



The Corporation of the City of Stratford
Social Services Sub-committee
Open Session
AGENDA

Date: Tuesday, October 8, 2024
Time: 4:30 P.M.
Location: Council Chamber, City Hall
Sub-committee Present: Councillor Henderson - Chair Presiding, Councillor Briscoe - Vice Chair, Councillor Biehn, Councillor Nijjar, Councillor Wordofa
Staff Present: Tatiana Dafoe - City Clerk, Kim McElroy - Director of Social Services, Corry Gunn - Manager of Anne Hathaway Day Care, Alex Burgess - Manager of Ontario Works, Jeff Wilson - Manager of Housing, Darren Barkhouse - Manager of Children's Services, Miranda Franken - Council Clerk Secretary

To watch the Sub-committee meeting live, please click the following link:

<https://video.isilive.ca/stratford/live.html>

A video recording of the meeting will also be available through a link on the City's website <https://calendar.stratford.ca/meetings> following the meeting.

Pages

1. Call to Order

The Chair to call the Meeting to Order.

Land Acknowledgment

Moment of Silent Reflection

Respectful Workplace Policy 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

3. Delegations

None scheduled.

4. Report of the Manager of Ontario Works

4.1 Ontario Works 2025 Provincial Allocation (SOC24-012)

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Motion by

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Ontario Works 2025 Provincial Allocation" (SOC24-012), be received for information.

5. Department Update

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The following Department Update Infographics of August, 2024 have been provided for the information of Sub-committee:

- Monthly Children's Services Report
- Monthly Homelessness Report
- Monthly Housing Report
- Monthly Ontario Works Report

6. Next Sub-committee Meeting

The next Social Services Sub-committee meeting is November 13, 2024 at 4:30 p.m. in the Council Chamber, City Hall.

7. Adjournment

Meeting Start Time:

Meeting End Time:

Motion by

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



MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: October 8, 2024
To: Social Services Sub-committee
From: Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works
 Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services
Report Number: SOC24-012
Attachments: None

Title: Ontario Works 2025 Provincial Allocation

Objective: To provide Council with an update regarding the 2025 Provincial funding allocation for the Ontario Works division.

Background: The Ontario Works Division has two primary funding sources: Provincial funding (the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS)) and municipal partner supports via taxation. Since January 2018, MCCSS has funded one hundred percent (100%) of social assistance payments. MCCSS provides program delivery funding (PDF) in two separate envelopes:

- **50/50 PDF – Social Services Administration**
 - This stream of funding supports Ontario Works intake, case management, eligibility review and enhanced verification. This funding also supports 50% of the administrative costs to manage the program, with the municipalities cost-sharing the remainder.
- **100% PDF – Ontario Works Employment Assistance**
 - This stream of funding is allocated 100% to support the delivery of employment services by the Division (not cost-shared by the municipalities).

In addition to the 100% PDF envelope tied to 2018 level, it further sustained an effective 22% reduction due to the Employment Services Transformation, outlined in the 2024 budget package. As a result of these impacts, the partner municipalities contributed \$317,200 of municipal funding in 2024. This allowed the Ontario Works Division to maintain staffing and support levels while caseloads continued to increase. As of August 2024, the caseload has increased to 775 benefit units. In January 2023, the caseload sat at 674. This 14% caseload increase has put added pressure on the

Ontario Works staff, reducing the amount of time they are able to spend with each client as they try and support them in their journey toward self-sufficiency.

Analysis: In a memo received in September 2024, MCCSS has acknowledged that due to a steady rise in caseloads across the Province, they are no longer holding delivery partners to 2018 expenditure levels. The Ministry will now use monthly average caseloads and caseload projections to adjust 2025 allocations. As a result the City of Stratford will receive an additional \$290,000 across the PDF envelope. Funding has increased in the 50/50 PDF by \$208,600 to a total of \$1,256,900 and has increased in the 100% PDF \$81,400 to a total of \$281,800 (guaranteed, not dependent on municipal contribution). The 50/50 portion of this funding requires that the municipality match the MCCSS contribution to receive the funding.

As noted earlier in the report, caseloads have steadily risen since the COVID-19 pandemic which has resulted in higher caseworker to client ratios, meaning caseworkers are spending less time with their clients due to the increased volume of paperwork, benefit requests, Ontario Works applications and clients requiring action plan updates.

Caseworkers are expected to meet with their entire caseload every 3-6 months to update the Ontario Works action plan. Clients with more complex needs require more frequent updates and is becoming more difficult for caseworkers to achieve as the caseload continues to grow. The result is a level of service delivery that is not in line with the vision of the Ontario Works program locally nor provincially.

Currently, a single client on Ontario Works receives a maximum of \$733 while a couple with two children receives a maximum of \$1,250. As the program is administratively burdensome and requires caseworker approval for the issuance of all benefits, contact between client and caseworker is more frequent due to the volume of requests that are coming in from the growing caseload.

Further to this, the local office continues to see a significant volume of Ontario Works applications. As of August 2024, the local office has averaged 77 applications per month and is intervening in all of the applications that are received, even those that are automatically processed by the centralized Intake and Benefit Administration Unit (IBAU) due to errors, undeclared information, or the application requiring local office intervention before the file is granted.

For these reasons, the Ontario Works Division will be including an expansion of an additional Ontario Works caseworker on a permanent basis during the 2025 budget cycle. The Province has recognized the need for additional support due to increasing caseloads and has increased funding for the program for the first time in 7 years.

The expansion initiative identifies that a new caseworker position will cost approximately \$107,000. With the Province now committed to funding half of this position, the City of Stratford would provide \$21,730 via taxation to increase the

responsiveness and availability of Ontario Works caseworkers to meet the needs of the most vulnerable citizens in our community. The remaining costs would be shared between the Province of Ontario, Perth County, and the Town of St Marys.

To maximize service delivery and provincial funding, the Ontario Works Division is proposing the additional caseworker for 2025 and beyond.

Financial Implications:

Financial impact to current year operating budget:

There is no impact on the 2024 budget as the funding allocation impacts 2025 and onwards.

Financial impact on future year operating budget:

As a result of the funding held at 2018 levels, the municipal contribution toward the Social Services administrative costs has exceeded the 50 percent requirement. This increase to the funding allocation will return the cost sharing between the Province and municipalities back to the 50/50 level. Further, the proposed impact on the City of Stratford tax levy for the Ontario Works Department at existing service levels reduces \$60,947 (9.75%). Should Council approve the expansion initiative, the proposed impact to the City of Stratford tax levy results in an adjusted 6.28% compared to 2024.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities:

Build Housing Stability

This report aligns with this priority as caseworkers often support clients experiencing housing instability and homelessness. By enhancing the caseworker complement, this will allow the team to spend more time with their most vulnerable clients, supporting them with many different aspects of their life and ensuring they are accessing all available benefits, that they are being seen in a timely manner and that they have the support they need on their path toward self-sufficiency. By ensuring caseworkers have more manageable caseloads, they are better able to support their clients who are experiencing housing instability.

Alignment with One Planet Principles:

Health and Happiness

Encouraging active, social, meaningful lives to promote good health and wellbeing.

Equity and Local Economy

Creating safe, equitable places to live and work which support local prosperity and international fair trade.

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Ontario Works 2025 Provincial Allocation" (SOC24-012), be received for information.

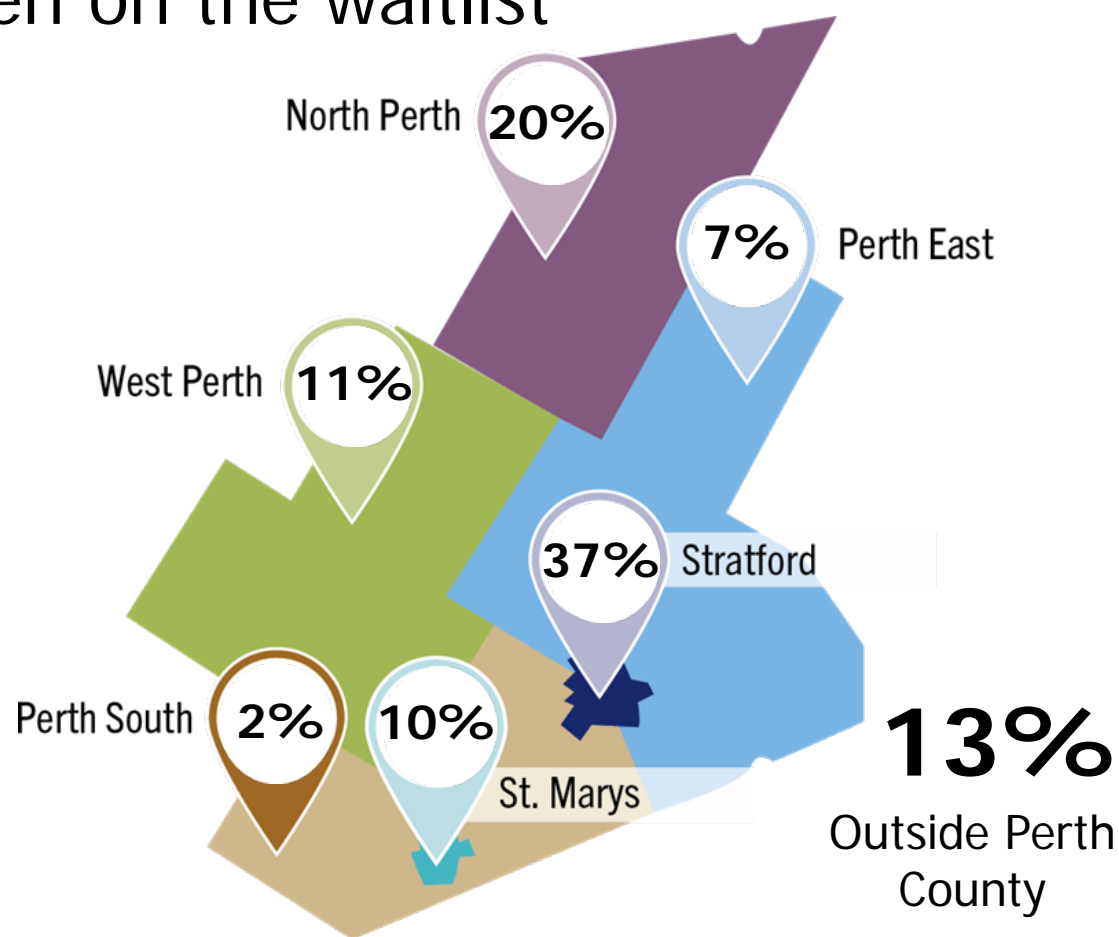
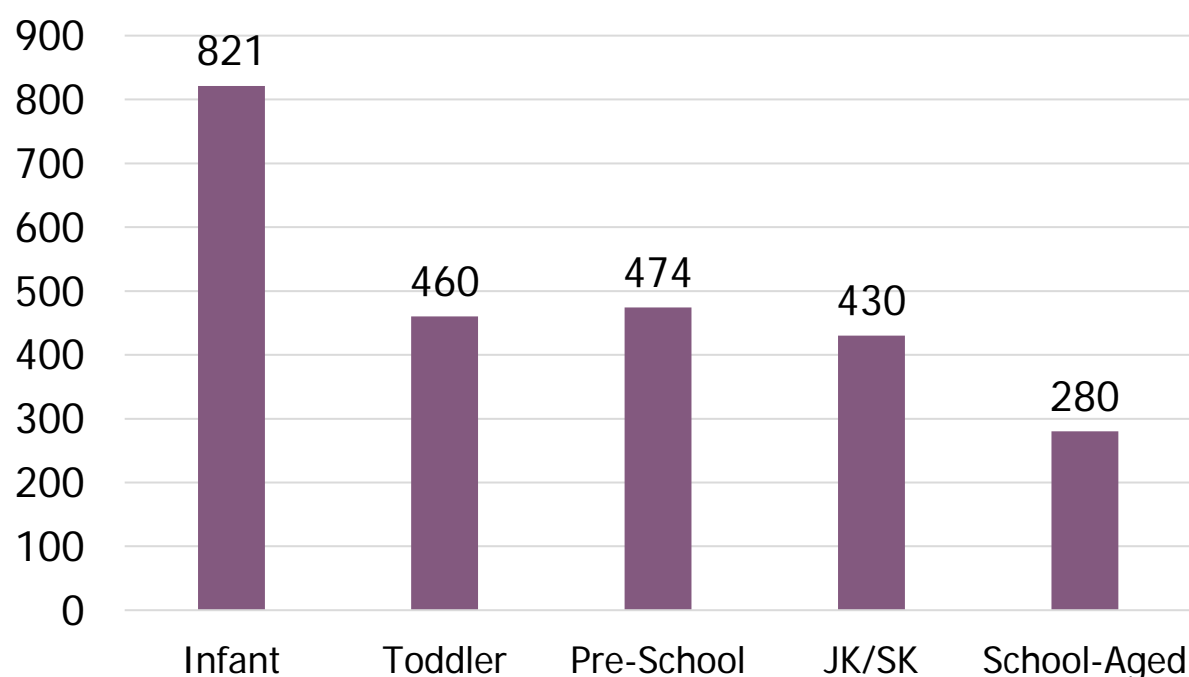
Prepared by: Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works
Recommended by: Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services
Joan Thomson, Chief Administrative Officer

SOCIAL SERVICES MONTHLY CHILDREN'S SERVICES REPORT

Stratford, Perth County, & St. Marys

2465 Total number of Children on the waitlist

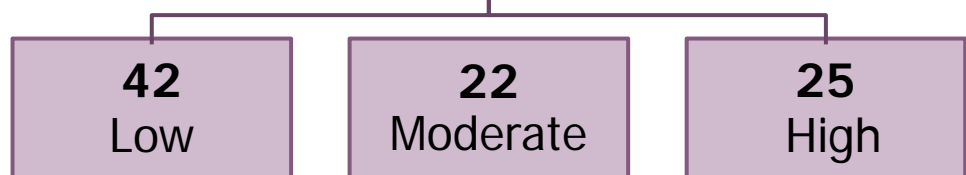
Age Category on the waitlist



Resource Consulting

89 Total Children supported by the Program

Level of Support



EarlyON

878 Unique children (0-6 years) served

644 Unique Parents/ Caregivers served

1793 Visits by children (0-6 years)

1287 Visits by Parents/ Caregivers



Information Bulletin

EarlyON providers collaborated for an engaging weekly drop-in summer program at Wildwood Conservation Area that served over 1000 participants this summer.



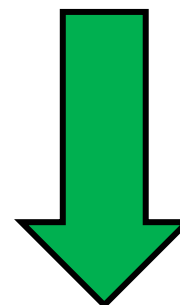
SOCIAL SERVICES MONTHLY HOMELESSNESS REPORT

Stratford, Perth County, & St. Marys



158

Total number of households experiencing homelessness



This is a decrease from July 2024, when there were **165** households experiencing homelessness



11

New households entering into homelessness



6

Households returned to service area or reconnected with services



2

Households who lost their housing



11

Households who became housed



15

Households who left the service area or had no contact with service provider

Population Specific Information

113 Single Adults

18 Youth (16-24)

27 Families

138 Chronic

35 Unsheltered

26 Identify as Indigenous

Information Bulletin

Many people who experience homelessness do not struggle with substance abuse problems or addictions. Just like in the general population, only a percentage of those who are experiencing homelessness deal with addictions. People experiencing homelessness may deal with other issues related to their experiences of homelessness, including trauma and mental illness, for example.

Source: The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness - The Homelessness Hub

For more information about housing and homelessness services and supports please visit: <https://www.stratford.ca/en/inside-city-hall/Homelessness.aspx>



SOCIAL SERVICES MONTHLY SOCIAL HOUSING REPORT

Stratford, Perth County, & St. Marys

564 Total number of Households on the waitlist

Unit Size

1 Bedroom	62%
2 Bedroom	16%
3 Bedroom	11%
4+ Bedroom	11%

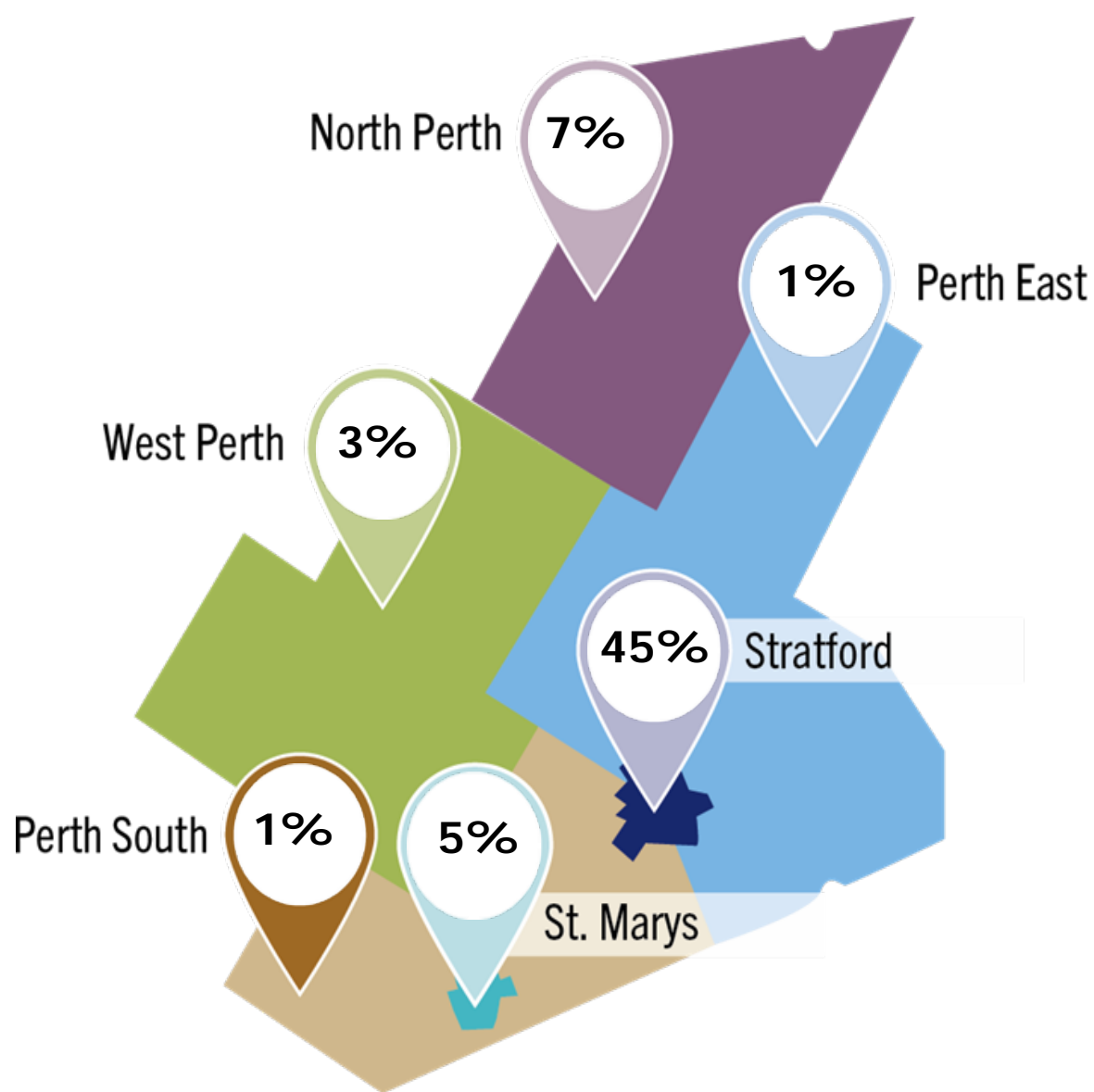
Applicant Type

Single/ Couple	55%
Family	34%
Senior	11%

Priority Status

Chronological Order	86%
Homeless	10%
Special Provincial Priority (SPP)	4%

*SPP: Survivor of domestic abuse or trafficking



Unknown: **6%**

Outside Perth County: **32%**

*Current applicant address

Move ins & Move outs

5 Total number of move outs

5 Total number of move ins

Maintenance



320

Number of
Work orders
requested

For more information about housing services and supports please visit: <https://www.stratford.ca/en/inside-city-hall/housing.aspx>



SOCIAL SERVICES MONTHLY ONTARIO WORKS REPORT

Stratford, Perth County, & St. Marys



775 Total number of active caseloads

55 Total number of active temporary care cases

*If you are an adult and you are temporarily responsible for the care of a child who is in financial need, you may be eligible for temporary care assistance on their behalf.



16%

Percentage of caseload terminations exiting to employment



7%

Percentage of Caseload terminated



104

New applications received



13%

Percentage of caseloads with employment earnings



\$934

Average monthly employment earnings

Population Specific Information



60%

Singles without dependents



30%

Lone parent families



5%

Couples with or without dependents

2.4

Years

Average time on Assistance

\$733

The maximum amount a Single on Ontario works receives per month



Information Bulletin

Ontario Works provides income and employment supports to people in temporary financial need. If you qualify, Ontario Works can provide you with:

- Financial assistance to help you cover the costs of your basic needs (example: food and housing costs, and
- Employment assistance to help you prepare for and find a job.

You may also be eligible for health benefits for yourself and your family, including drug and dental coverage.

For more information about Ontario Works and Social Assistance please visit: <https://www.stratford.ca/en/inside-city-hall/ontarioworks.aspx#How-to-Apply-for-Financial-Assistance>

