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## 2023 Department Overview

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### Community & Social Services

#### Service Description

**Northumberland County Community & Social Services (NCCSS)** is responsible and accountable for the Provincial/County programs and services in accordance with relevant Acts, regulations, Provincial Service Contracts, policies and directives of the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Ministry of Education, the County of Northumberland, and all relevant professional bodies.

To provide and manage programs to maximize available federal, provincial, and County funding to improve and align services for the residents of Northumberland County and strengthen their social and economic well-being within their communities.

As a strategic and operating department of the Corporation of the County of Northumberland, the following core values are embedded in all facets of Community and Social Services programs and operations:

- Accountability
- Care and Support
- Collaboration and Communication
- Honesty and Integrity
- Innovation and Excellence
- Mutual Trust and Respect

Helping People – Building Connections – Strengthening Communities



## **Mandatory Programs**

### **Community Services**

Community Services is the Consolidated Municipal Services Manager responsible for coordinating 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 Community Safety and Wellbeing, homelessness, social determinants of health and support to food security. This work includes developing evidence-informed decision making and planning 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 fund homelessness services across Northumberland (reflecting 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 other forms of 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.

### **Early Years Services**

Early Year Services is the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager responsible for childcare and service system planning for licensed childcare services throughout Northumberland County. Childcare services are managed by the department through a local service planning process that reflects current childcare legislation, regulations, and policies/directives, as well as engagement with local licensees.

In addition to managing childcare services, Early Years services are also responsible for the local management of all ministry-funded child and family programs. This responsibility integrates child and family programs into a cohesive system of services and support known as EarlyON Child and Family Centres.



The ability to strengthen the quality of childcare and early years' experiences and enhance system integration requires the strategic leadership of Early Years services to initiate, sustain, and monitor local planning and development.

## **Housing Services**

Housing Services is the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager for housing initiatives, responsible for systems-based planning for housing throughout the County and leads strategic initiatives relating to housing stock, affordability, viability, and housing security mandated by the provincial government and according to County strategic priorities.

Housing Services also leads the implementation of the Northumberland County Affordable Housing Strategy and is a co-lead alongside Community Services for the Ten-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan with a joint commitment to Housing First and providing housing stability for individuals across the housing continuum. This commitment along with the Ten-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan and the Affordable Housing Strategy provides guidance and direction for the division. Housing Services is also responsible for the implementation of the forthcoming Community Housing Master Plan.

Housing Services is specifically responsible for the administration of Community Housing programs and non-mandated affordable housing programs in the County to ensure housing providers and other housing system stakeholders are meeting obligations in compliance with Social Housing legislation, County policies, municipal standards, and various operating agreements. In addition, Housing Services is responsible for the oversight of the Purchased Services Agreement across County departments with the Northumberland County Housing Corporation (NCHC). Housing Services works to implement the strategic vision of the NCHC Board of Directors while implementing housing retention models of community housing. Housing Services plays a key role in the implementation of the NCHC 2023-2027 Strategic Plan.

## **Ontario Works Services**

Through a team of caseworkers and support staff, Ontario Works provides high-level strategic oversight for the provision of social assistance to Ontario Works recipients and conducts planning and service outcome evaluation for multiple aspects of the Ontario Works program related to general case management, file integrity and local business practices. The services are delivered with a client centered approach, and a focus on stability supports, along with employment readiness. Stability Supports as a part of case management will help address barriers to employment through various services and community referrals that will encourage individuals to gain self-sufficiency by addressing urgent needs, such as health, legal, social supports, family support and human services.



## **Customer Service Unit**

The Customer Service Unit provides program support for both internal and external customers and clients. This unit is responsible for the modernization and integration of client access to social services programs. Key components of this unit are a focus on front end customer services and back-end services such as financial reporting, collections, records retention, and accounting processes. This unit assists in ensuring compliance with performance and legislative standards and supports service divisions in the delivery of programs and reporting.

## **Discretionary Support**

Discretionary benefits under the *Ontario Works Act* and the *Ontario Disability Support Program Act* are provided on a case-by-case basis. This includes children on whose behalf Temporary Care Assistance is being paid. The amount provided for discretionary benefits is determined by local policy.

## **Discretionary Programs**

### **Food Security Services**

#### **Food 4 All**

The Food 4 All is a centralized food distribution warehouse located in Cobourg and serving all within Northumberland County. The distribution centre was created to ensure a higher level of food security in Northumberland County. The warehouse acquires food and other essential items and redistributes them to local community agencies who in turn distribute them to their clients. The Food 4 All partners with and distributes product to over 120 local agencies including 60+ community groups, 43 school nutrition programs, and 12 food banks. Additionally, Food 4 All shares provincially sourced product with 5 other Ontario Association of Food Bank Hubs located in Belleville, Trenton, Oshawa, Peterborough, and Lindsay.

Food Security Services is continually working to alleviate hunger in communities across Northumberland County by developing unique partnerships and promoting education of the impact of food insecurity on health and well-being.

## **Partnerships**

Everything the department engages in is linked to well-entrenched relationships and working collectively with a wide and varied range of partners. These partnerships include community agencies, non-profits organizations, local school boards, academic and training institutions, health care and multiple levels of government.

These partnerships are central in ensuring the department builds a robust and community led response to poverty reduction.

## Environmental Scan

### Population & Demographics

#### Economic Context and Income

#### Profile

- According to the 2021 census, Northumberland County has a population of 89,365, and there are 37,300 households. It is projected that the number of households will grow by 22.8% by 2041 (Northumberland County Affordable Housing Strategy).
- The County has an older age profile than Ontario, with fewer residents aged 25 to 44 years and a higher percentage of residents over the age of 65. In fact, 29% of the county population is aged 65 and older. The growth of the population aged 65 and older has grown significantly faster than the overall population in Northumberland, 45.5% compared to 8.8% between 2011 and 2021
- Northumberland County has a larger proportion of smaller households (two people or less) compared to Ontario (68.2% compared to 59.1%).
- Couples without children or persons living alone made up 62.6% of Northumberland census households. These households are increasing, while households consisting of couples with children decreased between 2011 and 2021 by 12.3%.
- There has been a decline in Northumberland County's younger population between 2011 and 2021, with the youth population (24 years and younger) decreasing by 7.5% and adults between 25 and 44 years of age decreasing by 10.7%.
- About 32 percent of census households include children; 35 percent are couples without children at home; and 33 percent are singles or other "non-family" households. This is relatively more singles and couples without children than for Ontario, and most growth is in these categories.
- The total number of children and youth (age 0-19) in the Northumberland population was forecasted to decrease 0.63% from 16,197 in 2021 to 16,095 in 2022.

The total number of children aged 0 to 6 years increased 2.9% between 2016 and 2021, with most member municipalities seeing a slight increase in child population. However, the Municipality of Brighton experienced a decline of 14.7% for children under 6 years.

- Local food banks assisted 3,150 unique individuals in 2021, approximately one third of these individuals are under the age of 18
- School nutrition programs provided more than 56,000 meals and snacks in 2021.



### **Housing Stock and Supply**

- Most dwellings in Northumberland County are single detached, 79.1% compared to 53.6% in the province. It is anticipated that this focus will remain based on building permits issued between 2016 and 2020.
- Rented dwellings make up a much smaller share in Northumberland County compared to Ontario (18.9% compared to 30.2%), however the proportion of renter households are increasing.
- Northumberland County's vacancy rate in 2021 was less than 1% and has remained below 3% since 2010.
- Most rented dwellings have been in the secondary rental market.
- 21.7% of housing stock dates from 1946 or earlier, compared to 12.2% for Ontario.
- 7% of homes are rated as needing major repair (12 percent for rental). This is slightly higher than the Ontario figures and associated with the older age of dwellings.

### **Affordability**

- More than a fifth of households in Northumberland County were facing housing affordability issues in 2016. With 22.2% spending 30% or more on housing costs, while 8.7% spend 50% or more on housing costs, and low-income households were more likely to be facing housing affordability issues (55.7% spending 30% or more and 27.2% spending 50% or more)
- Some household types are more likely to be facing housing affordability issues including renters, youth, persons living alone, lone parent households, people with a cognitive disability.
- 12.5% households in Northumberland County are in core housing need, slightly below the Ontario average (15.2%); similarly, there is a lower share of households in Northumberland County falling below the affordability standard compared to Ontario.
- The average market rent for a one-bedroom unit in Northumberland County is higher than neighbouring communities including the City of Peterborough, the City of Kawartha Lakes, the City of Kingston, the Region of Durham, and Hastings County.
- Based on the average rental costs of available units in Northumberland County, the current rental market is unaffordable for all low-income households, most moderate-income households and in some cases for high-income households.
- Average household incomes in Northumberland County are not keeping up with the increase in house prices. Between 2005 and 2015, house prices have increased by 45.9% compared to 29.1% increase to average household incomes. The year-to-date average resale house price as of December 2021 in Northumberland County was \$825,000, well above what the average household income can afford.
- Wait times for social housing are up to 10 years, with over 1,000 households on the waitlist. The centralized waiting list has grown more than 260% in the last 10 years.



## Homelessness

- Northumberland County has conducted three enumerations of individuals experiencing homelessness in our community (2016, 2018, and 2021). Conducting an enumeration provides a “snapshot” of the experience of homelessness in a community, particularly local needs, and potential gaps in service.
- In the 2021 enumeration, 54% of individuals experiencing homelessness in Northumberland reported experiencing chronic homelessness, or homelessness for 6 or more months in the past year. In 2016, 48% of enumeration respondents reported chronic homelessness, and in 2018, this figure was reported as 63%.
- In all three enumerations, individuals identifying as having Indigenous Identity or Ancestry were overrepresented among those experiencing homelessness in our community. In 2021, 15% of individuals experiencing homelessness in Northumberland identified as Indigenous, even though < 5% of Northumberland County’s general population identifies as Indigenous.
- In the 2021 enumeration, 85% of individuals experiencing homelessness or unstable housing reported an income source. Further, 33% reported that not having enough income was the reason for their most recent housing loss. This suggests that there are several Northumberland residents requiring homelessness support services due to income-related barriers.
- In rural areas such as Northumberland, there may be more reliance on “couch-surfing” or staying temporarily with a succession of friends and relatives. In the 2021 enumeration, 19% of individuals experiencing homelessness reported staying at someone else’s place on the night of the enumeration. This type of homelessness is often referred to as “hidden homelessness” as additional supports in the community may not be sought out.
- Many people who are experiencing homelessness have complex, multiple needs. In the 2021 enumeration, 52% of individuals experiencing homelessness reported a substance use issue, 69% reported a mental health issue, and 46% reported an illness or medical condition. This suggests that in addition to requiring stable housing, additional supports may be required to address other complex needs.
- Many service providers and support agencies in our community deal with housing-related concerns. The Homelessness Coordinated Response Team (HCRT), led by the Community Services Team, is a community table comprised of 11 Northumberland service agencies that work together to support individuals experiencing homelessness in our community.
- The current homelessness system in Northumberland provides support for 24 individual emergency shelter spaces, and an additional 2 spaces for families through the Family Diversion Program. There is not currently any specialized, supportive housing in



Northumberland that would provide clients from high-need populations with housing and additional supports.

### **Early Years Supports**

Based on the results of the 2021 Census, there are estimated to be 4,945 children between the ages of 0 and 6 in Northumberland County. Statistics Canada reports that 41.4% of parents in Ontario use daycare centres, which equates to approximately 2,047 children that may use childcare in Northumberland County ("Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements). Of those who use childcare in Ontario, 52% enroll their children in centre-based care, 18% use home childcare, and 34% use private childcare. The remainder uses other arrangements.

- Currently, there are 1,131 licensed spaces in Northumberland County for children 0-6 years old (i.e., infant, toddler, and preschool care, including profit and non-profit centres).
- As of June 2022, there were approximately 1,119 children on licensed childcare centre waitlists in Northumberland County. Most of the children on the waitlist needed childcare as soon as possible. Many families join centre waitlists before their children are born or early in infancy. 18% of children on waitlists were infants, 36% toddlers, 26% preschoolers, and 20% school-age.
- On average, families pay \$39-46/day for full day centre childcare and \$41-47/day for licensed home childcare (depending on age). Centre fees are below provincial averages, and home fees are comparable to provincial averages. The introduction of Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) will reduce parent fees by 25% in 2022 and by 50% in 2023.
- In 2021, there were, on average, 316 Children receiving fee subsidy each month. Most (42%) of children receiving fee subsidy are school age (older than 5.8 years old), although a high proportion (23%) are preschool age (31 months to 4 years). Fee subsidy caseloads were reduced during the pandemic, likely due to the temporary closure of centres, the provision of Emergency Child Care, and closures of workplaces. Between Q1 and Q2 2022, an average of 388 children received fee subsidy each month.
- In summer 2019, the Ministry of Education released the results of the 2017-2018 Early Development Instrument (EDI), which measures children's ability to meet developmental expectations at school entry. The EDI assesses five domains of child development. Overall, the rate of vulnerability in Northumberland (i.e., the proportion of children not meeting expectations) has decreased since 2015. Specifically, improvements were noted in the domains of Physical Health and Well-Being, Social Competence, and Emotional Maturity. Developmental trajectories for Language and Cognitive Development, as well as Communication Skills and General Knowledge, remain stable.





### **COVID-19 Pandemic: Supports for Families**

- On March 17, 2020, the provincial government declared a State of Emergency and ordered the closure of all licensed childcare centres, and all facilities providing indoor recreational programs including EarlyON Child and Family Centres. The province subsequently announced that, to support health care and front-line workers in securing care for their children, Emergency Child Care could be offered at select centres.
- The Early Years Division implemented several initiatives to support children, families, operators, and the community during this time. Two main areas of focus were:
  - The creation and implementation of Emergency Child Care
  - Supporting virtual EarlyON child and family support services
- Emergency Child Care was again implemented in January 2022, supporting a total of 252 children and 180 families.
- Virtual programming has been well received by children and families in the region. Twice daily, videos from our creative and enthusiastic Early Childhood Educators, Resource Consultants, and Indigenous Partners are uploaded to Northumberland's EarlyON Facebook pages. Interactive live performances are also provided, allowing children and families to comment/engage in real-time. In 2021, our EarlyON educators shared a total of 301 Facebook videos.

### **Economic Context and Income**

- The average caseload has increased by approximately 22% since 2021, but remains approximately 13% lower than the pre-pandemic average
- Based on current caseload information, approximately 37% of the Ontario Works caseload has been on assistance for 2 years or more, with 13% of the caseload having been on assistance for more than 5 years.
- The average length of time on assistance in June 2022 was 2.1 years, equal to our pre-pandemic average length of time on assistance
- The Sole Support Caseload has decreased over the last year, representing 31% of the total caseload and the singles caseload sits at 66% of the total caseload.
- Approximately 31% of our caseload is between the ages of 16 and 29 with 56% being single.
- Approximately 19% of the Ontario Works caseload is between the ages of 50 and 65.
- 36% of our recipients are children under the age of 18, with 17% of our total recipients under the age of 6 years.
- The Northumberland economy has a diverse range of sectors, but is weighted to agriculture, construction/utilities, and manufacturing.



- The local labor market continues to be dominated by minimum wage employment, including part-time, seasonal, contract/temporary employment. Most job postings are in the sectors of retail trade, accommodation and food services, and health care and social assistance (Workforce Development Board).
- The local unemployment rate has remained below the provincial and federal average; as of May 2022, the rate for Central Ontario (the Employment Insurance Economic Region that Northumberland falls under), sits at 3.9% compared with the Ontario Average of 5.5% and Canadian Average of 5.1%
- Provincial Poverty Reduction focuses on Ending Chronic Homelessness through Housing First strategies; renewed Federal interest in developing a National Housing Strategy emphasizing Homelessness initiatives and potential investments in successful Housing First models.
- Certain household types are more likely to have low incomes compared to Northumberland County as a whole, specifically renter households, youth households, persons living alone, lone parent households, Indigenous households, senior households, physical disability mental health issues and households with a member with cognitive issues.

## **Funding**

### **Community Services**

Homelessness Programs are funded through the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) which is provincial funding supporting programs determined based on local need and designed to meet local community needs as of April 1, 2022, CHPI funding will be consolidated and administered through the Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP). There is an annual levy contribution to ensure service provision and innovation. Other funding is realized through detailed funding applications for targeted programs and services.

The Community Outreach Program is funded currently through the County levy.

### **Early Years Services**

Early Years Services are mainly funded through the Ministry of Education. All mandated programs have provincial guidelines although some programs have flexibility to incorporate local needs when designing programs to meet the uniqueness of a community. There is also a levy contribution to ensure service provision, which includes mandatory contributions based on Provincial legislation.

### **Food Security Services**

The Food 4 All warehouse is funded through the County levy, membership fees and financial donations.



## **Housing Services**

The Housing Services budget projection is based on annualized Federal and Provincial allocations, and subject to new funding as part of any new initiatives. In addition, funding is provided through the County levy and rental and laundry revenue. In addition, Housing Services has received funding specific to applications submitted for the completion of Building Condition Assessments, pre-construction of 473 Ontario Street and the construction of Elgin Park Redevelopment project.

## **Ontario Works**

Since January 1, 2018, the Province provides full subsidy for the mandatory components of the program, such as basic needs, shelter, and mandatory benefits. There will still be a cost shared portion of delivery for administration, discretionary funding, and stability supports funding. The province acknowledges that Municipal and First Nations Ontario Works delivery agents are best suited to maximize existing relationships with other local service providers.

As a municipality included in the Employment Services Transformation Prototype region (Muskoka-Kawarthas), changes to the delivery of employment services within Northumberland County have been implemented. Fleming College is the Service System Manager for the delivery of Employment Services within the Muskoka-Kawarthas prototype region. Currently, the role of the Ontario Works program is to refer eligible individuals to the employment services, while continuing to work with individuals facing barriers to successful integration in employment services.

## **Legislative**

### **Community Services**

Homelessness programs and services are planned according to the legislative requirements of the *Housing Services Act, 2011* and Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing policy directions along with any additional Federal and Provincial Program and Funding Guidelines; in addition to compliance with any other provincial regulatory requirement and/or municipal by-law or County approved policies.

Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan is implemented according to the legislative requirements of the Police Services Act in addition to compliance with any other provincial and regulatory requirement and /or municipal by-law or County approved policies.

The Community Outreach Program has detailed municipal policy and procedure guidelines that address principles of service and eligibility criteria. This program will begin to align with Social Assistance Renewal and Recovery, Ontario Works Act and directives led by the Ministry of Community and Social Services



### **Early Years Services**

Early Years programs, which include License Care and EarlyON Centers are planned according to the legislative requirements of the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 and Ministry of Education policy directions and any other Federal and Provincial Program and Funding Guidelines; in addition to compliance with any other provincial regulatory requirement and/or municipal by-law or County approved policies.

### **Food Security Services**

The Food 4 All operation is a member of Feed Ontario and affiliate member of Food Banks Canada. This requires that the operations adhere to very specific rules and regulations regarding food procurement, distribution, safe food handling and fundraising initiatives. In addition to compliance with any other provincial regulatory requirement and/or municipal by-law or County approved policies.

### **Housing Services**

Housing programs and services are planned according to the legislative requirements of the Housing Services Act, 2011 and Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing policy directions along with any additional Federal and Provincial Program and Funding Guidelines; in addition to compliance with any other provincial regulatory requirement and/or municipal by-law or County approved policies. There is a wide range of legislation that is considered by the Housing Services division in systems planning, supporting the NCHC and delivering and designing programs. This includes Housing Services Act, 2011, Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, Ontario Business Corporations Act, 1990, Planning Act, 1999, Municipal Act, 2001. The work of the Housing Services division is also required to comply with other supporting legislation in all areas of work including Human Rights Code, 1990, Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act, 2005 (AODA), Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 1990.

### **Ontario Works**

Social Assistance programs and services are planned according to the requirements of the Ontario Works Act and directives that are established by the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Local planning is through the Ontario Works EST Transition Plan, and 2021-2022 Ontario Works Service Plan.

The Ministry of Children, Community & Social Services is committed to reforming the delivery of Social Assistance across the province. In February 2021, the Ministry released their Recovery Plan with a renewed focus on modernizing and streamlining the delivery roles between the province and the municipality. While paused in 2022, co-design of the new system is expected to continue in the fall of 2022 and winter of 2023, along with prototypes relating to Employment Services Transformation and Centralized Intake, to reduce the administrative burden locally and allow more time for direct client service delivery. During the 2023 budget



and business planning cycle, there has been no announcement regarding a rate increase to Social Assistance.