member agency has an ability and mandate to serve individuals, families, and/or the broader community through situations that may be described as “Acutely Elevated Risk” (AER). AER is described as a situation negatively affecting the health or safety of an individual, family, group, or place where there is a high probability of imminent and significant harm to self or others. The Huron-Perth Situation Table’s focus aligns with the broader notion of enhancing community safety and well-being. The Situation Table was established in response to a recognized need to coordinate resources and services to better serve community members with more complex needs. Within this setting, they endeavour to respond more effectively to individuals, families, and the broader community where they identify multiple risk factors, including criminalization, victimization, homelessness, and harm.



Access, Resources and Connection (ARC)

The ARC Program is a partnership between the Perth County Mobile Integrated Health Team and the Social Services Department of the City of Stratford. A Community Paramedic and Intensive Housing and Community Outreach Coordinator work together to provide health-based outreach support and social services and healthcare system navigation to folks considered to be in the vulnerable or under-resourced population of Perth County.



Community Safety and Well-Being By-Law Officer

In January 2024, the Community Safety and Well-Being By-law Officer was introduced through a Building Safer Communities Fund Grant. This is a partnership between the City of Stratford Social Services Department, City of Stratford Building and Planning Department and Youth providers. The Community Safety and Well-Being Officer accompanies the City of Stratford Social Services Outreach team when attending to incidents in the community to provide an alternate avenue for enforcement and education that is non-criminal in nature.



Public Outreach Coordinator - West Perth

The Public Outreach Coordinator works directly with residents to connect them to vital resources, ranging from social services to recreational opportunities, while fostering meaningful partnerships to address local priorities. By listening to community voices and building bridges between people and supports, this role ensures that everyone, from young families to seniors, can flourish in a safe and welcoming environment.



Outreach Worker - St. Marys

The St. Marys Outreach Worker connects individuals with community resources related to food insecurity, shelter, mental health support, physical health support, and more. They assist with paperwork administration for Ontario Works (OW), Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) housing, financial assistance, and identification applications, such as birth certificates and health cards. The Outreach Worker provides one-on-one case management to help individuals gain access to community support, ensuring they do not risk becoming unhoused again.



Community Developer and Support Worker - North Perth

The Community Developer and Support Worker position is dedicated to serving the North Perth community. The position provides:

- Community and Social Service Navigation through short-term support – assistance with applications, funding, food security, animal care/resources, community resources/information, etc.
- Provide follow-up and advocacy to ensure the right service was received.
- Offer education and awareness to the community. Sharing community events/education opportunities.
- Provide outreach in partnership with Stratford Social Services.
- Attends Committee meetings – sharing resources.
- Support tenants living in Social Housing – community information, paperwork, resources, and activities to build community.

Perth County VAW Leadership Table

Across the Province several communities including Perth County are focused on restructuring community coordination to respond more effectively to the Renfrew County Death Review Inquest Recommendations (2022), the Ryan Inquest Recommendations (2023), and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, titled *Reclaiming Power and Place* (2019). These reports and recommendations are levers for change and can only be actioned with collective and coordinated local efforts. In the fall of 2024, with backbone support and leadership from Optimism Place Women's Shelter and Support Services, the Perth County VAW Leadership Table was formed. This table is aimed at improving community coordination to address the issue of Intimate Partner Violence locally, recognizing the urgent need for a whole community response that can prevent femicide and reduce the risks of gender-based violence more broadly. In order to effectively address the issues that lead to intimate partner violence, there is a need to focus on driving change through leadership, transforming relationships between and across systems, and identifying and creatively addressing the gaps that exist in our predominantly rural community. Through the Perth County VAW Leadership Table, Leaders in our community are working together to create our own unique roadmap for prevention and intervention, aimed at engaging all levels of government, social services organizations, justice, and child welfare organizations. Our goal is to transform the climate in Perth County to be better attuned to recognizing and responding to Intimate Partner Violence, with a lofty goal of putting an end to Intimate Partner Violence through strong relationships, shared governance and accountability, system approaches, collaboration and communication, funding, education, and training.



StopVAW Coordinating Committee

The Stop Violence Against Women (VAW) Coordinating Committee is comprised of representatives from community organizations across Perth County. Committee members share resources, provide training sessions for service providers, and conduct outreach activities to educate the public and raise awareness about violence against women. Member organizations include: City of Stratford Social Services, Crown Attorney's Office, Emily Murphy Centre, Family Services Perth-Huron, Huron Perth Addiction & Mental Health Services, Huron Perth Catholic District School Board, Huron-Perth Children's Aid Society, John Howard Society of London & District, Ontario Provincial Police, Optimism Place, Probation & Parole, Sexual Abuse Treatment Program (Huron Perth Public Health), Shelterlink Youth Services, Stratford Police Services, Supervised Access Program, Victim Services Huron Perth, Victim Witness Assistance Program, and WELLCom Speech.



www.cswb-stratfordperthstmarys.com

The Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) website (<https://www.cswb-stratfordperthstmarys.com>) provides readers with information about the CSWB plan, its objectives and local events across the six partnering municipalities pertaining to community safety and well-being.



Social Research and Planning Council (SRPC)

The Social Research and Planning Council is operated by United Way Perth-Huron and is comprised of community members dedicated to the collection, analysis, and distribution of information relating to social trends and issues in Perth and Huron County. The research enables United Way and the broader community to discover and understand the root causes of issues affecting Perth-Huron and work toward action.



Stratford Connection Centre

In operation since December 2021, the Stratford Connection Centre (SCC) provides services to individuals experiencing, but not limited to, challenges associated with poverty, homelessness, addictions, and mental health. The goal of the SCC is to offer a safe place for our community's most vulnerable citizens to rest, access basic needs, healthcare services, identification assistance, assistance with housing searches and more, all in one place.

Through SCC, CMHA Huron Perth can offer services from professional social workers specializing in counselling and peer support. Other onsite partners include Huron Perth Public Health, Healthcare Services, Employment Services, ODSP/OW Services, Legal Aid, Public Library, and Voting Services.

CSWB Priority Areas

Overview

The Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Partnership Council has strategically identified and prioritized critical areas requiring immediate and comprehensive community-wide intervention. These priority areas are Housing and Homelessness, Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and Gender-Based Violence (GBV), and Mental Health and Addiction. These areas were selected due to their significant and pressing impact on the community, necessitating coordinated strategies to address them effectively.

While the CSWB Partnership Council acknowledges the multitude of issues impacting our communities, the current focus does not diminish the importance of other areas. Our commitment remains to address and consider these issues as opportunities and resources allow.

Leveraging the collaborative momentum fostered by the *Road Map for Collaboration*, the new phase, *Charting the Next Chapter: Empowering Safe and Connected Communities*, aims to:

Develop a Shared Understanding:

Build consensus and a shared understanding concerning the priority areas, engaging diverse community stakeholders and experts to ensure a holistic perspective.

Strengthen Community-Wide Initiatives:

Actively collaborate with community entities to identify and bolster initiatives targeting these priority areas. This involves strengthening existing programs and introducing innovative strategies to enhance community resilience and capacity.

Educate and Inform:

Implement comprehensive training sessions and public communications to raise awareness and knowledge among residents, thereby empowering them with the tools and understanding to engage with and support community initiatives.

Advocate Collaboratively:

Provide unified support to collaborative efforts aiming to influence policy and gain support from local, provincial, and federal governments. This advocacy is essential for securing the resources and legislative backing necessary to effect lasting change.

This refined priority-focused approach exemplifies a robust commitment to creating safer, healthier communities and demonstrates the CSWB Partnership Council's proactive and strategic engagement with the critical challenges these communities face.



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.
- Community consultations.
- Community and CSWB Partnership Council surveys.

Engagement

The Community Safety and Well-Being Partnership Council (CSWB-PC), in collaboration with local communities, undertook an extensive engagement process to explore community strengths, assets, protective factors, partnerships, service gaps, and opportunities for improving safety and well-being. This process included consultations, surveys, and engagement sessions, which played a crucial role in shaping future priorities.

Engagement Activities

1. Community Engagement Sessions

These sessions focused on housing and homelessness—a critical concern aligned with the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan:

- **Stratford:** November 23, 2023
- **St. Marys:** March 20, 2024
- **Listowel:** April 3, 2024

2. Public Survey

Community Safety and Well-Being Feedback Survey

- **Timeline:** April 1 – May 20, 2024
- **Respondents:** 285 community members
- **Purpose:** Collected public input on key safety and well-being issues

3. Partner Survey

Community Safety and Well-Being Priority Area Survey

- **Date:** November 25, 2024
- **Participants:** CSWB Partnership Council members (including service providers, municipal CAOs, and social service agencies)
- **Purpose:** Ranked the most urgent community safety and well-being priorities

Outcomes:

These engagement efforts informed the identification of new priority areas, as outlined in *Charting the Next Chapter: Empowering Safe and Connected Communities*. The process underscored the importance of cross-sector collaboration, ongoing community dialogue, and data-informed decision-making in shaping a safer, healthier future for all residents.

Insights Gained from Engagement

Consensus within the CSWB-Partnership Council revealed several key insights:

- There is a critical need to deepen our comprehension of priority areas in order to develop more streamlined and collaborative strategies. This can be achieved through targeted research, comprehensive community engagement, and direct involvement of community members.
- It is imperative to clarify the decision-making mechanisms within the collaborative framework to effectively identify strengths, capitalize on available resources, and optimize the leveraging of existing assets.
- Understanding the intersectionality of priority areas is essential for aligning strategies to address these multifaceted challenges cohesively.
- Enhancing communication strategies is necessary to facilitate improved integration and coordination in our approaches, ensuring more effective and holistic responses to community needs.



Housing and Homelessness

On January 9, 2025, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) released *Municipalities Under Pressure: The Human Cost of Ontario's Homelessness Crisis*. The report found that, in 2024, 81,515 Ontarians were experiencing 'known homelessness' (people known to the homelessness-serving system, through service provision or data collection and prioritization activities). This number has increased by 25% since 2022, with Chronic Homelessness (people in prolonged or repeated episodes of homelessness) accounting for more than half of known cases (41,512).

Similar to the experience on a provincial level, homelessness impacts have been recognized in 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, with 89% of those experiencing homelessness classified as chronically homeless last year (2024). This is an indication that when households become homeless locally, they tend to stay homeless for a long period of time. The homeless population within the six partners is also increasing over time. The average number of households experiencing homelessness on the local By-Name List increased from 18 in 2020 to 155 in 2024.

There are many factors contributing to increased levels of homelessness, however, one of the biggest reasons is the lack of affordable and appropriate housing options. As housing prices and rental costs continue to increase, more households are finding themselves in core housing need, meaning they live in unaffordable, inadequate, or unsuitable situations from which they are unable to escape. A survey completed by the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager for the six partner municipalities found the cost of rent for a 1-bedroom unit increased from \$793 in 2018 to \$1,594 in 2024, an increase of 101%.

As the title of the AMO report implies, the cost of homelessness is felt by everyone. As we move into the next CSWB Plan, it's imperative that the communities remain united in their approaches to addressing housing insecurity. This will require a community-wide response rooted in research and direction from field experts.



Author: Jeff Wilson,
Manager of Housing,
City of Stratford—
Social Services Department

Local communities and municipal governments are taking collaborative action, as was seen in the first CSWB plan, to address the housing and homelessness crisis. These include community collaborations, calls to action from higher levels of government, and independent groups and individuals who are continually finding innovative ways to create, sustain and diversify housing stock, while actively working with homelessness populations to secure safe, affordable, sustainable housing.

Some of the local efforts include:

The construction of 62 affordable units (rent is set at 80% of average market rent for comparable units in community) on a hectare of city-owned land in Stratford, ON, known as Britannia Phase 1 & 2.

In 2024, **115 people moved into permanent housing** off the local By-Name List. This was the direct result of a collaborative effort between multi-sectors.

As of 2024, the administration of:

- 126 Rent Supplements
- 31 Housing Allowances
- 21 Canada Ontario Housing benefits

to assist individuals and families access rental housing by **subsidizing their monthly rental expenses**.

Creation of two community developer positions in the Municipality of North Perth and the Town of St. Marys that work on housing stability, financial security, food security and increased community well-being.

Coordinated municipal **responses to encampments and homelessness**.



Intimate Partner Violence/ Gender Based Violence

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is one of the most prevalent and pressing complex social issues facing communities across Ontario. In Canada, a woman is killed by an intimate partner every two days¹. More than 57% of women in the country will experience some form of violence in an intimate relationship². At least 25% of criminal matters before the courts, and most complex family court cases, involve IPV. A significant proportion of police calls relate to IPV, despite it being vastly underreported³.

The response to IPV comes at a substantial cost. Across Ontario, billions are spent annually on healthcare, policing, child welfare, and the justice system as a result of responding to the issue⁴. Rural communities face additional barriers in both responding to and preventing IPV, including limited access to transportation, affordable housing, childcare, and anonymity for women who are unsafe in their homes.

Solutions to IPV cannot come from a single system or service. This issue requires a coordinated, community-wide response. Years of Provincial Death Reviews, along

with recommendations from the *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry* and the *Nova Scotia Mass Casualty Commission*, have provided a roadmap for action across all levels of government and community. However, because these recommendations are non-binding, the responsibility falls on local community leaders to adopt and implement meaningful change.

Leaders, service providers across the human services sector, workplaces, and members of the public must unite with a shared commitment to preventing IPV. This includes improving local service pathways, expanding survivor support programs, and ensuring that evidence-based programs for those who use violence are accessible within our communities.

As we move into the next Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Plan, our focus is on identifying and sustaining effective programs and strategies, while supporting the development of new initiatives aimed at ending IPV. By making IPV a priority in the CSWB plan, it will act as a lever for systems change, transforming the climate in Perth County to be attuned to responding to IPV, with a lofty goal of putting an end to it in our community.

¹ #CallItFemicide: Understanding sex/gender-related Killings of women and girls in Canada, 2018-2022.

² #CallItFemicide: Understanding sex/gender-related Killings of women and girls in Canada, 2018-2022

³ Statistics Canada, "Family Violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2013", *Juristat* (Ottawa: StatCan, 15 January 2015) at 6, online: www.statcan.gc.ca. ["Family Violence"]. The analysis of family violence in the present study is based on definitions that correspond to those found in the *Criminal Code*. For example, assault, criminal harassment, sexual offences or homicide.

⁴ Zhang, T., Hoddenbagh, J., McDonald, S., & Scrim, K. (2013, January 25). *Economic impact of spousal violence - department of justice*. Government of Canada. https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/tv-vf/rr12_7/rr12_7.pdf.

Several local projects and strategies are already underway to address IPV more effectively, including:

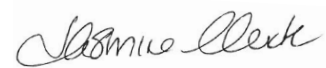
A recent capital **expansion at Optimism Place Women's Shelter and Support Services**, increasing emergency shelter beds for women and children fleeing violence from 13 to 29.

The Perth County OPP has successfully applied for and **received Provincial Victim Support Grant funding** to support local initiatives, community education, and training.

The StopVAW Coordinating Committee, our local IPV coordination table, **meets monthly with representatives** from social services, health, medical, and justice sectors to promote public education and improve inter-agency collaboration.

Led by Optimism Place and in partnership with The Emily Murphy Centre, Huron Perth Children's Aid Society, The City of Stratford, Perth County OPP, Stratford Police, Probation and Parole and Victim Services, our community has **developed a high-risk IPV table—MARAC** (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference)—to better coordinate responses and reduce the risk of violence in high-risk cases.

The City of Stratford and the Municipality of West Perth have officially **declared Intimate Partner Violence an epidemic locally**. This declaration acknowledges and validates the experiences of survivors living in isolation and signals that local elected officials recognize the severity and prevalence of IPV.



Author: Jasmine Clark,
Executive Director,
Optimism Place – Women's
Shelter and Support Services

Learn to recognize the signs of IPV.
Complete the free Neighbours,
Friends & Families training.
Scan the QR code for the course.



Perth County Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Snapshot

January-December 2024



CRISIS RESPONSE

- 4,779** Crisis calls answered
- 24** Women assisted through Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)



HOUSING AND SUPPORTS

- 203** Women and children in emergency VAW shelter
- 125** Women and children in second stage housing
- 736** Women received DV/SV counselling
- 7** Men participated in Caring Dads Program
- 10** Partners supported through Partner Assault Response (PAR) Program
- 40** Women on waitlist for individual counselling



CHILDREN AND YOUTH

- 32** On-going child protection cases with exposure to domestic violence (in Perth & Huron)
- 18%** Children admitted to care because of exposure to domestic violence (in Perth & Huron)
- 173** Children received counselling
- 84%** Families using Supervised Access Program due to domestic violence
- 55** Homeless youth in shelter
- 216** Youth supported through outreach



HOMELESSNESS

- 54** Women-led households experiencing homelessness as of December 31, 2024
- 42** Women-led households experiencing homelessness who identify as domestic violence survivors
- 27** Applicants on the centralized waiting list for RGI housing with special priority status to flee abuse
- 137** Women assisted through shelter transitional housing program



POLICING AND JUSTICE

- 991** Reports of domestic violence
- 227** Domestic violence charges laid by police
- 107** Reports of sexual violence
- 38** Sexual violence charges laid by police
- 115** Average number of domestic violence clients supervised monthly by Probation and Parole
- 69** Women experiencing domestic violence assisted through Legal Support Program
- 63** Partner Assault Response Program starts



Compiled by Stop Violence Against Women Coordinating Committee of Perth County

BARRIERS AND TRENDS

All forms of IPV are significantly underreported to police and social services. Two out of three women will seek support from their family and friends; they are not captured in this data.

Indigenous women, women with a disability, racialized women, young women, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and women living in rural areas face disproportionately high rates of IPV.

IPV has a substantial impact on individuals, families, and society, leading to significant economic and social costs, including pressure on the healthcare, social service, and legal systems. As well as lost productivity, homelessness, and economic disparity. The new Community Safety & Well-Being plan acknowledges the societal costs and responsibility for ending VAW by making IPV a priority area.

Mental Health and Addictions

Mental health and addictions concerns have long been standing issues in all communities, including the municipalities of Perth County. The steady increase in the prevalence of mental health and/or addiction concerns over the past number of years and the lack of significant investment in the treatment system has created challenges for communities and services to respond. The reason for the increase is a complex issue with a number of contributing factors, such as economic stressors, social determinants of health like housing and food insecurity, and barriers to accessing mental health and addiction services.

The prevalence of mental health and/or addiction issues is significant in our communities, leaving very few people without experience with these issues, either themselves or someone they care about. According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, in any given year, 1 in 5 Canadians will experience a mental illness. By the time Canadians reach 40 years of age, 1 in 2 have, or have had, a mental illness. People with a mental illness are twice as likely to have a substance use disorder compared to the general population and at least 20% of people with a mental illness have a co-occurring substance use disorder. For people with schizophrenia, the number may be as high as 50%. People with substance use disorders are up to 3 times more likely to have a mental illness. More than 15% of people with a substance use disorder have a

co-occurring mental illness. Increases in prevalence drives up the cost of mental health and addiction on society and other services in the community. The annual economic cost of mental illness in Canada is estimated at over \$50 billion per year. This includes health care costs, lost productivity, and reductions in health-related quality of life. In addition, the annual economic cost of substance use in Canada is estimated at nearly \$40 billion. This includes costs related to healthcare, criminal justice, and lost productivity.

Challenges including the opiate poisoning crisis, increased access to alcohol, and the housing and economic crisis have stretched the ability of the local addiction and mental health treatment system to adequately respond to the needs of this population. The solution can not be the responsibility of one part of the system but needs to be a coordinated approach. Multiple factors impact why people turn to substances or develop mental illness, which means the community at large needs to be part of the response.

The CSWB plan gives us this opportunity. Collaboration between municipalities and community services is the only way we will support those who are most vulnerable, building a community which ensures people can access the resources they require and where everyone feels accepted and supported.

Several local projects and strategies are in place currently to address mental health including:

CMHA Huron Perth created a Geriatric Case Management role to support the growing senior population. This position focuses on providing case management to seniors living in the community experiencing mental health concerns. This position partners regularly with other senior services, such as Senior's Mental Health and One Care Services. They are part of a larger group of providers of services to seniors, which focuses on system issues and planning.

The Stratford Connection Centre provides support to individuals who are homeless or precariously housed, funded by the United Way Perth Huron. Although operated by CMHA HP, there are a number of partners providing services on site, such as Paramedicine, Ontario Works, Primary Care, Stratford Library, employment services and legal services.

The Huron Perth Addiction and Mental Health Alliance (the Alliance), is a legal entity that includes all the primary providers of mental health and addiction services in our area. The partners include, CMHA Huron Perth, Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance, Huron Health System, Huron Perth Centre for Children and Youth, CMHA Thames Valley and Medavie Health Services. The Alliance focuses on care pathways, provincial initiatives such as Coordinated Access, service provision-impact of changes on the system, staff training and development and advocacy.

The Huron Perth Helpline and Crisis Response Team (HPHCRT) provides 24/7 support to anyone with concerns about their own or someone else's mental health and/or addiction issues. All mental health and addiction services can be accessed via the HPHCRT, through direct referral to the most appropriate organization.

The Huron Perth & Area Ontario Health Team (HPOHT) lead an initiative to support the development of stepped care for the mental health and addiction services in our area. This work included the development of a service inventory of all mental health and addiction services in our area. This inventory is live on the HPOHT website. Individuals can access this inventory and find the support they require based on their current need.

Ontario Structured Psychotherapy is a provincial program that provides individuals both in person and virtual support for a variety of mental health concerns. This program has been implemented in Huron Perth and receives referrals from a variety of areas including primary care.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Catherine Hardman". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Author: Catherine Hardman,
Chief Executive Officer,
Canadian Mental Health
Association - Huron Perth

Mental Health and Addictions Snapshot

SUBSTANCE USE



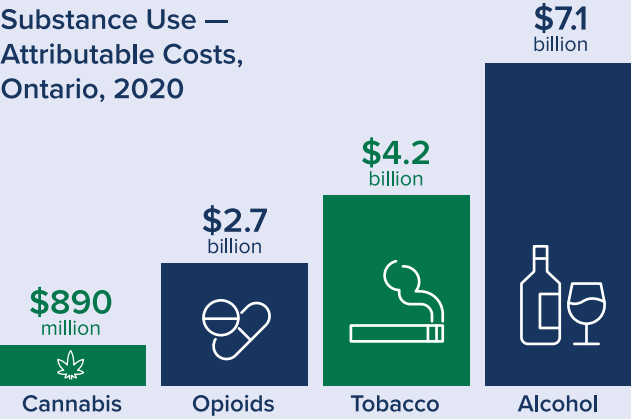
Alcohol is the most used drug in Huron Perth.

36% of Huron Perth residents aged 12 and older are consume three or more drinks within a seven day period.



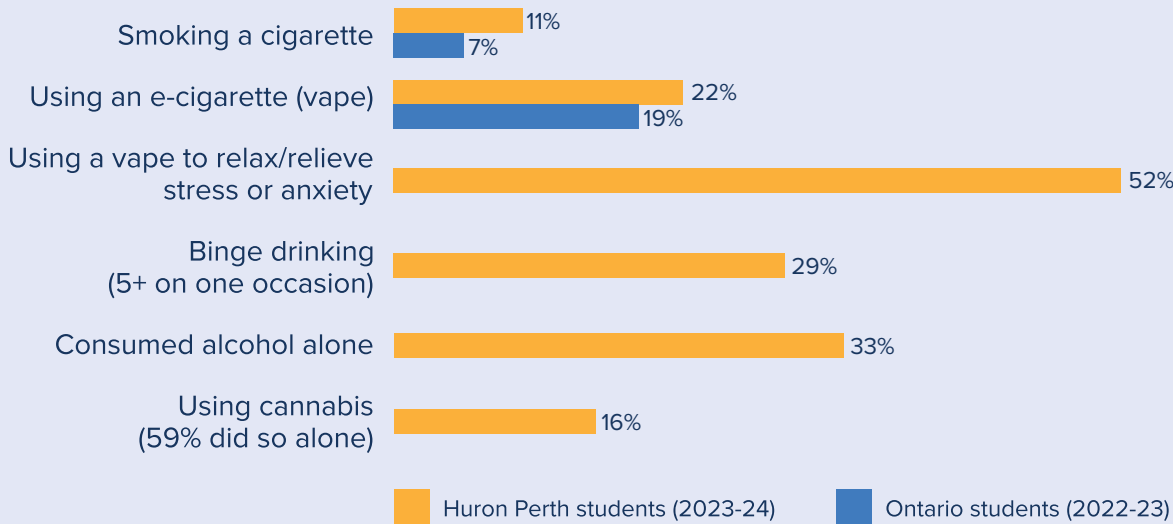
This is considered above a low-risk level according to Canada’s Guidance on Alcohol and Health.

Substance Use — Attributable Costs, Ontario, 2020



SUBSTANCE USE AMONG STUDENTS

Based on a 2023-24 survey, Huron Perth students reported using the following in the past 30 days:



AFFORDABILITY

\$1,338 per month the cost of groceries for a family of four in Huron Perth.

For a family of four receiving Ontario Works, that’s 46% of their income spent on food to meet Canada’s Food Guide recommendations.*

Financial strain increases the risk of adverse mental health effects. The risk of depression, anxiety disorders, mood disorders, and suicidal thoughts increases with the severity of food insecurity for adults and youth.

HPPH Alcohol Municipal Primer, 2024 shared with local municipalities: Reducing Alcohol Harms-A Primer for Municipalities Dec24
*Huron Perth Public Health. (2025). The real cost of eating: food insecurity in Huron and Perth, 2024.
<https://www.hpph.ca/inspections-reporting/reports-plans-and-statistics/#FoodInsecurity/CostofEating>



The Financial Implications of Addressing Priority Areas

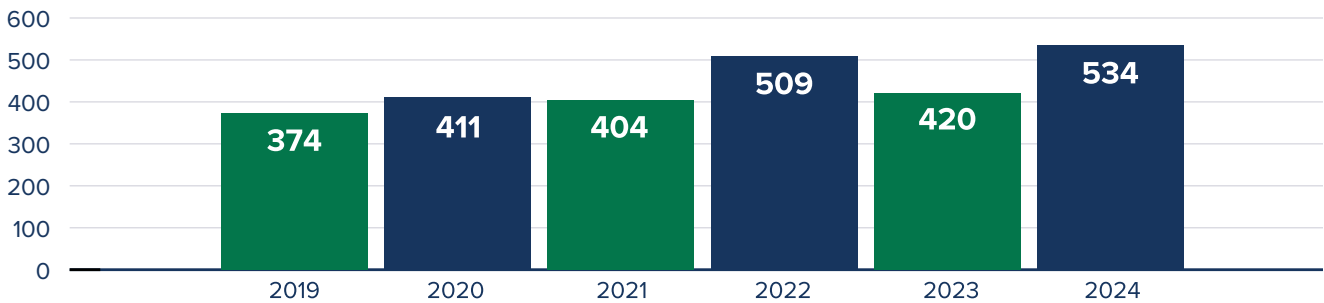
Neglecting the root causes of social issues imposes widespread repercussions across society, affecting individuals, families, communities, and governmental functions. Addressing these issues collaboratively is essential to alleviate the strain on various societal segments and public services. Communities across Canada, including those concerned with the priority areas identified by the Community Safety and Well-Being Partnership Council, invest substantial time, resources, and financial capital to tackle these complex social challenges. This intense focus diverts resources from other critical societal needs and imposes costs on all community members, not just those directly impacted. The ripple effect of untreated social issues can lead to increased demand for healthcare, social services, law enforcement, and other areas, ultimately challenging the sustainability of community resources and resilience. By addressing these priority areas effectively, communities can optimize resource allocation, foster sustainable development, and enhance overall societal well-being.

Highlighted below are the financial impacts of each of the priority areas. Working in collaboration with service providers, local governments, and communities is essential to help alleviate the financial strain on systems, governments, and individuals.

Housing

The cost of housing in Ontario has been increasing over time, this has resulted in escalating rental costs and an overwhelming demand for affordable housing¹. The year 2024, saw 268,241 households, on Ontario’s waitlists for Rent-Geared-to-income housing². As seen in the graph below, the average households waiting for Rent-Geared-to-income housing increased from 374 in 2019 to 534 in 2024 for Perth County. The shortage of affordable, appropriate spaces results in strains on local governments, social services, and the community.

Average Households on the Centralized Waitlist - by Year



1 Donaldson, J., Wang, D., Escamilla, C., & Turner, A. (2025). Municipalities under pressure: The human and financial cost of Ontario’s homelessness crisis. HelpSeeker
2 Donaldson, J., Wang, D., Escamilla, C., & Turner, A. (2025). Municipalities under pressure: The human and financial cost of Ontario’s homelessness crisis. HelpSeeker



Homelessness

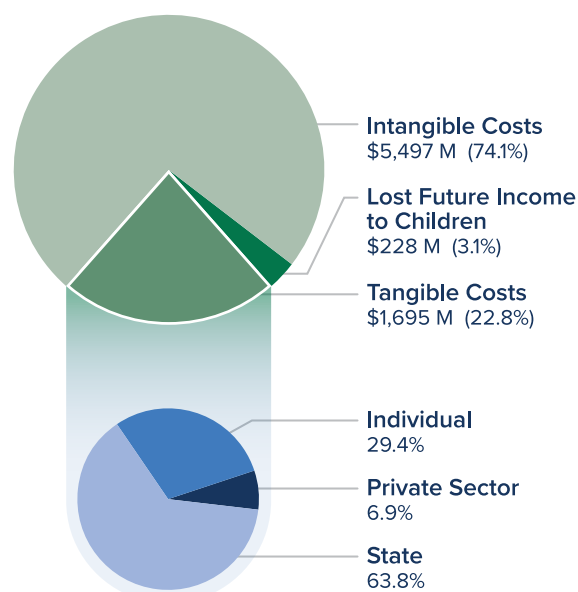
A matched cohort study of a representative sample of people experiencing homelessness, housed and low-income housed in 2021 and 2022 out of Toronto, Ontario Canada found that participants experiencing homelessness had nearly seven times health care costs compared to housed (\$12,209 among participants experiencing homelessness compared to \$1,769 housed and \$1,912 low-income housed).³ Without targeted investments, coordinated responses and commitments to long term solutions, municipalities, individuals and families will face increased costs. Currently, nearly \$1 billion is being spent on emergency shelters across Ontario. While shelter in the short term is essential to help stabilize people during a crisis, there is too much reliance on emergency shelters as housing solutions and many people are unable to exit due to a lack of appropriate long-term housing options. Shelter stays do not prevent individuals from entering homelessness, nor do they increase the chances of individuals exiting out of homelessness, there needs to be more concerted efforts on prevention. Investing in housing and prevention measures helps address the immediate crisis and reduce long-term costs by minimizing reliance on emergency shelters, hospitals, justice systems, and other social services.

³ Richard, L., Carter, B., Nisenbaum, R. et al. Disparities in healthcare costs of people experiencing homelessness in Toronto, Canada in the post COVID-19 pandemic era: a matched cohort study. *BMC Health Serv Res* 24, 1074 (2024).

Intimate Partner Violence/ Gender Based Violence

An Estimation of the Economic Impact of Spousal Violence in Canada, 2009 was a comprehensive study published by the Department of Justice Canada with the purpose to measure the impact of all spousal violence that occurred in 2009. The study found that the total economic impact of spousal violence in Canada in 2009 is estimated at \$7.4 billion, which accounts to \$220.00 per Canadian. A further breakdown demonstrates that the Government pays for the majority of tangible costs at 63.8%, individuals pay for 29.4% of tangible costs, and the private sector pays for 6.9% of total costs. Included below is a graph showing: Intangible Costs (pain and suffering, loss of life, loss of affection and enjoyment for families and victims); Tangible Costs (costs with actual financial transactions; Criminal Justice System, civil justice system, health care system and social services); and Lost Future Income to Children.

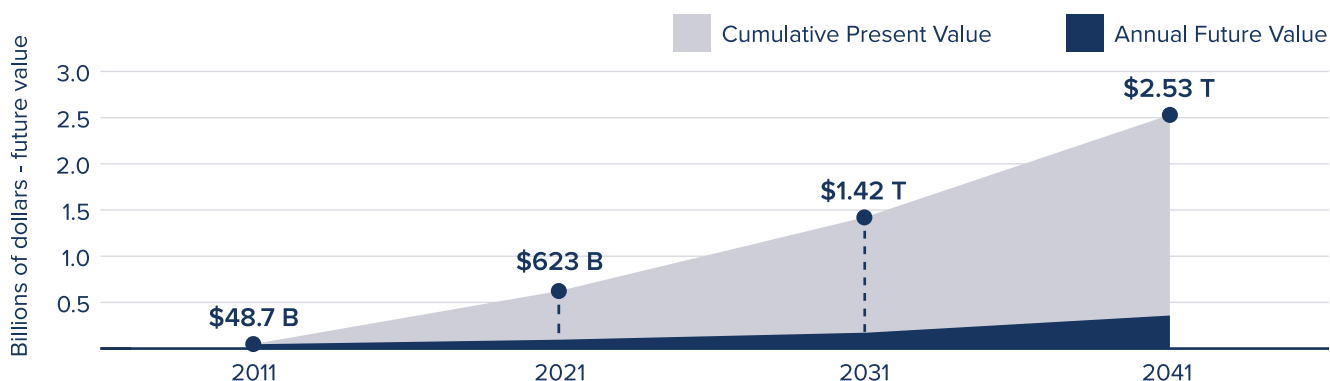
An Estimation of the Economic Impact of Spousal Violence in Canada, 2009





Mental Health and Addiction

In 2010, the Mental Health Commission of Canada commissioned a study about the number of people living with mental illness and the associated costs. The study found that mental health problems and illnesses cost the Canadian economy approximately \$50 billion per year. While most of these costs pertain to health care, social services and income supports, about \$6 billion is from lost productivity. 21.4% of the working-age population (ages 20-64) was found to be living with a mental health problem or illness. As demonstrated in the chart below, the projected cost of mental illness on the economy over the course of 30 years would add up to more than \$2.5 trillion.



Source: Making the case for Investing in Mental Health, 2013

Next Steps

Charting the Next Chapter: Empowering Safe and Connected Communities will build upon the collaborative foundation established by the *Roadmap for Collaboration* by advancing community-wide initiatives, education, and advocacy within designated priority areas through strategic community partnerships.

To prevent service duplication and optimize resource allocation, each priority area will be assigned a lead individual responsible for several key functions:

Liaison Role:

Act as the primary conduit for communication between the CSWB Partnership Council and Community Tables, ensuring a cohesive and integrated approach to community safety and well-being.

Training and Facilitation:

Organize and deliver training sessions to the CSWB Partnership Council that align with strategic priorities, enhancing the capacity and understanding of council members in relation to their specific priority area.

Bi-Monthly Updates:

Provide detailed bi-monthly updates to the CSWB Partnership Council meetings, reporting on progress within Education, Community-Wide Initiatives, and Advocacy. This will ensure transparency and continuous alignment with the overall mission.

Leadership of Sub-Committees:

Chair sub-committees that focus on developing community-wide strategies pertinent to their priority area, bringing in diverse expertise and perspectives to drive comprehensive and sustainable solutions.

Recommendation Sharing:

Convey recommendations and insights derived from the Community Tables and CSWB Partnership Council to relevant stakeholders, facilitating informed decision-making and policy development.

This structured approach ensures a collaborative, informed, and strategic progression in addressing community needs, while strengthening the capacity and integration of efforts across the region.



The CSWB Partnership Council will:

Continue to take a structured and strategic approach to community safety and well-being initiatives, fostering innovation and collaboration, and ensuring accountability and continuous improvement.

Decision-Making and Governance

Voting on Recommendations:

- Establish a structured decision-making process to evaluate recommendations based on criteria such as community impact, feasibility, and sustainability.
- Implement a feedback mechanism to assess and review the outcomes of decisions made, ensuring continuous improvement.

Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing

Brainstorming, Collaboration, and Offering Insights/Guidance:

- Organize regular brainstorming sessions and collaborative workshops to foster innovation and creative problem-solving.
- Facilitate cross-sector collaborations with governmental, non-governmental organizations, and private sector partners to leverage diverse expertise.

Active Engagement in Subcommittees

Participation in Priority Area Subcommittees:

- Create specialized subcommittees focusing on the key areas.
- Develop clear agendas and action plans for each subcommittee to ensure targeted and effective interventions.
- Conduct regular workshops and training sessions for subcommittee members to enhance their skills and knowledge.

Integration of Research and Expertise

Bringing Ideas, Emerging Research, and Expertise:

- Integrate innovative research and evidence-based practices into the partnership council's initiatives.
- Hold annual symposiums or conferences for experts to share findings and innovations with council members and the community.
- Find creative ways to integrate community insights and assess for community impact on an ongoing basis.



Moving Forward

As we move into the next iteration of the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan *Charting the Next Chapter: Empowering Safe and Connected Communities* there will be a strong emphasis on building a shared understanding of the priority areas while working collaboratively with Partnership Council and Community Tables to address gaps, build on community strengths and assets and promote the safety and well-being of all residents in our communities.

The Community Safety and Well-Being Plan is a 10-year iterative community plan. Annual updates will be provided outlining implementation work that has been done during that time and future planning projects. In order to be responsive and to ensure the CSWB Plan evolves to continue to meet emerging needs of the local Municipalities, the Plan will be updated at year 4 and year 8.

Charting the Next Chapter: Empowering Safe and Connected Communities represents the interest and commitment that Municipalities 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.



Partnership Council

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
- Optimism Place, Women's Shelter and Support Services
- Emily Murphy Centre
- Perth County Paramedic Services



For more information, please visit: www.cswb-stratfordperthstmarys.com



Need help getting connected to Social Services, Programs or Community Supports?
Please call 211.