



COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

Report from: Social Services Department, County of Wellington

To: **Committee of the Whole, Guelph City Council**

Date: June 12, 2024

Subject: 2023 Social Services Indicators Report

Recommendation:

That the Council of the City of Guelph receive the report, Social Services 2023 Data Indicators, from the Social Services Department, County of Wellington, for information.

Purpose of Report

This report includes information on the role of the County of Wellington as the designated Consolidated Municipal Service Manager for Social Services by the Province of Ontario, a description of the Wellington service delivery area, as well as Provincial Performance Targets and Social Services Indicators achieved in 2023. Provincial Performance Targets are set by the province. Social Services Indicators represent the service activity each division provided within the approved 2023 budget allocation.

Role of the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (Service System Manager)

As the Service System Manager, the Social Services department oversees the planning, management, and implementation of the following programmes and services on behalf of the Province of Ontario.

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

Social Service	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 department is accountable to both provincial and federal governments, the Joint Land Ambulance and Social Services Committee and 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 funding from all three levels of government.

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 regularly to ensure compliance requirements are maintained.

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 the Administrator and 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.

Joint Land Ambulance and Social Services Committee (April 2023)

The County of Wellington Council has eight different Standing Committees that report to County Council. The Joint Land Ambulance and Social Services Committee is one of the Standing Committees and is comprised of 3 County of Wellington Councillors, 3 City of Guelph Councillors, the Warden, ex-officio, and the Mayor of the City of Guelph. Motions related to Social Services approved at the Joint Land Ambulance and Social Services Committee are sent to County Council for final approval.

The Wellington Service Delivery Area (Wellington County and Guelph)

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 40% residing in Wellington County that is distributed across more than 2,500 square kms of land (nearly 97% of the service delivery area) and 60% residing in Guelph that is distributed across just over 87 square kms.

Children's Early Years: Service System Manager Responsibilities

A key responsibility of the Children's Early Years division 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-Guelph that addresses local priorities and matters of provincial interest, as outlined in the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*. The [Wellington-Guelph Child Care and Early Years Plan](#) is available on the County's website.

A collaborative approach to planning is supported through the Growing Great Generations Planning Table and the Birth to Six sub-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, and is 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.

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.
- ❖ 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 and to learn about available services.
- ❖ Improve integration of the child care and early years service system, particularly EarlyON programmes, with other community services.

Children's Early Years, Provincial Performance Measures 2023

	Green: Target met	Yellow: In progress	Red: Target not met
Performance Outcome	Description	Provincial Target (2026)	Actual 2023
# new school-based child care spaces, birth – 5 years, created under the CWELCC Agreement, 2022-2026	Number of new child care spaces located in schools created with CWELCC funding.	113	49
# new community-based child care spaces, birth – 5 years, created under the CWELCC Agreement, 2022-2026	Number of new child care spaces located in the community created with CWELCC funding.	1,608	406
Total # new child care spaces created under the CWELCC Agreement, 2022-2026	Total of new school- and community-based spaces created.	1,721	455

Note: Under the CWELCC System, Ontario has a plan to improve access to licensed child care through the creation of 86,000 affordable spaces by the end of 2026. Meeting these targets set for Wellington and Guelph will be contingent on the availability of capital funding to support this growth, in addition to continued and sufficient operational funding under CWELCC.

Children's Early Years, Social Services Indicators 2023

Indicator	City	County	Total
1. # of full day/full year spaces (infant, toddler, preschool spaces) as of December 31, 2023	1,796	610	2,406
2. # of spaces ages 4 up to 12 years (kindergarten, school age) as at December 31, 2023	2,029	742	2,771
3. # of active contracted Home Child Care Providers as at December 31, 2023	41	13	54
4. # of licensed child care spaces supported by CWELCC as at December 31, 2023	2,490	948	3,438
5. # of unique families who received fee subsidies	-	-	641
6. # of children in who received fee subsidies*	-	-	806
7. # of unique child participants who accessed an EarlyON Centre**	8,147	3,067	11,214
8. # of unique adult participants who accessed an EarlyON Centre	7,317	2,350	9,487
9. # of unique Early Childhood Educators who participated in professional learning	-	-	928

*About 80% of children who received fee subsidies in 2023 resided in the City of Guelph.

Housing Services: Service System Manager Responsibilities

The *Housing Services Act, 2011* requires Service System 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. The Housing and Homelessness Plan “A Place To Call Home” sets out how our community plans 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. All Housing Services reports can be found at: [Housing Services](#).

Service system planning 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 homeownership.

Housing Services manages and maintains the Wellington-Guelph Centralized Waiting List for social housing. It is also 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 non-profit housing providers and housing co-operatives. In addition, it is also responsible for the administration 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

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 current eight objectives of the Housing and Homelessness Plan, developed in consultation with community are:

- ❖ 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, Provincial Performance Measures 2023

	Green: Target met	Yellow: In progress	Red: Target not met
Performance Outcome	Description	Provincial Target 2023	Actual 2023
# of subsidized housing units	Number of units that are 100% municipally funded using rent calculation as per the <i>Housing Services Act</i>	2,342	2,495

Housing Services, Social Services Indicators 2023

Indicator	City	County	Total
1. # of available units, government-funded affordable housing (*)	443	238	681
2. # of unique households that accessed permanent supportive housing	60	7	67
3. # of available units, permanent supportive housing (**)	58	7	65
4. # of unique households that received rent subsidies (includes rent supports)	2,512	610	3,122
5. # of unique households assisted with Housing Stability supports (***)	-	-	887
6. # of emergency shelter beds available as at December 31, 2023	146	0	146
7. Total # of entries onto the By-Name List	-	-	368
8. Total # of exits from the By-Name List	-	-	195
9. Total # of housing placements from the By-Name List (****)	-	-	144

(*) Includes n=131 County-owned units along with n=550 not-for-profit housing provider units.

(**) Includes Grace Gardens (n=32 units) plus Bellevue (n=8 units) and SAMH (n=25 units)

(**) Includes utility and rental arrears assistance, first/last month's rent, moving costs, appliances.

(***) 144 housing placements represent 39% of all entries onto the By-Name List in 2023, and 73.8% of all exits from the List.

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) that 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.

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.

Ontario Works 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. It also oversees the administration of 100% municipal grant funding to local agencies or collaborative groups to address important social issues such as domestic violence, substance use, elder abuse, and poverty.

To ensure accountability, the division's Cost Recovery team is primarily responsible for eligibility verification and review, overpayment recovery and client appeal processes.

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.

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.

Ontario Works, Provincial Performance Measures 2023

	Green: Target met	Yellow: In progress	Red: Target not met
Performance Outcome	Description	Provincial Target 2023	Actual 2023
Percentage of the Ontario Works Caseload with Employment Income (monthly average)	Percentage of cases who have some earned employment income.	10%	10%
Average employment earnings (monthly)	Average monthly employment earnings for Ontario Works households reporting employment income	\$803	\$781
Percentage of Cases Terminating that are exiting to Employment (monthly average)	Cases that exit Ontario Works due to securing paid employment as a percentage of all terminations.	21%	21%
Percentage of Ontario Works cases that exited to employment	Percentage of the total Ontario Works caseload exited due to securing paid employment.	1%	1%

Ontario Works, Social Services Indicators 2023

Indicator	City	County	Total
1. # total Ontario Works cases (households) as at Dec 31, 2023	1,542	351	1,893
2. # total Ontario Works beneficiaries (individuals) as at Dec 31, 2023	2,633	572	3,205
3. Monthly average number of people in receipt of benefits	-	-	3,236
4. # of unique Emergency Assistance cases (*)	-	-	490
5. # of unique individuals assisted with 100% Municipal Discretionary Funds (**)	234	125	359

As of December 2023, a total of 1,893 households, representing 3,205 individuals in Wellington and Guelph were in receipt of Ontario Works benefits, with 81% of households residing in Guelph and 19% of households residing in Wellington County. Most Ontario Works recipients are single individuals, followed by single parents with children. The relative share of the caseload for each family type remains static year-over-year with minor variances. The largest proportion of dependent children living in households in receipt of Ontario Works are children between the ages of birth to 6 years of age (40% in Guelph and 45% in the County). The gender distribution of recipients also remains static year-over-year with most recipients being female (53% in Guelph and 54% in the County).

(*) Emergency assistance is a temporary programme distinct from ongoing Ontario Works assistance. It provides up to 48 days of financial assistance for applicants in a crisis or emergency situation. Individuals may qualify if they are facing an emergency such as eviction, leaving an abusive relationship or are facing financial hardship while waiting for other benefits such as Employment Insurance.

(**) The 100% municipally funded discretionary benefits programme provides low-income residents of Wellington County and Guelph with one-time financial support to cover basic medical expenses and funeral/burial expenses when there is no other social assistance programme or other community support that meets their need.

Summary

As the Service System 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 County to assess progress and identify areas that require new or additional attention in subsequent service delivery plans, while consistently meeting the service targets set by the province and federal governments.