



2022 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 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 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 an application to the Public Health Agency of Canada to implement cross-sectoral training to include Gender-based Analysis plus



- Developed a Federal application to the Crime Prevention Action Fund to develop a case conferencing model with outreach support for transitional-aged youth who have regular contact with the Police and justice system, to align with the priorities identified in the Community safety and Wellbeing plan

Social Services Relief Fund

- Managed the Social Services Relief Funds 1, 2 and 3 to support the provision of services to people experiencing homelessness and precarious housing through the pandemic and ensured that service providers had access to training and resources including PPE to continue providing services

Technology

- Implemented new case management database software to enable outreach case managers to safely record data and case plan with clients. The software enables the team to be able to review entire household demographics, and to be able to securely manage case notes and planning. This new database enables data to be analyzed and better service planning and response, as trends and opportunities can be identified. Data can also be shared to compliment departmental reporting including dashboard inclusion
- Implemented new electronic signing software, DocuSign, 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

Website

- Created a new standalone homelessness information website for Northumberland. Worked with community partners and people with lived and living experience to test the content and the functionality. Included regular updates for both agencies and people interested in homelessness information

Training and Employment

- Worked 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



Sustainable Growth

Food Security

- Developed a new program to support food security across the County called Northumberland Eats. 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. This new program has quickly proved successful, and we are working to transition the management and ongoing sustainability of this innovative initiative to the United Way to include ongoing evaluation, distribution and fundraising
- Working with the Food 4 All manager to design a program of improvement and sustainability for the food distribution and warehousing functions to ensure sustainability and increase member participation

Service Agreements

- Delivering services through partner agencies is an essential role of Community Services. Developing Service agreements that are legally sound, that mitigate risk and meet the needs of the community while ensuring that partner agencies can develop innovative and flexible services continues to be a priority through 2021.
- Following the legal review of the service agreements we have with community partners to provide services across the County, we have streamlined the reporting requirements to reflect an outcome-based approach with the collection of data and metrics which support the strategic goals of the County and partner agencies

Data Analysis

- The new position in the Community Services Team of the Data Analysis Coordinator, enables us to design data collection tools and increase our ability to analyze data. This in turn enables us to embed evidence informed decision making into our work including planning and evaluation and reporting of the work we do and the difference or impact it makes in the community



Thriving & Inclusive Communities

Ten Year Housing and Homelessness Plan

- Completion of the 2020 Annual Report and submission to County Council and the Ministry for approval as legislatively required.
- Worked with Community Services Division to review key action areas to begin broader implementation of the plan.
- Developed data templates for the collection and reporting of relevant data for annual reporting.
- Developed and delivered diversion training for community organizations delivering homelessness services

Community Safety and Wellbeing

- Successfully employed a temporary Community Safety and Wellbeing Coordinator to support the implementation of the structure for the delivery of actions outlined in the plan
- Developed new governance model to ensure a wide scope of representation on the collaborative leadership table and connection to the action groups.
- Developed SharePoint site to be able to connect with all the members of the Community Safety and Wellbeing network to share information and tools

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.

Wellness

- Supporting the Community Health Centers of Northumberland and their dental program specifically, we have developed a new 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

Warming Room

Designed and set up daytime and nighttime warming room services for winter 2021 to



offer food and warmth for people experiencing homelessness not able to stay in shelters. This was an urgent need during lockdown to ensure that people could access washrooms, hot drinks and respite from the cold while keeping safe during the pandemic.

- Worked to identify location and negotiate use of space, employ and train staff, consult with community and provide furniture and resources for the spaces.
- Ensured the ongoing provision of the transitional housing pilot started during the initial phase of the pandemic to offer concentrated and focused support to 4 individuals to gain the skills and confidence to move into and live successfully in independent accommodation

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.

Food Security

- Continued with the alignment between food security and Community Services and using the joint priorities using the four pillars of food security as our guide to ensure that we mitigate risk and develop support across access, availability, utilization and sustainability of food issues
- Developed a survey for members of the Food 4 All network to determine membership needs and priorities and to garner opinion on sustainability. This information has helped to inform the ongoing development of a phased approach to the improvement and business development of the food distribution and warehouse facilities.

Homelessness Coordinated Response Table (HCRT)

- Continues to manage and coordinate biweekly meetings for homeless-serving organizations and programs 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 prioritization at a household level and an understanding of homeless inflow and outflow 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 aiding homeless and at-risk of homelessness people. 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 and scoring are carried out.

RentSmart

- Provided coordination of a County-wide trainers group to ensure that the training is available to all people who are experiencing homelessness or who want to move into the rental market
- Provided training for 12 community partners to become licensed RentSmart trainers and join the County network and organized and facilitated training sessions

Enumeration

- Developed plan to implement the requirements to undertake enumeration as required by Provincial Government.
- Developed electronic tool to survey people experiencing homelessness and those who are precariously housed. This included ensuring that prevention, assessment and housing questions were 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
- Recruited staff from other agencies to be able to work as interviewers for the day of enumeration
- Created 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
- Created 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



Leadership in Change

Building Community Capacity

- Working with community partners to develop an inclusionary and transparent model to distribute the funding and resources allocated from a Provincial level to support homelessness services during the pandemic
- Developed Northumberland Advisory Group to inform and advise on the distribution of the Social Services Relief Funds
- In line with the aspirations identified in the Housing and Homelessness plan, developed a leadership group to have oversight and influence on the development and improvements for the Homelessness Coordinated Response Table and other associated homelessness responses in Northumberland. This group consists of Executive directors and senior staff from organizations providing homelessness services across the County
- Working with community partners to explore the potential of a case conferencing committee to support the potential of a justice-based program
- Coordinated and organized Bridges Out of Poverty training for 72 internal staff and community partners

Business Continuity Planning

- Continued working with the Community and Social Services department and the Health and Safety/Emergency Planning department to support focusing on business continuity activities in the event of an emergency, as demonstrated and tested during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Continued planning for, and implementation of measures, in preparation for continued waves of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Implemented County procedures and policies concerned with keeping staff and customers safe during the pandemic

Professional Development for Frontline Staff

- 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.
- All staff also completed an online Suicide Awareness Training and internal training on Health and Safety Incident Reporting.

2022 Service Objectives & Initiatives

Economic Prosperity & Innovation

Training and Development

- Continue to build a robust RentSmart training network and ensure that this training is offered across the County on an individual and group basis. Coordinate membership of the RentSmart Canada organization to ensure that all Northumberland trainers are licensed to be able to deliver the training. Work with a Community Partner to build capacity for them to take on the coordination role and ensure the sustainability of this program
- Implement the training developed for entry level employees to human service organizations and ensure that it is promoted and adopted across the County
- Investigate further modules to be added to this training suite.
- Explore options for texting technology to be added to this training suite as a tool to continue the transfer of information and encourage learner participation

Data Catalogue

- Identify data sources from across the work of the department
- Develop a data catalogue for the department that will enable the safe collection, storage, indexing, access, and analysis of data available throughout divisions across the department.
- Create the training and process for managers to be able to access and utilize these resources.

Sustainable Growth

Food Security

- Continue with work across the pillars of food security to ensure availability and access to resources and the utilization and stability of the food system in Northumberland. This work will include examining the broader issues that impact food security and life stabilization within Northumberland County
- Develop further actions for the phased approach to quality and sustainability planning with the Food 4 All division



Thriving & Inclusive Communities

Social Services Relief Fund 4

- Invest the funds as per provincial guidelines to ensure that homelessness services can meet the needs of clients through the pandemic with resources to keep people safe
- Implement responses during potential lockdowns or other pandemic responses that ensure people experiencing homelessness can access support. This may include warming room or other emergency accommodation solutions.

Community Safety and Wellbeing

- Coordinate and administer the meetings and reporting required for the implementation of the Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan
- Develop and implement action plan agreements for the action groups and committees. Work with the groups to influence work plans and strategic directions
- Organize the overall network meetings in April and September.

Social Prescribing

- Develop and implement a pilot program for social prescribing for people experiencing homelessness or precarious housing. This will include identifying models of best practice and creating a 'Northumberland' model to meet the health needs of vulnerable adults. Clinical expertise will come from the Community Health Centers of Northumberland.
- Data and outputs will be collected and analyzed to build a prototype for ongoing implementation

Wellness

- Continue to support the outreach clinic developed through the Northumberland Ontario Health Team to offer financial support and community connections to clients through involvement of the Outreach case workers from the Community Services Team

Leadership in Change

By-Name List

- Continue the improvement of the By-Name list to meet the standards required by the Province and to inform and influence planning and evaluation of services and



improve the coordination of services to the individual

- Continue to inform and raise awareness with community partners of the use of this tool to help to build impactful interventions for people experiencing homelessness
- To continue to provide data to the Canadian Alliance to End Homeless and retain our full membership of the Built for Zero campaign
- Use data to demonstrate inflow and outflow from homelessness and use information to influence planning and service delivery options within the homelessness system

Data

- Continue to build the capacity of the department to collect and use data by building tools and process to enable staff to identify data that is available.
- Define and build a data dashboard for the department to be shared publicly that showcases the work of the department and the trends and impact of services.
- Develop 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 will improve the quality and timeliness of reporting sent to funders and Council or Provincial Ministries

Food Security

- The Community Services Department will coordinate and develop a food network of not-for-profit community meal providers. This group will begin to coordinate meal provision to ensure the widest coverage possible including days times and locations to avoid duplication. Sharing tools and best practices will enable all group members to consider continuous improvement and safety within their respective programs. As collaboration and trust grows, group members may consider shared purchasing such as meal boxes, and storage containers as examples

Ten Year Housing and Homelessness Plan

- Upon receipt of ministerial approval, work is planned with the Housing Services Division to develop an implementation plan for the 2019-2029 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 2020 Annual Report and submission to County Council and the ministry for approval as legislatively required.



Electronic document signing

- Roll out the 'docu sign' technology to all community service documents requiring both internal and external signatures including confidentiality agreements with other agencies, membership agreements and service agreements

Case Conferencing

- Build capacity for case conferencing across homelessness, case work and community safety and wellbeing by creating standards, templates, and training.
- Ensure that consent and confidentiality are understood across services and that training, and information resources are available to promote good practices.
- Lead discussion about best practice with the involvement of people with lived and living experience.
- Work with the Homelessness leadership team to create standards for the case conferencing that is initiated through HCRT either at the meetings or ad hoc outside of the meetings, and develop buy-in from all members

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

Thriving & Inclusive Communities

Funding and Investment Opportunities

- Explore opportunities to co-design funding applications and reporting requirements across Northumberland. Currently a myriad of funding forms and



applications exist (examples include United Way, County, local charitable trusts). Working together – funders could align priorities, avoid duplication and reduce competition. Completing applications is time consuming and skilled work, however by funders working together and melding requirements, we could design applications and requirements that align timing, reporting and other information to aid decision making.

- A funders committee could also explore shared funding opportunities, and shared tools and promotion
- Continue to seek and complete applications for funding that aligns with County priorities across homelessness, health and community safety, food security, and wellbeing

Shelter and Housing

- Developing housing options across the housing continuum is a priority in the housing and homelessness plan. By continuing to review the current state and identify opportunities for growth and new services, we will be able to utilize the resources available to us.
- The Transitional housing pilot will be reviewed, and the outcomes identified and evaluated. A full costs analysis will become a standard tool to help define success and offer weight for continued support or funding
- Plans for a range of shelter and accommodation options will be developed including emergency shelter, supportive housing and transitional housing alongside a range of affordable housing options

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.

Health

- The opportunity for the social determinants of health to be a key priority in human service planning.
- Build the integration of service improvement with health partners. This is central to the success of the Community Safety and Wellbeing plan – where health partners are actively involved in identifying potential solutions and opportunities
- Integrate social prescribing as a model of health improvement to support life stabilization



Leadership in Change

Community Safety and Wellbeing

- Develop the mechanisms and tools to enable the Community Safety and Wellbeing plan, and to coordinate the strategic priorities from across other divisional plans and strategies and consolidate reporting and priorities. This will build a central location for priorities and actions to be combined to maximize use of resources and optimize co- design opportunities

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 and develop intersectoral responses to co-design programs and services that are agile and sustainable. Working with people with lived and living experience and community agencies, the opportunity to develop and embed improvements across the system becomes possible.

2022 Business Plan & 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 early years and childcare 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 childcare.

The pandemic continued to greatly affect childcare and early learning programs in 2021. Many of the second- and third-year action items from the Early Learning and Child-Care Five-Year Service Plan were put on hold while the Early Years Team was reacting, planning and implementing the “new normal” for early learning and childcare programs during the pandemic.

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. This order did not apply to Licensed Family Home Child Care Agencies. The province announced that Licensed Child Care agencies could start to re-open on June 12, 2020, if they adhered to the enhanced health and safety protocols. Since reopening in June 2020, licensed childcare and child and family programs have had to continuously adapt programs to meet the ever-changing health and safety protocols and enhanced reporting requirements due to the pandemic.

The Early Years Division led and continues to lead several key initiatives to support children, families, operators and the community during the continued pandemic. From March 17, 2020, to September 1, 2021, and beyond the main areas of focus were:

- As required, implementation of Emergency Child Care (ECC) for Northumberland front-line workers. In 2021, School Age ECC was in effect in Northumberland from January 4 to January 22 and then from April 19 to June 30.
- The continued expansion of virtual EarlyON Child and Family support services and expanded outdoor programming.
- To work closely with the Haliburton, Kawartha and Pine Ridge District Health Unit (HKPRDHU) and the Licensing Branch of the Ministry of Education (MEDU) to determine the safest way to operate



- To provide children, parents/caregivers and educators with ongoing supports for children with special needs whether at home during closure periods or in a licensed childcare setting

The Early Years Team will continue to work with HKPRDHU and the Ministry of Education as the pandemic continues to impact programs and services into 2022.

Prior Year Accomplishments

Thriving & Inclusive Communities

Licensed Child Care

- Updated Service Agreements for agencies that operate in multiple service area and/or are multidisciplinary to ensure early years funds are being spent appropriately.
- Updated Cross-jurisdictional Service Agreements with neighbouring CMSMs.
- Continue to manage complicated funding guidelines and reconciliation processes to ensure Operators continued to have sufficient funding to support ongoing operations due to the pandemic.
- Provided additional financial support through the Federal Safe Restart and Reinvestment Funding 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 transition 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.
- Ongoing waitlist survey with operators to assist in monitoring childcare demand.
- Pilot project to expand Licensed Home Child Care (LHCC), especially in rural underserved areas, by adding Compass Early Learning and Care as a LHCC operator.
- In partnership with the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board (KPRDSB), supported Northumberland YMCA with opening two new School Age Programs in Colborne Public School and Roseneath Public School. Both sites are licensed for 26 kindergarten age and 30 school age children.
- In partnership with KPRDSB, submitted a request to the MEDU for the additional funds required to build the infant room to the Brighton Children's Centre located in Brighton Public School. Northumberland County committed \$350,000 for the addition of an on-



site kitchen. Request for the additional funds and approval for the County to do the kitchen addition was approved.

- Joint submissions with Peterborough, Victoria, Northumberland, Clarington Catholic District School Board (PVNCCDS) and Mon Avenir Conseil Scolaire Catholique to request full licensed childcare programs be included in their new builds if their applications are successful.
- In partnership with the lead agency Compass Early Learning and Care and numerous community partners, will be participating in a project called “Newcomer Home Child Care Expansion in Central Ontario” supported through funding from Women and Gender Equality Canada.

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 Centres and Beehive Day Care Centre, continued to adapt and adjust programs and supports for children and families due to the ongoing pandemic.
- Continued to expand virtual and outdoor programming options for families to support social distancing options. Some examples of programming offered:
 - Interactive videos created by the team that showcase interactive games, songs and activities that support play and family participation.
 - Provision of other resources including links to videos/webinars, articles, and other websites that offer information about early learning activities for families to enjoy from the safety and comfort of their own home.
 - One on one support to families who reach out.
 - Virtual program for new parents.
 - Outdoor programs include Outdoor Adventures, Explore Northumberland, Hiking Babies, Walk with EarlyON
- In partnership with Five Counties Children’s Centre (FCCC) provide information packages to parents of newborn babies to introduce EarlyON Child and Family Centres and early years supports in Northumberland.
- In partnership with the HKPRDHU, hosted COVID-19 vaccination clinics at EarlyON locations throughout Northumberland.
- Continued supported of the Triple P, Positive Parenting Program:
 - Continued, in partnership with other funders, the Triple P Coordinator position with Rebound Child & Youth Services.
 - Virtual Triple P, Positive Parenting one on one and group sessions.
- EarlyON partners collaborated with the Ontario Works team to deliver virtual engagement session for families with children under the age of 6 to connect with broader supports through EarlyON.

- Three intakes
- 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.
- Completed grant applications requesting funds to improve access, program delivery and enhanced health and safety protocols.
 - FCCC to support an accessible playground for program delivery and increased outdoor activities which promote social distancing.
 - Rotary Club of Campbellford increase access and health and safety improvements.

Special Needs Resourcing

- Resource Consultants continued to play a vital role in supporting operators, educators, care givers and children through the pandemic.
- 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.
- Increased demand for enhanced supports due to increased needs related to the pandemic.

Indigenous Led Early Years Program

- Indigenous Early Years Team moved into dedicated space in the EarlyON space at FCCC.
- One of the EarlyON Child and Family Centre rooms at FCCC is focused on Indigenous programming.
- Indigenous Early Years Team continued the coordination of community connections with Alderville First Nations, local Indigenous organizations, and Indigenous early years stakeholders.
- Delivered a virtual series of Cultural Competency Training sessions for Early Years and Community and Social Services partners.
- Developed an Orange Shirt Day campaign for September 30 to raise awareness and create meaningful discussion about the legacy of Canada's Residential School System, as part of the ongoing process of reconciliation.
- Indigenous Early Years Team developed a new website, "Language of the Land" to teach Anishinaabemowin—the language of the Anishinaabe people. Child-friendly characters provide cultural tales, word games, and language learning at languageontheland.com.

Capacity Support for Early Years Operators/Educators

- The Early Years team's new model was critical to providing ongoing supports to educators, children and families during the pandemic. The emphasis is on supporting the transfer of knowledge to practice with direct supports and virtual learning.
- Continued training all Early Childhood Educators in the Positive Early Childhood Education (PECE) program, an extension of The Positive Parenting Program (Triple P).
- Continued to support, in partnership with Five Counties Children's Centre, multiple learning opportunities focused on early learning professional development and quality assurance.
- Key Highlights
 - Self-Regulation Sessions
 - Behaviour Management
 - 2021 month of May, "May We Inspire You"
 - Planned to rejuvenate and celebrate Northumberland early years staff who worked throughout the pandemic supporting children and families.
 - One night a week for 4 weeks, virtually offered a fun, entertaining educational activity.
 - Last event was comedian, Susan Stewart, "You Gotta Laugh". Each participant also received a gift card for dinner.
 - Networks: Pedagogical, Cook's and Preschool
 - Mental health session to support Educators as they offer programs during the pandemic.
 - Proclamation October 21, 2021 is Child Care Worker and Early Childhood Educator Day.

Quality Improvement Framework

- The implementation of the Community Learning Quality Reflection Tool, that outlines a continuous cycle of evaluation/monitoring, goal setting, training and improvement initiatives, mentorship, and transfer to practice to accommodate and support the integration of Licensed Child Care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres as a single system was put on hold due to the pandemic. In fall 2021, the gradual role out of the tool was reinstated.
- The Quality Tool was updated to address the updated *How Does Learning Happen* document that was developed to correspond with the new enhanced health and safety and other protocols that were developed in response to the pandemic.



Early Years Service Planning and Community Engagement

- Fall 2021, implemented a Community Environmental Scan to assist with planning for current and future demands for licensed childcare in Northumberland.
- Continue to expand social media platforms to be sure information is being shared and is more user friendly.
- Continue to plan and partner with our School Board partners.
- Surveyed families to:
 - Inform program planning during the ongoing pandemic health and safety regulations.

Youth Support Programs

- Continued to pilot the Community and Social Services Trusteeship Program with Rebound Child and Youth Services. This program was a collaborative approach funded through 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*). The Trustee representative from Rebound Child & Youth Services is a member of the Homelessness Co-Ordinated Response Team (HCRT).
- Continued to support youth service delivery which improved existing services offered by Rebound Children and Youth Services, by reducing wait times, increasing access and helping to address the significant service gap with younger youth and children under the age of 12 (connected to EarlyON).
- In partnership with the KPRDSB and YMCA Northumberland, evaluating the model of the TEAM program for young mothers and working to ensure outcomes are being met.

Leadership in Change

Continuity Planning

- As a division that serves the residents of Northumberland County in both ongoing financial assistance in all departments 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 pandemic tested our planning and demonstrated gaps that needed to be filled. While not finalized in 2021, Business Continuity planning is well underway and will continue into 2022.



- As a result of the pandemic, the main Community & Social Services office remained open while reducing the necessity for in-person visits by members of the public. Community & Social Services was required to shift services and adapt to new technologies to continue to provide urgent, emergency, and ongoing supports to the community. This included:
 - Collaboration with the Information Technology team to deploy additional technology resources in order to support tele-commuting for staff, while reducing service delays for the public.
 - Continuing to support team members in delivering client-based/operator support services over the telephone or online.
 - Implementation of acceptance of digital documents, including documents sent by email or text to staff to reduce in-person visits to the office; and
 - Increased awareness of physical distancing and emphasis on cleaning common touchpoints throughout the office.

Data Validity, Measurement of Impact

- Member of Canadian Community Economic Development Network to establish a Northumberland Community Data Consortium.
- 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.
- Continue to better link data collection to Ministry of Education reporting requirements.

Professional Development

- Learning and Development opportunities continued to be offered in the virtual environment. All staff have access to webinars offered through the Ontario Municipal Social Service Association (OMSSA) on a range of topics.
- All staff completed an online Suicide Awareness Training and internal training on Health and Safety Incident Reporting.

2022 Service Objectives & Initiatives

Thriving & Inclusive Communities

Licensed Child Care

- Continue to support childcare operators as they provide care to children and support to families during the ongoing pandemic. This includes support for increased PPE, enhanced cleaning and increased administrative burden.
 - If some of the enhanced protocols remain in place, we need to ensure there is funding available to support. Without government supports there may be a need for operators to increase fees to remain viable.
- Continue to monitor and plan for Provincial, Ministry of Education funding reductions that will have an impact on the Early Years budget. Due to the pandemic, we are unsure if the proposed changes for 2022 will be implemented. There has been an increase in administrative burden put on CMSMs with COVID-19 reporting that will continue into 2022. There will be challenges if the proposed reduction of administration funding from 10% to 2.5% is implemented although the 2022 budget was balanced using the proposed funding changes.
- Continue to work with the childcare operators on exploring new ideas to improve access to licensed childcare for families. Focus will be on addressing affordability.
- Review and update the operator's budget reporting tool and fee increase request process.
- Investigating the establishment of a market rate fee scale.
- Implement Fee Subsidy Attendance monitoring program.
- Investigate opportunities to assist operators with salary grid guidelines.
- Develop a surplus fund policy for non-profit operators.
- Continue to engage Child Care Operators and their Boards in working on process and policies to support program viability and enhanced accountability.
- Continue to work with the licensed home childcare sector that compensates operators and agencies in a transparent and equitable way.
- Continue to increase public awareness of licensed home childcare as a viable option for families which includes a focus on recruitment of home providers.
- Explore the partnership with Compass early Learning and Care on the "Newcomer Home Child Care Expansion in Central Ontario" project.
- Continue to work with all our school board partners on expanding licensed childcare in schools.
- In partnership with KPRDSB, build the infant room and kitchen addition to Brighton Children's Centre.

- 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 support EarlyON programming that is meeting the needs of children and families in relation to the enhanced health and safety protocols as per the pandemic and the updated *How Does Learning Happen* document.
- Create tracking tools to accurately capture the data for virtual programs and services.
- Continue to build on the communication strategy that focuses on increasing community awareness of the free child and family programming offered at EarlyON Child and Family Centre and virtually, including:
 - New social media platforms.
 - Enhanced exposure on various social media platforms.
 - Participate in community events.
 - Enhance partnerships with local schools and attend kindergarten nights, welcome BBQ's, etc. (when allowed in person or virtual).
- Continue to build programs where community experts meet directly with families to discuss specific areas i.e., Occupational Therapists from FCCC discuss weighted blankets.
- Continue to enhance connections between County departments to explore opportunities to partner or support County events including virtual/in person tours of County programs such as the MRF and the forest.
- Continue to build on the Ontario Works/EarlyON pilot.
 - The collaborative program with the EarlyON Centres will continue in 2022 through a hybrid model, incorporating both virtual and in-person programming supports.
 - The program will be geared towards the Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP) participants and other interested Ontario Works participants.
 - We will begin to explore opportunities to incorporate Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) participants into this programming.
- Explore opportunities for community partner agencies and the Community and Social Service Department to offer their programs and services at EarlyON locations, enabling them to provide services across the County. Building on the Hub philosophy.
- Implement a five-year review of EarlyON Child and Family Centre Model in accordance with the RFP/Service Agreement process.

Early Years Expansion

- Continue to investigate with KPRDSB, PVNCCDSB and Mon Avenir Conseil Scolaire Catholique the possibility of capital builds and retrofits for early years spaces in their schools as per the Province's Schools First Approach.
- 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 space for community partners
 - Community use room for group sessions
 - Direct connections to other early years programming. i.e. Infant Hearing, Occupational and Speech Therapy

Special Needs Resourcing

- Resource Consultants will continue to support educators with the implementation of the Learning Quality Reflection Tool. As *How Does Learning Happen* has been updated to reflect the health and safety regulations due to the pandemic, this support is even more crucial as educators adjust their practice to meet these needs.
- Direct more resources to frontline to build capacity with educators to better support children with unique needs.
- Explore opportunities to support inclusion through programming or equipment. Since the pandemic there has been an increase in the demand and types of equipment required. i.e., all carpet removed, mats required.

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.
- Develop programs to be offered on site in Indigenous EarlyON room.
- 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.
- Continue to offer Cultural Awareness Training in person and virtual for Early Years and Community and Social services partners. This includes establishing set sessions for new staff or staff refreshers.
- Expand workshops to include a Medicine Walk and Medicine Bundle
- Focused on the early years, continue to expand on the book studies. Areas of focus are the 7 Grandfather's Teaching Toolkit workshop and the Indigenous documentation workshop.

- Build on the Indigenous Perspectives Network.

Capacity Building Support for Early Years Operators/Educators

- Based on survey data, in partnership with FCCC, continue to offer multiple learning opportunities through various mediums.
- Continue to investigate webinars and other online training opportunities to support educators by minimizing time requirements and ensuring social distancing.
- Continue to train all Early Childhood Educators in the Positive Early Childhood Education (PECE) program, an extension of The Positive Parenting Program (Triple P).
- Provide support for the educators to adapt to the new *How Does Learning Happen* document that was adjusted in response to the new reality of offering early years programs during and after the pandemic.
- Due to a greater emphasis on outdoor programming in response to the pandemic, this will be a focus for 2022 learning opportunities.
- Leadership/mentorship training for Pedagogical leads.

Quality Improvement Framework

- Continue the implementation of Learning Quality Reflection Tool that has enhanced pieces to support changes due to the pandemic across all Early Years Programs.
- Focus on a continuous cycle of evaluation/monitoring, goal setting, training and improvement initiatives, mentorship, and transfer to practice
- Build a framework to monitor Service Agreement accountability measures.

Early Years Service System Planning and Community Engagement

- Update the five-year Early Years Service System Plan's key priorities, in partnership with community partners, to reflect the government's changes to the framework. The Plan will continue to be data driven and focus on the outcome indicators, understanding due to the pandemic we have put on hold some initiatives.
- Form an Early Years Planning table that is specific to supporting the vision of EarlyOn Child and Family Centres being utilized as hubs. This table will connect to the larger Northumberland Children and Youth Collaborative.
- Connect with nontraditional and corporate partners to seek opportunities for program sponsorship through in kind or financial support for Early Years Programming.
- Engage lower tier municipalities and recreation departments in partnership opportunities with space and programming.

Youth Support Programs

- Continue to support the joint Community and Social Services Trusteeship Program, by reviewing opportunities with Ontario Works and Homelessness.
- Continue to assist Rebound Child & Family Centre in meeting demand for established programs and create stronger connections between these programs and EarlyON Centres.
- In partnership with the KPRDSB and YMCA Northumberland, investigate new opportunities to support all young parents, not just mothers, across Northumberland.

Leadership in Change

Data Validity, Measurement of Impact

- Continue to develop outcomes and measures for all programming, including Early Years Service System Plan.
- Continue to work collaboratively with other department resources, especially the Community Services DAC to develop a Data Catalogue for the department.
 - Will enable the safe collection, storage, indexing, access, and analysis of data available throughout divisions across the department.
 - to build and maintain data sources that will support future programming and operational needs, including the development of key performance indicators and streamline collection methods.
- Implement a Cross-County Parent Satisfaction Survey for Child Care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres.
- Implement a Cross-County Staff Satisfaction Survey for Child Care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres staff.
- Investigate data sharing agreements with relevant partners.
- File audit function for fee subsidy will be reviewed to ensure it focuses on accountability.

Professional Development

- Continue to review opportunities for staff to participate in various learning and development opportunities virtual and in person (when allowed).
- Continue building on the department's professional development training series, with continued focus on customer service, the client experience, self-care and Emergency Response as it relates to Social Services.

- Learning and development opportunities will continue to be offered to staff within the department, to further enhance skillsets required in providing quality customer service and case management planning.
- Continue to support the corporate direction of LEAN.

Business Continuity Planning

- Business Continuity planning for the Early Years division, alongside the Community & Social Services department as a whole, will continue in 2022. 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 solutions that were implemented in 2021, and to provide awareness for staff of the requirements during an emergency.

Long Term Plan & Strategic Objectives

Thriving & Inclusive Communities

- The overall goal is to continue to build a high-quality, accessible and affordable early years and childcare system within the provincial funding allocations.
- Continue to monitor and plan for Provincial, Ministry of Education funding reductions that will have an impact on the Early Years budget. Due to the pandemic, we are unsure when and if proposed changes will be implemented. There has been an increased administrative burden placed on CMSMs, in addition to a greater demand for funding, in order to address the pandemic.
- Ongoing evaluation and monitoring of the five years Early Years Service System Plan.
- Continue to investigate opportunities to create additional licensed spaces for 0 – 4-year-olds with a focus on infants to address waitlist demands across the County.
- Continue to partner with KPRDSB, PVNCCDSB and Mon Avenir Conseil Scolaire Catholique on capital build and retrofits for early years spaces.
- Through Indigenous led programming, continue to increase access to licensed childcare and family and support programs for Indigenous, Métis and Inuit families in partnership with Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre and Alderville First Nation.
- Continue to look for ways to support affordability of childcare in partnership with increasing salaries of educators.

Capacity Building Support for Early Years Operators

- Develop a workforce strategy to support recruitment and retention of early years and childcare professionals in Northumberland.



- Seek 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.

Learning Quality Reflection Tool

- Implement provincial and local mechanisms for measuring program quality as part of the overall Early Years outcomes and measurement strategy.
- Continue to implement the County's Learning Quality Reflection Tool.

Early Years Service System Planning and Community Engagement

- In conjunction with the Northumberland Children and Youth Collaborative, continue to increase awareness and access of quality early years programs.
- Continue to find opportunities to build on the Hub model.

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.

Professional Development for Frontline Staff

- Continue to build internal capacity through learning and sharing opportunities.
- Find efficiencies utilizing Lean approaches to examine internal processes in order to meet targets and outcomes.

2022 Business Plan & Budget

Food Security Services

In March of 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic began, and throughout all of 2021, the Food 4 All program has made ongoing changes in the daily warehouse operation to respond to the COVID situation. Throughout the pandemic, Food 4 All has remained open to assist local food banks 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 being done within the Food Security Services division has focused on the Food 4 All operation. During the past 2 years, additional work has been done while working with the Community Services manager to expand the work of Food Security Services to look at broader issues that affect and impact food security in Northumberland.

In Q1 of 2021, initial discussions and plans were made with the Director of Community and Social Services, the Community Services Manager, and the Food Security Services Manager regarding a 5-year phased plan specific to the broader issues of food security and including the Food 4 All operation.

The 5-year plan will include a Food 4 All membership fee review (2021), inventory management upgrade implementation and broader alignment with health plans (2022), governance structure review (2023), implementation of governance structure changes (2024), and overall ongoing monitoring and review (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

- In Q1, Q2 and early Q3 of 2021, we continued to utilize a limited number of volunteers within the Food 4 All operation to ensure the health and wellbeing of both volunteers and County staff.
- Additional volunteers were brought back to assist in latter Q3 and Q4 of 2021



Increased Local food Purchasing

- As we continue to purchase and distribute healthier food items for local food banks and school nutrition programs, we work to increase the number of local suppliers we utilize 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, 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 on the 4th annual “All Hands-on Deck” food drive in August of 2021
 - 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 4 years of this event, more than 16,000 pounds of food and personal care items and more than \$10,000.00 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 was suspended with plans to re-schedule at an appropriate time in the future
- Since the pandemic began in March of 2020 and throughout 2021, there were significant financial donations made to Food 4 All/Food Security from the community.

Food Security/Community Services

- Continued work to on the alignment between food security and community services and identified and planned joint priorities
- Continued to promote the foodhelpnorthumberland.cioc.ca website reference tool for contact information for food banks, community gardens, school nutrition programs and meal programs. This tool includes a QR code to support ease of access to the information
 - This site has been 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.
- Shared operational updates and discussed food security plans that will be worked on collaboratively and continued to be developed in 2022 and moving forward



Financial Policy – Membership Fees

- After developing our new financial policy in 2018 we continued to use new processes (based on the policy) in 2021.
 - 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 totaling more than 6 times our annual donation budget have been received during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of these donations were made through our online donation tool.
- In working with the manager of Community Services and in starting phase 1 of our 5-year phased plan, we reviewed the Food 4 All membership fee structure.
 - Created and promoted an online survey using the Bang the Table tool that was targeted to existing Food 4 All members
 - 56 surveys were completed that helped to provide valuable feedback regarding our current and future membership fee structure
 - Met with County finance staff to examine different fee structures and reviewed financial implications of each
 - Identified a proposed new membership fee structure to be presented at Social Services committee for endorsement and support in Q4 of 2021
 - New membership fee structure that will be phased in over 2 years (beginning in 2022) has been created with plans to include in the County's 2022 Fees and Charges By-Law
- In working within our revised Donation Policy, it has provided us with more flexibility with how donations are being utilized and were able support new initiatives including the Northumberland Eats program.

Warehouse Technology

- During late Q3 and Q4 of 2021 we have started to source out a new inventory management software program to use within the Food 4 All operation. The acquisition of the new system is being 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.
 - 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 that is required with our old system.
- Ability to send out product recalls to member groups when required
- 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)

Thriving & Inclusive Communities

COVID-19 Response

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 1.5 million pounds of food and essential items distributed from Food 4 All to local food banks, school nutrition programs and community agencies (valued at approximately \$4 million)
- More than 140 deliveries made to local food banks and emergency shelters
- 4500+ emergency food hampers distributed to local food banks
- \$41,449.16 in grants provided to local food banks and emergency food programs
- 4131 separate individuals (26% under 18) assisted at local food banks
- Working with the OAFVC and United Way Northumberland we are distributing 18,000 servings of frozen soup that was produced at the OAFVC
- Worked with the Housing division and Facilities staff to source out, pack and deliver more than 800 bags including PPE and cleaning supplies to housing tenants located throughout Northumberland

School Nutrition Program Assistance

- Although the pandemic impacted the school year, we continued to work with “School 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 2020/2021 school year we had our second 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
- 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
- Worked with Local Food for Local Good to help provide product for 950 fresh and 950 healthy snack bags to 121 families (total of 430 people) that were delivered to students learning at home during the pandemic

Food Distribution from Social Services Office

- After implementing a LEAN yellow belt project in 2019, we continued to utilize the new process for distributing and tracking food to the clients that we assisted during 2021

Hunger Action Month Activities (September 2021)

- Fourth annual Hunger Action Month activities implemented in September of 2021
- Proclamation by County Council recognizing September as Hunger Action Month in Northumberland County
- Sharing our “30 Ways in 30 Days 2021” calendar electronically through via social media and on printed copies through the Northumberland News and through local food programs to show the community members how they can help
- Released our 4th annual Feed the Change report (2021) which shares food security data and Food 4 All distribution statistics from 2020.
- Made daily social media posts promoting HAM to engage the community and offer ways they could support the initiative
- Promoted Northumberland Eats as part of HAM

Milk 4 Families Program Review (Ongoing)

- Continued to examine the Milk 4 Families program to ensure maximum value for our investment
- Continuing to distribute increased quantities of liquid milk to local families
- Continue to monitor gift card allocations made monthly to local programs to reflect their individual client needs more accurately

Food Banks Northumberland – Standards of Service

- Continued our 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 during the pandemic
- 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 with 2 partners for waste diversion
 - Food waste is picked up weekly by 2 local farmers and diverted from the local landfill
 - Total of approximately 9,000lbs of waste diverted in Q1 + Q2 of 2021
- Continued partnership with Second Harvest and their FoodRescue.ca program to access rescued food from donors. This includes a new partnership established with Shoppers Drug Mart in Cobourg where we began making bi-weekly pickups from their location.
- Expanded our partnership with Walmart in Cobourg which now includes weekly pick-ups of donated fresh, frozen, and non-perishable items
- Began new partnership with Burnham Family farm in Cobourg and picked up more than 1500 pounds of donated fresh produce including apples and corn

Food Banks Northumberland – Professional Development

- Due to the COVID-19 situation our in-person meetings had to be replaced with teleconference meetings and zoom calls
- Plans to return to in-person meetings as soon as possible

Revised/Updated Warehouse Operational Policies

- Original warehouse policies were created and implemented in 2015
- This policy is reviewed annually and adjusted as necessary.
- New policy document is being kept as an electronic file to assist with ease of distribution and ease of updating whenever necessary.

2022 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 we continue to expand our focus to include both the daily warehouse operation and the broader issues that affect food security, the work has included the 4 pillars of food security (Availability, Access, Utilization and Stability) since 2019. Beginning March of 2020, the focus has been on the *availability* of and *access* to food assistance. The COVID-19 pandemic forced us make changes to our daily operation ensuring that we were able to continue to provide support and assistance to local food banks and food



assistance programs during the pandemic. Looking forward into 2022 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 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 a 5-year phased plan which began in 2021 looking at membership fees, we will move forward and complete the implementation of the new inventory management system in 2022 along with the new fee structure. Finally, as part of the phased plan, we will focus on the work being done within Food Security Services and begin to align it more closely with the broader health plans and recommendations both within our department and within our entire community.

Economic Prosperity & Innovation

Volunteer Opportunities/Development

- We will continue to provide volunteer opportunities which will provide interested individuals with marketable skills (fork-lift training, First Aid/CPR) to improve their opportunities to gain employment and assistance in our daily operation.

Increase Local food Purchasing

- As we continue to purchase healthier food options, we will strive to make these purchases from local producers/suppliers whenever possible and we will continue to look for new local suppliers whenever possible.

Sustainable Growth

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

- Ensuring financial accountability for all donations that are received (Access)
 - Following up on work started in 2020 regarding new donation SOP
 - Issuing personalized thank you notes for every donation received
- Working to maximize the use of excess food items that are available at the warehouse (Access)
 - Working with community partners including the OAFVC to create simple items using existing excess ingredients, pancake mix as one example (carried over from 2021)
 - Longer term plans will require creative approaches to be able to ensure the needs of the customer are being met without increasing costs or creating barriers to access



- Planning for this including viability, cost, risk, and growth potential will be determined during 2022 where we will provide opportunities to engage our warehouse members and individuals with lived experiences with the co-design of these new products
- Food waste (Availability)
 - Continue to work with local retailers including Walmart and Shoppers Drug Mart to pick up donated food items
 - Look for new partnerships with other local retailers (Giant Tiger and Metro), to pick up additional food items for distribution to local feeding programs and diversion from local land fills
 - Continue our 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
 - Develop plans to train case workers and counsellors to ask people about food, to tell them about where to get food
 - We will partner with programs that promote healthy food and cooking to encourage the uptake and promotion of these programs
 - We will work to develop programs and provide information that move people towards skill building and motivation to prepare their own meals

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 our BCP in 2019, the COVID situation expediated our need to have a plan in place and lots of work was done on the plan 2020 and 2021.
- In 2022 we will complete the work we started in 2020 and finalize our business continuity plan for the warehouse operation to ensure minimal disruption to our service to our members during emergency situations.
- We will make sure we include appropriate information from Feed Ontario's provincial BCP with ours



Thriving & Inclusive Communities

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

- Ensuring financial accountability 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
 - 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
 - Develop plans to train case workers and counsellors to ask people about food, to tell them about where to get food
 - We will partner with programs that promote healthy food and cooking to encourage the uptake and promotion of these programs
- We will work to develop programs and provide information that move people towards skill building and motivation to prepare their own meals

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
- Begin working with the Community Services data coordinator to create reports using the Link2Feed hunger tracking software and the new inventory management software to help with decision making and planning for the Food 4 All operation and food security
- 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

Long Term Plan & Strategic Objectives

We will continue working on our 5-year phased plan regarding the Food 4 All operation and food security. This includes the following milestones, 2021 membership fee review, 2022 new inventory system and membership fee implementation, 2023 review of governance models, 2024 implementation, 2025 evaluation

Economic Prosperity & Innovation

Local food Purchasing/Investment

- We will continue to use local producers/suppliers whenever possible for food purchases for the operation
- We will look to source out new local suppliers for additional food purchases

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
- Work with other County departments to enhance service delivery to community partner agencies

2022 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 Social Housing Master Plan and the NCHC Strategic 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.

Prior Year Accomplishments

Economic Prosperity & Innovation

Northumberland County Affordable Housing Strategy

- Continued working with the Affordable Housing Strategy Working Group to implement the Affordable Housing Strategy focusing; completed first data collection exercise for the Housing and Homelessness Plan Annual Report.
- Refined data collection tools created opportunities for networking and dialogue on planning policies to encourage the creation of affordable housing options.
- Launched the Northumberland County Affordable Housing Grant Program to support the creation of additional affordable rental units across the County.
- Worked with member municipalities to promote available incentives to developers for the creation of affordable rental housing options.
- Worked with member municipalities with Affordable Housing Community Improvement Programs to support implementation.
- Initiated a discussion group with service managers across the province to share best practices and learn from others providing municipally funded affordable housing strategy programs.



- Continued working to identify opportunities for land acquisition with member municipalities and other sources for the development of shovel-ready and funding-ready projects.
- Began work with the Northumberland Affordable Housing Committee's Landlord Liaison Committee to further landlord engagement strategies to support the creation and preservation of affordable housing units through rent supplements and other subsidy programs.

Sustainable Growth

Social Housing Master Plan/NCHC Strategic Asset Management Plan

- This project has been significantly stalled by the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically the delays in the completion of the Building Condition Audit project.
- Worked with Housing Services Corporation to continue progressing on the project as possible throughout 2021 while waiting for the completion of the required studies.
- Began the implementation of AssetPlanner for the NCHC portfolio for stronger capital planning and asset management initiatives.

Elgin Park Redevelopment

- Worked with the Major Capital Project Team, supporting departments and design consulting team to achieve construction start in Fall 2021.
- Secured financing for the remaining of funds for the full construction through CMHC's Co-Investment Fund and a debenture from Infrastructure Ontario for the remaining required financing.
- Partnered with Habitat for Humanity Northumberland to salvage material from existing units in Phase One prior to demolition. Partnered with Cobourg Fire to utilize vacant units for training exercises.
- Successfully rehoused all remaining tenants in Phase One for the initial phase of construction.

473 Ontario Street

- Entered a Memorandum of Understanding with Ontario Aboriginal Housing services, Habitat for Humanity Northumberland and the NCHC to jointly develop 62 units of affordable and attainable rental housing.
- Continued working with project partners and legal counsel to develop governance structure and binding agreements for development.
- With project partners, successfully received pre-construction funding from the



Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

- Initiated pre-construction activities, including a net-zero feasibility study, and initiated the design and construction management delivery processes.

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

- Completed operational reviews for non-profit and co-operative housing providers with safety protocols in place considering COVID-19.
- Continue with HSC to identify opportunities for improvement within operational review processes and templates.
- Work with housing providers to continue exploring opportunities to further viability of each housing provider.
- Supported community housing providers in implementation provincial legislation changes including the 2021 rent freeze and RGI simplification.

Community Housing Asset Management

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

Northumberland County Housing Corporation (NCHC) Governance

- Finalized and adopted NCHC visual identity work, including the creation of a logo, templates and branding strategy.
- Initiated a complete review of all NCHC policies. Initiated the creation of Standard Operating Procedures for the maintenance of NCHC facilities.
- Completed the first NCHC Strategic Plan outlining the strategic direction of the NCHC with the leadership and direction of the Board of Directors.

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 cross-departmental presentations.
- Completed cross-departmental training with Facilities Division to support increasing understanding of housing legislation and role of landlord and tenants. Continued to identify processes and clarify expectations in the implementation of the purchased services agreement.



- Continued COVID-19 protocols including:
 - Increased cleaning and disinfecting; installation of electronic messaging boards in common areas; installation of hand sanitization stations throughout buildings; etc.
- Introduced mandatory tenant insurance as part of all new rent supplement tenants, planned for initiation of mandatory tenant insurance for all new NCHC tenants as a part of the policy review.

Strategic Asset Management for the NCHC

- Project delayed due to restrictions of the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- Continued working with HSC as a part of the Social Housing Master Plan to complete a strategic asset management plan for the NCHC and initiated the use of AssetPlanner to manage long-term capital planning, monitoring changing building condition and other key projects.
- Completed installation of a passenger lift at 8 King Street, Colborne, Ontario through investment from the Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative.
- Complete the replacement of 11 balconies at 24 Queen Street, Port Hope, Ontario.
- Continue to implement the 10-year capital plan, recognizing any potential required changes through the Building Condition Assessments.
- Continued implementing the facility policy and process review to ensure compliance with legislation, adherence to best practices and consideration of risk mitigation.

Housing Reserve Forecast and Planning

- Initiated a review of the Housing Reserves 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

- Continued implementation of the provincially and federally funded Social Infrastructure Fund (SIF) Housing Allowance and Rent Supplement Programs. Began 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 2020/2021 projects and manage delays as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Continued the implementation of COCHI and OPHI provincial and federal funding in Northumberland County. Investments being made in 2021 include:
 - Home repair projects through Renovate Northumberland, in partnership with Habitat for Humanity Northumberland.
 - Community Housing capital repair projects through OPHI and aligned with initial 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.

Expansion of Rent Supplement Programming

- Continued the expansion and implementation the Made in Northumberland Rent Supplement Program, to support households on the centralized waitlist obtain rent-geared-to-income (RGI) housing.

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.

Tenant Engagement

- Continue the delivery of tenant programming during COVID-19, including ongoing partnerships with the Northumberland Community Health Centres, and a partnership with Food4All for fresh produce delivery and PPE/disinfecting kits to all NCHC tenants.



Indigenous Engagement

- Worked with the Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre to implement an MOU to bring urban Indigenous services to Northumberland County, developing referral processes and procedures between the County and the Friendship Centre. Support delivery of Indigenous Cultural Competency Training to external community agencies in support of the MOU and program referral process.
- Worked with the Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services, and partners on the development of affordable housing at 473 Ontario Street, based on the principles of reconciliation.

Leadership in Change

Implementation of Housing Retention Framework

- Continued the implementation of the housing retention model of community housing, including the creation of tools, training, policies, and procedures.

Upgrade of YARDI Information Management System

- In partnership with the IT department, NCHC, CSU and Finance implemented the required upgrade of the information management system used by the NCHC for tenant relations and rent supplement programming.

Ten Year Housing and Homelessness Plan

- Completion of the 2020 Annual Report and submission to County Council and the ministry for approval as legislatively required.
- Worked with Community Services Division to review key action areas to begin broader implementation of the plan.
- Developed data templates for the collection and reporting of relevant data for annual reporting.

Service Manager RGI Directives and NCHC Policy Review

- Continued 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. Finalized and released imperative directives for providers for immediate implementation as it relates to legislative changes including the 2021 rent freeze and RGI simplification.
- Continued the review of all existing NCHC policies and the introduction of new policies to ensure alignment with provincial legislation and provide greater clarity to tenants and NCHC staff as directed by the NCHC Board of Directors.



- Began the project to review and develop a suite of Standard Operating Procedures for Facilities Services.

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

- Implemented RGI simplification as required by the province, beginning on July 1, 2021.
- Provided virtual training and support to County and community housing provider staff on the changes to rent calculation processes.
- Continued collaborating with OMSSA and AMO on providing feedback and advocacy points on the provincial changes to housing strategy and policy.

Housing Provider Administrative Support Process Review

- In partnership with Finance, worked with Housing Services Corporation to undertake a review of the current administrative support process for community housing providers. Established a revised process to reduce duplication and provide improved customer service and response times for community housing providers.

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

- Initiated a file destruction project for all housing files scheduled for destruction.
- Transitioned Housing Services electronic files to being TOMRMS compliance. Continued to work toward TOMRMS compliance for all hard-copy files and NCHC electronic files.
- Continued working towards achieving TOMRMS compliance across all housing and NCHC electronic and hard-copy files.

Business Continuity Planning

- Continued working with the Community and Social Services department and the Health and Safety/Emergency Planning department to support focusing on business continuity activities in the event of an emergency, as demonstrated and tested during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Continued planning for, and implementation of measures, in preparation for continued waves of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Professional Development for Frontline Staff

- Continued building on the department's professional development training series, virtual training opportunities were provided through the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association and the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association. All staff also



completed an online Suicide Awareness Training and internal training on Health and Safety Incident Reporting.

- Housing Specific training included topics on RGI simplification, and a joint session with Facilities Session on the relevant housing legislations.

COVID-19 Pandemic Response

- Continued to provide high-quality services to clients in a remote and in-person environment.
- Implemented supportive measures for NCHC tenants to reduce the requirement to attend the office including alternate rent payment methods, installation of electronic messaging boards and joint lease signing and key pick up appointments.

2022 Service Objectives & Initiatives

Economic Prosperity & Innovation

Northumberland County Affordable Housing Strategy

- Continue working with the Affordable Housing Strategy Implementation Working Group to implement the Affordable Housing Strategy with the goal of identifying key implementation targets.
- Develop a fulsome implementation plan, including establishing a set of realistic targets to support the strategy's aspirational targets.
- Continue implementation 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.
- Continue to work toward implementing the foundational recommendations within the Affordable Housing Strategy.
- Continue working with member municipalities and other sources to develop a land bank of shovel-ready and funding-ready projects.
- Consider landlord engagement and education opportunities to support the creation of additional affordable housing units (both new and through rent supplement).
- Work toward the creation of an affordable housing taskforce that focuses on the development of a diverse range of housing options.

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.
- 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.
- Consider long-term capital investment programs to support the continued viability of community housing providers.
- Implement AssetPlanner for the NCHC portfolio for stronger capital planning and asset management initiatives.

Elgin Park Redevelopment

- Working with the Major Capital Project Team, oversee the construction of phase 1 of Elgin Park, ensuring funding reporting requirements are met throughout the project.
- Support tenants throughout the construction period, including initiating plans for rehousing in phase 1.
- Establish processes and policies for the introduction and management of market rent units alongside expanded waitlist for subsidized housing units and modified units.

473 Ontario Street

- Working with Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services, Habitat for Humanity Northumberland and the NCHC to advance pre-construction activities, including the substantial completion of design work.
- Working with project partners to advance the governance structure and development of a final operational vehicle.
- 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 Non-Profit and Co-operative Housing Providers

- Complete of operational reviews for non-profit and co-operative housing providers with safety protocols in place for COVID-19.
- Build on recommendations made by the HSC to implement improvements within



the operational review process and templates.

- Work with housing providers to continue exploring opportunities to further viability of each housing provider, in light of end of operating agreements and mortgages.
- Continue to build relationships with former federal housing providers and explore opportunities to collaborate.

Community Housing Asset Management

- Based on final recommendations from the Social 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.

Northumberland County Housing Corporation (NCHC) Governance

- Begin implementation of the NCHC Strategic Plan.
- Complete policy review of all NCHC policies, processes and procedures, and begin implementation and stakeholder/tenant education.
- Establish clear decision-making authorities including decisions requiring Board approval, Officer approval, and/or internal County department decision making processes.

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 increased safety protocols in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including increased cleaning and disinfecting, alternate rent payment options, etc.
- Consider the adoption and implementation of mandatory tenant insurance.
- Initiate the development of a fulsome Standard Operating Procedure manual for the full cycle of facilities/asset management for the NCHC.

Strategic Asset Management for the NCHC

- Finalize work with HSC as a part of the Social Housing Master Plan to

- complete a strategic asset management plan for the NCHC.
- Implement use of AssetPlanner to manage long-term capital planning, monitoring changing building condition and other key projects.
- Continue to implement the 10-year capital plan, recognizing any potential required changes through the Building Condition Assessments.
- Continue completing facility policy and process review to ensure compliance with legislation, adherence to best practices and consideration of risk mitigation.
- Continue to identify external funding sources and opportunities for the completion of key capital improvement projects at the NCHC.

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 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 projects and manage delays as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Develop investment plan for 2022/2023 upon receipt of funding allocations from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) Implementation

- Upon receipt of the 2022/2023 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-geared-to-income (RGI) housing.
- Shift subsidy calculation processes to support more households by considering max shelter rates for social assistance recipients.

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.

Tenant Engagement

- Continue the delivery of tenant programming during COVID-19, including ongoing partnerships with the Northumberland Community Health Centres and Food4All in the delivery of fresh produce delivery to all NCHC tenants.
- Consider opportunities to expand tenant programming within the NCHC and the broader community housing sector.



Indigenous Engagement

- Implement the referral program with Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre for the delivery of urban-Indigenous programming in Northumberland County.
- Continue the provision of Indigenous Cultural Competency Training as required to external community agencies and other County staff.
- Continue to meet with Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre to plan and expand relationship and consideration of funding opportunities to bring expand urban Indigenous programming in Northumberland.
- Continue to work with Department staff and others to educate and provide awareness of the new relationship and support referrals.

Leadership in Change

Implementation of Housing Retention Framework

- Continue the implementation of the housing retention model of community housing, including 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 2021 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.
- Finalize the review of all existing NCHC policies and the introduction of new policies to ensure alignment with provincial legislation and provide greater clarity to tenants and NCHC staff as directed by the NCHC Board of Directors.
- Provide training to community housing providers and County staff on new directives and legislation.



Implementation of Rent-Geared-to-Income Simplification, Community Housing Renewal Strategy and the ending of the 2021 Rent Freeze

- Continue the implementation of RGI simplification as required by the province, which began on July 1, 2021. Continue to provide training and clarification to County staff and community housing providers.
- Support tenants in the rent increases effective January 1, 2022 following the end of the 2021 Rent Freeze.
- Continue collaborating with OMSSA and AMO on providing feedback and advocacy points 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 light of 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.

Business Continuity Planning

- Continue working with the Health and Safety/Emergency Planning department to support focusing on business continuity activities in the event of an emergency.
- Continue planning and developing minimum service standards to ensure ongoing operations during an emergency or unforeseen incident which may impact the ability of continued operations.
- Continue planning for ongoing COVID-19 pandemic response and contingency development.



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. It is further anticipated that recommendations will be provided for training and onboarding of future staff into case management roles.

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 2022.

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 Emergency Response as it relates to Social Services.
- Learning and development opportunities will continue to be offered to staff within the department to further enhance skillsets required in providing quality customer service and case management planning.
- 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 an Affordable Housing Taskforce bringing together leaders throughout the County to plan for long-term opportunities to create new affordable housing stock that reflects various needs throughout the County.

Sustainable Growth

Social 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.
- 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.
- 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.

Northumberland County Housing Corporation Governance

- 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.



2022 Issue Paper

Housing Services Operations Supervisor

Purpose

This is a request to create an Operations Supervisor position within the Housing Services Division that would report to the Housing Services Manager. This position would support the successful operations of both the Housing Services Division and the Northumberland County Housing Corporation (NCHC).

Background

Northumberland County Housing Services is responsible for the oversight and administration of mandated programs and services as outlined in the *Housing Services Act, 2011* in its role as Service Manager and other affordable housing programs cost-shared by the provincial and federal governments. In addition, Housing Services is also responsible for the oversight and management of the Northumberland County Housing Corporation (NCHC), while also supporting the County's strategic priority of affordable housing.

The breadth of program areas and accompanying legislation is wide. At present, there are at least 8 provincial statutes that drive the work of the division including: *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*. The relationship between the Housing Services Division and the supporting legislation is made additionally complex in its role as a landlord in supporting the NCHC.

In addition, the Housing Services Division works closely with a large group of stakeholders in the successful delivery of programs and services. These stakeholders include internal departments and divisions, other levels of government, community agencies, community housing providers



and private developers delivering affordable housing, tenants, applicants, and other service users.

There is a wide range of programs and services currently overseen by the Housing Services division, as outlined in the below table:

Program Area	Scope of Work	Risk Considerations	Annual Financial Impacts
Community Housing Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop and administer community housing directives - Annual Reporting, oversight, operational reviews, and analysis - End of operating agreement/mortgages preparation and strategic planning - Overall state of good repair – asset management, future planning, viability, capital investment - Training, legislative support, tenant relations - Subsidy for all RGI households - Develop and implement Service Manager Directives/Local rules for housing providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Over \$100,000,000 asset oversight – non-profit and co-operative providers; over \$45,000,000 asset oversight for NCHC - Over 670 RGI tenancies and adherence to requirements - Projects at risk, required to follow legislative process in oversight and management - Provincial/Federal funding ends but legislative requirement to oversee remains with requirements to continue County levy investment 	<p>~\$3,000,000 (total budget – not including NCHC)</p> <p>Of which ~\$1,000,000 is non levy funding (provincial/federal funding)</p> <p>Administration costs covered within Housing Services Admin budget/staffing compliment</p>

<p>Provincial/ Federal Housing Programs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Receive annual allocations from provincial and federal governments - Administer/oversee programs including: Northumberland Renovates, Home Ownership Down Payment Support, Housing Allowances, Capital Repair for Community Housing Providers, Rental Housing Construction, Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit - Provided with annual allocations in one- to three-year tranches, required to create investment plans, annual and quarterly reporting, audits for both provincial and federal programming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If program funding is not spent in full, province can reallocate it - Heavy reporting burden, reconciliation to the \$0.01 in allocations and capital repairs - Cost matching requirements for Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative - Investments made according to strategic areas, consideration of allocations, number of residents served, etc. - Over 100 units created with private sector partners, continued audit and oversight of program guideline adherence and affordability criteria. 	<p>Current annual investment average between \$600,000 and \$1,000,000 in direct program funding delivery</p> <p>\$14,762,581 since 2014/2015</p> <p>Some administration costs covered – supports legal costs and program administration costs.</p> <p>Other administration costs (staff time) covered within Housing Services Administration Budget</p>
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<p>Centralized Waitlist</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oversee and administer centralized waitlist for rent-geared income housing (rent supplement, NCHC, non-profit and co-operative housing providers) - Assessing household eligibility for RGI and specific priority areas – Special Priority (victims fleeing family violence) and Modified Unit requirements - Management of entry into the RGI system - Annual reporting requirements to province 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impact to households if removed from waitlist – harder to maintain criteria for a 10-year period - Privacy and file management considerations, as the waitlist grows, files are retained longer 	<p>Administration costs covered within Housing Services Admin budget and staffing complement</p>
<p>Rent Supplement Programming</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work within funding allocations (provincial, federal, county) to match landlords and prospective tenants - Create and monitor agreements with landlords for compliance (including with the Landlord Tenant Board processes) - Support tenants in maintaining tenancy, RGI annual eligibility and review - Increasing stock of rent supplement funding and participating landlords - Annual reporting requirements to province 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The “inaffordability” for rental housing in Northumberland, is impacting the ability to renew units at tenant turnover - Diversifying landlord participation to support the increase in affordable unit creations - Flexibility in County-funded programs: impacts to Service Level Standards - Landlord/Tenant Relationships independent to the County and NCHC (there are currently 68 tenants; 20 landlords (with 24 agreements)) 	<p>The estimated annual budget for 2022 is ~\$500,000, with an estimated annual increase of ~2%.</p> <p>Rent Supplement budget growing as a response to the need for more affordable housing</p> <p>Other administration costs (staff time) covered within Housing Services Administration Budget</p>

<p>NCHC Tenant Relations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support successful tenancies for 344 households, and growing - Manage full lifecycle of tenancies, from offer of housing, lease signing, annual inspections, maintenance concerns, neighbour issues, etc. through to end of tenancy, including post-tenancy - Complete RGI eligibility reviews annually as required by the HSA - Implementing tenant engagement programming across building - Tenant Supports in housing retention in successful payment of rent, behaviour and/or health and safety concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Landlord and Tenant Board implications, including tenant claims against the NCHC as landlord - Tenant claims of violations of relevant legislation including Human Rights Code, AODA, MFIPPA, etc. - Tenancies end in evictions, without adequate supports - Health and Safety risk to other tenants, staff members, etc. - Over 344 tenancies to be managed effectively and in accordance with relevant legislation 	<p>Total NCHC Budget approximately ~\$4,500,000 (outside of major grant funding)</p> <p>County Levy Contribution: ~\$3,000,000</p> <p>Tenant Rent Revenue: ~\$1,500,000</p> <p>Internal allocations through department to support work done on NCHC behalf</p>
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<p>NCHC Operations/ Governance/ Leadership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Managing Shareholder relationship/Oversight of Purchased Services Agreement between the NCHC and the County. Impacts cross-departmental service delivery on behalf of the NCHC - Governance and Board Support (agenda package creation, report writing, coordinating with other departments, etc.) - Development of policies, procedures and SOPs for housing administration and facilities services - Training of cross-departmental staff to ensure adherence to legislation and best practices in housing retention - Development, Implementation and Actioning of an NCHC Strategic Plan - Reporting Requirements, budget, annual report to shareholder, maintaining Ontario Business Corporation Act requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Asset management (~\$45,000,000); buildings reach end of useful life, extending life and making critical repairs - Contingency planning for major incident – tenant displacement, asset loss, etc. - Landlord and Tenant Board implications, including tenant claims against the NCHC as landlord - Tenant claims of violations of relevant legislation including Human Rights Code, AODA, MFIPPA, etc. 	<p>See above</p> <p>Internal allocations through department to support work done on NCHC behalf</p>
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<p>NCHC Growth and Regeneration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oversee NCHC Strategic Asset Management Plan - Landbanking, project initiation, growth planning - Currently 2 projects underway (Elgin Park Redevelopment and 473 Ontario Street) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Seeking funding for pre-construction and construction of projects o Participate in pre-development and engagement in design and planning processes o Viability considerations, partnership discussions, etc. - Future projects under consideration across County for development and land acquisition opportunities - Review of BCAs and related studies, asset planner, etc. to determine options for high value, ROI improvements to building asset - Develop viable models of housing that generate revenue and create opportunities for self-sufficiency - Introduction of different types of housing models – including affordable and attainable market rental housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Loss of funding if milestones not met - Impact to levy – thoughtful and purposeful development in consultation - Role of the NCHC in supporting County’s housing strategies - Consideration of longevity of housing reserves to continue financing construction - Diversifying NCHC funding models and tenant services 	<p>See above</p> <p>Some pre-construction activities supported by the Housing Reserve</p> <p>Management of per-project funding (i.e. EPR expected to receive ~\$7,500,000 in external funding sources)</p> <p>Internal allocations through department to support work done on NCHC behalf</p>
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<p>Affordable Housing Strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop and action implementation framework and target plans - Monitoring and implementing Affordable and Rental Housing Policy and Municipal Housing Facilities By-Law - Monitoring and implementing Affordable Housing Capital Grant Program - Raise awareness on housing realities in Northumberland County - Work with member municipalities on Implementation Working Group (data, joint work, priority setting, etc.) - Create and support joint funding agreements for affordable housing investment – monitoring for a 20-year period - Support the increase of rent supplement units within County-supported project. - Identifying partnership opportunities for the creation of affordable housing across the County - Support member municipalities on achieving goals created in individual or County plan (policy and/or funding) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consideration of longevity of housing reserves to continue funding incentives - Lack of capacity within member municipalities and County to fully implement - Increase in construction costs and land value 	<p>Incentives to be funded through Housing Reserves</p> <p>Other administration costs (staff time) covered within Housing Services Administration Budget</p>
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These program areas are also complemented by a suite of strategies that are being led (or co-led) by Housing Services. These strategies include:

- Northumberland County Affordable Housing Strategy
- 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan
- Social Housing Master Plan (forthcoming)
- NCHC Strategic Plan (forthcoming)
- NCHC Strategic Asset Management Plan (forthcoming)
- 2019-2023 County Strategic Plan (Economic Prosperity and Innovation – attainable housing)

Housing Services currently has one Housing Services Manager and four Housing Services Caseworkers. Caseworkers are focused on providing high quality frontline support to NCHC tenants, rent supplement tenants, waitlist applicants, community housing providers and other housing programs as funded by the federal and provincial governments, while the Housing Services Manager is responsible for leading strategy development and implementation, programmatic oversight, providing leadership to the NCHC as the Registered Officer, growth of affordable housing stock, and systems level planning and response. Housing Services is also supported by the Customer Services Unit, including two FTEs funded through the Housing Services budget which provide support in the administration of the programs listed above.

The capacity of the Housing Services Division has begun to peak, particularly for the Housing Services Manager. Over the past 3 years, workload realignment has occurred with frontline workers to create efficiencies and create capacity in attempts to better serve the breadth of program areas within its scope. While this continuing realignment has proved to provide much needed frontline capacity, gaps remain within the workload at a management/supervision level. Some key areas of concern that require additional attention, include:

- Community Housing Providers (non-profit and co-operative housing providers): long-term viability consideration for post end of operating agreements/mortgages; long-term capital requirements; strong tenant relations; staff training; legislative compliance; community housing directives guidance and adherence
- NCHC operations: policy development and implementation; purchase services administration and oversight; development of standard operating procedures for facilities management of NCHC assets; implementation of upcoming market rent units; modified unit creation and vacancies; strategic plan development and implementation



- Affordable Housing Strategy: development and actioning of an implementation plan; pursuing land banking and land acquisition opportunities; supporting member municipalities in strategy implementation – CIPs, policy updates, consideration of financial incentives; private developer networking and discussions on incentives and need for affordable housing; advocacy for additional funding, policy changes to support rural housing creation and needs.

It is intended that the Housing Operations Supervisor position would support the direct oversight of frontline activity, ensuring programs adhere to all relevant legislation, directives, policies, procedures, and guidelines. It is also intended that this position would support the implementation of key strategies and support the development of processes for new and growing areas, including the affordable housing strategy implementation and new tenures of housing options within the NCHC (namely non RGI rent).

A Housing Operations Supervisor will provide the much-needed direct support to frontline staff providing high quality services to tenants, applicants and housing providers while also supporting the Housing Services Manager in the implementation of key strategic areas.

Consultation/Options

This issue paper was discussed with, and reviewed by, the Chief Administrative Officer, Corporate Services, Finance Department and the Director of Community and Social Services. In addition, engagement will take place with the NCHC Board of Directors to garner their support in this position to support the work of the NCHC operations and other housing priority areas.

A review of job postings over the last several years has also been completed, primarily in recognition of the staffing capacity needs that exist within Housing Services. It has been determined that in many service manager areas positions exist within housing services areas that are neither client-facing nor the Housing Services Manager. In some Service Manager areas this represents supervisors with various focuses, policy and/or business analysts, or other positions.

Direct consultation took place with several comparable service manager areas, some of which are included in the Council-approved comparators. While the scope of each service manager's housing services division varies, most areas have at least one supervisor and/or non-client facing roles including policy or business analysts. 7 of 8 respondents provided in-house staff support to their local housing corporation (NCHC) and approximately half had some direct overlap between homelessness and housing.

The following table outlines the staffing complement for housing services in their respective municipalities:

Municipality	Number of Manager Positions	Number of Supervisor Positions	Frontline positions (caseworkers, admin, analysts, etc.)
United Counties of Prescott-Russell	1	0	5
Prince Edward-Lennox and Addington	1	1 (contract)	7
City of Kingston *not including the LHC – staffed separately)	1	3	7
Lanark County	1	2	9
United Counties of Leeds and Grenville	1	3	12
Hastings County	1 2 Assistant Managers	3 6 Property Supervisors	13
Renfrew County	1	1	11
City of Kawartha Lakes	3	3	13

Options considered for this request include:

1. Maintain existing staffing levels

- Continuing with current staffing complement would allow for the day-to-day activities to continue. However, several strategic priorities and implementation activities would be limited or not undertaken. Without a proper implementation of these priorities, the County faces significant risk and liability in the long-term viability of its community housing sector, fulsome adherence to legislation, policy and directives, and stalled implementation of affordable housing priorities.
- The risks of this option have been outlined in this Issue Paper.



- Staff capacity will continue to peak and will face challenges in continuing ability to stretch to implement all required/expected work.
2. Increase external supports
 - External supports are sought for most strategy creation, some process reviews, policy and procedure development and other high-value and specific requirements. However, external supports are often unable to support long- term implementation and management of final work.
 - It is anticipated that if it were possible to increase external supports for long- term implementation and supervision, would likely not result in significant cost savings based on the specific expertise needed
 3. Create a full-time Housing Operations Supervisor
 - Recommended option as outlined in this Issue Paper
 - Ensuring that the Housing Services Division is appropriately staffed and able to respond to the current and future housing needs and priorities.
 - It is anticipated that through the creation of a full-time Housing Operations Supervisor, there may be a reduction in the reliance on, or reduction in the assigned scope of work for external supports for small projects where internal expertise and capacity may be available. However, this position will not eliminate the need for contracted services based on specific expertise and skillsets.

Financial Impact

There is currently one supervisor position within the Community and Social Services Department. This position is currently in the non-union salary grid 'E'. The maximum job rate of this grid for 2021 is: \$81,604. In addition to salary costs, employer costs for this position are approximately 30% of the annual salary.

Consultation is currently taking place with the Human Resources department to complete a full compensation review. It is anticipated that this position will be classified in either a Grid E (as below) or a Grid F.



As a result of the above, it is anticipated that the total cost of this position will be, at a minimum:

2022 Salary Grid E (1820 hours)

Salary = \$81,604

Employer benefit costs = \$24,481

Total: =106,085

This position would be 100% funded through the County levy.

It should be noted that the anticipated impact to the 2022 County levy is approximately \$80,000 due to the anticipated timing for the hiring of the Operations Supervisor (Q2).

Risk Considerations

Housing Services provides mandated services for Northumberland County residents as Service Manager through the oversight and delivery of affordable housing programs and initiatives and through support to the NCHC. In addition to the mandated services provided, critical support is provided to County and member municipal strategic priorities in supporting affordable housing initiatives across the County.

Risk considerations were outlined above in the detailed program chart and include risk of continuing to maintain legislative compliance and ability to fully implement strategic priorities for the County and member municipalities. Should this position not be realized, Housing Services will be challenged to meet expectations set for implementation of strategic priorities while overseeing the full community housing portfolio and meeting the needs of the NCHC.

Impacts to Member Municipalities/Partners

Affordable Housing has been identified as a strategic priority in many member municipalities as well as the County. It is anticipated that member municipalities will benefit from the increased capacity this position will create within the Housing Services division workload to better support municipalities as they consider the implementation of tools and policies to support affordable housing creation in their own municipality.



It is also anticipated that this position will greatly benefit community housing providers including 8 non-profits, 1 co-operative and the NCHC in direct support in oversight and legislation adherence. This position will support community housing providers facing challenges.

Included in 2021 Long Term Plan: NO

This position was not included in the 2021 long term plan. The staffing deficit within the Housing Services division is significant and needs to be addressed in the short-term.

2022 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 2020 and 2021 budget.

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



In order to be able to count a housing unit to the SLS, the household must be:

- Housed from the centralized waitlist
- Have an annual household income at, or below, the provincially established Household Income Limit
- Follow all rules outlined in the *Housing Services Act, 2011* (HSA)

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 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 (in 2022 this has been set at 1.2%). 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 6 households achieve housing affordability through receiving rent-geared-to-income and as a result have been removed from the centralized waitlist.

The *Housing Services Act, 2011* governs the administration of RGI assistance across the province, the County is legislatively required to follow the HSA in the administration of subsidies to HSA-governed projects (traditional community housing providers, provincial/federal rent supplement programming, etc.) that count toward the SLS. The rules contained within the HSA govern several areas of housing administration, including the centralized waitlist, household eligibility and the requirement of subsidy from the Service Manager (Northumberland County) for community housing providers.

In the calculation of rent paid by tenants, RGI typically ensures that the rent paid by tenants is 30% of their income, except for tenants in receipt of social assistance. For households in receipt of social assistance, their rent is calculated using Social Assistance rent scales which set the rent that can be charged. For a one-person household on social assistance, the scales are below the minimum rent that can be charged under the HSA, specifically, for a one-person household in receipt of Ontario Works rent would be set at \$85 and if in receipt of Ontario Disability Support Program rent would be set at \$109 per month.

These minimum rents are far below what households are entitled to receive from social assistance for shelter costs (approximately 20%), households will not receive additional monthly benefits as a result of this reduced rent but can be eligible for other shelter related



costs including tenant insurance, utilities, etc. With the provincial implementation of rent scales, it is the provincially funded social assistance programs that are saving money, while municipalities are required to pay a deeper subsidy to support households in receipt of RGI.

This discrepancy is detailed in the below table. The comparison demonstrates the impact for a one-person household residing in a one-bedroom unit at 100% CMHC AMR. It assumes that tenant insurance is a mandatory requirement and that utilities are included.

RGI Rent Scales

	Market Rent	Tenant Rent	County Subsidy
Ontario Works	\$1,106	\$115	\$1,091
ODSP	\$1,106	\$139	\$1,067

Maximum Monthly Shelter Allowance

	Market Rent	Tenant Rent	County Subsidy
Ontario Works	\$1,106	\$360	\$746
ODSP	\$1,106	\$467	\$639

For the vast majority of RGI subsidies provided by the County, the County is legislatively required to use the rent scales, however where new programming, funded by the municipality is created, the County has greater flexibility in its administration of assistance. However, the province will not consider this type of housing support as eligible toward achieving the County’s SLS. However, a shift from strict adherence to the RGI rent scales will allow for the County to support a greater number of households while being mindful to the amount of levy funding required.

It is recommended that County-funded rent supplements shift away from using RGI social assistance rent scales, moving to the use of a household’s maximum monthly shelter allowance less any shelter related costs (utilities, tenant insurance, etc.) Through this shift, it is anticipated that the incremental increase of \$16,000 will support more households than anticipated. The total number of households supported will vary dependent upon the market rent of the unit and household income which could be generated from a variety of sources including social assistance, employment, pensions.



It is recommended that while the County will no longer be able to formally count these households to the SLS, that the County continues to track the total number of households supported with County-funded programs achieving permanent housing affordability and include this in the Housing and Homelessness Annual Report.

County staff will continue to advocate to the provincial government for flexibility to SLS measures to better reflect the investments made by service managers in supporting low income households achieve housing affordability. The County will continue to consider the SLS as a minimum level of standard for number of households in need of housing affordability assistance, however it is also recognized through the Northumberland County Affordable Housing Strategy, that a far greater number of housing units are required to truly meet the need for affordable housing.

According to the Strategy there is a need to create 90 affordable housing units each year, predominately rental options, over the next 10 years. Of these 90 units, 52 units should be affordable to households in the first- and second-income deciles (in 2018 this represents households earning \$37,250 or less, meaning that rent charged would need to be approximately \$930 or less). In order to create these units, it is likely that rent supplements or other forms of subsidies will be required to ensure that units created are affordable to this demographic, for households in the first income decile.

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 in order 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.

Consideration was also given to continuing to administer this program using rent scales which would reduce in the number of households that could be supported through the program.

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 in the 2020 and 2021 budget process, the impact to the 2022 budget is \$16,000, in addition to the provincially mandated market rent increase (in 2022 this rate has been set at 1.2%).

With this investment, Northumberland County can secure at least 2 units of affordable housing for households on the centralized waitlist. The 1.2% increase required for the existing \$32,000 budget represents a potential increase for the existing program units of \$144. As a result of the 2021 provincial rent freeze, a portion of the 2021 budgeted Market Rent Increase will be used to offset the cost of the 2022 1.2% increase.

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 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 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.



Further, risk has also been considered in shifting to using maximum shelter allowance for social assistance recipients. The potential consequences that may arise from continuing to not adhere to SLS has been weighed against the added benefit of supporting more households achieve housing affordability.

It is proposed that the County focus on adhering to the spirit of the SLS for county-funded rent supplements while supporting a greater number of households achieve housing affordability.

Impacts to Member Municipalities/Partners

At present, rent supplement units are in five 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

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.

2022 Issue Paper

‘Made in Northumberland’ Rent Supplement Program – Affordable Housing Strategy Units

Purpose

This is a request to continue the expansion of the ‘Made in Northumberland’ Rent Supplement Program to include units supported through the implementation of the Affordable Housing Strategy (AHS), as initiated in the 2021 budget.

It is recommended that this local program be guided by the Northumberland County Affordable Housing Strategy, the proposed targets and interim Affordable and Rental Housing Program Policy.

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

In order to be able to count a housing unit to the SLS, the household must be:

- Housed from the centralized waitlist
- Have an annual household income at, or below, the provincially established Household Income Limit
- Follow all rules outlined in the *Housing Services Act, 2011* (HSA)

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.

This issue paper recommends expanding the Made in Northumberland Rent Supplement Program following the details outlined in the accompanying 2022 Issue Paper – Continuation of ‘Made in Northumberland’ Rent Supplement Program. Namely, the use of monthly shelter allowances in determining RGI subsidy amounts for each unit.

This issue paper recommends that this program be supported through the creation of rent supplement agreements in 50% of all County-supported affordable rental units created under the Affordable and Rental Housing Program Policy and the Municipal Housing Facilities By-law up to a maximum of 50 rental units per year over a rolling average, as was signaled in the 2020 budget process.

One of the key housing gaps identified in the Northumberland County Affordable Housing Strategy was a need for affordable rental housing options for households with low incomes. According to the Strategy there is a need to create 90 affordable housing units each year, predominately rental options, over the next 10 years. Of these 90 units, 52 units should be affordable to households in the first and second income deciles (in 2018 this represents households earning \$37,250 or less, meaning that rent charged would need to be approximately \$930 or less). In order to create these units, it is likely that rent supplements or other forms of subsidies will be required to ensure that units created are affordable to this demographic, in particular for households in the first income decile.

County provided support to housing developers through the provision of Tax Increment Equivalent Grants (TIEGS) as a part of the Affordable and Rental Housing Program and Municipal Housing Facilities By-law provide Northumberland County with the right to enter into rent supplement agreements within all supported affordable units in new rental developments that receive County support through TIEGs or other incentives.



It is recommended that Northumberland County aim to establish rent supplement agreements in 50% of all affordable rental housing units, supported through the Affordable and Rental Housing Policy and Municipal Housing Facilities By-law. As private market rental units continue to increase in price, this will support Northumberland County in securing reasonably priced rent supplement units, while also allowing affordable market rents to be available to households who are able to afford these units without subsidy and/or do not qualify for rent-geared-to-income (RGI). Currently a rent supplement unit can cost between \$6,000 and \$10,000 annually, depending on the market rent amount and the household's income. The higher cost of market rent has also increased the cost of a rent supplement, with most recent units nearing \$10,000 annually. Units supported through the Affordable and Rental Housing Program will be required to adhere to a rent ceiling as agreed to in the Municipal Housing Facilities Agreement between the proponent and the County. This ceiling will allow for some stability in rent supplement levels required for these units over the next several years.

Since 2019, County staff have had discussions with various private and non-profit developers at various stages in their construction projects. Two organizations have formally sought County investments through Tax Increment Equivalent Grants (TIEGs) since 2019. It is anticipated with the introduction of the Affordable Housing Grant Program and the ability to provide Development Charge Rebates, that there will be further interest in working with the County to create affordable housing units.

In 2021 \$31,250 was budgeted for the first project that has begun construction, anticipating the creation of 14 affordable housing units. This budget was created to support a rent supplement agreement for 7 units (50% of the affordable housing units created and supported by the County). It was anticipated that additional funding would be required to fully fund the rent supplement agreement but was not fully funded in consideration of the construction timelines and anticipated delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is now anticipated that initial occupancy will be achieved in 2022, which will require the full funding to be allocated for the 7 units.

Following the principles of amending the RGI subsidy calculation for County-funded units, it is anticipated that approximately \$55,000 will be required annually to support these 7 units. This represents a savings of approximately \$30,000 as a result of a shift away from Rent-Geared-to-Income social assistance rent scales. As such, this issue paper is requesting an additional \$23,750 in 2022 to fully fund these units, with an annual budget increase tied to the annual market rent increase.

It is anticipated that a Municipal Housing Facilities Agreement will be formalized in 2022 which will establish the mechanism for the provision of TIEGs.



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 in order to understand best practices.

Other options considered included not expanding rent supplement program in Northumberland County. This option would result in the lost opportunity of partnering with housing developers seeking County funded support through the Affordable and Rental Housing Program. In addition, this option would not provide a supportive option to meeting SLS or affordable housing targets as per the Northumberland County Affordable Housing Strategy.

Consideration was also given to continuing to administer this program using rent scales which would increase the total levy requirement by approximately \$30,000 annually.

The proposed option of expanding 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 expand the 'Made in Northumberland' Rent Supplement Program in collaboration with the Affordable Housing Strategy, the impact to the 2022 budget is approximately \$23,750 to secure approximately 7 new rent supplement unit, for a total annual budget for the Made in Northumberland – Affordable Housing Strategy program of \$55,000. It is recommended that the Made in Northumberland – Affordable Housing Strategy Rent Supplement Program budget be increased annually to reflect the market rent increase guideline established by the provincial government.

It is anticipated that this investment will support the full portion of the rent supplement commitment required for 50% of the affordable units.

Through the County's Affordable and Rental Housing Program Policy, Northumberland County has committed to supporting up to the full target of affordable housing units as per the Northumberland County Affordable Housing Strategy through the provision of TIEGs. This

commitment means that over a rolling average of 10 years up to a maximum of 90 affordable rental units per year. As a result, up to 50 rental units per year over a rolling average can be considered for rent supplement agreements.

Risk Considerations

Risk has been considered throughout the proposed expansion of the '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 legislated SLS.

In addition, consideration was given to establishing a precedent for future investments in rent supplement agreements for projects that receive County support through the Affordable and Rental Housing Program and Municipal Housing Facilities By-law.

With a commitment to creating a '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. The signal to creating additional rent supplement units under the Affordable and Rental Housing Program will support County staff in articulating the potential investment that may be available to current and/or future proponents seeking County support in the development of affordable housing.

Impacts to Member Municipalities/Partners

At present, rent supplement units are located in five of seven municipalities. The proposed expansion is focused on affordable housing units created by the non-profit and private sector. The project considered for this funding is located in the Town of Cobourg. It is likely, that as other municipalities consider options for implementation and support of the Affordable Housing Strategy, that projects will continue to be considered and developed in other municipalities in the County.

Included in 2020 Long Term Plan: YES

Yes – this expansion of the Made in Northumberland Rent Supplement Program was considered in the long-term budget.

2022 Issue Paper

Strong Communities Rent Supplement Program

Purpose

This is a request to continue the long-term strategic management for the ending of the provincially funded Strong Communities Rent Supplement Program (SCRSP).

It is recommended that Northumberland County continue its commitment to prepare to fund the remaining rent supplement units when the SCRSP program ends on March 31, 2023, to count toward the provincially legislated service level standards (SLS). It is recommended that the Housing Services budget increase by \$83,000 to complete the transition period to fully fund the program at a level of \$250,000 annually.

Background

The SCRSP was announced in 2000 for an initial three to five-year term, in 2004 the program was extended until March 31, 2023. The SCRSP provides Northumberland County with approximately \$247,052 of fixed annual funding (provided that the County can commit this funding each fiscal year). It is estimated that \$238,149 will be spent in 2021 from the budget. While the estimated year-end spending is below what has been spent in prior years, it is anticipated that the full \$250,000 will be spent in its entirety in future years. The reason for the underspending in 2021 is a result of sub-streamed funding allocation, whereby current underspending cannot be combined to support an additional household. Without any confirmation or commitment from the provincial government to continue funding past 2023, Northumberland County Council committed to prepare to fund the remaining rent supplement units as part of the 2020 and 2021 budget.

In 2020 and 2021, Northumberland County Council committed to the continuation of the SCRSP following the end of provincial funding on March 31, 2023, by beginning to gradually prepare for the funding requirement in 2023 through increasing the County budget annually (or as programming costs require¹) until 2023 where increases would then cease, and the full funding requirement would be met. As part of the 2020 and 2021 budget an additional \$83,500 was transferred to the housing reserves for the ongoing work of expanding community housing stock across Northumberland County. Based on County Council's decision, Northumberland County staff have worked to maintain the current 34 households within the allocated budget of

¹ Programming Costs for rent supplement programming can vary based on fluctuation in tenant's income, annual increases to market rent, or changes to rent charged upon vacancy.



approximately \$250,000 annually, and within the program funding structure. It is recommended that this commitment continue in 2022, through the increasing of the County budget by \$83,000 to complete the gradual preparation to continue the SCRSP following the end of the provincial funding on March 31, 2023.

Northumberland County also has a legislative requirement to meet established 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

At present, SCRSP rent supplements are not counted toward the SLS as per ministry directive, however, Northumberland County continues to advocate to the province for a broader understanding of service level standards, particularly as it applies to municipally funded subsidies. It is hoped by the end of SCRSP that there will be changes to the methodology of determining the SLS and these units could be counted toward the SLS.

Should the SCRSP funding not be continued, the loss of these units will have a detrimental impact to the growing need for subsidized housing. 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 Supplements provide a cost-effective opportunity for Northumberland County to increase the number of households that can receive RGI in private market rent settings that can complement the need to increase housing stock.

One of the key housing gaps identified in the Northumberland County Affordable Housing Strategy was a need for affordable rental housing options for households with low incomes. It is important that Northumberland County take steps to ensure the current stock, while insufficient of affordable rental housing options is not lost – specifically the role of existing rent supplement programs through various Northumberland County rent supplement programs, including the SCRSP. The current 2021 budget for SCRSP represents an average annual cost of approximately \$7,000 per household. This annual cost is within the general range of current and potential rent supplement units, and in fact is affordable compared to rent supplement agreements made more recently. This is reflective of the rising rental rates in Northumberland



County. It is important that these affordable rental rates are maintained through the end of the SCRSP as the cost of maintaining rent supplement units into the future will likely continue to grow based on the current rental market.

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 in order to monitor and advocate for the continuation of the SCRSP.

Other options considered as part of the 2020 – 2022 budget cycles included ending the SCRSP in 2023. Should the decision be made to no longer commit to this funding, Northumberland County staff would be required to develop a strategic plan to begin immediately to prepare tenants, landlords and community agencies for the end of funding. This option would also likely increase the number of individuals on the CWL and may result in an increase to individuals experiencing homelessness if subsidized housing was not available prior to the end of SCRSP funding.

The proposed investment supports the decisions made as part of the 2020 and 2021 budget and is well positioned to support Northumberland County's requirements to meet or exceed the legislated SLS. In addition, this proposal supports the continuation of critical affordable housing stock in the private rental market that would otherwise be unaffordable to low-income homeowners. The proposed option also supports community agency partners in supporting clients in maintaining secure housing.

Financial Impact

The financial impact of growing rent supplement programming in Northumberland County is substantial. In order to maintain the current 34 units funded through SCRSP after March 31, 2023, the funding required will be approximately \$250,000 annually. Market rent increases can impact the overall budget, both for new tenants and accounting for provincially set annual market rent increases. It is important to note that upon the completion of provincial funding, should these units be maintained through levy funding, 34 units would be added to the SLS. This would be a significant contribution to begin to meet, and in the future, exceed Northumberland County's SLS.

It is recommended that Northumberland County continue its commitment to prepare for the 2023 end to SCRSP through the continued gradual increase to the County budget to offset a significant increase in the 2023 fiscal year, representing an increase to the 2022 budget of \$83,000. It is anticipated that this will be the final increase to the SCRSP budget and full funding requirements will be met in 2023.



It is recommended that the budget increase in 2022 be transferred to housing reserves for the creation of additional community housing stock in Northumberland County.

Risk Considerations

It is important that the County continues its commitment to prepare for the likely end of the provincial SCRSP on March 31, 2023. The risk in not continuing to fund the SCRSP is the loss of critical affordable units in the private market that house individuals from the CWL. Without continued funding, the housing security of impacted households may also be jeopardized.

The proposed method of a gradual increase to reach the full funding requirement was intended to mitigate a significant financial requirement between fiscal years 2022 and 2023. It is recommended that the budget is increased by \$83,000 to complete this work.

Northumberland County staff have begun to action County Council's commitment in 2020 and 2021 to continue funding SCRSP after the end of provincial funding by continuing work on an action plan to begin to meet or exceed the SLS as legislated by the province. The continuation of this funding will also provide a consistent and clear message to community agencies, existing tenants and landlords that the program will continue and that the funding is stable. Further County staff have begun identifying opportunities to increase the reach of this funding through changes to subsidy calculations that could be considered once it is transitioned to county funded.

Impacts to Member Municipalities/Partners

At present, SCRSP units are in four of seven municipalities. The continuation of SCRSP will support low-income residents in these municipalities in continuing to achieve housing security. With the continuation of the program, new landlords will likely also be added that can support residents throughout the County. In addition, the continuation of SCRSP will continue to support additional units that can be used to house applicants on the CWL. The continuation of the SCRSP will also support community agencies to continue to support clients housed under the SCRSP.

Included in 2022 Long Term Plan: YES

Yes – following County Council's decision in 2020 to begin the gradual preparation to take over the funding of the SCRSP at program end in 2023, this funding increase has been included in the long-term plan.

2022 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, Training & Skills Development or MLTSD) 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). In February 2020, it was announced that the Service System Manager selected for the Muskoka-Kawarthas region would be Fleming College. The full transition of Employment Services in Northumberland County commenced January 1, 2021.

In addition to the changes to the delivery of employment services in Northumberland, the Ontario Works division has been an active participant in various committees and sub-groups with the Ministry of Children, Community & Social Services, as it relates to modernization and the transition to life stabilization. With the formal launch of the Service System Manager responsible for the delivery of employment services, the first quarter of the year was spent reviewing the existing caseload and making referrals to the transformed model, 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.

Due to the global pandemic, and the economic shut-down that followed, many Employment Ontario and other training sites moved their programming to online or virtual settings. In addition, limited employment opportunities have resulted in reduced options for clients to move forward. Throughout 2021, the Ontario Works team has been working closely with clients to ensure their needs are being met, but also connecting them to online resources to assist them in their journey to reach their goals. With the provision of federal relief benefits, the Ontario Works Caseload has decreased by approximately 27% over the average in 2020 and 33% over the caseload average in 2019. As the federal benefits have been extended several



times since late 2020, it is anticipated that there will be an increase to the Ontario Works caseload commencing in September/October 2021 as the federal employment benefits come to an end. The role of the division will be to continue to connect recipients to resources within their community, as well as further federal and provincial labour initiatives.

In 2021, the Social Assistance Modernization 5 Year Roadmap concluded, and was replaced on February 11, 2021, with the Social Assistance Recovery and 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 life stabilization 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, in an effort 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. Throughout 2021, the Ontario Works division is leading conversations with the department to provide feedback through various stakeholder engagement sessions with the Ministry, while supporting staff with the transition.

In addition to the EST Prototype, on February 16, 2021, the Ontario Works program 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. 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 Prototypes are included in the first phase of the Recovery & Renewal Plan.

On June 21, 2021, the two-way messaging service for Ontario Works recipients was launched. Ontario Works clients who have registered for the online service MyBenefits, are now able to communicate with their caseworker through a secure messaging system that aligns with their electronic file. In addition to messages, both clients and caseworkers can send attachments or additional documents through this secure method. This change aligns with records



management and retention standards and will reduce our reliance on email for communicating with clients. Other improvements include:

- 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.

As of June 30, 2021, approximately 54% of our active caseload is registered for MyBenefits with another 30% that are eligible to register. Caseworkers continue to encourage increased registration and use of the messaging service. The expectation will be by the end of the year, we will no longer use email with clients who are eligible to register for MyBenefits.

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) was not launched in 2021 due in part to the implementation of various prototypes and provincial initiatives. In addition, 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 will be commenced in the fall of 2021 using trained department staff to identify efficiencies and process mapping to complete this project. At the completion of the document retention Lean project, it is expected 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 2022.

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. In 2021, due to operational needs of Community Care, we ended leases at locations in Port Hope and Colborne. While the pandemic has



restricted our ability to meet off-site, the remaining locations will continue to provide opportunities to engage with our local communities and partners as we return to in-person service delivery. 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 2021 and 2022

Through a collaborative funding opportunity with the Early Years Program, 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 2021, 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. Two intakes have launched virtually in 2021, with a third expected in the fall. This program will shift to a hybrid model of virtual and in-person supports once operations return. 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 an effort 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 life stabilization programming to the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program delivered by the Help Centre of Northumberland. In 2020, the program assisted in the completion of 1,332 income tax returns, returning approximately \$3.42 million to residents of Northumberland County. As of the end of June 2021, 1,236 tax returns have been completed, returning approximately \$2.91 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.

In 2020, the Customer Service Unit tracked the work completed in each division via a time study project to ensure each program is allocated an appropriate level of support to achieve departmental goals. This tracking was continued in March of 2021, and again in July of 2021.



Ongoing tracking on a quarterly basis will continue in 2022, to ensure that each division continues to receive administrative support for their programs.

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. The ACD Phone Queue allows for calls to be picked up real time by attendants during regular business hours, reducing the need for messages to be left and calls to be returned. The main goal in launching this initiative was to streamline the workload, while providing an enhanced level of customer service. Currently this project is being piloted with six 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 2021, Business Continuity planning is well underway and will continue into 2022.

As a result of the pandemic, the main Community & Social Services office remained open while reducing the necessity for in-person visits by members of the public. Community & Social Services was required to shift services and adapt to new technologies to continue to provide urgent, emergency, and ongoing supports to the community. This included:

- Collaboration with the Information Technology team to deploy additional technology resources in order to support tele-commuting for staff, while reducing service delays for the public.
- Further refinement of Standard Operating Procedures for the use of the interview rooms and lobby by staff and visitors to the department.
- Collaboration with Facilities, Health & Safety and Corporate Services on the implementation of a video/intercom system for the main building doors
- Leveraging the Customer Service Unit staff in new ways to ensure ongoing support for staff working from home, in order to ensure no disruption or delay of services;
- Continuing to support caseworkers in delivering client-based services over the telephone or online.
- Implementation of acceptance of digital documents, including documents sent by email or text to staff to reduce in-person visits to the office; and



- Increased awareness of physical distancing and emphasis on cleaning common touchpoints throughout the office.

Learning and Development opportunities in 2021 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. All staff completed an online Suicide Awareness Training and internal training on Health and Safety Incident Reporting. Further to this, all Customer Service Unit staff took an online Minute Taking training course in 2021, enhancing their knowledge of how record meeting minutes in a standard and consistent manner. We continue to review opportunities for staff to participate in various learning and development opportunities.

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.

2022 Service Objectives & Initiatives

Thriving & Inclusive Communities

In 2022, 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 2022. It is expected by late 2022, that additional municipalities will be joining the prototype. 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.



Throughout 2022, the Ontario Works team will continue testing various methods of service delivery and reporting back to the Ministry to further refine the future of service delivery for Social Assistance recipients.

As the focus for Ontario Works continues to shift from an employment lens to life stabilization, our targets and metrics will also be shifting. At the time of preparation of this Business Plan, further details on targets and metrics under a life-stabilization framework are not available.

With the shift from employment to life stabilization 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 2022 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 Northumberland, planning for the implementation of Electronic Document Management (EDM) for active Ontario Works files is underway, with an anticipated launch in late 2022. 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, front-line Ontario Works staff will be part of the discussion 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. Both in-person and virtual learning will be considered in 2022. 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 2022. 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 solutions that were implemented in 2020 and 2021, and to provide awareness for staff of the requirements during an emergency.

The local Ontario Works file audit process, while delayed in 2020 and 2021, will continue to be refined in 2022. 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 2022, the Customer Service Unit will continue to modernize and improve customer service, with the goal of enhancing the client experience and supporting all divisions. Prior to 2021, one lead and one back-up staff member were assigned to each distinct administrative task. In 2021, initiatives to enhance cross-training of staff was commenced, and step-by-step Standard Operating Procedures were drafted and finalized for near all administrative supports. Cross-training of staff will continue into 2022, and knowledge transfer will be encouraged and supported. In addition to this, the Customer Service Unit will continue to consider enhancements to the ACD 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 life stabilization:

- 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 Recovery & Renewal Plan.
- 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
- Modernizing 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; and
- Find efficiencies utilizing Lean approaches to examine internal processes to meet targets and outcomes.