



The Corporation of the City of Stratford Social Services Sub-committee

MINUTES

Date: November 12, 2025
Time: 4:30 P.M.
Location: Council Chamber, City Hall

Sub-committee Present: Councillor Henderson - Chair Presiding, Councillor Nijjar, Councillor Wordofa

Staff Present: Kim McElroy - Director of Social Services, Alex Burgess - Manager of Ontario Works, Mandy Koroniak - Manager of Children's Services, Jeff Wilson - Manager of Housing, Audrey Pascual - Deputy Clerk, Kelly Stone - Supervisor of Social Services Housing, Robin Brown - Supervisor of Social Services Ontario Works, Karmen Krueger - Director of Corporate Services

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the Meeting to Order.

Councillor Biehn provided regrets for this meeting.

Land Acknowledgment

Moment of Silent Reflection

Respectful Conduct Statement

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and the General Nature Thereof

The *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act* requires any member of Council declaring a pecuniary interest and the general nature thereof, where the interest of a

member of Council has not been disclosed by reason of the member's absence from the meeting, to disclose the interest at the first open meeting attended by the member of Council and otherwise comply with the *Act*.

Name, Item and General Nature of Pecuniary Interest

There were no disclosures of pecuniary interest made by a Member at the November 12, 2025 Social Services Sub-committee meeting.

3. Delegations

None scheduled.

4. Report of the Supervisor of Social Services - Housing

4.1 Implementation of Seniors Designated Housing Pilot Project within the Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation (SOC25-017)

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Implementation of Seniors Designated Housing Pilot Project within the Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation" (SOC25-017), be received for information;

THAT authority be delegated to the Director of Social Services to make and update local eligibility rules for the purpose of seniors designated housing pertaining to the Housing Services Act, 2011;

AND THAT the Delegation of Authority By-law 135-2017, as amended, be further amended to delegate authority to the Director to make and update local eligibility rules for the purpose of seniors designated housing pertaining to the Housing Services Act, 2011.

Sub-committee Discussion: The Supervisor of Social Services Housing provided an overview of the report. Highlights included the following:

- staff requesting the implementation of a Seniors Designated Housing Pilot Project;
- this not being supported in the current housing portfolio but supported under the Housing Services Act if identified as a local eligibility rule;
- 30% of the centralized waitlist for Rent-Geared-to-Income Housing being 55 years old or over demonstrating a need for the program;
- the program being to support seniors aging at home and to address unique needs with health and social services support;

- staff having attended the Ontario Non-profit Housing Association (ONPHA) conference with seniors designated housing being a topic of priority;
- presentations by medical professionals having identified 30 thousand long term care beds implemented at present with a projection that by 2040 there will be a shortage of 70 thousand beds;
- the population 80 years and over being expected to double by 2026; and
- staff aiming to be proactive by putting measures in place to assist seniors aging at home and with longer term plans for those in need.

Discussion occurred between Sub-committee and staff. Highlights of the discussion included the following:

- a Member asked if there is a partner organization for the program;
- staff are currently working with multiple services including the hospital with the primary service provider being the Acute Respite Care (ARC) program;
- ARC being a Community Paramedicine Program with intensive outreach workers responsible to assist with health care facilitation in the community, complete assessments and help with transitions for longer term plans;
- the ARC program having been successful;
- the vision being a strong wraparound service for seniors with services located in one building working with ARC, One Care Supports and Huron Perth Health Association (HPHA);
- the program including seniors programming and addressing isolation;
- the program to ensure activities and services are available in a central building to support aging in the home and ensure outreach programs are supporting seniors;
- age being the only requirement for enrollment;

- Members commented the program being a great idea and will have a huge impact in the community for seniors;
- a Member asked if an applicant from Toronto would be required to wait before being eligible for the program;
- staff noted that the general eligibility waitlist for RGI housing being a date order application for applicants anywhere in the province with a significant number of people currently on the list who meet eligibility;
- the building portfolio being reviewed to identify an appropriate location for the program to meet accessibility requirements; and
- applicants on the waitlist being deemed eligible to have names being drawn by application date order.

Motion by Councillor Nijjar

Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Implementation of Seniors Designated Housing Pilot Project within the Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation" (SOC25-017), be received for information;

THAT authority be delegated to the Director of Social Services to make and update local eligibility rules for the purpose of seniors designated housing pertaining to the Housing Services Act, 2011;

AND THAT the Delegation of Authority By-law 135-2017, as amended, be further amended to delegate authority to the Director to make and update local eligibility rules for the purpose of seniors designated housing pertaining to the Housing Services Act, 2011.

Carried

5. Report of the Manager of Children's Services

5.1 The Early Development Instrument (EDI) in Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County (SOC25-013)

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "The Early Development Instrument (EDI) in Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County" (SOC25-013), be received for information.

Sub-committee Discussion: The Manager of Children's Services provided an overview of the report. Highlights included the following:

- the report being for information reviewing the purpose and recent results of the Early Development Instrument (EDI);
- the EDI providing information on the developmental health of children at school entry;
- Children Services and the Service System Manager (SSM) exclusively receiving the data in the service area;
- most recent data collected in 2023 indicating 25% of children in the area being vulnerable in a minimum of one developmental domain;
- the data being a tool to identify strengths and needs in communities;
- the data to be used by Children Services in planning programming and services in the development of the five-year services system plan in 2026; and
- returning to regular data collection post COVID with the next EDI collection date to occur by kindergarten teachers in spring 2026.

Discussion occurred between Sub-committee and staff. Highlights of the discussion included the following:

- a Member asked if there is an expectation of more spaces for children;
- staff consistently looking for appropriate spaces for services;
- a continued expansion of licensed childcare with new spaces having opened in Perth County in fall 2025;
- an additional for-profit childcare centre to open early 2026 with recent zoning approval;
- the report focus being on development with this to possibly inform programs for EarlyON Centres; and
- the lack of spaces being due to a lack of funding from the Federal and Provincial Levels with the possibility of an impact on municipal tax levy.

Motion by Councillor Wordofa

Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "The Early Development Instrument (EDI) in Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County" (SOC25-013), be received for information.

Carried

6. Report of the Manager of Ontario Works

6.1 Partnership with The Local Community Food Centre (SOC25-014)

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Partnership with The Local Community Food Centre" (SOC25-014), be received for information.

Sub-committee Discussion: The Manager of Ontario Works provided an overview of the report. Highlights included the following:

- the report highlighting the ongoing partnership with The Local since 2023;
- no operational funding being provided to The Local with the money provided directly to clients requiring supports and access to the market;
- the program being to help improve food security for Ontario Works (OW) clients;
- the program being to address the gap in OW funding received and current food costs;
- a focus of implementation being to address food security for the most vulnerable in the community;
- the market being run in conjunction with a weekly meal on Mondays and Fridays in Stratford;
- the market being open to everyone with no requirements for access;
- on an ongoing basis the program determined as part of discretionary funding as a health-related need; and
- there being multiple impacts to health when food insecurity is prevalent.

Discussion occurred between Sub-committee and staff. Highlights of the discussion included the following:

- a Member noted the program having expanded since the beginning and helping to support community members;
- a Member asked about funding sources for The Local;
- staff noted The Local being under Community Food Centres Canada but still requiring additional funding such as grants;
- a Member asked if the City can provide additional funding;
- staff noted The Local can apply under the current Community Grants Program; and
- a Member noted The Local having received Community Grants funds in the 2025 grant program.

Motion by Councillor Nijjar

Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Partnership with The Local Community Food Centre" (SOC25-014), be received for information.

Carried

6.2 Sports and Leisure Program - Outcomes and Impact (SOC25-015)

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Sports and Leisure Program – Outcomes and Impact" (SOC25-015), be received for information.

Sub-committee Discussion: The Manager of Ontario Works provided an overview of the report. Highlights included the following:

- \$45,000 allocated annually by the Municipality for the program;
- funding having been exhausted before October 1, 2025;
- 139 children having been supported from 72 families;
- recipients must be receiving social assistance through either Ontario Works (OW) or Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP);
- 76% of participating children being from Stratford with the remaining children from across the County and St. Marys;

- the average age being 9 years old with applications received for children aged 1 to 17 years old;
- the program funding anything considered as sports, recreation and leisure including soccer, dance, swimming and summer camps;
- funding also used towards core needs required for the programs; and
- the program being important and included in the 2026 budget and future year's budgets.

Discussion occurred between Sub-committee and staff. Highlights of the discussion included the following:

- a Member asked how many applications were turned down when funding was completed October 1;
- staff noted this is being tracked currently with all applications being tracked;
- if a conversation is had with an OW caseworker and no formal application submitted these numbers are not recorded;
- staff expect a more fulsome number in 2026; and
- a Member noted there could be an increase to the amount in the budget with the program being very important to the community.

Motion by Councillor Nijjar

Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Sports and Leisure Program – Outcomes and Impact" (SOC25-015), be received for information.

Carried

Additional discussion was held regarding the following:

- the data collected to be brought back to Council;
- staff noted the funding amount has remained stagnant at \$45,000 with a need growing in the community; and
- staff to bring a report to Council in the 2026 to highlight funding short falls.

6.3 Stratford, St. Marys and Perth County Employment Ontario Services (SOC25-016)

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Stratford, St. Marys and Perth County Employment Ontario Services" (SOC25-016), be received for information.

Sub-committee Discussion: The Manager of Ontario Works provided an overview of the report. Highlights included the following:

- the report being an overview of the current Employment Ontario providers operating in Perth County;
- changes having been undergone to the system since the Integrated Employment Services 2023 roll out;
- Stratford being a member of the Service System Manager (SSM) which funds the Employment Ontario Providers with the County of Bruce operating day to day operations;
- Conestoga College and Partners in Employment having exited the system;
- three current primary employment services providers being Agilec, LEADS Employment Services and College Boreal with staff awaiting a potential new provider;
- in conversation with College Boreal and Agilec regarding increasing service options in the community;
- College Boreal attending the OW office every other week, with modifications considered based on demand; and
- Agilec considering coming into the Stratford space and co-locating in North Perth.

Discussion occurred between Sub-committee and staff. Highlights of the discussion included the following:

- a Member noted newcomers being in language programs while looking for jobs;
- they asked if priority is given to local applicants with many newcomers residing in Stratford who are struggling to find jobs;

- staff noted there are population specific targets with newcomers being one target demographic;
- the level of English spoken as well as reading and writing being the largest barrier to employment opportunities;
- caseworkers can make referrals but services do not always align;
- job placements being with private market employers who are in control of hiring;
- staff can provide proof of value to support individuals;
- barriers being not having a work permit and language barriers which can create safety concerns in manufacturing;
- staff trying to upskill everyone who comes and match them with appropriate employers;
- OW identifying English level as a primarily preventer;
- a Member commented we are losing young students with not enough jobs available and asked if a program for student summer jobs could be possible for local students;
- staff noted youth unemployment being at an all time high;
- the SSM continuing to strive to improve services through the Ontario Employment network to match job seekers to jobs in timely manner;
- OW reviewing who is being supported and match with appropriate services;
- certain populations facing more barriers to employment and OW providing support;
- a Member noted English as a Second Language (ESL) programs offered through the Avon Maitland School District School Board for newcomers 18 years and over; and
- they noted the programs can be free if eligibility criteria are met.

Motion by Councillor Nijjar

Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Stratford, St. Marys and Perth County Employment Ontario Services" (SOC25-016), be received for information.

Carried

7. Department Update

Sub-committee Discussion: A Member noted trends in the infographics provided.

8. Next Sub-committee Meeting

The December Sub-committee meeting has been cancelled in accordance with the approved 2025 Meeting Schedule. Information about 2026 Sub-committee meetings will be available at a later date.

9. Adjournment

Motion by Councillor Wordofa

Sub-committee Decision: THAT the Social Services Sub-committee meeting adjourn.

Carried

Meeting Start Time: 4:30 P.M.

Meeting End Time: 5:09 P.M.