
2022 Department Overview

Community & Social Services

Service Description

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

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

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

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

Helping People – Building Connections – Strengthening Communities



Mandatory Programs

Community Services

Community Services is the Consolidated Municipal Services Manager responsible for coordinating the department's investments and strategic directions to build capacity within the community by implementing a range of initiatives and improvements. These developments are concentrated across Community Safety and Wellbeing, homelessness, social determinants of health and support to food security. This work includes developing evidence-informed decision making 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.

Early Years Services

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

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



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

Housing Services

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

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

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

Ontario Works Services

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



Customer Services Unit

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

Basic financial assistance includes legislated mandatory and discretionary benefits for eligible recipients and members of the benefit unit.

Discretionary Support

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

Discretionary Programs

Food Security Services

Food 4 All

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

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

Partnerships

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



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

Environmental Scan

Population & Demographics

Economic Context and Income

Profile

- According to the 2016 census, Northumberland County has a population of about 85,500, and there are approximately 35,000 households. It is projected that the number of households will continue to grow by 28.4% by 2041.
- The County has an older age profile than Ontario, with fewer residents aged 25 to 44 years and a higher percentage of residents over the age of 65. In fact, 26% of the county population is aged 65 and older. The growth of senior households has grown significantly faster than the overall household growth in Northumberland, 37.5% compared to 13.1% between 2006 and 2016
- Northumberland County has a larger proportion of smaller households compared to Ontario (68% compared to 58.7%) and smaller households are increasing while larger households are decreasing.
- Couples without children or persons living alone made up 62.6% of Northumberland census households. These households are increasing, while households consisting of couples with children decreased between 2006 and 2016 by 9.5%.
- There has been a decline in Northumberland County's younger population between 2006 and 2016, with the youth population (24 years and younger) decreasing by 11.8% and adults between 25 and 44 years of age decreasing by 11.7%.
- About 33 percent of census households include children; 37 percent are couples without children at home; and 25 percent are singles or other "non-family" households. This is relatively more singles and couples without children than for Ontario, and most growth is in these categories.
- Population forecasts from provincial sources (consistent with the County's Growth Management Strategy) project future households over the decade 2011-2021 will be approximately 4,000 net additional households, an average of 400 per year.
- The total number of children and youth (age 0-19) in the Northumberland population was forecasted to decrease .06% from 15986 in 2019 to 15891 in 2020.
- The total number of children aged 0 to 6 years is expected to remain relatively stable overall, with most member municipalities seeing a slight decrease in child population. However, the town of Cobourg is experiencing growth, with a forecasted increase of 6% for children under 6 years.



- Local food banks assist an average of 2100 unique individuals monthly, approximately one third of these individuals are under the age of 18
- School nutrition programs provide more than 85,000 meals and snacks to approximately 6000 students per month.

Housing Stock and Supply

- Most dwellings in Northumberland County are single detached, 79.4% compared to 54.3% in the province, it is anticipated that this focus will remain based on building permits issued between 2013 and 2018.
- Rented dwellings make up a much smaller share in Northumberland County compared to Ontario (18.9% compared to 30.2%), however the proportion of renter households are increasing.
- Northumberland County's vacancy rate in 2020 was approximately 1% and has remained below 3% since 2010.
- Most rented dwellings have been in the secondary rental market.
- 19% of housing stock dates from 1920 or earlier, compared to 8 percent for Ontario.
- 7% of homes are rated as needing major repair (12 percent for rental). This is slightly higher than the Ontario figures and associated with the older age of dwellings.

Affordability

- More than a fifth of households in Northumberland County were facing housing affordability issues in 2015. With 22.2% spending 30% or more on housing costs, while 8.7% spend 50% or more on housing costs, and low-income households were more likely to facing housing affordability issues (55.7% spending 30% or more and 27.2% spending 50% or more)
- Some household types are more likely to be facing housing affordability issues including renters, youth, persons living alone, lone parent households, people with a cognitive disability.
- 11.9% households in Northumberland County are in core housing need, slightly below the Ontario average; however, there is a greater share of households falling below the affordability standard compared to Ontario.
- The average market rent in Northumberland County is higher than neighbouring communities including Peterborough, City of Kawartha Lakes and Hastings County.



- Based on the average rental costs of available units in Northumberland County, the current rental market is unaffordable for all low-income households, most moderate-income households and in some cases for high-income households.
- Average household incomes in Northumberland County are not keeping up with the increase in house prices. Between 2005 and 2015, house prices have increased by 45.9% compared to 29.1% increase to average household incomes. The year-to-date average resale house price in 2020 in Northumberland County was \$4570,670, well above what the average household income can afford.
- Wait times for social housing are up to 10 years, with the highest demand for one-bedroom units. The centralized waiting list has grown more than 260% in the last 10 years.
- The average market rent in Northumberland is more expensive than neighbouring communities, including the City of Peterborough, the City of Kawartha Lakes and Hastings County.

Homelessness

- There are rising numbers of “working poor” residents using homelessness prevention services.
- Increasing number of cases of families sharing homes and single persons “couch-surfing” staying temporarily with a succession of friends and relatives).
- Many people who are homeless or at high risk have complex, multiple needs. These require stable housing as a base to address other needs; but actual housing issues often worsen needs.
- Most people with intellectual/developmental disabilities have unstable housing, and support agencies deal with recurring housing-related crises.
- There is very little specialized housing with supports for high-need populations.

Early Years Supports

- Based on the results of the 2016 Canadian Census, there are estimated to be 4820 children between the ages of 0 and 6 in Northumberland County. Statistics Canada reports that 43% of parents in Ontario use daycare centres, which equates to approximately 2072 children that may use childcare in Northumberland County (“Child Care in Canada” report). Of those who use childcare in Ontario, 36% enroll their children in centre based care, 19% use home childcare, and 32% use private childcare. The remainder use preschool or other arrangements.
- Currently, there are 583 licensed spaces in Northumberland County for children 0-6 years old (i.e., infant, toddler, and preschool care, including profit and non-profit centres).



- Prior to COVID-19, there were approximately 373 Children on licensed childcare centre waitlists in Northumberland County. Most of the children on the waitlist needed childcare as soon as possible. Many families join centre waitlists before their children are born or early in infancy. Thirty-nine percent of children on waitlists were infants, 33% toddlers, 21% preschoolers, and 7% school-age.
- On average, families pay \$35-42/ day for full day centre childcare and \$39-42/day for home childcare (depending on age). Centre fees are below provincial averages, and home fees are comparable to provincial averages.
- Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were, on average, 318 Children receiving fee subsidy each month. Most (42%) of children receiving fee subsidy are school age (older than 5.8 years old), although a high proportion (22%) are preschool age (31 months to 4 years). Fee subsidy caseloads were reduced during the pandemic, likely due to the temporary closure of centres, the provision of Emergency Child Care, and closures of workplaces. Between Q1 and Q2 2021, an average of 235 children received fee subsidy each month.
- In summer 2019, the Ministry of Education released the results of the 2017-2018 Early Development Instrument (EDI), which measures children's ability to meet developmental expectations at school entry. The EDI assesses five domains of child development. Overall, the rate of vulnerability in Northumberland (i.e., the proportion of children not meeting expectations) has decreased since 2015. Specifically, improvements were noted in the domains of Physical Health and Well-being, Social Competence, and Emotional Maturity. Developmental trajectories for Language and Cognitive Development, as well as Communication Skills and General Knowledge, remain stable.

COVID-19 Pandemic: Supports for Families

- On March 17, 2020, the provincial government declared a State of Emergency and ordered the closure of all licensed childcare centres, and all facilities providing indoor recreational programs including EarlyON Child and Family Centres. The province subsequently announced that, to support health care and front-line workers in securing care for their children, Emergency Child Care could be offered at select centres.
- The Early Years Division implemented several initiatives to support children, families, operators, and the community during this time. Two main areas of focus were:
 - The creation and implementation of Emergency Child Care
 - Supporting virtual EarlyON child and family support services
- Emergency Child Care was again implemented in January 2021 and from April to June 2021. In January, a total of 82 children and 68 families were supported, with 276 children and 203 families supported between April and June.



- Virtual programming has been well received by children and families in the region. Twice daily, videos from our creative and enthusiastic Early Childhood Educators, Resource Consultants, and Indigenous Partners are uploaded to Northumberland's EarlyON Facebook pages. Interactive live performances are also provided, allowing children and families to comment/engage in real-time. In 2020, our EarlyON educators shared a total of 590 Facebook posts.

Economic Context and Income

- Due to the Federal Relief programs introduced over the past 18 months, the OW Caseload has declined by approximately 30% since March 2020
- Based on current caseload information, approximately 52% of the Ontario Works caseload has been on assistance for 2 years or more, with 16% of the caseload having been on assistance for more than 5 years.
- The average length of time on assistance in February 2020 was 2.11 years, compared the average in July 2021 of 2.82 years, which accounts for a 34% increase in length of time on assistance
- The Sole Support Caseload has increased over the last year, representing 35% of the total caseload and the singles caseload sits at 61% of the total caseload.
- Approximately 33% of our caseload is between the ages of 16 and 29 with 56% being single.
- Approximately 19% of the Ontario Works caseload is between the ages of 50 and 65.
- 40% of our recipients are children under the age of 18, with 19% of our total recipients under the age of 6 years.
- The Northumberland economy has a diverse range of sectors, but is weighted to agriculture, construction/utilities, and manufacturing.
- The local labor market continues to be dominated by minimum wage employment, including part-time, seasonal, contract/temporary employment in the retail and service industry.
- 2021 has proven to be a challenging year for employment due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, however, the local unemployment rate has remained below the provincial and federal average since May 2020
- Provincial Poverty Reduction focuses on Ending Chronic Homelessness through Housing First strategies; renewed Federal interest in developing a National Housing Strategy emphasizing Homelessness initiatives and potential investments in successful Housing First models.
- Certain household types are more likely to have low incomes compared to Northumberland County as a whole, specifically renter households, youth households, persons living alone, lone parent households, Indigenous households, senior



households, physical disability mental health issues and households with a member with cognitive issues.

Funding

Community Services

Homelessness Programs are funded through the Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) which is provincial funding supporting programs determined based on local need and designed to meet local community needs. There is an annual levy contribution to ensure service provision and innovation. Other funding is realized through detailed funding applications for targeted programs and services.

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

Early Years Services

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

Food Security Services

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

Housing Services

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

Ontario Works

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



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

Legislative

Community Services

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

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

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

Early Years Services

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

Food Security Services

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



Housing Services

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

Ontario Works

Social Assistance programs and services are planned according to the requirements of the Ontario Works Act and directives that are established by the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Local planning is through the Ontario Works EST Transition Plan, 2021 Business Plan and 2022 Service Plan (Business Plan and Service Plan are not yet approved at the time of preparing this report).

The Ministry of Children, Community & Social Services is committed to reforming the delivery of Social Assistance across the province. IN February 2021, the Ministry released their Recovery & Renewal Plan with a renewed focus on modernizing and streamlining the delivery roles between the province and the municipality. Throughout 2022, co-design of the new system will continue along with prototypes relating to Employment Services Transformation and Centralized Intake, to reduce the administrative burden locally and allow more time for direct client service delivery. During the 2022 budget and business planning cycle, there has been no announcement regarding a rate increase to Social Assistance.