



COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

County of Wellington Social Services: Report to Guelph City Council Tuesday June 6, 2023

Recommendation:

That the report from the Social Services Department, County of Wellington on the provision of social services in Guelph and Wellington County be received for information by the Guelph City Council.

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide Guelph City Council information on the provision of social services in response to the motion passed by Guelph City Council on Monday July 4, 2022 under item 10.2 Urgent Issues Related to Homelessness, Mental Health and Addictions.

“City Council respectfully requests quarterly updates from the County on the provision of social services with a focus on homelessness, addiction and mental health issues, including performance reporting and key performance indicators.”

Since July 2022 there have been numerous conversations between senior leadership at the City of Guelph and the County of Wellington to discuss the City of Guelph motion and clarify expectations noting that addiction and mental health fall outside the scope of social services.

It was agreed that the County of Wellington would prepare an annual report on the provision of social services in 2022 for Guelph City Council meeting on June 6, 2023. There was consensus among senior leadership that this report would be satisfactory to respond to the spirit of the motion passed by Guelph City Council in July 2022.

This report includes background information on the role of the County of Wellington as the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) for Social Services for the Wellington service delivery area (Guelph and Wellington County), related reporting requirements to the province and a brief description of the service area.

Descriptions of Social Services programming areas, programme goals and objectives are provided to contextualize the key performance indicators for the three divisions of Social Services: Children’s Early Years, Housing Services and Ontario Works. The report also includes embedded links where the reader can access additional information and reports from the Social Services Department.

Background

County of Wellington, Consolidated Municipal Service Manager of Social Services

The Province of Ontario's Local Services Realignment process in 1997 resulted in shifting the financial responsibility between the provincial and municipal tax bases for a number of programme areas and a pooling of social services.

This led to the creation of 47 Service System Managers across Ontario made up of Consolidated Municipal Service Managers, and District Social Services Administrative Boards in Ontario's northern districts. Since the 1998 municipal fiscal year, Ontario is the only jurisdiction in Canada where municipal levels of government hold the responsibility for social services.

Hence, the Corporation of the County of Wellington was designated as the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM), or Service Manager, for the delivery of Social Services for the "Wellington" area which includes Wellington County and the City of Guelph. Today, the County's Social Services department oversees the planning, management, and implementation of the following provincially mandated services, within their own division: Children's Early Years; Housing Services; Ontario Works.

Wellington Service Delivery Area

The Wellington service delivery area is a mix of urban and rural areas, covering 2,665 square kilometers. The map below identifies the 8 municipalities that make up the Wellington service delivery area.



According to the 2021 Census, Wellington service delivery area has a total population of 241,026, with approximately 60% residing in the City of Guelph and 40% residing in Wellington County. The population has grown by 9.1% since the 2016 census, well above Ontario's population increase of 5.8%. The City of Guelph population is distributed across just over 87 square kms, and Wellington County's population is distributed across more than 2,500 square kms of land (nearly 97% of the total service delivery area).

The County of Wellington Social Services Committee

The County of Wellington Council has eight different Standing Committees that report to County Council. The County's Social Services Committee is one of these Standing Committees of Council and its membership is comprised of 4 County Councillors, the Warden, ex-officio, and the Mayor of the City of Guelph. The Social Services Committee meets monthly, except for July, August, and December, receiving a variety of reports and programme updates from the three divisions of Social Services (Children's Early Years, Housing Services and Ontario Works).

Motions approved at the Social Services Committee are sent to County Council where all minutes of the Standing Committees receive final approval.

Service Manager Accountability to the Province and Reporting Responsibilities

As the Service Manager for social services, the County is accountable to the provincial government, in addition to County Council, to ensure the funding and delivery of these services are carried out in accordance with contractual agreements the County holds with various Ministries. These agreements are accompanied by Ministry directives, guidelines, and may include provincially funded initiatives, including provincial/federal partnerships or for federal programmes and initiatives where funding is flowed directly to the County.

Each division of Social Services has responsibilities outlined in their respective legislation and are required to report to their respective Ministries:

Social Services	Relevant Legislation	Provincial Ministry
Children's Early Years	Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014	Ministry of Education
Housing Services	Housing Services Act, 2011 Residential Tenancies Act, 2006	Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Ontario Works	Ontario Works Act, 1997	Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services

The Ministries hold the County accountable through ongoing monitoring of service plans, reporting of financial and service data, compliance reviews (policies and client files), as well as financial audits. Social Services Directors and Managers from each division work closely with Ministry officials on a regular basis to ensure compliance with requirements is maintained at all times.

In addition, the Social Services Policy, Research, and Planning team which consists of policy, research, and data analysts, provide planning, monitoring and evaluation supports and ensure that services are evidence-based and designed to support the unique strengths of each municipality within the Wellington service delivery area. Under the guidance of Directors, the team is responsible for developing, implementing, and monitoring service plans which address matters of provincial interest and are responsive to local needs and interests. All social services plans are developed by leveraging research and local data and include extensive community engagement processes.

Children's Early Years: Service Manager Responsibilities

Children's Early Years is required to produce a Child Care and Early Years Service Plan, according to the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* that explains how matters of provincial interest will be addressed through the services and programmes offered to the service delivery area. The service plan is submitted to Social Services Committee and County Council and then submitted for approval by the Ministry of Education. The Children's Early Years Service Plan is made publicly available on the County's Children's Early Years webpages.

- A key function of Children's Early Years is to perform service system planning that includes research, local data collection, and community engagement to inform a service plan that will advance a system of child care and early years programmes and services in Wellington that addresses local priorities and matters of provincial interest, as outlined in the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*.
- A collaborative approach to planning is supported through Growing Great Generations (GGG) and the Birth-Six working Group, local community planning tables involving health, community service agencies, and organizations supporting children and youth and their families.
- To advance Wellington's strategic priorities of a licensed child care and early years system that is of high quality, equitably available, equitably accessible, affordable, and supported by system leadership and accountability, the Children's Early Years Division performs several key functions:
 - *Operational Funding for Licensed Child Care*: Provide funding to support child care operations, as well as workforce compensation supports and minor capital.
 - *Special Needs Resourcing*: Improve access and optimal participation of children with special needs in licensed child care and early years programmes.
 - *Capacity Building*: Build the capacity of the child care and early years programmes workforce through professional learning and development opportunities to support the provision of high-quality programmes.
 - *Directly Operated Child Care Programmes*: Operate four licensed child care centres and one licensed home child care agency.
 - *Child Care Fee Subsidy*: Administration of the child care fee subsidy programme, which subsidizes the costs of licensed child care for eligible families.
 - *EarlyON Child and Family Centres*: Plan for and oversee the system of high-quality child care and family programmes and services, for all families and caregivers with children from birth to 6 years old, at no cost to participants.
 - *Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) System*: Implementation of 100% federal funding to reduce child care fees and support improved compensation for Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) who are low wage earners. The County enters into CWELCC funding agreements with each child care programme.

Children’s Early Years Programme Goals and Objectives

- Implement a consistent and continuous quality assessment and improvement strategy across the child care and early years system.
- Develop and support implementation of a workforce strategy that improves recruitment and retention of qualified child care and early years professionals.
- Increase access to and participation in professional development and recruitment strategies that enhance the workforce’s knowledge and competencies on topics of current focus, relevance and interest within the sector including diversity, inclusive practices, and cultural competence.
- Stabilize current child care and EarlyON service levels during the pandemic.
- Continue to increase the capacity for regulated child care and EarlyON services, focusing on fair distribution.
- Improve child care and early years service system information, awareness, communication, and service navigation resources to enable parents to make informed decisions about and facilitate access to available services.
- Improve integration of the child care and early years service system, particularly EarlyON programmes, with other community services.
- Improve awareness and facilitate parents’ access to child care fee subsidy, including simplifying processes for families applying for and receiving child care subsidy.

Children’s Early Years Division Performance Measures

Children’s Early Years performance measures for 2022 are presented in the table below:

Children’s Early Years Performance Measures	2022
# of full-time, full-year licensed child care spaces for children birth up to 4 years old	2,275
# of active contracted home child care providers	28
# of participants accessing EarlyON Centre programmes	2,817
# of educators participating in professional learning	348
# of spaces available for child care fee subsidies	4,857
# of children in receipt of child care fee subsidies	976
# of CWELCC agreements with child care programmes	72 (85%)

Housing Services: Service Manager Responsibilities

The Housing Services Act, 2011 requires Service Managers to prepare local 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plans, in consultation with community and service providers, to address the current and future housing needs of individuals and families. Service Managers are also required to communicate community progress towards Housing and Homelessness Plan goals and objectives to the province and the public on an annual basis. These reports are available on the [County's Housing Services website](#).

- A key responsibility of Housing Services as the Service Manager is service system planning which includes planning activities such as developing service system needs analysis and approaches to respond to diverse housing needs across the housing continuum from homelessness, through emergency shelters, transitional and supportive housing systems, through social and affordable rental housing, to private market rental and ultimately homeownership.
- The County of Wellington Housing Services manages and maintains the Guelph-Wellington Centralized Waiting List for social housing. Housing Services is responsible for the administration and management of a large portfolio of social and government-funded affordable housing properties throughout Guelph and Wellington County. Housing Services is responsible for financial support and legislative oversight of 20 non-profit housing providers and housing co-operatives. In addition, Housing Services is also responsible for the administration of hundreds of housing units under rent supplement agreements with private market landlords to reduce rents for low-income tenants.
- *Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy* provides federal funding to support individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness. As the designated Reaching Home Community Entity for the Wellington service area, the County of Wellington, implements the community plan and is responsible for the selection, approval, and management of projects in the local area. Community Entities are supported by a Community Advisory Board responsible for developing the community plan and recommending projects for funding at the community level.
- *Housing Services is the lead agency for the Guelph-Wellington Built for Zero-Canada Campaign*, a national movement to end chronic homelessness. Built for Zero Canada provides a structured, supportive, and data-driven approach focused on optimizing local homeless systems, accelerating the adoption of proven practices, and driving continuous improvement.
- Housing Services supports households experiencing/at risk of homelessness through three key areas:
 - *Preventing Experiences of Homelessness*: address issues that can destabilize households. Early interventions that can support households to pay off rental or utility arrears are key components to quickly stabilizing a household and keeping them housed.
 - *Emergency Responses to Experiences of Homelessness*: respond to immediate experiences of homelessness. The housing stability system includes emergency shelters, outreach workers to support those experiencing unsheltered homelessness while diversion and rapid rehousing services assist with alternate housing solutions quickly, to avoid long duration homelessness.
 - *Transitions to and Retention of Housing Placements*: to find permanent housing solutions for those that are newly experiencing homelessness or experiencing chronic homelessness.

Housing Services Programme Goals and Objectives

- In 2014 the County, in collaboration with the community, developed the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan (HHP) entitled "A Place to Call Home". The County undertook a 5-year update, approved by County Council in 2018, which reflects refined objectives that align with provincial policy directions and emerging community needs.
- The County's Housing and Homelessness Plan sets out how we plan to address housing and homelessness locally, including housing affordability, coordination of support services, the promotion of human-centred and culturally appropriate service delivery models, housing stock revitalization, and ending chronic homelessness.
- Housing Services work is undertaken collaboratively with a variety of local stakeholders including municipal partners; Indigenous organizations; health and human service organizations and operators in the homeless serving system. The eight objectives of the Housing and Homelessness Plan, developed in consultation with community, are listed below:
 - To help low-income households close the gap between their incomes and housing expenses.
 - To provide a range of housing stability supports to assist with housing retention and homelessness prevention.
 - To offer a comprehensive range of supportive housing options for residents with complex needs due to aging, disabilities, mental health issues and addictions.
 - To increase the supply and mix of affordable housing options for low to moderate income households.
 - To end chronic homelessness.
 - To promote client-centred, coordinated access to the housing and homelessness system.
 - To support the sustainability of the existing social and affordable housing stock.
 - To foster access to culturally appropriate housing and homelessness services for Indigenous peoples.

Housing Services Performance Measures

Housing Services performance measures for 2022 are presented in the table below:

Housing Services Performance Measures	2022
# of households in Rent-Geared-to-Income (subsidized housing) units	2,508
# of households in government-funded affordable housing	616
# of households that received rent supports	489
# of households served in Transitional and Supportive Housing	111
# of households accessing support services in subsidized or government-funded affordable housing	360
# of people actively experiencing chronic homelessness (monthly average BNL)	137

Ontario Works: Service Manager Responsibilities

Ontario Works division prepares annual Ontario Works Service Plan submissions to the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) are shared with Social Services Committee and County Council. While not mandatory, the Ontario Works division also prepares annual reports on 100% municipally funded health benefits for low-income individuals. These reports are available on the [County's Ontario Works webpages](#).

- Ontario Works provides temporary financial assistance to residents in need while they are actively assisted in becoming employed and achieving self-reliance. Income assistance includes allowances for basic needs, shelter, as well as other benefits prescribed in provincial regulations to those applicants who meet mandatory eligibility requirements.
- Employment and life stability supports include the development of participation plans, counseling, life skills programmes, referrals to community supports and job placements.
- The Cost Recovery Division is primarily responsible for programme accountability. These services include eligibility verification and review, overpayment recovery and client appeal processes.
- The Cost Recovery team also administers provincially and municipally funded discretionary benefit programmes to eligible low-income households, with urgent needs, who are not otherwise in receipt of Ontario Works assistance.
- The Social Services Help Centre offers a wide range of services including access to computers, local job postings, photocopying, public telephones, and assistance in completing social services related programme applications and accessing other community supports.
- Employment and Life Skills Workshops are delivered on numerous employment and life skills topics facilitated by professional staff.
- Immigrant Settlement Services: Assists newcomers in our community in gaining access to the economic, social, health, cultural, educational, and recreational services that they require.
- Municipal grant funding is administered to local agencies or collaborative groups to address important social issues such as domestic violence, substance use, elder abuse, and poverty.

Ontario Works Programme Goals and Objectives

The Ontario Works Division strives to effectively serve people needing assistance by delivering high quality programmes and services in collaboration with our community partners and in accordance with provincial legislation and directives governing the Ontario Works programme.

The Ontario Works Annual Service Plan outlines how the following goals and objectives of the Ontario Works programme are to be achieved:

- Recognize individual client responsibility and promote self-reliance through participation in life stabilization and employment activities.
- Provide financial assistance to those most in need while they meet obligations to prepare for, obtain and maintain employment.
- Ensure accountability in service delivery to provincial and local taxpayers.

The Division also delivers settlement services to newcomer immigrants to Wellington County. Through an agreement with the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, the County has the following goals and objectives pertaining to this work:

- To meet the settlement and integration needs of newcomers, including those in smaller and more rural communities.
- To facilitate the connection of newcomers to the communities they live in.
- To enhance the capacity of local employers to hire and retain newcomers.

Ontario Works Performance Measures

Ontario Works performance measures for 2022 are presented in the table below:

Ontario Works Performance Measures	2022
% of the Ontario Works Caseload with Employment Income	9.82%
% of Cases Exiting to Employment	20.85%
# of new settlement* clients assisted with a settlement and referral plan	150
# of settlement* group sessions	42
# of employers participating in the County's newcomer/immigrant recruitment programme	13

*Settlement Services is a programme funded through Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) with the mandate to assist newcomers to Canada access community services and adjust to life in their new community.

Summary

As the Service Manager for Social Services, the County of Wellington has the responsibility to implement social services programmes that align with provincial matters of interest and according to legislation while ensuring that they reflect the diverse and varied needs of communities across the service delivery area. Setting goals and objectives, and measuring programme performance, allows the Service Manager to assess progress and identify areas that require new or additional attention in subsequent service delivery plans.