



2023 Business Plan & Budget

Community Services

The Community Services Division coordinates the department's investments and strategic directions to build capacity within the community by implementing a range of initiatives and improvements. These developments are concentrated across the pillars of Community Safety and Wellbeing, homelessness, social determinants of health and support to food security. This work includes developing evidence-informed decision making through the collection and analysis of data for the division.

The Community Services Division leads the implementation, coordination and evaluation of the planning and activities associated with the Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan mandated by the Provincial Government.

Community Services continues to work as the homelessness system manager within Northumberland County Community and Social Services. This work includes developing and improving a system and framework to coordinate and manage homelessness services across Northumberland (reflecting the goals outlined in the 10-year Housing and Homelessness plan).

The Community Services division also delivers a comprehensive Community Outreach program with case workers supporting those in crisis and living on low incomes who are not eligible for social assistance. Outreach case workers identify support services and help design plans of care and goals with individuals, identifying actions to support success and life stabilization.

Community services leads the co-design of new services and programs by offering guidance and support to a range of community partners, building capacity and wellness in the community.

Prior Year Accomplishments

Economic Prosperity & Innovation

Funding Applications



- Completed a successful application to Employment and Social Development Canada and United Way Simcoe Muskoka's Reaching Home Rural and Remote project, to enhance emergency shelter system capacity in Northumberland County.
- Applied for the Federal Crime Prevention Action Fund. This application would support the creation of a Transitional Aged Youth Outreach Program, collaboratively Cobourg Police, Rebound Child and Youth Services and Northumberland County Community and Social Services would work together to develop programming to meet the immediate needs of youth in Northumberland with high acuity seeking access to service which could prevent recidivism.
- An application was submitted for the Intersectoral Action Fund through the Public Health Agency of Canada. This fund would be used to build capacity within our existing data collection systems such as the Community Safety and Well-being data reporting.
- In collaboration with several community organizations, letters of support and grant writing support were offered to assist organizations and groups in submitting funding applications including Community Safety and Policing Grants, Reaching Home funding applications, Ontario Trillium Foundation Grants, etc.

Social Services Relief Fund

- Managed the funding allocations for Social Services Relief Fund 4 and 5 to support the provision of services to people actively experiencing homelessness and people at risk of experiencing homelessness through the pandemic. Ensured that service providers had access to training and resources including PPE to continue providing services in a way that met the Health and Safety protocols during the pandemic.

Technology

- Implemented new electronic signing software, Adobe e-sign, to improve the ability to ensure agreements and service particulars can be signed in a timely and efficient manner, returned to the document owner, and stored appropriately
- Implemented SharePoint as a means of working collaboratively with partners. This platform has been used both internally (cross divisions) and externally with key stakeholders in the community. The implementation of SharePoint has allowed groups to work together on different projects, communicate effectively and share resources using a common tool.
- iPads deployed to the 2021-2022 warming room for data collection, allowing for efficient and accurate up-to-date data about warming room utilization. The implementation of this technology and the quality of data that it allows us to collect will enable analysis and insights for planning future warming rooms and optimizing service delivery.



Community Safety and Wellbeing

- Through the Community Safety and Well-being plan (CSWB) implementation process, several key aspects were established in 2022, including the establishment of a clear governance structure. The governance structure consists of 4 key elements: the Collaborative committee, the data group, the network, and action groups.
- The Collaborative had their first meeting in October of 2021, this group continued to meet bi-monthly throughout 2021 and 2022 providing clear guidance and leadership over Community Safety and Well Being implementation. Staff continued to coordinate and provide leadership within the collaborative committee.
- The Data Group was established in March of 2022. County staff have provided leadership to this group in establishing a clear term of reference focusing on key objectives and priorities around CSWB data collection. This includes identifying local data sources and defining common terminology and developing information sharing materials and metrics based on collected data through action groups and community organizations.
- Throughout 2022, the Community services team has actively worked with leaders of action groups and organizations across the community to establish agreements to share reporting between the CSWB data group and each action group. Staff worked alongside leaders to define priorities and identify existing linkages between work currently underway and opportunities to expand some of the work plans to align with CSWB priorities. Action groups and organizations are actively submitting reporting metrics to support and enhance future planning around key areas of success and improvement related to CSWB.
- When the OHT-N began data collection analyses, an opportunity for collaboration was identified between CSWB and OHT-N and they are working to determine areas where data can be collected and analyzed together through the CSWB Data Group and existing OHT-N resources.
- Staff continue to attend the Community Safety and Well Being OMSSA network. Within this network staff have provided insight into approaches used to implement the plan and supported networking with other communities around plan development and implementation. Throughout ongoing networking communications, Northumberland County has been regarded as leaders in CSWB plan implementation.

Social Prescribing

- Developed and implemented a pilot program for social prescribing for people experiencing homelessness or precarious housing. This included identifying models of best practice and creating a 'Northumberland' model that meets the health needs of



vulnerable adults. Clinical expertise will come from the Community Health Centers of Northumberland.

- Data and outputs collected and analyzed to build a prototype for ongoing implementation

Data Catalogue

- In collaboration with the Early Years Data Analysis Coordinator, developed a strategy and tool to identify data sources from across all divisions of the department.
- Developed a combined data catalogue for the department that outlines topics, categories, and sources of available data to enable enhanced evidence informed decision making across the department.
- Co-created the template and process for managers to be able to access and utilize these resources fully, including data discovery and classification of commonly used data sources and tools.

Website

- Continued to keep new standalone Housing Help Northumberland website current with relevant information related to housing and homelessness resources. Included regular updates for both agencies and people interested in information regarding housing and homelessness. Responded to inquiries that came from website through the 'contact us' button. Created new email address to respond to general inquiries more easily.

Training and Employment

- Continued to work with a community training partner to develop a new entry level course for people looking to enter employment within human services, such as emergency shelters. This training will cover areas such as consent, confidentiality, communication, and personal boundaries, and will enable employers to reduce risk through employing staff with no experience. This area of employment is known to have a high turnover of staff, and this training will be available to people looking for employment and used as an asset on their resume/application and can also be used for employers as they plan onboarding for new staff
- The Community Services Team attended CAEH National Conference on Ending Homelessness. We also facilitated attendance at the conference for the housing support worker from a small local community agency. The National Conference on Ending Homelessness arms policy makers, funders, researchers, advocates, community leaders and front- line workers with the inspiration, information, tools and training they need to end homelessness.



- Bridges Out of Poverty training was offered to all internal department staff and community wide to continue to build capacity among service providers and those interacting and engaging with those living in poverty, homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Leadership in Change

By-Name List

- By-Name List meets the standards required by the province and was used to inform and influence planning and evaluation of services and improve the coordination of services to the individual
- Continued to inform and raise awareness with community partners of the use of this tool to help to build impactful interventions for people experiencing homelessness
- Provided data to the Canadian Alliance to End Homeless and retain our full membership of the Built for Zero-Canada campaign
- Used data to demonstrate inflow and outflow from homelessness and use information to influence planning and service delivery options within the homelessness system
- Submitted term 3 application to ensure we continue to participate in BFZ-C campaign. Included veteran homelessness as a population we are gathering data for along with chronic homelessness.

Data

- Continued to build the capacity of the department to collect and use data by building tools and processes to enable staff to identify data that is available (e.g., the data catalogue).
- In collaboration with the Early Years Data Analysis Coordinator, refined the C&SS Spotlight data dashboard for the department to eventually be shared publicly that showcases the work of the department and the trends and impact of services.
- Developed data collection tools for the division service agreements to enable reporting from service providers to be collected and reported under the definitions and guidance offered from the funder. This improved the quality and timeliness of reporting sent to funders and Council and Provincial Ministries.
- Updated and enhanced the functionality of the Northumberland County By-Name List tool to ensure accuracy for reporting and to further enable the use of By-Name list data to inform decision making and system planning.



Ten Year Housing and Homelessness Plan

- Completion of the 2021 Annual Report and submission to County Council and the ministry for approval as legislatively required.

Sustainable Growth

Food Security

- Continued to invest and support a program called Northumberland Eats that supports food security across the County. This voucher program enables people to choose where they can purchase food at locally owned vendors who provide a range of different food options, both meals and other food items. The vouchers are distributed through a range of human service organizations including shelters, churches, paramedics, libraries, children's aid, health and mental health organizations and others. We are continuing to work to transition the management and ongoing sustainability of this initiative to the United Way to include ongoing evaluation, distribution, and fundraising.
- Worked with Food 4 All manager to implement a program of improvement and sustainability for the food distribution and warehousing functions to ensure sustainability and increase member participation. Create reporting structures and processes to extrapolate important data around the use of food4all.
- Supported Community Care- Meals on Wheels program. Community Care Meals on Wheels program promotes health and independence by providing nutritious and affordable meals to: seniors living alone, adults with disabilities and those being discharge from hospital who require the assistance while recovering. Community Care provided meal subsidies through the Dining Program which enhances social connectedness for those seniors living in isolation.

HIFIS

- Obtained access to HIFIS as a method of sharing real time information with participating agencies and to enhance coordinated access to the homelessness system. Implementation planning process currently underway. Presented to the HLT table and determined governance structure to coordinate and distribute roles and responsibilities to make decision and coordinate action on the implementation of the system. Determined configuration of HIFIS program, completed data sharing agreements for all agencies that will use HIFIS. Full implementation expected late 2022/early 2023.



Thriving & Inclusive Communities

Community Transport

- Recognizing that transport remains a priority for residents of Northumberland, Community Services continues to support community transport initiatives managed through Community care and has co-designed metrics which show passenger feedback and any trends and successes within operations. We will also explore any opportunities for growth and innovation with this service.
- The Community Outreach Program has continued to support individuals in Northumberland to access transportation through, emergency funding, organizing rides through local programs, providing transit passes, etc. This transportation support has connected residents to vital services such as medical appointments, emergency shelter services, apartment viewings, employment opportunities, homelessness diversion opportunities etc.

Mental Health and Wellness

- Supporting the Community Health Centers of Northumberland and their dental program specifically, we have developed a service agreement with agreed outcomes and measurements for the services offered. This is monitored bi-annually with a report and a meeting with program delivery staff. The program is required to undertake client engagement activity and share results
- Creation of a mental health homelessness worker position to conduct outreach with clients who are experiencing homelessness and who are identifying with mental health related concerns. There is an intensive case management component for those clients needing housing outcomes (e.g., to remain housed, obtain housing, in shelter, to a diversion option, etc.).
- Continued to invest in an outreach position for the emergency shelter. This position acts as a daily check point i.e., wellness check for those living in shelter and motel overflow.

Warming Room

- Designed and set up a nighttime warming room for winter 2021-2022, operating from December 14, 2021, to May 1, 2022 (139 days). The warming room offered some light refreshments and warmth for people experiencing homelessness not able to stay in shelters.
- Worked to identify a suitable location and negotiate use of space, employ and train staff, consult with community and provide furniture and resources for the space.



- 792 total visits were made to the warming room in the 2021-2022 season. On average, the warming room supported 5.7 client visits per night.
- 137 unique clients were supported throughout the duration of the warming room. 70 clients returned to the warming room for more than 1 visit (51% of all unique clients). Returning clients (ranging from 2 to 75 total visits) accounted for 92% of all warming room visits. The median number of visits made by returning clients was 6.
- 45.3% of warming room clients reported their income source as the Ontario Disability Support Program, and 14.6% identified that they were in receipt of Ontario Works.

Outreach

- Offered outreach case worker support to people not eligible for social assistance to ensure that they are able to remain safe and healthy in the community. This included support to improve financial literacy, to connect with other services in the community, to navigate a range of personal challenges and to work toward life stabilization. The number of clients requesting this assistance has started to rise from the end of the lockdown period.

Homelessness Coordinated Response Table (HCRT)

- Continued to coordinate biweekly meetings for organizations working with people experiencing homelessness across the County to support people experiencing homelessness and encourage sharing of resources and expertise.
- Managed the By-Name List, which is a prioritized, real-time list of all people experiencing homelessness in our community. It includes a set of data points that support coordinated access and an understanding of inflow into homelessness and outflow into housing or alternative accommodations at a system level
- The common assessment tool used through our HCRT, and homelessness support services is the Vulnerability Index - Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT). This is a survey administered both to individuals and families to determine risk and prioritization when working with people experiencing homelessness. We will continue to promote this tool and offer training to internal staff and staff from partner agencies to ensure consistent, accurate and high standard assessments are carried out.

Homelessness Leadership Table

- Development of Homelessness Leadership Table (HLT) to provide ongoing leadership support to HCRT and for ongoing monitoring of the homelessness system to identify and address gaps. This group consists of senior staff from local organizations providing direct support to people experiencing homelessness



Training and Employment

- Continued building on the department’s professional development training series, virtual training opportunities were provided through the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association and Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness.
- Supported the transition of the RentSmart to The Help Centre as the leaders of the ongoing programming. The Help Centre continues to facilitate monthly community sessions.

2023 Service Objectives & Initiatives

Leadership in Change

Case Management

- Through a collaborative approach, the Community Services Manager together with the Ontario Works Manager will begin reviewing opportunities to support consistent case management approaches for both the Ontario Works and Community Services divisions. This approach will align with the delivery of stability supports and will focus on developing consistent delivery standards for financial and counselling supports by case workers, within the broader Community & Social Services department. By developing a “Northumberland-approach” to responding to emerging issues or trends within our community through the existing capacity of caseworker staff. We will align the approach with the Social Assistance Renewal Plan and Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan (CSWB).

Outreach

- The Community Outreach Program (COP) provides service to a wide range of Northumberland County residents with varying needs. 199 new households sought supports from COP during September 2021 to August 31, 2022, and for these households, 361 program enrollments were completed. Of these program enrollments, the majority (96%) were for Life Stabilization services.
- Further, the most frequently provided services to COP clients were related to maintain or obtaining housing. On average, these types of housing services require more caseworker time per service activity (e.g., 18.77 minutes per housing activity vs. 12.82 minutes for health activities, the next highest category). Additionally, of the service activities that took one hour or more, the majority were housing related (72.3%). This



suggests that services related to housing provided by COP caseworkers are time intensive and frequently sought out by members of our community. Further exploration will take place in 2023 to assess how to best structure the outreach program to respond to emerging client needs.

Thriving & Inclusive Communities

Community Safety and Well Being (CSWB)

- CSWB will remain a priority for us as we continue to move through the implementation phase. The governance model will remain, and the Community Services Team will continue to actively work with leaders of action groups and organizations across the community to establish agreements to share reporting between the CSWB data group, each action group, and the Collaborative. With the temporary Community Safety and Well-Being Coordinator position ending in late 2022, there will be a shift in responsibilities related to implementation.

Enumeration

- Develop plan to implement the requirements to undertake enumeration as required by Provincial Government.
- Use of electronic tool to survey people experiencing homelessness and those who are precariously housed. This includes ensuring that prevention, assessment, and housing questions are included in the survey with the mandated questions from the provincial Government. The electronic format for the survey also includes technology to support the reporting requirements.
- Recruit staff from other agencies to be able to work as interviewers for the day of enumeration
- Create route and location planner to ensure that interviewers can cover areas across the entire County and speak to as many people experiencing homelessness as possible
- Update training and support materials for the staff interviewers in preparations for the day of enumeration including COVID safety and precaution protocols, tips for interviewing techniques, and an overview of rationale and background

Warming Room

- Working with community partners on the design and set up of a daytime and nighttime warming room for winter 2022/23 to offer food and warmth for people experiencing homelessness not able to stay in shelters.
- Will work to identify location and negotiate use of space, employ and train staff, consult with community and provide furniture and resources for the spaces.



- Engaging persons with lived and living experience to ensure the services provided meet the needs of the community.

Economic Prosperity & Innovation

Homelessness System Review

- The goal of this review will be to develop recommendations for advancing a community-wide response model of infrastructure and services to support those experiencing – or at risk – of homelessness. This will be based on a holistic view of the homelessness system.
- The review will include an assessment of present state, along with best practice and sector trends, so that we can develop data-based plans for effectively meeting the needs of the community over the long-term. We will be looking at:
 - funding models
 - partnership opportunities
 - core emergency shelter service level standards, and
 - strategies supporting impactful program delivery and coordinated access.
- Homelessness system partners in Northumberland have a history of co-designing community strategies and services like collaborative enumerations, winter warming rooms, Next Steps transitional housing, and the Northumberland Eats initiative.
- This review represents the next step in strengthening the coordination of services and supports, ensuring people have access to the right types of supports, when they need them, and wherever they enter the system.

Technology

- To further streamline documentation processes and to enhance the communication between internal staff, we are exploring the use of SAMS to issue benefits and payments to clients. Currently, the Community Services Team uses an electronic documentation system to capture work for the Community Outreach program. This system has ongoing fees, and a limited number of users can access the system based on fee structure. The Community Services Manager will work with the Ontario Works Manager and Supervisor to assess feasibility of using SAMS for Community Outreach Program clients.



Sustainable Growth

HIFIS

- Engaging service providers on implementing a Homelessness Management Information System and on data management is a significant undertaking. It will require the ongoing collaboration of service providers, front-line users, and clients to create change. The Community Services Team will continue to engage partners in the use of HIFIS as a method to capture important data in real time. There will be a review of the implementation and ongoing improvements made as needed.

Food Security

- As we slowly move out of pandemic response, there is a renewed effort from the public health unit to reengage members of the food policy council. As a member of this council, the Community Services Manager will attend meetings and be an active participant of this re-established group focused on food policy options such as decreasing food waste, incentives for institutions to purchase local food, land use planning and community gardens as priorities.

Food Security/Community Services (Continued work under the 4 pillars of food security)

While work since the beginning of the pandemic has focused primarily on food access and availability, work will be intentionally directed back on plans made for 2022 including:

- Reexamining the ideas around the use of excess food items that are available at the warehouse (Access)
 - Working with the OAFVC to create simple items using existing excess ingredients, pancake mix as one example (carried over from 2022)
 - Planning for this including viability, cost, risk, and growth potential will be determined in 2023 and will include opportunities to engage our warehouse members and individuals with lived experiences with the co-design of these potential new products
- Food waste (Availability)
 - Continue to work with local retailers including Post Brand Cereals (Weetabix), Walmart, Shoppers Drug Mart, and local farmers to pick up donated food items
 - Continue to look for new partnerships with other local retailers and farmers, to pick up additional food items for distribution to local feeding programs and diversion from local land fills



- Continue to work with local partners including the food policy council and other local providers and businesses to make this a sustainable plan with the opportunity for future growth
- Outreach and Independence (Utilization)
 - Continue to develop outreach activities and plans to ensure that the most vulnerable people in our communities have access to food
 - We will work with our community partners to ensure that food and access to food is part of planning care and services in community programs
 - Partner with programs that promote healthy food and cooking (Porth Hope Northumberland Community Health Centre) to encourage the uptake and promotion of these programs

Long Term Plan & Strategic Objectives

Economic Prosperity & Innovation

Evidence-informed decision making

- Following from the collection and analysis of data, build the resources, awareness, and skill to ensure that evidence is used when planning services and programs. Tools that require evidence to be used in planning will be developed
- Develop robust systems for the data collected and shared through service agreements to be merged to inform high-level discussion and decision making
- Develop ways to include the experience of people with lived and living experience

Sustainable Growth

Homelessness System Review

- Staff are anticipating several recommendations to be brought forward by the Homelessness System Review. There will be long term recommendations that will require assessment and long-term planning with external and internal stakeholders. This review represents the next step in building a collaborative, culturally competent, trauma-informed, Housing First system approach to addressing homelessness. It is an opportunity to strengthen the coordination of services and supports, ensuring people have access to the right types of supports, when they need them, and wherever they enter the system.



Thriving & Inclusive Communities

- Northumberland County is a mix of small towns and rural and remote areas. With the Community Outreach Program, households were affiliated with the Town of Cobourg (38.2%) and the Municipality of Port Hope (22.3%), followed by the Municipality of Trent Hills (15.2%), the Municipality of Brighton (11.3%), the Township of Cramahe (5.3%), the Township of Alnwick-Haldimand (4.6%), and the Township of Hamilton (3.2%). Lower levels of services provided in the more rural municipalities like Cramahe, Alnwick-Haldimand and Hamilton Township requires exploration. Rural homelessness is often hidden with people couch surfing or staying in temporary accommodations. We will be exploring rural homelessness and the unique responses required to meet the needs of the rural homeless population.

Community Safety and Wellbeing (CSWB)

- Continue to support the priorities of the CSWB plan for Northumberland, by ensuring that resources are identified to help ongoing work of the collaborative and their agenda, education, and promotion of the plan, supporting a communication plan and ensuring adherence to the established governance.

Shelter and Housing

- The County purchased a house in Campbellford, with Social Services Relief Funds made available for capital purchases. There is a demonstrated community need for more supportive housing options in the County. Once renovations are completed a Request For Proposal will go out to determine an operator and the specific programming that will be offered within this house.

Ten Year Housing and Homelessness Plan

- Develop opportunities for people with lived and living experience to be involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of homelessness and housing services
- Build further collaboration with community agencies to design opportunities and solutions to meet the needs of people seeking housing in the County.

Leadership in Change

Long-term Continued Improvement of Northumberland Coordinated Entry System to Homelessness Services



- Business planning will continue to incorporate local opportunities, best practice, and legislative requirements to build the services available to support people experiencing homelessness and build life stabilization and prevention into the system.
- The Community Services Team will continue to build capacity, develop, and maintain community partnerships to co-create programs and services that are agile and sustainable.

2023 Issue Paper

Homelessness System Annual Investment

Purpose

This 2023 issue paper requests that County Council approve an additional \$300,000 levy investment for homelessness support, beyond the \$260,000 currently invested. With the loss of critical provincial investments received during COVID 19 and increased levels of acuity within the growing homeless population, this investment is required to stabilize existing services and add flexibility to resource allocations.

Background

The County of Northumberland is the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) for Social Assistance, Children and EarlyON Services, as well as Housing and Homelessness supports. Specifically, the Community and Housing Services divisions are responsible for planning and managing a broad range of housing and homelessness services on behalf of and by direction of County Council.

The County of Northumberland is a participating community in the Built for Zero Canada campaign (BFZC). The BFZC is an ambitious national change effort helping a core group of leading communities to end chronic homelessness. It is connections to leading national organizations such as these, that leadership around best practices and approaches for system planning are discussed and considered for local implementation.

Throughout COVID-19, we have been able to direct historic one-time investments from the province into the homelessness system through Social Services Relief Funding (SSRF). This \$5.8 million in funding has enabled the County to expand supports and innovate to address identified needs.

This includes:

- Expanded emergency shelter capacity through the local motel system
- Operation of winter warming rooms
- Funding homelessness diversion and outreach workers
- Support outreach staff and resources
- Piloting the Northumberland Eats food voucher program, which is now operated by the United Way.



- We're also currently in the process of renovating a home in Campbellford and securing a provider to offer supportive housing for up to five people.

This funding has had an impact here in Northumberland. However – it is due to end December 2022. To affect change and meet the scope of the need, municipalities are going to need ongoing, stable, predictable funding.

With the loss of this additional provincial funding, we are anticipating an overall reduced provincial investment of approximately \$800,000 dollars towards homelessness supports compared to 2022. The requested increase in levy investments will help to sustain some of the ground gained with SSRF funding over the last several years.

Staff understand that the local taxpayer cannot alone close the gap in funding required to meet the extent of local need. Homelessness cannot be resolved by the local level of government alone. This requires a multi-system approach, with engagement from all levels of government.

When referencing a multi-system approach, it looks beyond shelter and accommodations, investments are required in areas such as mental health and addictions supports, and even changes to Ontario Works and ODSP benefits so people can better afford rent. These are areas outside of municipal jurisdiction. But they are vital upstream measures to prevent homelessness. When looking at the housing crisis, which is creating pressures on the homelessness system, this is an issue that is both provincial and national in scope and requires financial intervention at that level.

The need for a more urgent and comprehensive response to homelessness within Northumberland is not a unique experience. Across Ontario the number of people experiencing homelessness are increasing. The reasons for which are multifaceted, but include the following:

- lack of affordable housing/increasing rents and home ownership prices
- lack of supportive housing/housing with supports
- impacts of COVID-19
- opioid epidemic
- increased experiences of trauma by users of the homelessness system

The data shared in this report is a high-level summary of the reporting numbers of households who sought services, identified a need or are on a waitlist in 2022. This data is not an exhaustive list but does point to local need.



- Yearend ministry reporting between April of 2021 to March of 2022 show a total of 1,877 households who were experiencing homelessness who obtained or retained housing through investments.
- Yearend ministry reporting between April of 2021 and March of 2022 shows a total of 1,146 households who were at risk of homelessness remained housed.
- The By-Name List currently has identified 87 unique names
- Social Housing waitlist has approximately 1000 households
- Ontario Works caseloads are currently at 620 households
- Child Care waitlist sits at approximately 1400 households with 500 households requiring immediate care.

A Request for Proposal (RFP) was issued in late spring of 2022 and has since been awarded to Vink Consulting. The objective of the RFP was to receive and evaluate proposals to conduct a complete program review of the emergency shelter system and supports across the County of Northumberland. The goal of the program review is to receive recommendations towards establishing a modernized shelter system. This includes equitable funding models and core service levels that fits well with other community services within a Housing First integrated system approach to addressing homelessness.

The review process includes a fulsome engagement with focus groups and surveys that include input from people with lived experience, member municipalities and staff, community agencies, and other social, justice and health systems. As a system, supports should be in place to prevent homelessness first, provide emergency shelter when required, and connect people to permanent appropriate, stable housing as quickly as possible.

The prevalence of individuals experiencing homelessness within Northumberland County is increasing considering the growth of the By-Name list and results from the Point In Time enumerations conducted over the past several years. Based on the data, people experiencing homelessness in Northumberland are presenting with higher levels of acuity which means they require more immediate and intense intervention to support life stabilization and safety planning. Homelessness is a complex, multi-faceted issue that requires investments from all levels of government.

Many of the community agencies who help to support individuals and families get housed, stay housed or connect to services rely on the provincial investments that flow through the County to them for contracted service agreements. Many of these organizations are non-profit and are doing vital work with already limited resources. The pandemic further strained these organizations resulting in fewer staff resources and programs. These are vital resources in our community that assist in connecting those at risk or experiencing homelessness to key supports. The loss of the SSRF funding, will have a significant impact on keeping these resources available in 2023.



Consultation/Options

This issue paper has been reviewed with staff including the Chief Administrative Officer, the Director of Community and Social Services, Director of Finance and Manager, Housing Services.

As the Service Manager for system planning related to Housing and Homelessness, County staff consult with others that form the 47 Service Manager network, professional networks, member municipalities, local social, justice and health agencies, residents and are seeking ways to improvement engagement of people with lived experience.

On the issue of homelessness and housing, engagement strategies were employed when developing the 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan, the Affordable Housing Strategy and the Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan to identify priorities and strategies.

The County continues to align system planning and service orientation with the stated priorities. Ongoing engagement, planning and case conferencing continues at various working tables and committees

Like municipalities across the province, the County is facing an ongoing challenge of addressing the scope of the need for housing and homeless supports in our community within the limited resources we have. Homelessness cannot be resolved by the local level of government alone. This requires a multi-system approach, with engagement from all levels of government.

The County strives to consider improved intervention methods to include incorporating increased impactful street outreach and intensive case management. Coordinated and persistent outreach, in-reach, and engagement efforts allow communities to bring services directly to people experiencing homelessness who otherwise might not seek out services and to connect them to permanent housing and necessary supports. Many individuals experiencing homelessness are disengaged from — and may be distrustful of — public systems and may be reluctant to seek assistance. Assisting individuals to overcome these barriers often requires significant outreach time and effort and can take months or even years of creative and proactive engagement.

According to Org Code (2021) as more and more communities see rises in unsheltered homelessness, they should examine their current street outreach services. Impactful street outreach is a current gap in the system, it is anticipated that this will be a recommendation in the Homelessness System Review that will require planning and resources to implement.



Financial Impact

This issue paper represents a financial impact to the County Levy of \$300,000. This would increase the County Levy investment into the homelessness system to a total of \$561,050.

Even with this increase, the homelessness response system will see a loss of funding from the 2022 Fiscal Year resulting from the ending of SSRF funding.

The Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) is a provincially funded initiative intended to prevent, address, and reduce homelessness within communities. The service categories funded through HPP are Supportive Housing, Community Outreach and Support Services, Housing Assistance and Emergency Shelter. The HPP allocations are funded based on a fiscal calendar. The levy contributions are approved through annual business and budget plans. The total HPP investment for 2023-2024 is 1.5 million.

By increasing the County's homelessness response system budget, the County will be able to improve the response to priority populations as indicated in the 2022 Report on Enumeration (including youth, Indigenous people, seniors). It is important that the County works to improve the response for priority populations as they are particularly vulnerable to homelessness due to multiple factors related to the social determinants of health.

In addition, by responding to the funding shortfalls within the existing homelessness system, County staff effectively respond to the recommendations from the Homelessness System Review. It is expected that several recommendations will require agile and quick responses to better equip the system to support those in need. Likely these recommended priorities will support better responses to priority populations, increasing street outreach, a focus on housing retention, diversion supports and increasing intensive case management for those experiencing homelessness or precariously housed.

Risk Considerations

Risk has been a consideration throughout the development of this proposal. The risk associated with not increasing the investment to the homelessness system is that the system will not be able to maintain, let alone improve, the provision of effective homelessness programs and services in Northumberland.



The role of the Service Manager is to oversee the provision of services across Northumberland pertaining to Homelessness services. This includes managing the HPP program and being able to demonstrate engagement in planning activities related to program delivery, which includes assessing service needs, identifying partners, and setting targets and methods to measure success in working toward ending homelessness. This investment allows the County to demonstrate further investment in this system and increasing critical supports for individuals experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, homelessness.

While homelessness can not be solved by the local tax payor alone, without any indication of critical and sustained investments from other levels of government, this immediate investment will help to plan and mitigate immediate risk to programming and services for better health and housing outcomes.

Impacts to Member Municipalities/Partners

Service Manager system planning and service response across all of Member Municipalities are considered when undertaking planning and engagement. Most investments are allocated to sheltering supports located in the more urban municipalities. Increase of investments will further enable opportunities to engage with all member municipalities to design and advocate for additional services.

Increase or decrease in capacity, service, or investments into the system to respond to priorities and needs directly impacts individual member municipalities and its residents either positively or negatively.

Included in 2022 Long Term Plan: YES/NO

This request for further County investment was not included in the 2022 long term plan. The loss of SSRF funding within the Community Services Division is significant and there are urgent system needs that need to be addressed in the short-term.

2023 Business Plan and Budget

Early Years Services

Northumberland County Early Years Services continues to evolve policies, programs, and services to greater align with and better reflect the Ontario government’s vision and ongoing transformation of the child care and early years system. The *Early Years and Child Care Act, 2014*, emphasizes the role of the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager as the system planner for early learning and child care. System change is ongoing with the Province of Ontario signing onto the Federal Government’s Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care System (CWELCC) in March 2022.

Many of the third- and fourth-year action items from the Early Learning and Child Care Five-Year Service Plan were placed on hold while the Early Years Team was reacting, planning, and supporting the early learning and child care community through the ongoing response and recovery initiatives related to the pandemic and the implementation of CWELCC.

The initial implementation of the CWELCC system has been onerous with ongoing challenges and changes since it was announced on March 28, 2022. Over the next four years, Early Years Services in Northumberland County will continue to be influenced by the ongoing implementation of the overall system transformation related to CWELCC.

Currently based on operating capacity, there are 1,248 licensed centre-based spaces in Northumberland County, spanning infancy to school-age. There are an additional forty-two spaces offered by licensed home-child care agencies, and twenty-four nursery school/preschool spaces. Available spaces in these locations are limited, and waitlists for child care across the County are extensive.

Each year, Northumberland County Early Years Services reviews the status of child care waitlists. Ongoing monitoring of this waitlist indicates continued high demand, with many parents waiting months for care. With the introduction of CWELCC, the waitlists are anticipated to continue to grow, especially for the younger age groups. There appears to be an increased demand for care that is further impacted by a workforce crisis in the Early Years sector. Child care operators are limited in their ability to offer maximum capacity, due to staffing pressures. This is an issue across all of Ontario.



Prior Year Accomplishments

Economic Prosperity and Innovation

Child Care and Early Years Workforce Development and Professional Learning Strategy

To address the workforce challenges, the Ministry of Education (EDU) provided one-time federal funding (January 2022 to March 2023) to support innovative retention and recruitment strategies. This funding allocation was designed to support both workforce development and to enhance capacity building opportunities. In 2022, this funding was used to enhance and expand the Northumberland Early Years' already established and effective professional learning system.

Key objectives of this funding:

- Sustain the existing early years workforce to ensure a more stable and high-quality early years system.
- Enhance access to opportunities for the workforce that promote retention and recruitment.
- Grow the number of qualified Early Childhood Educators (ECE) to increase access to high-quality programs for families.
- Attract and support the development of an increasingly diverse workforce to reflect the children and families accessing early years programs more effectively.

Northumberland County's Workforce and Professional Learning Strategy was designed in consultation with Northumberland's Early Learning Community.

Key Accomplishments:

- Northumberland ECE Career Pathways Video
 - Highlighted several career opportunities for ECEs in Northumberland County.
 - For use on social media, job board, local Employment centres and local school boards.
- Job Board
 - Located on the Northumberland County Website under the Early Years tab.
 - Specific for Early Years jobs in Northumberland County.
- ECE Student Support Program
 - Any ECE assistant who was already enrolled in a college program and did not qualify for the ECE Government Grant were able to apply for funding supports for books and technology.



- Early Years Employment Initiative
 - Early Years partnered with Ontario Works, Watton Employment Services, Fleming College, and the Northumberland YMCA to offer a six-week paid employment opportunity.
 - The first intake had five participants who partook in two weeks of in class training (including certificate courses in Food Handlers, CPR/First Aid, WHIMS) which prepared them for their four-week paid placement at one of the YMCA child care locations.
 - Following the completion of the course, four of the participants are actively seeking employment in the early years field (At this time, one participant has found full time employment at a local child care centre and two are being supported with furthering their education in the field).
 - Pre- and post-program surveys of participants indicated increased knowledge in various Early Years topics, including theories of child development, workplace health and safety, and available career options in the Early Years.
- Pedagogical Lead Time
 - Funding was provided to Early Years programs to support a Pedagogical Lead position which functioned as mentor to the educators in its program.
- Self-Reg-Early Childhood Development Program
 - Thirty-one educators across Northumberland completed a 12-week certificate program that supports understanding children's behaviors and wellbeing.
- Outdoor Pedagogy
 - Dr. Beverlie Dietz, the author of PlayOutdoors magazine, spent 3 days presenting to different groups of our Early Years Community and Stakeholders on the importance of Outdoor Pedagogy.
 - She also met one on one with each Pedagogical Lead, to review their centre's outdoor play space.
- Child Care Worker and ECE Appreciation Day
 - October 18th, 2022 was proclaimed Child Care Worker and ECE Appreciation in Northumberland County.
 - Educators across the county participated in the first ever Professional Learning Closure of all centres to celebrate the day.
 - Renowned guest speaker, Drew Dudley facilitated a day focused on building strong leadership skills.
- The Northumberland Workforce and Capacity Building Mentor
 - One-year contract position housed out of Five Counties Children Centre.
 - Provided ongoing support to the Workforce and Capacity projects.
 - This position has provided an educator from Northumberland the opportunity to build leadership skills and become a mentor and support to all the programs.



- Provincial Marketing Strategy
 - Provincial partnership with CMSM/DSSABs on promoting quality child care across the province.
- Digital Signage for Full Day Programs
 - Installed digital signs at full day child care programs to help promote the importance of licensed child care and the recruitment of staff.

Thriving and Inclusive Communities

Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC)

The Government of Canada identified child care as a national priority to enhance early learning and childhood development, support workforce participation and contribute to economic recovery. On March 28th, 2022, Ontario and Canada signed the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) agreement that will lower fees for parents and provide more accessible and high-quality child care for Ontario families.

Funding under CWELCC will be used to build and leverage the success of Ontario's existing early learning and child care system by increasing quality, accessibility, affordability, and inclusivity in early learning and child care, towards achieving the objectives of:

- Providing a 25% fee reduction retroactive to April 1, 2022, building to a 50% reduction in average parent costs (based on 2020 levels) for licensed early learning and child care by the end of calendar year 2022 and reaching an average fee of \$10 a day by 2025-26 for licensed child care spaces.
- Creating 86,000 new high-quality, affordable licensed child care spaces (relative to 2019 levels), predominantly through not-for-profit licensed child care.
- Addressing barriers to provide inclusive child care.
- Valuing the early childhood workforce and providing them with training and development opportunities.

The initial year of rollout for the CWELCC System, was a year of transition and adjustment for the child care sector. Ontario is taking a phased approach to implementing the CWELCC System, with a focus on the immediate objectives of affordability for families and system stability, before moving on to addressing the objectives of increasing accessibility and inclusion over the longer term.

2022, was a year of transition with the expectation this will continue into 2023. The rollout and implementation of the CWELCC system has had many setbacks as the sector strives to implement the extremely complicated policies and procedures.



Northumberland County Early Years team in partnership with the Finance Department have been working closely with EDU and CMSM/DSSAB partners provincially and regionally.

Overall key challenges and highlights of the implementation to date:

- Initial Addendum to Ontario Child Care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres Service Management and Funding Guideline (2022) was first released in April:
 - Strict guidelines and restrictions focused on accountability including:
 - Restrictions on allowable profit/reserve funds.
 - Base fee and financial viability calculations.
 - Thresholds for administration expenses.
 - Increased reporting requirements and administrative burden.
- Updated Addendum released August 2022 to address operator concerns and to encourage enrollment:
 - Goal is to have as many operators enroll to ensure parents will be able to receive their fee rebate for children 0 to 5 years in licensed child care back to April 1, 2022.
 - 2022 is considered a transition year and the focus is on revenue replacement, not base fee calculations.
 - Extended the deadline for operators to enroll in the program to November 1st.
 - Operators could opt in or out. If they opted out in 2022, they cannot apply to opt in again until 2023.
 - If an operator opted out, their families would not be eligible for the fee rebate to April 1st or ongoing and educators would not be qualified for the salary floor increases.
 - Tightened timelines for municipalities to enroll operators.
 - For 2022, EDU removed many of the increased accountability measures and some of the increased administration burden.
 - The Guidelines in many places are vague and open to interpretation. The Early Years Team is working closely with regional CMSM partners and EDU to assist with ensuring the rollout meets Ministry expectations.
- In Northumberland County, the Early Years Team is working with operators to maximize enrollment into the program to ensure parents and ECEs benefit from the system.
 - Even with some of the accountability measure removed in August, this process has been very time consuming and has increased the workload of the Early Years Team and Finance partners exponentially.
 - Developed policies and procedures including a Service Agreement Schedule.
 - As more accountability measure are to be reinstated in 2023 and beyond, additional supports will be required for the Early Years Team to ensure expectations are being met.



- As of September 2022, the expectation is the nine head offices (8 not-for-profit and one for-profit) in Northumberland that are eligible will be enrolling in the CWELCC System although not confirmed.
- Licensed Home Child Care Agencies applied for CWELCC where their head office is located. The two in Northumberland applied to Peterborough.
- Once enrollment was approved and the service agreement schedule is signed, there was a lot of work for the operator to complete Fee Rebate and Wage Support workbooks to provide parents/educators retroactive payments to April 1, 2022.
- The Ontario Child Care Management System (OCCMS) which is used for fee subsidy was not updated as of September 2022, to calculate the rebate for families.
 - It is expected to be operational in October.
 - Rebate timelines were dependent on the system being ready to calculate the rebates as there should not be a tiered system for full fee and fee subsidy families.
- The overall delivery of financial supports through fee subsidy and especially the work required for rebates impacted the work of Early Years team and will further continue to evolve with these system changes.

Licensed Child Care

- The Early Years Division led several key initiatives to support children, families, operators, and the community during the continued pandemic.
 - Implemented in partnership with Child Care Operators, School Age Emergency Child Care (ECC) for Northumberland front-line workers from January 7th to 14th which provided care for 264 children.
 - Provided additional financial support which was used to support operators with purchasing additional personal protective equipment, enhanced cleaning, additional staff to meet health and safety requirements, support for short term vacancies as operators transitioned to full capacity and minor capital required to meet new requirements. This also included supporting parents by covering the cost of absent days due to COVID screening protocols.
- Lead bi-weekly operator virtual meetings to provide ongoing support to operators as the system continues to transition to address its response to the pandemic and CWELCC.
- Continued to monitor waitlist data from operators' information.
 - Over five hundred children on the waitlist (birth to 12 years) with an average wait of 4.5 months.
 - These values are approximate, as families often do not remove themselves from waitlists once they find a space, and families may enroll on multiple waitlists.



- Whenever possible, duplicate and/or already placed children were removed from the list.
- It is evident that there is a high demand for care, with limited capacity to meet this need.
- Monitored changes in local demographics, including the increase in the age 0-4 population.
 - Between 2016 and 2021, there was a 4.4% increase in the age 0-4 population. Municipalities with high growth include Alnwick/Haldimand (+14.0%), Port Hope (+10.5%), and Hamilton (+6.0%).
- In partnership with the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board (KPRDSB):
 - Supported Northumberland YMCA with opening a new Family Age Grouping site for fifteen children at Centre for Individual Studies in Cobourg.
 - Secured additional funds from EDU in addition to the municipal funds approved in 2022, to build the infant room/kitchen at the Brighton Children's Centre located in Brighton Public School. Construction started August 2022.
- Joint submissions with Peterborough, Victoria, Northumberland, Clarington Catholic District School Board (PVNCCDSB) and Mon Avenir Conseil Scolaire Catholique to request full licensed child care programs be included in their new builds if their applications are successful.
 - Mon Avenir Conseil Scolaire Catholique proposal was approved. When the school is built there will be ten infant, fifteen toddler and twenty-four preschool spaces. The kindergarten and school age programs will operate out of shared classroom space.
- Started the implementation of the Fee Subsidy Attendance monitoring program with one test centre.

EarlyON Child and Family Centres

- The EarlyON Child and Family Team, led by the Early Years Coordinator, in collaboration with the three lead agencies: Northumberland YMCA, Brighton Children's Centre and Compass Early Learning and Care, continued to adapt and adjust programs and supports for children and families through the transition out of COVID restrictions.
- Continued to expand virtual and outdoor programming options for families.
- The EarlyON Centre at 800 Division Street officially opened to in person programming in March.
- As in person programming continued to expand with re-opening of spaces as allowed, the participation at all EarlyON programs has been steadily increasing.
 - Between June and August 2022, there were 2,139 total visits to EarlyON programs by children aged 0 to 6.
 - New Parent Program and Baby Hikers are two innovative programs that continue to expand to address demand.



- Increased reach through the Northumberland EarlyON Facebook page, with 8,940 page visits between January and August 2022 (65% year-over year increase) and 451 new page likes (52% year-over-year increase).
- In partnership with the HKPRDHU:
 - Provided support to children’s vaccination clinics held throughout Northumberland, including at EarlyON locations.
 - Five Counties Children’s Centre (FCCC) and EarlyON hosted COVID-19 vaccination clinics.
- Continued supported of the Triple P, Positive Parenting Program, expanding the virtual options for parents.
- EarlyON partners collaborated with the Ontario Works team to deliver virtual engagement session for families with children under the age of six to connect with broader supports through EarlyON.
 - Participants in the program are provided with resources kits intended to support the child and the family on their journey together. The kits include books and other tools, as well as personal hygiene items for the entire family.
 - The program outcomes are intended to foster an environment of sharing and connection to resources to support the family unit to thrive and grow.
- Expanded outreach programming to include more locations that highlight all that Northumberland has to offer families:
 - Partnership with the County Forestry Team to deliver programs on the trails, such as our Jr Hikers program. Partnered on the Oaktober event.
 - Other destinations include: Roseneath Carousel, Old Mill Alpacas, Cobourg Beach, Peter’s Apple Yard, Burnham Family Farm, etc.
- In partnership with FCCC and Infant Hearing, developed a welcome package and tour of the EarlyON at 800 Division Street for new parents.
 - Parents often say they do not know about the programs and services that are available.
 - This provides a perfect opportunity for EarlyON Educators to talk about the EarlyONs located throughout all on Northumberland County as well as other early years supports.
- Provided onsite child care and information at County led Newcomer Information sessions.
 - Connected families to relevant resources.
- Provided ongoing support to the United Way Back Pack Program.
- Completed grant applications requesting funds to improve access, program delivery and enhanced health and safety protocols.
 - In partnership with FCCC and Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre, to support a culturally appropriate, accessible, and inclusive playground for program delivery and increased outdoor activities.



- In partnership with Rotary Club of Campbellford supported minor renovations to increase access and health and safety of the EarlyON space.

Indigenous Led Early Years Program (In Partnership with Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre)

- Continue to increase awareness of the supports for urban Indigenous, Métis and Inuit families in Northumberland.
- Opened an Indigenous-led EarlyON Child and Family Centre room for culturally relevant and responsive programming at the 800 Division location.
- Continued to develop programs to be delivered at EarlyON Centres.
- Provided educational opportunities including book studies to educators across the County.
- National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, Orange Shirt Day campaign for September 30th to raise awareness and create meaningful discussion about the legacy of Canada's Residential School System, as part of the ongoing process of reconciliation.
 - Storytime readings and drumming circles in partnership with the public libraries in Trent Hills, Hastings, Port Hope, and Brighton.
 - Orange Shirt Day sign campaign distributed through free local newspapers.
 - Medicine Walk for families at Carstairs Trail.

Special Needs Resourcing

- Increased demand for all Resource Consulting supports including enhanced supports due to increased needs related to the effects of the pandemic.
- Continued to offer training, guidance, and support to continue to build capacity of educators within each child care and early learning program.
 - Includes monthly Network meetings with varying topics focused on the different age groupings, Children with Special Rights, Pedagogical leads, self-regulation, leadership, and dietary technicians.
- Continued to build in Resource Consultant services and supports at EarlyON Child and Family Centres to assist families with early identification. This also includes sessions that are hosted by the KPRHU and FCCC Occupational and Speech Therapists.
- Coordinated and offered supports to Alderville First Nation Child Care Centre.

Quality Improvement Framework

- With the continued challenges with the pandemic, the implementation of the Workforce Development Strategies and CWELCC, the Quality Tool Framework was postponed although individual Early Years programs did continue to work at their own pace based on their individual needs.



Early Years Service Planning and Community Engagement

- In partnership with Five Counties Children’s Centre, continue the vision of building a community hub model for early years service delivery:
 - Designated space for the Indigenous Led Early Years Team.
 - Office/counselling/community use space for community partners.
 - Direct connections to other early years programming. i.e., Infant Hearing, Occupational and Speech Therapy, Healthy Babies, Healthy Children, Infant Development Program.
- Established the Northumberland Early Years Working Group that is specific to supporting the vision of EarlyOn Child and Family Centres being utilized as hubs. This group is comprised of agencies who focus on the overall health and well-being for prenatal to age 14 years and is connected to the larger Northumberland Children and Youth Collaborative.
- Continued to work with the lower tier municipalities and our school board partners on identifying space to expand licensed child care and EarlyON Child and Family Programs in all communities.
- Started to develop a capital plan for licensed child care based on need and space availability in anticipation of EDU funding announcement.
- The retirement of a long-standing Early Years Caseworker provided a natural opportunity to review and update programs, policies, and procedures as part of the onboarding of the new team member.

Youth Support Programs

- Continued to offer the Trusteeship Program with Rebound Child and Youth Services. This program was a collaborative approach with Ontario Works and Early Years.
 - The service continues to provide financial support and coaching for individuals and families served through the Social Services department who have identified struggles with budgeting and specifically the youth under the age of 18 years (as mandated under the *Ontario Works Act*).
- Continued to support youth service delivery by providing supports to improve existing services offered by Rebound Children and Youth Services by:
 - Reducing wait times.
 - Increasing access
 - Providing additional supports to help address the significant service gap with younger youth and children under the age of 14 (connected to EarlyON).



- In partnership with the KPRDSB, YMCA Northumberland and EarlyON, evaluated the model of the TEAM program for young mothers and agreed to partner on a new service delivery model to support all young parents across all of Northumberland.
 - Program ended June 2022.
 - The new Family Age Grouping program at CIS has prioritized child care spaces for students who have children as one of the new supports for young parents.

Leadership in Change

Data Validity, Measurement of Impact

- Conducted a County-wide Child Care Needs Assessment Survey
 - Survey responses indicated that there are anticipated child care pressures across the County, between now and 2024.
 - In particular, the areas of Cobourg, Hamilton, and Port Hope are expected to see a demand for infant, toddler, and school-age spaces from fall 2022 into 2023.
 - Demand for school-age care is high in the eastern region of the County.
 - Parents/caregivers are frustrated by long waitlists and the prohibitive cost of care.
 - The ongoing implementation of CWELCC is anticipated to address some of the barriers to care.
- Worked on creating tracking tools to more accurately capture the data for virtual programs and services.
- Continued to better link data collection to EDU reporting requirements.
- Implemented a Cross-County Early Years Staff Satisfaction Survey for Child Care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres staff.
- The Data Analysis Coordinators (DAC) collaborated with the Community Services DAC to develop a Data Catalogue for the department.
 - Enables the safe collection, storage, indexing, access, and analysis of data available throughout divisions across the department.
 - Maintain data sources that will support future programming and operational needs, including the development of key performance indicators.
- Continued work within the department and with community partners on streamlining reporting requirements to reflect an outcome-based approach with the collection of data and metrics.

Professional Development

- Early Years Coordinator and a Resource Consultant represented Northumberland County at the 2022 Merhit Centre Symposium (Learning New Strategies for Supporting



Self-Reg Havens; creating safe, caring environments for children to learn in).

Northumberland's two representatives were featured in two components:

- A half hour "Ted Talk" on the success of Self-Regulation Strategies in Early Learning Programs across Northumberland County.
- A question-and-answer panel with Dr. Jean Clinton, representing Early Childhood Educators and the values of Self- Reg.

Joint training across all departments provides a coordinated approach to staff training and program administration.

- A variety of learning and development opportunities were offered both virtually and in-person throughout the year. Team members took advantage of opportunities through the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association, webinars and online learning purchased through Corporate Services and Early Years specific (Indigenous-led Book Studies, Self-regulation, Mental Health, and Well-being).
- Early Years caseworker participated in Lean Yellow Belt training.
 - The focus of the project was to review current Ontario Works file management processes pertaining to information collection, storage, and destruction. As technology evolves, it presents opportunities to review current processes and develop plans to utilize technological advances in program administration. Results show cost savings relating to Office Supplies and staff time.
 - These changes are now transferrable from Ontario Works and next stages are to be applied to the Early Years file management processes.
- Staff participated in Basic Emergency Management (BEM) and Emergency Social Services (ESS) refresher training, facilitated by the Health and Safety and Emergency Planning Department.
 - Opportunities were provided for practical hands-on experience for staff to prepare and practice their skills.
- Staff participated in a refresher/introductory training on Records Management, facilitated by the Information Management Coordinator.

Business Continuity Planning

- Business Continuity planning for the Early Years division, alongside the Community and Social Services department as a whole, had begun with the Health and Safety/Emergency Planning department in late 2019 and early 2020. The pandemic evaluated the plans and demonstrated the gaps that needed to be filled. While not finalized in 2022, Business Continuity planning is well underway and will continue into 2023.

2023 Service Objectives and Initiatives

Economic Prosperity and Innovation

Child Care and Early Years Workforce Development and Professional Learning Strategy

- The one-time funding specific to this initiative is set to end March 31, 2023.
- The plans in place for 2022 will be wrapping up in the first quarter.
- Northumberland Early Years Community already had an established and effective professional learning system prior to 2022 and the plan is to continue building on these initiatives within the funding parameters of 2023.
- Retention and recruitment of ECEs will continue to be a focus.
- Professional development will be planned with input from early learning partners and responses from training surveys and the overall 2022 staff satisfaction survey.
- A focus will remain on:
 - Self-regulation strategies
 - Building Leaders in Early Years
 - Outdoor Pedagogy (Community Outdoor Play Charter)
 - Inclusion and diversity (Children with Special Rights, New Comers)
- Early Years Employment Initiative
 - Continuing the partnership with Ontario Works, Watton Employment Services, Fleming College, and the child care community planning to have another intake winter 2023.
 - Building on this initiative, the plan is to work with KPRDSB and PVNCCDSB to develop a co-op program for high school students to introduce them and encourage a career pathway in the Early Years sector.
- Plan for the 2nd Annual Child Care Worker and ECE Appreciation Professional Learning Day (Early Years system closure for a day).

Thriving and Inclusive Communities

Licensed Child Care and Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC)

- 2023 will be the second year of the five-year CWELCC system transformation.
- As more accountability measure are expected to be reinstated in 2023 and beyond, additional Financial supports will be required for the Early Years Team to ensure expectations are being met.
 - Base Fee calculations



- Viability standards
- Administrative and allowable expense monitoring
- Starting in January 2023:
 - Parent fees for 0- to 5-year-olds will be further reduced by 50% (Based on the March 2022 frozen parent fee rate) for those programs whose operator as opted in.
 - The annual wage floor increase of \$1.00 per hour up to the maximum wage floor ceiling comes into effect for qualified ECEs and Supervisors.
- Continue to monitor and plan for EDUs previously announced funding reductions and restrictions which were put on hold due to the pandemic. Anticipated changes may also be impacted by a proposed provincial Early Years funding formula update for 2023. Due to the lingering effects of the pandemic and the continued rollout of CWELCC it has not yet been communicated if proposed or anticipated changes for 2023 will be implemented.
- There has been an increase in administrative burden put on CMSMs with COVID-19 and CWELCC. The CWELCC pressures will continue into 2023 to 2025 and beyond. There will be challenges if the proposed reduction of administration funding from 10% to 2.5% is implemented. Although there are contingency plans in place to balance the proposed 2023 budget if the funding changes.
- As the 2023 EDU Guidelines and Funding for Child Care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres has yet to be announced (September 2022) it is difficult to fully anticipate what changes will be required to be implemented in 2023. The Early Years Team and the Finance Department are anticipating some of the future requirements such as:
 - Determining base fees for each licensed program based on true expenses and operating enrollment.
 - May be required to determine reasonable administration costs including what percentage is allowed for administrative salaries.
 - Continued opportunities for capital funding to address the high demand for quality licensed child care.
 - Continued focus on ECE retention and recruitment.
- With the introduction CWELCC, the evolution of our fee subsidy program and administration will continue to be a focus going into 2023 to 2025 and beyond.
 - As CWELCC becomes a standard pillar of support to the Early Years framework in Northumberland County, the overall delivery of Fee Subsidy will further continue to be impacted and will evolve with system changes.



- Continue the rollout of the Fee Subsidy Attendance Audit program.
- Implementation of a new multi-year Service Agreement for child care and EarlyON Child and Family Centre operators, ensuring greater accountability measures are built in.
 - Updates will include guidelines regarding reserve funds for operating and capital planning. Multi geographical and multi-use operators will have more detailed year-end financial requirements.
- Develop a surplus fund policy for non-profit operators.
- Continue to work with the child care operators on exploring innovative ideas to improve access to licensed child care for families (space, hours of care, flexibility, inclusion).
- Continue to engage child care operators and their Board of Directors in working on process and policies to support program viability and enhanced accountability.
- Continue to work with the licensed home child care sector:
 - To ensure compensation for and between providers and operators is transparent and equitable.
 - Continue to increase public awareness of licensed home child care as a viable option for families.
 - Focus on recruitment of home providers.
- Maximize the Ontario Child Care Management System (OCCMS) tools by implementing on-line applications for parents and the parent portal for documentation and information sharing.

EarlyON Child and Family Centres

- Continue to build on the strong partnerships already developed between the County and the three EarlyON lead agencies.
- In partnership with the Communications department continue building on the marketing strategy to promote the free programming offered at the Centres:
 - Planning an event for March Break celebrating the one-year anniversary of the 800 Division Street EarlyON location.
 - Plans will include exposure to all EarlyON programs with an event at this site to celebrate the centre and all the community partners that are so important in helping us deliver programs and services.
- Continue to enhance connections between County departments to explore opportunities to partner or support County events.
- Build on and grow the strong partnership with the Forestry Division and programs within the forest.
 - Increased educational opportunities for children, families, and educators.
- Continue to build partnerships with all libraries to assist with offering programs across all of Northumberland County.



- Build on and continue to explore opportunities for community partner agencies and the Community and Social Service Department (CSS) to offer their programs and services at EarlyON locations, enabling them to provide services across the County. Building on the Hub philosophy.
- Expand on the Ontario Works/Early Years EarlyON project.
 - Model the program with the Housing Division to offer programming at the County's Housing complexes.
 - Expand to offer the program to Ontario Disability Support Program participants with children under six.
- Explore how Early Years, in partnership with community partners, can support and develop programs that meet the needs of Newcomers to Northumberland.
- Prenatal and infant care supports for low-income residents of Northumberland County has been identified as a need by the community. The benefits of prenatal supports such as the regular use of prenatal vitamins and dietary health is well documented as a predetermination for healthy infant and child development.
 - With the increasing impact of inflation and the cost-of-living increases, low-income families are facing financial barriers that may place them at risk of sacrificing prenatal and infant care needs due to lack of affordability.
 - Basic items such as prenatal vitamins, infant diapers and formula are a necessity that are unavoidable for healthy prenatal and infant care.
 - In collaboration with the Early Years community, there will be a focus on using data to determine need.
 - The Early Years Division in partnership the Food For All Warehouse and community partners are in a unique position to address this need within the existing Early Years framework.

Indigenous Led Early Years Program (In partnership with Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre)

- Continue to build awareness of the supports for urban Indigenous, Métis and Inuit families in Northumberland.
- In consultation and input with the Indigenous families, design and deliver Indigenous-led programming for Indigenous families.
- Design and deliver relevant programming for the broader community to be delivered at the Indigenous EarlyON program, EarlyON Centres and child care centres across the County that are culturally relevant and fosters cultural sensitivity.
- Indigenous Early Years team will continue to build and enhance the coordination of community connections with Alderville First Nations, local Indigenous organizations, and Indigenous early years stakeholders.



- In partnership with the communications department build greater awareness and expand relevant programming to honour and recognize:
 - National Indigenous History month, including National Indigenous People’s Day.
 - National Day of Truth and Reconciliation, Orange Shirt Day.
- Expansion of the book studies offered. Areas of focus are the 7 Grandfather’s Teaching Toolkit workshop and the Indigenous documentation workshop.
- Expand the Indigenous Perspectives Network that is offered to early years educators to include other early years partners.

Quality Improvement Framework

- In 2023, there will be a renewed focus on the tool, supporting the revitalization of the educator teams who during the struggles of the past two and half years have had to shift focus to other priorities.
- Focus is on a continuous cycle of evaluation/monitoring, goal setting, training/ improvement initiatives, mentorship, and transfer to practice
- Build a framework to monitor Service Agreement accountability measures that have been or are being built into the framework.

Special Needs Resourcing

- Resource Consultants will support the rejuvenation of the implementation of the Learning Quality Reflection Tool.
- Direct more resources to frontline educators to build capacity to better support children with unique needs.
- Explore opportunities to support inclusion through programming or equipment.
- In 2023, a focus for the consultants will be to assist operators with reviewing and updating diversity and inclusion policies, including CWELCC priorities.

Early Years Service Planning and Community Engagement

- In 2023, into 2024, Northumberland Early Years Team will be engaging and consulting with early learning and child care partners, community partners and families to build the five-year Early Years Service System Plan for 2024 to 2029.
 - There is an understanding due to the pandemic many initiatives of the previous plan were not completed and will carry forward.
 - The Plan will continue to be data driven and focus on the outcome indicators.
 - To gather input and feedback on the plan, the Early Years Team will host separate community events for parents and early years stakeholders.



- Implement the first bi-annual County-Wide Parent/Caregiver Child Care and Early Years Programming Feedback Survey. This will contribute to the development of the five-year plan.
- Due to the pandemic, the two-year cycle of the Early Development Instrument (EDI) for Sr Kindergarten children was disrupted. EDU has tentatively scheduled EDI implementation in the spring of 2023.
 - The Northumberland Early Years DAC will be part of the planning, training, and implementation of the instrument with neighbouring CMSMs and with KPRDSB and PVNCCDSB.
- At the request of the EDU, develop a Capital Master Plan for Licensed Child Care to support EDU funding opportunities as they become available.
 - The demand for licensed child care continues to grow in Northumberland. Child care is essential to support economic growth and prosperity and is needed in all areas of the County, urban and rural.
 - Explore opportunities with the lower tier municipalities (recreation departments, facilities, CAOs, etc.) and our school board partners on identifying space to expand licensed child care and free EarlyON Child and Family Programs in all communities.
- Connect with nontraditional and corporate partners to seek opportunities for program sponsorship through in kind or financial support for Early Years Programming.
- Continue to work with the CSS, Finance and Communications departments on updating tracking tools to capture data more accurately.
 - Greater support from finance to assist with new and evolving accountability measures as directed by EDU, especially regarding the ongoing implementation of CWELCC.
 - Focus on virtual programs and services meaningful data collection.
- Continue to better link data collection to EDU reporting requirements.

Youth Support Programs

- Continue to support the joint CSS Trusteeship Program, by reviewing opportunities to expand the program to support Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Support Program and underhoused clients.
- Continue to assist Rebound Child and Youth Services in meeting demand for established programs and create stronger connections between these programs and EarlyON Child and Family Centres.
 - Continue the expansion of Triple P Parenting programs.



- Increase awareness of programs and services that are available to children and families in Northumberland. Focus on the warm handoff between service providers to supports the family's transition.
- In partnership with the KPRDSB and YMCA Northumberland, investigate new opportunities to support all young parents, not just mothers, across Northumberland.
 - Connect parents to EarlyON Child and Family Centres located in their neighbourhood.

Leadership in Change

Data Validity, Measurement of Impact

- Continue to share information and learn of new methods of tracking data that is relevant to the department and the community that we serve, to continue to inform evidence-based planning.
- Continue to work collaboratively with other department resources to build and maintain appropriate data sources that will support future programming and operational needs.
 - This will include determining metrics and streamlining collection methods to provide demographic information that will inform evidence-based planning.
- Implement a Cross-County Satisfaction Survey for Child Care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres parents/caregivers.
- Investigate data sharing agreements with relevant partners.
- File audit function for fee subsidy will be reviewed to ensure it focuses on accountability.

Professional Development

- Both in-person and virtual learning will be considered, expanding options for professional learning in 2023.
- Continuing with previous Professional Development plans for the department, a focus will continue to be on customer service, the client experience, self-care, and emergency response as it relates to Social Services.
- Lean management, records management (including information privacy and security), and health and safety, will continue to be promoted and supported
- In 2023 a focus will be on supporting the completion of Mental Health First Aid training for all CSS staff.
- Will work with each Early Years Team member to identify their professional goals and look to ways the division, department and County can support this development.



Business Continuity

- Planning for the Early Years division, alongside the CSS department, will continue in 2023. This planning will include a review of the divisional level response to COVID-19, as well as a detailed review of minimum service standards in the event of an emergency. Current plans will be updated to address technical solutions that were implemented over the last three years, and to provide awareness for staff of the requirements during an emergency.

Long Term Plan and Strategic Objectives

Economic Prosperity and Innovation

- The shortage of qualified early childhood educators will be an ongoing issue for years to come. Focus will continue to be on workforce strategies to support recruitment and retention of early years educators and all staff.
- Continue to explore opportunities to support under qualified early years staff in becoming a Registered Early Childhood Educators. Explore various paths, such as the ECE Qualification Upgrade Program, a college program in Northumberland or distant education.
- Continue to provide ongoing support locally for professional development opportunities based on sector input.

Thriving and Inclusive Communities

- The overall goal is to continue to build a high-quality, accessible, and affordable early years and child care system within the provincial funding allocations.
- Continue to monitor and plan for EDU funding changes that may have an impact on the Early Years budget.
 - Funding allotments are usually communicated with little time to thoughtfully plan for and implement the changes in the EDU timeframes.
 - The direction of the Early Years Division is very dependent on Ministry plans and objectives.
 - Continued monitoring and planning is required to ensure:
 - Early Years programs are of high-quality, affordable, accessible, and welcoming to all.
 - Provincial funding is fully maximized
 - Greater connection between Early Years and the finance department.
- As the CWELCC system transformation continues it is anticipated there will continue to be increased administrative burden placed on CMSMs and child care operators. This includes increased accountability measures such as determining viability, base fee calculations and reserve management.
- Ongoing evaluation and monitoring of the five-year Early Years Service System Plan.
- Continue to investigate opportunities to create additional licensed spaces for 0 – 4-year-olds with a focus on infants and toddlers to address waitlist demands across the County.
- Continue to partner with KPRDSB, PVNCCDSB, Mon Avenir Conseil Scolaire Catholique and lower tier municipalities on capital build and retrofits to provide early years programs and services across the County.
- Through Indigenous-led programming, continue to increase access to family and support programs for Indigenous, Métis and Inuit families in partnership with Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre and Alderville First Nation.
- Continue to work with the sector to improve the wages of educators.
- In conjunction with the Northumberland Children and Youth Collaborative and the Early Years Working Group, continue to increase awareness and access of quality early years programs.
- Continue to find opportunities to build on the Hub model. For programs and services at the EarlyON Child and Family Centres.



Leadership in Change

Data Validity, Measurement of Impact

- Early Years Services recognizes the utility and power of data in planning, evaluating, and reporting and will continue to work with the department and community partners on sharing data and using data to inform decisions.
- Ongoing implementation of Early Years Staff Surveys and Parent/Caregiver Surveys to assist with system planning.

Professional Development for Frontline Staff

- In partnership with all departments, continue to build internal capacity through learning and sharing opportunities.
- Find efficiencies utilizing Lean approaches to examine internal processes to meet targets and outcomes.
- Review and discuss client-centred case management models in a collaborative environment.
- Build on the Corporate People Plan to support staff in learning and development opportunities while ensuring continuity in service delivery.

2023 Business Plan & Budget

Food Security Services

Over the past 2 years, the COVID pandemic has required the Food 4 All program to make ongoing changes in the daily warehouse operation to remain open and ensure the health and safety of staff and volunteers. During that time, Food 4 All has remained open to assist local food banks, student nutrition programs and community food programs to ensure that the most vulnerable members of our community have continued to receive the assistance and support they required.

Historically, most of the work that has been done within the Food Security Services division has been primarily focused on the Food 4 All operation. In early 2021, initial discussions and planning involving the Community and Social Services Director, Community Services and Food Security Services managers took place, regarding a 5-year phased timeline of activities specific to the broader issues of food security within Northumberland. This timeline includes plans that are specific to the Food 4 All operation.

The first phase of the timeline began in mid-2021 with a thorough review the Food 4 All membership fee structure. After this review, a new usage-based membership fee structure was recommended by staff, approved by County Council, and included in the County's 2022 Fees and Charges By-Law. In 2022, all warehouse member groups were charged their annual fee based on this new structure. Later in 2022, the focus turned to customizing and installing a new inventory management system upgrade for the operation. With the implementation of the new system there were new processes created in 2022 with more anticipated in early 2023 for the handling, tracking, distributing, sourcing, ordering, and reporting on the product that is received into and distributed from the warehouse.

Other work planned for 2023 will involve conducting an initial review of the current governance structure of the Food 4 All program.

Further work on the 5-year phased timeline will continue in 2024 with the review and implementation of potential new governance structure changes (based on the 2023 review), followed by the ongoing monitoring and review of the Food 4 All operation in 2025. This work will help to ensure the continued sustainability and positive impact of the Food 4 All operation and help to focus the work of Food Security Services in the coming years.



Prior Year Accomplishments

Economic Prosperity & Innovation

Volunteer Opportunities/Development

- Beginning in Q2 after COVID protocols were lifted, volunteers were brought back to assist with the operation.
- In Q3 & Q4 the volunteer base was expanded further with new volunteers being brought in to assist with the operation on a more consistent basis.
- A new volunteer coordinator position was created (for a volunteer) to assist with recruiting, training, and scheduling volunteer positions.

Continued Healthier, Local food Purchasing

- Continued to purchase and distribute healthier food items for local food banks and student nutrition programs, with ongoing work to increase the number of local suppliers utilized to provide these items. Current local purchases include:
 - Local grocery stores and wholesale produce supplier (No frills, Walmart, Food Basics, Deodato and Sons Ltd.)
 - Fresh produce and beef from local farmers (Moore Orchards, Burnham Family Farms, Northumberland Cattlemen's Association)
 - Liquid milk directly from supplier (Kawartha Dairy)
 - Fresh bread directly from supplier (Canada Bread)
 - Fresh eggs directly from supplier (Burnbrae Farms)

Sustainable Growth

Fundraising/Food raising Activities, Financial Donations

- Worked with staff from MyFM radio station and volunteers from Northumberland Fare Share on the 5th annual "All Hands-on Deck" food drive in August of 2022
 - This annual event is a partnership between Food 4 All and Northumberland Fare Share with all food and financial donations being split equally between the 2 organizations
 - In the 5 years of this event, more than 22,000 pounds of food and personal care items and more than \$13,000.00 in financial donations have been raised
- Due to COVID, the annual Classic Rock Restock event held each year in front of Cobourg's Victoria Hall has been suspended for 2 consecutive years with plans to re-schedule the event at an appropriate time in the future



- Since the pandemic began in March of 2020, there have been significant financial donations made to Food 4 All/Food Security from the community. These donations have been used to purchase increased amounts of fresh produce, milk and eggs, provide financial subsidies to food banks and community meal programs and provide funding to the Northumberland Eats program.

Food Security/Community Services

- Continued work on the alignment between food security, community services and joint priorities including the Northumberland Eats program.
- Continued to promote the foodhelpnorthumberland.cioc.ca website reference tool for contact information for food banks, community gardens, student nutrition programs and meal programs.
 - This tool includes a QR code to support ease of access to the information
 - This site is being updated regularly and has been a useful tool through the pandemic to enable people in Northumberland to easily access the information they require to access food and support.
- Had the Community Services manager and 1 staff attend the March Food Banks Northumberland committee meeting to share valuable information and resources with local food banks
- Held initial meetings with staff to plan organized support for community meal programs
 - Will be similar to the Food Banks Northumberland (FBN) group where the County will act as a support/resource for local community meal providers
 - Opportunity to share best practices
 - Provide product support through Food 4 All membership

Financial Policy – Membership Fees

- After creating our new financial policy in 2018 work continued using new processes (based on the policy) in 2022.
 - On the County's updated web site, the online donation tool continues to be a useful option where donations are being made to Food 4 All / Food Security through the web site.
 - Significant financial donations have been received since the beginning of the pandemic. A large percentage of these donations have been made through the County's online donation tool.
- When working within our revised Donation Policy, it has provided more flexibility with how donations are being utilized and are able to provide continued support to initiatives including the Northumberland Eats and Milk 4 Families programs.
- After working with the manager of Community Services and Finance staff in 2021, the new Food 4 All usage-based membership fee structure was included in the County's 2022 Fees and Charges By-Lay.



- All member groups were invoiced in 2022 based on this new structure with an additional \$15k in membership fee revenue anticipated annually

Warehouse Technology

- After sourcing out new warehouse inventory management software in Q4 of 2021, significant work was done in 2022 to customize and implement the new software into the Food 4 All operation.
- The acquisition of the new system was made possible thanks to funds provided to the Food 4 All program from Food Banks Canada.
- Some of the many upgrades and advantages that the new system will provide include:
 - Ensuring a fairer and more equitable distribution of product based on inventory levels and the requests of various community member agencies.
 - Significantly better reporting options not currently available on existing software including reporting on the actual weight, variety/type and source of products being distributed.
 - Bar code scanning for product entering and leaving warehouse.
 - Smart phone app compatibility for off-site access to inventory program.
 - Significant reductions in administrative time required tracking product when compared to the old system.
- We continue to utilize other technology for the operation including:
 - Walk-in cooler and freezer temperature monitoring software (iMonnit)
 - GPS tracking of warehouse vehicles
 - Online appointment scheduling software (Setmore)
 - Hunger count tracking software used by most Food 4 All member agencies (Link2Feed)
 - Food rescue/donation software (foodrescue.ca)
 - Provincial food bank donation allocation software (SNAP 2.0)
 - Looking at volunteer management software options for 2023

Thriving & Inclusive Communities

Support Throughout the Pandemic

Throughout the pandemic the Food 4 All warehouse remained open and continued to provide much needed assistance to local food banks and feeding program. This included:

- More than 2.5 million pounds of food and essential items being distributed from Food 4 All to food banks, student nutrition programs and community agencies (valued at approximately \$8 million)
- More than 140 deliveries made to local food banks and emergency shelters



- Worked with the Housing division and Facilities staff to source out, pack and deliver more than 800 bags that included PPE and cleaning supplies to housing tenants located throughout Northumberland
- Packed and delivered 300+ bags with assorted fresh food items and additional PPE to housing tenants
- After receiving a donation of more than 900 children’s booster toilet seats work was done with the Early Years team to distribute more than 600 units through Early On centers located throughout the County

Student Nutrition Program Assistance

- Although the pandemic has impacted how local student nutrition programs are able to assist, Food 4 All continued to work with “Student Nutrition Programs Central East” to provide new healthy food items including bread, fresh produce, school safe snacks and eggs to local school nutrition programs
- During the 2021/2022 school year, it was the third full school year of using the new online order program for schools to order their monthly food items. The online system provides:
 - One system for schools to submit monthly reports and school food orders
 - More healthy food options (that meet school nutrition guidelines) that are delivered to schools each month
 - A second opportunity each month to order food that must be picked up from Food 4 All
 - Improved access with product being shipped to Food 4 All where it was then divided into individual school orders, loaded onto school courier vehicles, and delivered to each school program

Food Distribution from Social Services Office

- Since implementing a LEAN yellow belt project in 2019, the new process was used to distribute and track food that was given to clients that visited the Social Services main office throughout 2022.
 - Implemented a JDI process when fresh apples were added as one new option of healthy food that is available through the office

Hunger Action Month (HAM) Activities (September 2022)

- Fifth annual Hunger Action Month activities organized in September of 2022
- Proclamation by County Council recognizing September as Hunger Action Month in Northumberland County
- Sharing the “30 Ways in 30 Days 2022” calendar electronically through the Food 4 All Facebook page



- Released the 5th annual Feed the Change report (2022) which shares food security data and Food 4 All distribution statistics from 2021.
- Worked with the Communications and Waste Department to promote ideas on how to reduce household food waste
- Made daily social media posts promoting HAM to engage the community and offer ways they could support the initiative

Milk 4 Families Program Review (Ongoing)

- Ongoing review of the Milk 4 Families program to ensure maximum value for our investment
- Increases in 2022 in the cost per bag of milk have made it necessary to adjust quantities of gift cards being distributed to ensure liquid milk allocations to local food banks stay consistent
- Continue to monitor adjusted gift card allocations made monthly to local programs to reflect their individual client needs more accurately

Food Banks Northumberland (FBN) – Improved Service Standards

- Continued to work with local food banks and key community partners to establish consistent levels of service to local food bank visitors which has been increasingly important since the start of the pandemic
- In working with Community Services staff, FBN SharePoint site was created in 2022 as a tool to share resources, information, schedules, and news regarding the food bank work being done throughout Northumberland
- Provided uninterrupted access to warehouse items, including several direct deliveries to food banks during the pandemic
- Continuing to provide more food items based on the revised Canada's Food Guide
- Continuing our work to identify service gaps between locations and identify ways to fill these gaps

Leadership in Change

Waste Diversion/Food Rescue

- Continued to work primarily with 1 partner for waste diversion
 - Food waste is picked up weekly by 1 local farmer and diverted from the local landfill
 - Total of approximately 6,500lbs of waste diverted in Q1 + Q2 of 2022
- Continued partnership with Second Harvest and their FoodRescue.ca program to access rescued food from donors. This includes an ongoing partnership with Shoppers Drug Mart in Cobourg where bi-weekly pickups are being made at their location.



- Expanded local partnership with Walmart in Cobourg which now includes weekly pick-ups of donated fresh produce, frozen, dairy, and non-perishable items
- Continued partnership with Burnham Family farm in Cobourg and picked up more than 2500 pounds of donated fresh produce including apples and corn
- Began work with the County's Communications and the Waste department to promote information regarding how to reduce household food waste

Food Banks Northumberland – Professional Development

- During the ongoing COVID situation the in-person meetings have been replaced with teleconference meetings and zoom calls
- Plans to return to in-person meetings as soon as possible
- Creation of Share-Point site for sharing information with local food banks

Revised/Updated Warehouse Operational Policies

- Original warehouse policies were created and implemented in 2015
- This policy is reviewed annually and adjusted as necessary.
 - With recent changes to the membership fee structure, addition of new inventory management software and processes, additional work will be done in 2023
- New policy document is being kept as an electronic file to assist with ease of distribution and ease of updating whenever necessary.

2023 Service Objectives & Initiatives

Historically, the focus of the Food Security division has centered primarily on the day-to-day operation of the Food 4 All warehouse program. As the work of the Food Security division continues to expand, the focus continues to include both the daily warehouse operation and the broader issues that affect food security. Since 2019, this has included working on the 4 pillars of food security (Availability, Access, Utilization and Stability).

Since the start of the pandemic in March of 2020, most of the focus of work has been on the *availability* of and *access* to food assistance. Looking forward into 2023 and beyond, the focus of the Food Security division will continue with work to ensure *availability* and *access* to assistance but will also expand to include the *utilization* of assistance and the *stability* of the food system in Northumberland. This work will continue to include examining the broader issues that impact food security and poverty reduction within Northumberland County and finding ways to alleviate some of the barriers that contribute to these issues.

As part of the 5-year phased timeline of activities which began in 2021, work will be done to ensure the full implementation of the new inventory management system in early 2023. This



will include working with local food banks, having them use the new inventory management system for ordering product from the warehouse. This new process will significantly reduce the time that is currently required to capture this same information.

In 2023, work will include creating new, leaner processes and workflows relating to the new inventory management software system. This will include working with the Community Services division's Data Analyst Coordinator to create and generate several new reports pertaining to the product that is being distributed through the warehouse.

Other work in 2023 will involve conducting an initial review of the current governance structure of the Food 4 All operation.

Further work on the 5-year phased timeline will continue in 2024 with the final review and implementation of potential new governance structure changes (based on the 2023 review), followed by the ongoing monitoring and review of the Food 4 All operation in 2025. This work will help to ensure the continued sustainability and positive impact of the Food 4 All operation and help to focus the work of Food Security Services in the coming years.

Economic Prosperity & Innovation

Volunteer Opportunities/Development

- Work will continue to provide new volunteer opportunities at the warehouse
- Continuing to develop the volunteer program including integrating the new volunteer coordinator position into the operation

Increase Local food Purchasing

- As healthier food options are always being sought out, continued efforts will be made to make these purchases from local producers/suppliers whenever possible

Sustainable Growth

Food Security/Community Services (Continued work under the 4 pillars of food security)

While work since the beginning of the pandemic has focused primarily on food access and availability, work will be intentionally directed back on plans made for 2022 including:

- Reexamining the ideas around the use of excess food items that are available at the warehouse (Access)
 - Working with the OAFVC to create simple items using existing excess ingredients, pancake mix as one example (carried over from 2022)



- Planning for this including viability, cost, risk, and growth potential will be determined in 2023 and will include opportunities to engage our warehouse members and individuals with lived experiences with the co-design of these potential new products
- Food waste (Availability)
 - Continue to work with local retailers including Post Brand Cereals (Weetabix), Walmart, Shoppers Drug Mart, and local farmers to pick up donated food items
 - Continue to look for new partnerships with other local retailers and farmers, to pick up additional food items for distribution to local feeding programs and diversion from local land fills
 - Continue to work with local partners including the food policy council and other local providers and businesses to make this a sustainable plan with the opportunity for future growth
- Outreach and Independence (Utilization)
 - Continue to develop outreach activities and plans to ensure that the most vulnerable people in our communities have access to food
 - We will work with our community partners to ensure that food and access to food is part of planning care and services in community programs
 - Partner with programs that promote healthy food and cooking (Porth Hope Northumberland Community Health Centre) to encourage the uptake and promotion of these programs

Staff/Volunteer Training & Development

- Ongoing monitoring of staffing and volunteer needs within the Food 4 All operation and develop a plan to determine how to best utilize current staff and volunteers
- Continue with development and training opportunities for staff and volunteers

Business Continuity Plan

- After beginning work on the BCP in 2019, the COVID situation expedited the need to have a more formalized plan in place. Lots of work has been done since the pandemic started.
- In 2023, the final version of the BCP, including all the new SOPs created during COVID will be completed.
- This will ensure minimal disruption to the service to members during emergency situations moving forward.
- Final version will include appropriate information from Feed Ontario's provincial BCP



Thriving & Inclusive Communities

Food Security/Community Services (Ongoing work under the 4 pillars of food security)

- Ensuring financial accountabilities for all donations that are received (Access)
- Working to maximize the use of excess food items that are available at the warehouse (Access)
- Food waste (Availability)
- Outreach and Independence (Utilization)
 - Continue to develop outreach activities and plans to ensure that the most vulnerable people in our communities have access to food
 - Continue to work with community partners to ensure that food and access to food is part of planning care and services in community programs
 - Continue to encourage case workers to ask people about food, to tell them about where to get food
 - Partner with the Port Hope Northumberland Community Health Center and other local programs that promote healthy food and cooking to encourage the uptake and promotion of these programs

Ongoing Community Development Plans

- Continue the “Moving from Good to Great” professional development program with our Food Banks Northumberland partners and their volunteers
- Continue to review and improve the Milk 4 Families program to determine need and impact
- Continue working with the Community Services data analyst coordinator to create reports using the Link2Feed hunger tracking software and the new inventory management software to help with decision making and planning for Food Security/Food 4 All
- Support where practical, the development of a municipal Poverty Reduction Strategy

Leadership in Change

Staff/Volunteer Training & Development

- Continue the training and development opportunities for both staff and volunteers including but not limited to:
 - First aid, Health & Safety, Safe Food Handling and Forklift Certification, and Mental Health First Aid



Revise/Update Warehouse Operational Policies

- With recent changes to the membership fee structure, addition of new inventory management software and related processes, significant updates will be required to reflect these changes in our operational policies in 2023
- New policy document will be kept as an electronic file to assist with ease of distribution and ease of updating.

Long Term Plan & Strategic Objectives

Work will continue working on the 5-year phased timeline that started in 2021 regarding the Food 4 All operation and food security.

Economic Prosperity & Innovation

Local food Purchasing/Investment

- Continue to use local producers/suppliers whenever possible for food purchases for the operation
- Continue work to source out new local suppliers for additional food purchases as required

Sustainable Growth

- Continue to operate as a distribution hub and member of Feed Ontario as a best practices warehouse operation for food and essential item distribution
- Continue to examine sustainable funding opportunities for the operation (grants, membership fee adjustments, online donations, etc.)
- Continue to research and implement updated processes and practices to streamline the overall operation and make it as LEAN as possible
- Review the membership fee model on an annual basis and utilize reports generated through the new inventory management software program to make any changes necessary to the fee structure based on product acquisition and distribution.

Thriving & Inclusive Communities

- Ongoing work will be done with our Community Services division focusing on the 4 pillars of food security
- Continue and expand “Moving from Good to Great” training and development program for local food banks and warehouse member programs



Leadership in Change

- Continue to enhance staff and volunteer roles that align with the County's strategic goals
- Continue to develop and enhance internal warehouse policies and procedures to ensure high customer service standards
- Continue to work with other Social Services division and other County departments wherever possible to enhance service delivery to community partner agencies

2023 Business Plan & Budget

Housing Services

The direction and strategic priorities of the Housing Services division continues to evolve to better reflect the strategic direction of the department and County, specifically focusing on the renewed 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan, the Northumberland County Affordable Housing Strategy and the forthcoming Community Housing Master Plan. Housing Services continues to strive to better address the needs of Northumberland County residents facing housing insecurity and remains committed to implementing a housing retention framework in the delivery of community housing. Housing Services continues to prioritize the development and implementation of key strategic planning initiatives to guide investments into the long-term maintenance of existing community housing stock alongside the creation of new affordable and community rental housing across the County.

Housing Services also leads the implementation of the purchased services agreement between the County and the Northumberland County Housing Corporation (NCHC). As the corporate officer, the Housing Services Manager leads this work with the support of the Housing Services team. This specific work is outlined in the annual reporting processes of the NCHC with the strategic vision outlined in the 2023-2027 NCHC Strategic Plan.

Prior Year Accomplishments

Economic Prosperity & Innovation

Northumberland County Affordable Housing Strategy

- Continued working with the Affordable Housing Strategy Implementation Working Group to network and share best practices in supporting affordable housing development across the County
- Continued implementation of incentive programs to support the creation of affordable rental housing stock in Northumberland County.
- Continued working with member municipalities to advance joint contribution templates for joint investment and administration of funding by the County.
- Worked with member municipalities with Affordable Housing Community Improvement Programs to support implementation.



- Continued to work to identify further sites for community, affordable and attainable housing to build a County land bank for future developments.

Sustainable Growth

Community Housing Master Plan

- Completed final drafts of the Plan, preparation to present to County Council, the NCHC Board of Directors and Community Housing Providers in early 2023.
- Initiated AssetPlanner for the NCHC portfolio for stronger capital planning and asset management initiatives, provided training for all housing providers on capital project planning using AssetPlanner.

Elgin Park Redevelopment

- Worked with the Major Capital Project Team to oversee the construction of phase 1 of Elgin Park, ensuring funding reporting requirements are met throughout the project.
- Supported tenants throughout the construction period, including initiating plans for rehousing in phase 1.
- Established processes and policies for the introduction and management of market rent units alongside expanded waitlist for subsidized housing units and modified units.
- Finalized CMHC Co-Investment Contribution Funding in the amount of \$2,400,000.

473 Ontario Street

- Worked with Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services, Habitat for Humanity Northumberland and the NCHC to advance pre-construction activities, including the initiation of architectural and engineering services alongside construction management at risk.
- Worked with project partners to advance the governance structure, including a pre-construction cost sharing agreement.

Capacity Support for Non-Profit and Co-operative Housing Providers

- Provided AssetPlanner and Capital Planning Training to Community Housing providers.
- Sought Housing Provider feedback on implementation of *Housing Services Act, 2011* regulation changes coming into effect in 2023.
- Supported housing providers with ongoing support for COVID-19 related expenses through SSRF 5 through to December 31, 2022.



- Supported housing providers maintain viability as they approach End of Operating Agreements/End of Mortgages to ensure sustainable community housing stock into the future.
- Declaration of Cobourg Non-Profit Housing Corporation as a Project-in-Difficulty as required under the *Housing Services Act, 2011*. Support the creation of a transitional board of directors and develop a workplan to support the provider in achieving financial viability and strong governance.

Community Housing Asset Management

- Based on initial findings of the Building Condition Audits, identified priority projects for year four allocations from Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative and Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative.

Support to the NCHC and implementation of the Purchased Services Agreement

- Continued to develop and implement internal processes to support the full implementation of the purchased services agreement between Northumberland County and the NCHC, including through the support of the development of the NCHC Strategic Asset Management Plan and Strategic Plan.
- Established standalone annual reporting processes for the NCHC in alignment with the NCHC Strategic Plan.

Housing Reserve Forecast and Planning

- Worked with the Finance Department to propose a new annual budget to support ongoing requirements to support the generation of additional affordable housing in Northumberland.

Thriving & Inclusive Communities

Social Infrastructure Fund

- Continued implementation of the provincially and federally funded Social Infrastructure Fund (SIF) Housing Allowance and Rent Supplement Programs. Continued planning for program wind-down including working with caseworkers and tenants to ensure smooth transition out of assistance.

Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative (COCHI) and Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI)

- Oversaw the completion of 2021/2022 projects.



- Continued the implementation of COCHI and OPHI provincial and federal funding in Northumberland County. Investments made in 2022 included:
 - Home repair projects through Renovate Northumberland, in partnership with Habitat for Humanity Northumberland.
 - Community Housing capital repair projects through OPHI and aligned with Building Condition Assessments (BCA) and AssetPlanner software.

Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) Implementation

- Continued implementing the COHB, including working with internal department stakeholders, community partners and the broader housing and homelessness systems to refer eligible households.
- Worked with Community Services Division to identify potential applicants through the Homelessness Coordinated Response Team (HCRT) to be considered for COHB.

Home Ownership Revolving Fund

- Provided down payment assistance to homeowners through Habitat for Humanity Northumberland using funds in the Home Ownership Revolving Fund.
- Continued planning with Habitat for Humanity Northumberland to support the longevity of this fund and supporting long-term home ownership affordability initiatives.

Expansion of Rent Supplement Programming

- Continued the expansion and implementation of the Made in Northumberland Rent Supplement Program, to support households on the centralized waitlist obtain rent-g geared-to-income (RGI) housing.
- Initiated new rent calculation methods to support more households receive rent supplements by shifting rent calculations for social assistance recipients to maximum shelter rates.

Creation of Intensive Housing Support Programming for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness

- With the collaboration of the Community Services Team, work to create and implement an intensive housing support programs using Homelessness Prevention Program funding that provides rent supplement funding and intensive case management.
- 152 Cockburn Street, Campbellford:
 - Worked with Facilities staff to progress construction through extensive renovations



- Secured required financing for the completion of this project, and developed operational budgets
- Identified and began discussions with a community agency to provide supportive housing services at this location.

Community Engagement/Partnerships

- Continued engagement with community agencies and key stakeholders on housing strategies, coordinated service delivery and seeking opportunities to promote community engagement within the NCHC community housing stock.
- Participated in local, regional and provincial networking and advocacy tables to address issues relating to housing.
- Continued to network and dialogue with agencies and developers on the need to create additional housing stock in Northumberland.

Leadership in Change

Implementation of Housing Retention Framework

- Continued the implementation of the housing retention model of community housing, including tools, training, and policies.
- Continued to educate and raise awareness within the broader community housing sector and seek opportunities to provide training and education on practicing and adhering to this framework.

Ten Year Housing and Homelessness Plan

- Completion of the 2022 Annual Report and submission to County Council and the ministry for approval as legislatively required.
- Continued dialogue with the Community Services Division to support the ongoing implementation of this plan.

Service Manager RGI Directives

- Advanced the review of all existing RGI directives and the introduction of new directives to ensure alignment with new provincial legislation and provide further clarity to all community housing providers and tenants.
- Provided training to community housing providers and County staff on new directives and legislation.

Implementation of Rent-Geared-to-Income Simplification, the Community Housing Renewal Strategy and Regulation changes



- Continued the implementation of RGI simplification as required by the province, which began on July 1, 2021. Continued to provide training and clarification to County staff and community housing providers.
- Continued collaborating with OMSSA and AMO on providing feedback and advocacy points on the provincial changes to housing strategy and policy.
- Worked with neighbouring service managers and the broader housing sector to work toward implementing regulation changes announced in 2022, including the forthcoming implementation of asset limits.

Long-term Capacity Planning

- In collaboration with the Customer Services Unit, work continued realignment of tasks to increase frontline capacity and align with current roles and responsibilities of all staff.
- Initiated process improvements with the Finance department to better support regular financial administrative processes for community housing providers.

Review of Housing Services File Management and Records Management Processes

- Completed historic and annual file destruction process to ensure hard copy files are compliant with records management requirements, including TOMRMs.
- Moved the Housing Services electronic drive to become TOMRMs compliant.

Business Continuity Planning

- Continued working with the Health and Safety/Emergency Planning department to support focusing on business continuity activities in the event of an emergency.
- Continued planning and developing minimum service standards to ensure ongoing operations during an emergency or unforeseen incident which may impact the ability of continued operations.

Professional Development for Frontline Staff

- Continued building on the department's professional development training series, training received by all Community and Social Services Staff included refreshers in Records Management/TOMRMS and Emergency Social Services.
- Housing Services Staff received training specific to their role to support their onboarding and ongoing strong customer service, staff received training in the areas of: calculating rent-gear-to-income, non-profit housing governance, effective leadership, and housing legislation review.

2023 Service Objectives & Initiatives

Economic Prosperity & Innovation

Northumberland County Affordable Housing Strategy

- Continue working with the Affordable Housing Strategy Implementation Working Group to create/expand municipal support for the creation of affordable and attainable housing.
- Develop a fulsome implementation plan, including establishing a set of realistic targets to support the strategy's aspirational targets.
- Continue the implementation, and review the effectiveness, of incentive programs to support the creation of affordable rental housing stock in Northumberland County.
- Continue working with member municipalities to finalize joint contribution templates for joint investment and administration of funding by the County.
- Work toward the creation of an affordable housing leadership table that supports the creation of affordable housing units and increasing affordability in our community.
- Consider options to create a pilot project that will support increasing the affordability for low- and moderate-income households more easily access the existing rental market.
- Work with the Department of Economic Development, Planning and Strategic Initiatives to continue supporting affordable and attainable housing strategic priorities.
- Continue working on land acquisition strategies to support the expansion of community housing, affordable and attainable housing throughout Northumberland.

Sustainable Growth

Social Housing Master Plan/NCHC Strategic Asset Management Plan

- Complete the final plans and present to County Council, the NCHC Board of Directors and Community Housing Providers.
- Develop a fulsome implementation plan for the Community Housing Master Plan to support the long-term viability of the community housing sector in Northumberland.

Elgin Park Redevelopment

- Working with the Major Capital Project Team, oversee the completed construction of phase 1 of Elgin Park, ensuring funding reporting requirements are met throughout the development.
- Support tenant relocation throughout the construction period, to allow for the demolition of Phase 2.



- Implement waitlist and application processes for the new units in Phase One, including modified units and market. Support occupancy and move in to Phase One upon completion of construction.

473 Ontario Street

- Continue pre-design work with Major Capital Projects and project partners, including the final scope of project, including net-zero viability.
- As a project team identify and complete opportunities for Indigenous Cultural Competency Training (ICCT).
- Work with project partners to identify and secure construction financing for the completion of the project.

Capacity Support for Community Housing Providers

- Complete operational reviews for non-profit and co-operative housing providers with safety protocols in place for COVID-19. Including building upon recommendations made by the HSC to implement improvements within the operational review process and templates.
- Implement the *Housing Services Act, 2011* changes to support providers at end of mortgage/agreement through the negotiation of new service agreements.
- Re-introduce and expand community housing provider training and networking to support a strong and collaborative community housing sector.
- Support the transitional Board of Directors of the Cobourg Non-Profit Housing Corporation to achieve viability of the corporation.

Community Housing Asset Management

- Based on final recommendations from the Community Housing Master Plan, explore opportunities to support strong asset management practices within the local community housing system including the NCHC, non-profit and co-operative housing providers.
- Consider opportunities to expand and develop programs and plans for the long-term management of the non-profit and co-operative housing provider budgets, specifically mortgage savings.

Support to the NCHC and implementation of the Purchased Services Agreement

- Continue to develop and implement internal processes to support the full implementation of the purchased services agreement between Northumberland County and the NCHC, including further cross-departmental education and training sessions.



- Continue providing training opportunities for key County staff supporting the NCHC to ensure services provided support housing retention framework.

Housing Reserve Forecast and Planning

- Work with the Finance Department to develop a strategy for the long-term management of the Housing Reserves that includes considerations for the long-term ability to support:
 - Pre-construction financing of affordable housing projects
 - Implementation of the Affordable Housing Strategy
 - Required studies, analyses, and contracted services to support County and Housing Services visions.

Thriving & Inclusive Communities

Social Infrastructure Fund

- Continue implementation of the provincially and federally funded Social Infrastructure Fund (SIF) Housing Allowance and Rent Supplement Programs.
- Continue planning and implementation for program wind-down (2023/2024) including working with caseworkers and clients to ensure smooth transition out of assistance.

Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative (COCHI) and Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI)

- Oversee the completion of 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 projects for low-income homeowners and community housing providers.
- Develop investment plan for 2023/2024 upon receipt of funding allocations from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) Implementation

- Upon receipt of the 2023/2024 allocation, continue implementing the COHB, including working with internal department stakeholders, community partners and the broader homelessness systems to provide input into the prioritization of applicants.

Home Ownership Revolving Fund

- Provide down payment assistance to homeowners through Habitat for Humanity Northumberland using funds in the Home Ownership Revolving Fund.
- Continue planning with Habitat for Humanity Northumberland to support the longevity of this fund and supporting long-term home ownership affordability initiatives.



Expansion of Rent Supplement Programming

- Continue the expansion and implementation the Made in Northumberland Rent Supplement Program, to support households on the centralized waitlist obtain rent-g geared-to-income (RGI) housing.
- Shift subsidy calculation processes for former Strong Communities Rent Supplement Program Recipients to support more households by considering max shelter rates for social assistance recipients.
- Assess the current rent supplement programming and processes to identify opportunities for improvement and expanding the program
- Consider landlord engagement and education opportunities to support the creation of additional affordable housing units (both new and through rent supplement).

Creation of Intensive Housing Support Programming for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness

- With the collaboration of the Community Services Team, work to create and implement an intensive housing support programs using Homelessness Prevention Program funding that provides rent supplement funding and intensive case management.
- 152 Cockburn Street, Campbellford:
 - Work with Facilities staff to complete construction through extensive renovations
 - Monitor and report on provincial funding to support the completion of this project, and developed operational budgets
 - Support the commencement of programming at this site with a community agency providing supportive housing services.

Community Engagement/Partnerships

- Continue engagement with community agencies and key stakeholders on housing strategies, coordinated service delivery and seeking opportunities to promote community engagement within the NCHC community housing stock.
- Participate in local, regional and provincial networking tables to address issues relating to housing.
- Continue to network and dialogue with agencies and developers on the need to create additional housing stock in Northumberland.
- Continue public education initiatives of affordable and attainable housing issues within the broader community as aligned with the Northumberland County Affordable Housing Strategy.

Indigenous Engagement



- Work toward increasing urban-Indigenous programming and services within Northumberland through partnering with urban Indigenous organizations.

Leadership in Change

Implementation of Housing Retention Framework

- Continue the implementation of the housing retention model of community housing, including developing tools, training, and policies.
- Continue to educate and raise awareness within the broader community housing sector and seek opportunities to provide training and education on practicing and adhering to this framework.

Ten Year Housing and Homelessness Plan

- Finalize the development of, and begin actioning, an implementation strategy including focus on data collection and securing support from key community agencies and their Board of Directors.
- Completion of the 2022 Annual Report and submission to County Council and the ministry for approval as legislatively required.

Service Manager RGI Directives and NCHC Policy Review

- Finalize the review of all existing RGI directives and the introduction of new directives to ensure alignment with new provincial legislation and provide further clarity to all community housing providers and tenants. Clarify delegated authority for the approval of specific directives and policies.
- Continue to provide training to community housing providers and County staff on new directives and legislation.

Implementation of *Housing Services Act, 2011* Regulation Changes and the Community Housing Renewal Strategy

- Continue the implementation of regulation changes required in 2023 including:
 - Creating and implementing an asset limit for all households in receipt of rent-geared-to-income or on the centralized waitlist.
 - Work with the Communications department to support the creation of a comprehensive access system for housing supports in Northumberland.
 - Reporting to the province on the revised service level standards.
 - Implement new community housing service agreements for providers who have reached or are reaching end of operating agreements/mortgages.



- Continue collaborating with provincial tables to provide feedback and advocacy on the provincial changes to housing strategy and policy.

Long-term Capacity Planning

- In collaboration with the Customer Services Unit, work to continue realignment of tasks to increase frontline capacity and align with current roles and responsibilities of all staff.
- With finance undertake a review of administrative costs to manage housing units in preparation for supporting the ongoing expansion of units.

Review of Housing Services and NCHC File Management and Records Management Processes

- Consideration of file location and storage options for expanding caseloads as a result of a growing waitlist, new housing developments, expansion of rent supplement programming and the introduction of market rental housing.
- Continue working towards achieving TOMRMS compliance across all housing and NCHC electronic and hard-copy files.
- Expand use of the NCHC electronic drive, across departments, to more effectively manage NCHC business.

Effective Case Management and Collaboration

- Continue to work toward the long-term goal of recommending minimum standards for case management through both policy and referral reviews.
- Identify efficiencies and consistent practices to ensure a clear standard of service for all individuals in receipt of services from Housing Services.

Implementation of a File Audit Function

- Implementation of a file audit function focusing on accountability, training, review of service gaps and identification of areas of improvement. The launch of this initiative has been delayed due to COVID-19 but is anticipated to launch in 2023.

Professional Development for Frontline Staff

- Continue building on the department's professional development training series, a focus will continue to be on customer service, the client experience, self-care and key functions of roles.
- Training opportunities will be prioritized that support both Housing Services staff and staff in other departments working toward a successful implementation of the Housing Retention Framework alongside supporting the NCHC Purchased Services Agreement.



Long Term Plan & Strategic Objectives

Economic Prosperity & Innovation

Northumberland County Affordable Housing Strategy

- Affordable rental stock in Northumberland County is increased. All Northumberland residents, particularly low- and moderate-income households, can access safe, affordable and adequate housing in their community.
- Collaborate with Member Municipalities to encourage private development of affordable housing, while raising awareness around the scope of planning and the role municipalities play in encouraging the creation of new affordable housing.
- Creation of a Table that brings together leaders throughout the County to plan for long-term opportunities to create new affordable housing stock and increasing the affordability of existing stock reflecting various needs throughout the County.

Sustainable Growth

Community Housing Master Plan

- Northumberland County is well positioned to respond to changing needs arising from the end of operating agreements and rent supplement funding, while maintaining service level standards.
- Through this Master Plan, revitalization opportunities to expand the social and affordable rental housing stock throughout Northumberland will be explored alongside the consideration of long-term viability of the portfolio.
- Community housing in Northumberland County is safe, affordable and adequate to meet the evolving needs of community members.
- Strengthen and build relationships with external housing providers to ensure strong accountability and planning is maintained. Strive towards positive landlord-tenant relationships that are mutually beneficial while moving towards an eviction prevention delivery of community housing.

Northumberland County Housing Corporation Asset Management Plan

- Ensure responsible long-term capital planning of community housing units and buildings operated by the NCHC.
- NCHC's portfolio matches the long-term needs of the County and is growing alongside the changing and expanding need of the community.

Community Housing Growth, Regeneration and Intensification



- The number of Rent Supplement units is increased throughout the County.
- Elgin Park Redevelopment is constructed and reaches full occupancy.
- 473 Ontario Street is developed with project partners and reaches full occupancy.
- Continue to build relationships with former federal housing providers and explore opportunities to collaborate.
- A landbank is developed to support the ongoing and future development of additional community housing and market rental units across the County.
- Potential community housing projects and 'shovel-ready' 'funding-ready' affordable housing projects are identified, and financing is sourced for the fulfillment of these projects.

County Support to the Northumberland County Housing Corporation

- The NCHC is governed by a strategic and skills-based Board of Directors that provides direction in line with the Shareholder Direction and governing documents.
- The Purchased Services Agreement is successfully managed and implemented by County staff.
- The NCHC's Strategic Plan is implemented and the NCHC is seen as a best-practice leader in community housing development.

Housing Reserve Forecast and Planning

- Strategy in place for the long-term management of the Housing Reserves that includes:
 - Pre-construction financing of affordable housing projects
 - Implementation of the Affordable Housing Strategy
 - Ability to completed required studies, analyses, and contracted services to support County and Housing Services visions.
- Reinvestment strategies into the Reserve Account are established and actioned on an ongoing/long-term basis.

Thriving & Inclusive Communities

Indigenous Engagement

- Indigenous people living in Northumberland County have access to safe, culturally competent, and relevant mainstream and Indigenous-specific supports.
- Community and Social Services staff and external partner agencies are trained in Indigenous Cultural Competency Training and are providing culturally competent services.

Ten Year Housing and Homelessness Plan



- Develop new, and nurture existing, partnerships and relationships to better support the availability of supportive resources to tenants and clients engaged with community housing in the County.
- Through community partnerships, work to meet the changing needs of the community and align with objectives, outcomes, and targets of the plan.

Leadership in Change

Implementation of Housing Retention Based Community Housing

- Community housing in Northumberland County is administered, delivered, and supported using a housing retention model ensuring that prospective tenants and current tenants have access to strong case management services and have needed supports to have a successful tenancy.
- When tenants are evicted from the NCHC, they have been provided with adequate case management and support ahead of the eviction, they have been given the option to relate to other homelessness prevention services.

Long-term Sustainability of Northumberland County Housing Corporation and Housing Services

- Business continuity planning has occurred and both the NCHC and Housing Services are well positioned to respond to changing provincial and federal policy, legislation and funding.
- Policies are developed and reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure housing retention frameworks are implemented. Processes are developed to support the NCHC Purchased Services Agreement by Housing Services and support departments.

2023 Issue Paper

Affordable Housing Growth Budget

Purpose

The purpose of this request is to establish a dedicated budget to support the strategies outlined in the Affordable Housing Strategy, Northumberland County Housing Corporation's (NCHC) Strategic Plan, the Community Housing Master Plan and the NCHC Strategic Asset Management Plan, through an annual reallocation of \$50,000 from the Housing Reserves.

This budget would be used to support preliminary investigation of possible land acquisitions, including appraisals, legal fees and pro-forma analyses. This budget could also be used to support specific projects and activities related to supporting the growth of rental housing in Northumberland County.

Background

Northumberland County continues to work to increase efforts to expand affordable rental stock in Northumberland. The need for increased rental stock in our community is stark. In Northumberland:

- The average market rent in Northumberland for a one-bedroom unit is more expensive than neighbouring communities, including the City of Peterborough, the City of Kawartha Lakes, Hastings County, the City of Kingston and the region of Durham.
- The year-to-date average house resale price as of June 2022, was nearly \$1,000,000. This is unaffordable to all households in Northumberland except for the top decile of income earners.
- The waitlist for social housing continues to be 10 years in some communities and has grown more than 260% in the last 10 years, with over 1,000 households on the waitlist.
- The vacancy rate remains low and there have been limited new primary market rent units built since 2016.
- As of November 2021, the living wage for Northumberland County was \$18.80. This means that a single earner household earning a living wage in Northumberland County is unable to afford any rental unit at the CMHC AMR regardless of unit size.



In effort to increase stock, Northumberland County has initiated a series of initiatives aimed at supporting private and non-profit developers to create rental stock including the launch of the Affordable Housing Capital Grant Program which commits to the creation of 50 new affordable units through capital grants of up to \$20,000 per unit, in addition to consideration of other municipally funded incentives, including Tax Increment Equivalent Grants (TIEGs) and Development Charge Rebates.

Northumberland County has also worked to increase the number of units that provide some level of affordability. This has been achieved through the ongoing expansion of the Made in Northumberland Rent Supplement Program, retaining 50% of affordable units created with municipally-funded incentives for rent supplements, and the continuation of the Strong Community Rent Supplement Program after program expiry on March 31, 2023 through municipal levy funding.

Northumberland County, partnering with the NCHC continues to seek opportunities to grow the NCHC's portfolio through the development of new units throughout the County. To date, two projects have been announced: Elgin Park Redevelopment and 473 Ontario Street, both in Cobourg. County staff continue to aggressively seek opportunities for land acquisition through surplus land, private market searches and other avenues, with the goal of developing shovel-ready/funding-ready projects throughout Northumberland.

The growth of the NCHC stock and landbanking practices is supported in the County's strategic direction as outlined in the Affordable Housing Strategy, 10 year Housing and Homelessness Plan, and the Community Housing Master Plan. This is also supported by the strategic direction of the NCHC as outlined in the NCHC's 5 Year Strategic Plan and the NCHC Strategic Asset Management Plan.

At present, the County has acted as the lead in the purchase, acquisition and due diligence on potential sites as stewards responsible for the Housing Reserve that funds these initiatives. After the acquisition of the land, and initial development activities the land is then transferred to the NCHC.

This issue paper is requesting the creation of a dedicated budget for the priority of growing community housing stock and developing a landbank of shovel-ready/funding-ready sites for future development of community housing. With an annual budget of \$50,000, County staff will be able to continue to identify and action possible development opportunities in a timely manner that matches the need for timely decisions when acquiring real estate. This fund will support the initial investigation into a site, this will not be able to fund the full due diligence required prior to finalizing a possible acquisition.



Consultation/Options

Two options have been considered for the establishment of a dedicated budget for the priority of growing community housing stock. The first option proposes creating this budget through using levy dollars, with an annual new levy impact of \$50,000. The benefits of this option include the preservation of the Housing Reserves that will be required to purchase land, complete more comprehensive due diligence, and continue the provision of municipally funded incentives for developers of affordable rental housing.

The second and recommended option proposes an annual reallocation from the Housing Reserves of \$50,000 to fund this budget with any surplus returning to the Housing Reserves at the end of each fiscal year. The benefits of this option is no new levy impact in the immediate future. The risks associated with this option are the potential to eventually overspend the Housing Reserves based on the extensive commitments and purposes for this Reserve over the next several years.

The proposed options recommends the continued investment from the Housing Reserves in a manner that is supportive of its purpose and intent. However, there will be a requirement that the Housing Reserves is reviewed to determine opportunities for further reinvestments into this important Reserve account.

Financial Impact

There are no new levy impacts associated with this issue paper.

The financial impacts associated with this issue paper are associated with the Housing Reserve. The Housing Reserve is intended to be primarily supporting the growth of affordable housing in Northumberland with a secondary focus of supporting existing housing providers maintain affordability. The annual impact to the Housing Reserves will be \$50,000.

The current balance of the Housing Reserves, as of June 2022, is approximately \$7,000,000. Included in this balance are committed contributions of approximately \$2,000,000. These commitments include the \$1,000,000 for the Capital Grant Programs, committed TIEGs, support for Elgin Park Redevelopment, and pre-construction costs of 473 Ontario Street (some of which will be repayable by project partners). As a result, the Housing Reserves has an available balance of approximately \$5,000,000 to support future projects.

Staff will bring forward a future proposal for County Council's consideration for the need to begin regular reinvestments into the Housing Reserves to support the longevity of this Reserve for future developments, particularly with the increasing cost of land and other services.



Risk Considerations

Risk has been considered throughout this report, and has been demonstrated through the recommended approach of drawing upon Housing Reserves to balance the need for this funding with the total impact to the levy funding.

County staff will continue to engage in a Housing Reserve Forecast and Planning and report to Council on options for the long-term maintenance of this reserve account to be able to fully support the future needs for growing and maintaining community housing in Northumberland.

Impacts to Member Municipalities/Partners

This request will allow the County to respond nimbly and expediently to support acquisition of future sites of affordable housing. This will support member municipalities and partners in the initial research/review of potential sites for affordable housing growth.

Included in 2022 Long Term Plan: YES/NO

No – however the need to consider a more viable funding source for initial investigation of housing properties supports several County strategic directions and priorities through a focus on growing a shovel-ready/funding-ready landbank.

2023 Issue Paper

Continuation of ‘Made in Northumberland’ Rent Supplement Program

Purpose

This is a request to continue the incremental expansion of the County-funded ‘Made in Northumberland’ rent supplement program as committed in the last three annual budgets.

It is recommended that the program continue to be guided by the Northumberland County Affordable Housing Strategy and its aspirational targets.

Background

Since 2010, the number of households on the centralized waitlist (CWL) has grown by more than 260% and for some households the wait is over 10 years for a subsidized unit. While Northumberland County is encouraging the creation of new rental developments and the expansion of the existing Northumberland County Housing Corporation (NCHC) community housing stock, rent supplement programming should be continued and expanded where possible. Rent Supplement provides the opportunity for Northumberland County to increase the number of households that are able to receive RGI in private market rent settings that can complement the need to increase housing stock, particularly for households already residing in reasonable priced rental units.

Northumberland County has a legislative requirement to meet established service level standards (SLS) set by the Province. The SLS represent the number of qualified households in receipt of rent-geared-to-income (RGI) or a designated portable housing benefit that the County is required to administer. The SLS were established at the time of social housing download from the Province to municipalities and were intended to reflect the number of units transferred to the County. Northumberland County’s SLS are found in *O. Reg. 367/11 Schedule 4*, the specific targets for the County are:

- 677 Households at or below household income limits
- 377 high need households
- 22 modified units



Northumberland County, like many other service managers are unable to meet the SLS and has begun to increase units through the creation of a county-funded rent supplement program in 2020. In addition, it is understood that the SLS are minimum level of service and in fact, the need for additional affordable rental housing is far greater than the 2019 Northumberland County Affordable Housing Strategy indicated at least 90 units would need to be created each year for the next 10 years to meet the housing needs in Northumberland.

In 2020, County Council approved the creation of a 'Made in Northumberland' Rent Supplement Program that incrementally increases rent supplement units in the County on an annual basis, beginning with an allocation of \$16,000 in 2020, with an annual increase tied to the provincially released market rent increases (this has been set at 2.5% in 2023). It was initially anticipated that this allocation would allow for the funding of 2 rent supplement units each year. However, this funding has been able to be stretched to support a total of 7 households to achieve housing affordability through receiving rent-geared-to-income and as a result have been removed from the centralized waitlist. At time of writing this issue paper, County staff are actively seeking another 1-2 units and households to support with this funding. It is anticipated that this funding will be fully allocated in 2022.

Consultation/Options

During the budget and business planning cycle ongoing consultations with the Director of Community and Social Services, Department of Finance and the CAO have occurred. In addition, the broader service manager network continues to be consulted to understand best practices.

Other options considered included not expanding rent supplement program in Northumberland County. This option would not provide an incremental supportive option to meeting SLS or affordable housing targets as per the Northumberland County Affordable Housing Strategy.

The proposed option of continuing to incrementally increase the 'Made in Northumberland' Rent Supplement program is well positioned to support Northumberland County's requirements to meet or exceed the legislated SLS. In addition, this proposal supports the Northumberland County Affordable Housing Strategy goal of creating new affordable rental housing stock that is affordable to households in the first and second income deciles.

Financial Impact

The financial impact of growing rent supplement programming in Northumberland County is substantial. In order to continue the implementation of the 'Made in Northumberland' Rent Supplement Program as considered since the 2020 budget process, the impact to the 2023 budget is \$16,000, in addition to the provincially mandated market rent increase (in 2023 this rate has been set at 2.5%).



With this investment, Northumberland County can secure at least 2 units of affordable housing for households on the centralized waitlist. The 2.5% increase required for the existing \$48,000 budget represents a potential increase for the existing program units of \$1,200.

It is also recommended that the number of rent supplement units in this program continue to be incrementally increased by approximately 2 units (\$16,000) annually dependent on future years budgetary approvals.

It is recommended that the 'Made in Northumberland' Rent Supplement Program budget continue to be increased annually to reflect the market rent increase guideline established by the provincial government. It is further recommended that all year-end surpluses in rent supplement programming continue be transferred to the Non-Profit and Service Level Standard Reserve Account.

Risk Considerations

Risk has been considered throughout the development of the proposed 'Made in Northumberland' Rent Supplement Program. The risk associated with not expanding rent supplement programming in Northumberland is that Northumberland County will continue to be challenged in meeting its minimum SLS.

With a commitment to continue an incremental increase to the 'Made in Northumberland' Rent Supplement Program, Northumberland County will signal its support of the Northumberland County Affordable Housing Strategy and will be able to better serve households on the centralized waitlist for community housing, while also slowly building capacity to begin meeting and/or exceeding the SLS.

Impacts to Member Municipalities/Partners

At present, rent supplement units are located in three of seven municipalities. The creation of the 'Made in Northumberland' Rent Supplement Program will support low income residents throughout the County. Program units will continue to be sought across the County based on available market rental units.

Included in 2020 Long Term Plan: YES/NO

Yes – following County Council's decision in 2020 to begin the incremental increase of the Made in Northumberland Rent Supplement program, this annual increase has been included in the long-term budget.

2023 Business Plan & Budget

Ontario Works & Customer Service Unit

Prior Year Accomplishments

Thriving & Inclusive Communities

In 2019, the former Ministry of Training, Colleges & Universities (now under the direction of the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training & Skills Development or MLITSD) and the Ministry of Children, Community & Social Services (MCCSS) announced the transformation of Employment Services across the province with three prototype regions. Northumberland County is part of an Employment Services Transformation (EST) prototype region that includes the City and County of Peterborough, the City of Kawartha Lakes, the County of Haliburton, and the District of Muskoka (Muskoka-Kawarthas region), under Fleming College. The full transition of Employment Services in Northumberland County commenced January 1, 2021.

The Ontario Works division has been an active participant in various committees and sub-groups with the Ministry of Children, Community & Social Services (MCCSS), as it relates to modernization and the transition to stability supports. In the second full year of the transition, this year has been spent continuing to make new referrals to the Service System Manager responsible for the delivery of employment services, while social assistance recipients requiring more community-based services and referrals continue to work with their Ontario Works Caseworker. In addition, the Ontario Works division continues to receive referrals from the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) for Non-Disabled Adults to provide additional supports and resources to support their goals towards independence and employment.

In 2022, the return to hybrid program delivery continued with many of the Employment Ontario and other training sites reopening their doors to in-person service. Combined with the strong labour market, many potential clients have been able to transition from the federal relief benefits back into employment. With the federal relief benefits coming to an end in late 2021, the Ontario Works caseload has increased by approximately 24% (as of May 31, 2022) over the 2021 average. However, the caseload remains 18% below the 2019 (pre-pandemic) caseload average. It is anticipated that the caseload will increase through 2023 and stabilize in 2024.

In February 2021, the MCCSS launched the Social Assistance Recovery and Renewal Plan, later rebranded as the Social Assistance Renewal Plan. This plan is a multi-year phased approach to



enhancing the current system to be more responsive to client needs, while ensuring it remains modern and sustainable. The plan includes realigning the current service delivery model to allow municipal caseworkers to focus on client services and the connection to the community, while the Ministry would be responsible for overseeing the access and issuance of financial assistance. In addition, the plan recognizes the Municipality's experience as a community connector, with a vision of stability support services for both Ontario Works and ODSP clients being administered at the municipal level. A long-term vision includes the ability for caseworkers to engage and intervene with clients in crisis before they access Social Assistance, to help them stay employed, housed and safe before they need to turn (or return) to social assistance. The long-term vision includes reference to a more integrated Human Services model, that would incorporate municipally delivered services such as housing and childcare. While there has been a pause on the co-design phase of this plan, it is anticipated to resume in the fall of 2022.

In February 2021, Northumberland County joined the Centralized Intake Prototype, where Ontario Works applications are approved through a centralized and automated process, freeing up time for caseworkers to focus on supporting clients in addressing their goals on their pathway to employment and independence. At the time of preparing this Business Plan, approximately 80% of the applications for Ontario Works financial assistance are now being started through the Centralized Team, with 45% of all applications sent to our office fully granted. It is anticipated that eventually approximately 70% of applications for Ontario Works financial assistance will be fully processed by the Centralized Team, freeing up time for the caseworkers to identify and address goals and barriers for clients. While still in the prototype phase, there have been challenges and opportunities for improvement. Through regular engagement with the Centralized Project Team, we are providing feedback towards an improved and streamlined system. Both EST and Centralized Intake Prototypes are included in the first phase of the Renewal Plan.

As of June 30, 2022, approximately 55% of our active caseload is registered for MyBenefits, an online portal for Social Assistance recipients to access information and report changes on their file. Through the summer of 2022, we were able to dedicate our Summer Student to making direct calls to clients to discuss the benefits of the portal and assist with the registration process. Caseworkers continue to encourage increased registration and use of the messaging service. The use of this portal will:

- reduce the impact of a staff absence, as any Ontario Works staff member would be able to view and respond to a message sent by a client.
- documents that are attached can remain digital, reducing the requirement to print and retain on file.
- reduction in potential data breach as the communication is secured to the client's unique electronic file; and



- retention period is established and maintained by the Ministry.

In addition to the two-way messaging service offered to Ontario Works recipients via MyBenefits, clients continue to have the option of connecting with their Caseworker via ConnectSMS, a text messaging platform created by Local Text Marketers that the Community & Social Services Department has utilized since 2018. This platform also allows for general inquiry text messages from residents and clients not currently receiving services through our department. General inquiry text messages received via ConnectSMS are checked and responded to by Customer Service Unit (CSU) staff.

Electronic Document Management (EDM) is another project that we continue to work towards launching. In 2021 it was determined that a full review of document retention on files needs to be considered and planned for in advance, to ensure the costs to be reasonable and to ensure appropriate documents are maintained in the digital format. A Lean yellow belt project was completed in the Winter/Spring of 2022 using trained department staff to identify efficiencies and process mapping to complete this project. This project identified key areas requiring attention, further training for staff and development of standards that continue to be implemented in 2022. It is anticipated that the remainder of the work to launch the EDM project will be completed using Lean tools and methods, with skills and expertise from our internal department staff. We continue to explore opportunities to launch this service using in-house services to further reduce costs associated with the initiative. It is anticipated that this initiative will carry over into 2023-2024.

Community & Social Services continues to operate the Service Locations located in Brighton, and Campbellford to meet with clients in their home community. The Community Service Locations are also used by many non-profit agencies and service providers at no cost to the agency to further serve our communities. While the pandemic has restricted our ability to meet off-site, we are beginning to return to in-person service and will continue to utilize this resource space to support residents accessing services. Tracking on non-profit membership and usage for 2019 and 2020 has been completed by the Customer Service Unit and will continue to be reported on upon usage of the locations in 2022 and 2023.

Utilizing stability supports funding through MCCSS, the Trusteeship program continued through Rebound Child & Youth Services. The service continues to provide financial support and coaching for individuals and families served through the Social Services department who have identified struggles with budgeting and specifically the youth under the age of 18 years (as mandated under the *Ontario Works Act*). The Trustee representative from Rebound Child & Youth Services is a member of the Homelessness Co-Ordinated Response Team (HCRT).

In 2022, the Ontario Works program collaborated with the EarlyON centres to deliver a virtual engagement session for families with children under the age of 6 to connect with broader



supports through EarlyON. Participants in the program are provided with resources kits intended to support the child and the family on their journey together. The kits include books and other tools, as well as personal hygiene items for the entire family. The program outcomes are intended to foster an environment of sharing and connection to resources to support the family unit to thrive and grow. In addition, the OW Program collaborated with the Early Years team on a workforce development initiative to provide sector introductions and on-the-job hands-on experience in the Early Years sector. The first intake commenced in July 2022, with a second intake anticipated for the fall of 2022.

To assist all members of Northumberland County to obtain resources that may be available to them through the various federal programs, funding was provided through Ontario Works stability supports programming to the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program delivered by the Help Centre of Northumberland. In 2021, the program assisted in the completion of 1,449 income tax returns, returning approximately \$3.45 million to residents of Northumberland County. As of the end of June 2022, 1,132 tax returns have been completed, returning approximately \$3.4 million to residents of Northumberland County.

The Customer Service Unit continues to provide the administrative infrastructure to ensure that all Community & Social Services programs can provide services, while continuing to grow and improve the delivery of mandatory and discretionary services. The team continues to be the first point of contact with the public, whether by phone, in-person at reception, by text or email.

Leadership in Change

In July 2021, the Customer Service Unit with the support of the Information Technology department launched an Automated Call Distribution (ACD) Phone Queue system to handle calls from the community requesting services, including applications for Ontario Works benefits, Community Outreach and applications for Social Housing. In the first full year of the launch, the Queue system has allowed for more streamlined service delivery with fewer call-backs required and quicker service and referrals for those accessing services. This project continues to be piloted with five team members, the Customer Service Unit Supervisor and four department managers.

As a division that serves the residents of Northumberland County in both ongoing financial assistance and in events of emergency situations, it is important that planning focusses on business continuity in the event of emergency circumstances. Continuity planning had begun with the Health & Safety/Emergency Planning department in late 2019 and early 2020. The Global Pandemic has tested our planning and demonstrated the gaps that needed to be filled. While not finalized in 2022, Business Continuity planning is well underway and will continue into 2023.



Video conference technology was installed in two meeting rooms within the Social Services department in 2022. This upgraded technology will allow staff members and teams to participate in virtual or hybrid meetings and training together in a collaborative workspace.

In the fall of 2022, staff will participate in Basic Emergency Management (BEM) and Emergency Social Services (ESS) refresher training, facilitated by the Health & Safety and Emergency Planning Department. Following the completion of these refresher, we will review opportunities to provide practical hands-on experience for staff to prepare and practice their skills. In addition, staff will also participate in a refresher/introductory training on Records Management, facilitated by the Information Management Coordinator.

Learning and Development opportunities in 2022 have continued to be delivered in a virtual setting. Throughout the year, staff have taken advantage of opportunities through both the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association and through webinars and online learning purchased through Corporate Services. We continue to review opportunities for staff to participate in various learning and development opportunities, in various formats to support individual learning styles.

The Ontario Works division collaborated with other department resources to build and maintain appropriate data sources that will support future programming. While still in its infancy, we continue to share information and learn of new methods of tracking data that is relevant to the department and the community that we serve, to continue to inform evidence-based planning. The Customer Service Unit will continue to support all Divisions in the collection of their key metrics, to ensure that data is posted on the County website as well as C&SS Facebook page, where deemed relevant.

2023 Service Objectives & Initiatives

Thriving & Inclusive Communities

In early 2023, the renewed operating model and detailed co-design for the Social Assistance Recovery & Renewal strategy should be completed. It is expected that we will continue to shift towards a centralized provincial delivery of administration functions, with municipal functions focusing on life stabilization supports for all Social Assistance recipients. We will continue to participate in stakeholder engagement, share resources with staff and members of Council and ensure alignment of service delivery locally to prepare for the change. We will also continue to review our staffing model to ensure we are able to deliver high-impact client facing services.

The Employment Services Transformation (EST) prototype will continue in 2023 for Northumberland County. It is expected by late 2022, that additional municipalities will be joining Phase 1 of EST. We will continue to provide feedback on the implementation and ensure



that Social Assistance recipients are receiving appropriate referrals to the Service System Manager. Recipients who are not ready to work with a provider, or who are completing basic education/upgrading, will continue to work with an Ontario Works caseworker, developing an Action Plan with identified goals and objectives. Financial supports will continue to be available to recipients to achieve their goals.

In alignment with the Provincial Renewal Plan, we will continue to explore opportunities to deliver streamlined services using digital tools including:

- paperless service delivery.
- digital signature for Ministry documents and forms.
- promotion of online tools including MyBenefits and digital messaging.
- promotion of electronic payment methods for both clients and vendors; and
- use of the Social Assistance Management System (SAMS) for all payments, reducing the impact on internal financial reconciliation.

Through a collaborative approach, the Ontario Works Manager together with the Community Services Manager will begin reviewing opportunities to support consistent case management approaches for both the Ontario Works and Community Services divisions. This approach will align with the delivery of stability supports and will focus on developing consistent delivery standards for financial and counselling supports by case workers, within the broader Community & Social Services department. By developing a “Northumberland-approach” to responding to emerging issues or trends within our community through the existing capacity of caseworker staff. We will align the approach with the Social Assistance Renewal Plan and Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan (CSWB).

With the shift from employment to stability supports in the prototype regions, participation in academic upgrading and the Learning, Earning & Parenting (LEAP) program will remain with Ontario Works. The collaborative program with the EarlyON Centres will continue in 2023 through a hybrid model, incorporating both virtual and in-person programming supports. This will be open to LEAP participants and other interested Ontario Works participants. In addition, we will begin to look for opportunities to incorporate Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) participants into this programming.

In addition to the above listed digital solutions, planning for the implementation of Electronic Document Management (EDM) for active Ontario Works files is underway, with an anticipated launch in late 2023 to early 2024. Electronic Document Management allows for the imaging and electronic storage and retrieval of required Social Assistance recipient documentation. This will improve the user experience for both staff and the people we serve, promote administrative efficiencies and process optimization through digitization of paper into digital records accessible through the Social Assistance Management System (SAMS). This project will align



with Lean management principles. The Customer Service Unit will be integral to the successful launch of this process.

As these changes are occurring, stakeholders in this change, including front-line Ontario Works staff will be engaged and will help shape the implementation and roll-out to the people that are to be served.

Leadership in Change

Learning and development opportunities will continue to be offered to staff within the department to further enhance the skill set in providing quality customer service and case management planning. With anticipated changes to program delivery and potential legislative changes, there will be a focus on providing staff with opportunities to learn and understand what the new role will be. Continuing with previous Professional Development plans for the department, a focus will continue to be on customer service, the client experience, self-care, and emergency response as it relates to Social Services. In 2023 we will be supporting the completion of Mental Health First Aid training for all Community & Social Services staff. Both in-person and virtual learning will be considered in 2023. The Customer Service Unit will continue to provide support in scheduling and managing attendance for future training initiatives.

In addition to sector specific training, corporate training initiatives for staff, including Lean management, records management (including information privacy and security), and health and safety, will continue to be promoted and supported.

Business Continuity planning for the Ontario Works division, alongside the Community & Social Services department as a whole, will continue in 2023. This planning will include a review of the divisional level response to COVID19, as well as a detailed review of minimum service standards in the event of an emergency. Current plans will be updated to address technical solutions that were implemented over the last three years, and to provide awareness for staff of the requirements during an emergency.

The local Ontario Works file audit process, while delayed over the previous two years, will continue to be refined in 2023. It is anticipated that the Audit review will be completed monthly and include 1% of the Ontario Works ongoing caseload, selected using the Integrated Case Report provided through the Social Assistance Management System (SAMS) monthly. The focus of the audit will be on quality and compliance with legislative rules and document retention standards. The Audit will be separate from the Ministry-mandated Eligibility Verification Process (EVP) that is currently conducted by the Ontario Works Caseworkers with a focus on financial eligibility.



The Ontario Works division will continue to work collaboratively with other department resources to build and maintain appropriate data sources that will support future programming and operational needs. This will include determining metrics and streamlining collection methods to provide demographic information that will inform evidence-based planning.

In 2023, the Customer Service Unit will continue to modernize and improve customer service, with the goal of enhancing the client experience and supporting all divisions. Knowledge transfer will be encouraged amongst this work unit to ensure continuity in front and back-end services. In addition to this, the Customer Service Unit will continue to consider enhancements to the ACD Phone Queue, ensuring that following the pilot period of this initiative, that consideration be given to further changes or enhancements that may be required to ensure the best customer service possible.

Long Term Plan & Strategic Objectives

Thriving & Inclusive Communities

Through collaboration with other divisions within the department and the greater community, a continued focus on supporting improved outcomes for clients through stability supports:

- Following up with all changes through the Employment Services Transformation, Centralized Intake, and other activities relating to the delivery of Ontario Works.
- Following up with all changes through the Social Assistance Renewal Plan.
- Continued implementation of digital solutions to streamline delivery to clients.
- Enhancing and expanding services throughout the community, specifically through use of Community Service Locations.
- Building partnerships and utilization of EarlyON Centres and resources.
- Reviewing opportunities surrounding the continued operation of the trusteeship program.
- Building greater connections for clients who are experiencing homelessness to community programs; and
- Optimizing the Social Services facilities and service locations to be more inviting and client-centred, including safety, technology, and infrastructure improvements.

Leadership in Change

The continued viability of the Ontario Works program is dependent on Ministry plans and objectives. Locally, continued monitoring and planning to ensure quality customer service and realization of full provincial funding is completed.

In addition, the Ontario Works division & Customer Service Unit will continue to:



- Build internal capacity through learning and sharing opportunities across the division and department.
- Review and discuss client-centred case management models in a collaborative environment.
- Find efficiencies utilizing Lean approaches to examine internal processes to meet targets and outcomes.
- Continue to review our staffing model to ensure focus on high impact client facing services.
- Build on the Corporate People Plan to support staff in learning and development opportunities while ensuring continuity in service delivery.

Northumberland County Housing Corporation 2023 Business Plan

The strategic priorities of the Northumberland County Housing Corporation (NCHC) are guided by the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan and align to the corporate vision, mission, and values. The direction of the NCHC continues to evolve and grow to meet the needs in the community and serve Northumberland County's strategic priorities and plans.

The NCHC regularly assesses its progress in implementing the strategic priorities outlined in the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan. The Officer provides quarterly updates to the Board on Strategic Plan progress, on an annual basis the NCHC releases an Annual Report that is shared with County Council as shareholder, and the broader community. The annual business plan is completed as part of the annual budget process and will establish implementation objectives for the coming year. Over 2023, the NCHC will strive to make progress in the following areas:

Improve Tenant Experience

Objective 1.1. Tenancies are well management and vulnerable tenants have successful tenancies

- Formal adoption of the Eviction Prevention Policies.
- Tenant lease updated to include mandatory tenant insurance.
- Continue developing relationships and partnerships with community organizations to support people at risk of homelessness to remain housed.

Objective 1.2. Promote equity, diversity and inclusions and raise awareness to inform and enhance services

- Develop training plan to support the NCHC Board of Directors and key staff to support decision making and delivery of programming grounded in equity, diversity and inclusion.
- Consider required resources to support the implementation of this advisor and identify funding strategy for this work.

Objective 1.3. Tenants are engaged and receive timely and proactive communications

- Finalize standard operating procedure for the display of information on Electronic Messaging Boards.
- Develop a tenant communications protocol establishing clear standards for proactive communications on matters that impact tenants that will apply across the Corporation.

Objective 1.4. Promote tenant engagement and participation activities

- Develop and implement a fulsome tenant relation program schedule across all communities.
- Seek tenant feedback on the type of tenant relations activities that are needed through informal feedback from programming participants.
- Provide more information on community activities using expanded communication channels including electronic messaging boards.

Objective 1.5. Provide quality housing and customer service

- Finalize and implement the application process for market rent units at Elgin Park and accessible units.
- Continue to implement legislative changes to rent-geared-to-income, including RGI simplification and asset limits while supporting tenants.
- Initiate the development of service level standards for customer service, including in areas such as response times, tenant relations, after hours services, case notes/documentation, etc.
- Support tenants through technological changes to services, including banking options and automated laundry systems.

Expand and Grow the NCHC Portfolio

Objective 2.1. Revitalization, renewal and implementation of new development

- Support tenants in relocation from Phase 2, Elgin Park to permanent housing options.

Objective 2.2. Leverage funding, financing and partnership opportunities to provide more homes

- Continue development work of 473 Ontario Street with project partners, including pre-construction work through design activities.
- Continue working with the County and member municipalities to identify future sites for NCHC growth across the County.
- Work toward identifying an additional site to develop a shovel-ready, funding-ready project for NCHC growth.
- Support provincial advocacy efforts to increase understanding of the local housing corporation model and the important role we play in our local communities.

Objective 2.3. Explore tools and mechanisms that will position NCHC to grow

- With Northumberland County Finance Department initiate the creation of a capital reserve strategy, as according to the County's corporate reserve policy to support NCHC new developments.

Extend and Improve the Useful Life of NCHC Assets

Objective 3.1. Development of a Strategic Asset Management Plan

- Adopt the Strategic Asset Management Plan for the NCHC as part of the County's Community Housing Master Plan.
- Review the 10-year capital plan with Building Condition Audit data to confirm maintenance priorities over the next several years.

Objective 3.2. Improve housing conditions to support health and wellbeing

- Begin implementing the use of AssetPlanner technology to update, track and monitor the state of capital repair.
- Continue to implement the annual capital plan as outlined in the 10-year capital plan and BCA data.
- Continue implementing the policy for Unit Turnover to ensure ongoing condition of unit renovations.

Objective 3.3. Improve standard and delivery of maintenance services

- Initiate the development a full Standard Operating Procedure Manual for Facilities Management.
- Establish reporting processes to demonstrate budget savings/cost reductions as a result of the 2021 Facilities Department request for additional staff.
- Provide cross-departmental training to Facilities and Housing teams to support responses on site, including specific training for Facilities staff on issues relating to housing matters and supports required by tenants.

Strengthen Governance

Objective 4.1. Demonstrate to the County and public what we are doing to manage the NCHC and its operating

- Initiate the implementation of the 2023-2025 strategic plan and adhere to reporting requirements within the plan.

- Begin working with the County's Communication department to develop a strategy for reporting and communicating progress and achievements within the strategic plan.

Objective 4.2. Strengthen the role of the Board to support effective governance

- Complete review of corporate by-laws and implement changes including meeting format and terms of director-held officer positions.
- Approve the full revised NCHC Policy Manual and ensure policies are posted online.

Objective 4.3. Maintain highest corporate management practices to ensure accountability and transparency

- Review current public reporting practices and determine additions or changes that are needed.
- Provide Board of Directors education and training on the Code of Conduct, including declaring conflicts of interests.
- Consider improvements to the posting of public information from an accessibility lens and support efficiencies for staff uploading information.
- Initiate a compliance review for the NCHC to requirements outlined in the *Housing Services Act, 2011*.

Objective 4.4. Ensure effective board succession planning

- Initiate the development of a Board succession plan to ensure continuity, diversity and the skills-based board is maintained.
- Establish standard definitions of terms for director-held officer positions.

Build and Strengthen the NCHC Profile

Objective 5.1. Implement a framework for organizational communications

- Begin working toward an increased presence on the County website and consider if a separate landing page is required.
- Implement a protocol and procedure for communicating with tenants under the new NCHC logo.
- Begin working on a protocol for public relations, identifying communication approaches and a social media protocol for responding to inquiries relating to the NCHC.

Objective 5.2. Action our brand mission, vision and values through community engagement

- Work toward implementing strong tenant communication policies and processes to respond to tenant complaints and concerns.
- Seek out opportunities for Board members and key staff members to model the NCHC brand through community action.
- Ensure progress on Elgin Park Redevelopment is communicated to the public and community.