



The Corporation of the City of Stratford  
Social Services Committee  
Open Session  
AGENDA

**Date:** Monday, November 25, 2024

**Time:** 7:05 P.M.

**Location:** Council Chamber, City Hall

**Committee Present:** Councillor Henderson - Chair Presiding, Councillor Briscoe - Vice Chair, Mayor Ritsma, Councillor Beatty, Councillor Biehn, Councillor Burbach, Councillor Hunter, Councillor McCabe, Councillor Nijjar, Councillor Sebben, Councillor Wordofa

**Staff Present:** Kim McElroy - Director of Social Services, Tatiana Dafoe - City Clerk, Karmen Krueger - Director of Corporate Services, Taylor Crinklaw - Director of Infrastructure Services, Tim Wolfe - Director of Community Services, Adam Betteridge - Director of Building and Planning Services, Neil Anderson - Director of Emergency Services/Fire Chief, Dave Bush - Director of Human Resources, Audrey Pascual - Deputy Clerk

To watch the 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.

**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. **Sub-committee Minutes** 4 - 9
- Sub-committee minutes are attached for background regarding the discussion held at the November 13, 2024 Sub-committee meeting.
4. **Delegations**
- None scheduled.
5. **Report of the Manager of Ontario Works**
- 5.1 **Update on the Provincial Centralized Intake Initiative (SOC24-013)** 10 - 12
- Staff Recommendation:** THAT the report titled, "Update on the Provincial Centralized Intake Initiative" (SOC24-013), be received for information.
- Motion by**  
**Sub-committee Recommendation:** THAT the report titled, "Update on the Provincial Centralized Intake Initiative" (SOC24-013), be received for information.
6. **Report of the Manager of Children's Services**
- 6.1 **EarlyON Service Provider Transition Update (SOC24-014)** 13 - 14
- Motion by**  
**Staff Recommendation:** THAT the report titled, "EarlyON Service Provider Transition Update" (SOC24-014), be received for information.
7. **For the Information of Committee**
- 7.1 **Department Update** 15 - 18
- The following Department Update Infographics of September, 2024 have been provided for the information of Committee:
- Monthly Children's Services Report
  - Monthly Homelessness Report
  - Monthly Housing Report
  - Monthly Ontario Works Report
8. **Adjournment**

Meeting Start Time:

Meeting End Time:

**Motion by**

**Committee Decision: THAT the Social Services Committee meeting adjourn.**



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

Date: November 13, 2024  
 Time: 4:30 P.M.  
 Location: Council Chamber, City Hall

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

Regrets: Councillor Biehn

Staff Present: Kim McElroy - Director of Social Services, Alex Burgess - Manager of Ontario Works, Miranda Franken - Council Clerk Secretary

**1. Call to Order**

The Chair called the Meeting to Order.

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

No disclosures of pecuniary interest were made by a Member at the November 13, 2024, Social Services Sub-committee meeting.

**3. Delegations**

None scheduled.

**4. Report of the Manager of Ontario Works**

**4.1 Update on the Provincial Centralized Intake Initiative (SOC24-013)**

**Sub-committee Discussion:** The Manager of Ontario Works presented the report, highlighting the following:

- the Provincial Intake and Benefit Administration Unit (IBAU), a branch of the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, now being responsible for processing Ontario Works (OW) applications;
- the Provincial change taking effect for 10 selected municipalities as of October 1;
- IBAU currently handling applications for Stratford and Perth County with option for local assistance and the IBAU files being passed to the local office as partially completed or grandfathered files;
- IBAU handling the intake process through online or phone applications and granting OW services;
- applications no longer being available at the local office under this change;
- clients with flagged applications through IBAU, being processed and transferred to the local office to complete the application;
- the initiative being launched to the remaining 37 service managers in 2025, including the local office, with no date being clarified;
- the local office continuing to process applications for applicants who are under 18 requiring a trustee, those with temporary care assistants, and clients requiring emergency assistance;

- staff anticipate challenges in the early stages of the transition and are hopeful issues will be addressed following the roll out with the initial 10 municipalities;
- staff anticipate challenges for clients who typically apply at the office and clients with no fixed address;
- following a launch date, staff will work with the Stratford Library and Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) to prepare for an anticipated increase in the need for computer access;
- staff are also being trained extensively on changes as they occur and computers are being set up in the lobby;
- under the Ontario Works Act, the Director of Social Services is identified as the Ontario Works Administrator;
- there being a regulatory change occurring at the same time as this launch, with the local office becoming a delivery partner and a Provincially Designated Agent to be identified as the Ontario Works Administrator and delivery agent;
- no financial implications having been identified as a result of these changes; and
- staff being hopeful the changes will allow for increased meaningful time with clients working towards employment and self sufficiency goals.

Discussion on this matter took place between Sub-committee and staff. Highlights of the discussion included the following:

- the current system for processing applications being explained;
- staff encouraging Huron Perth Community Legal Clinic involvement from internal review through to SBT as this is a complex process and complex legislation;
- under the future model, the IBAU to send the letters deeming ineligible applications, then hearing the internal reviews and referring to the SBT;

- staff being unable to provide support during this process as clients are not involved with a case worker if the application has been denied;
- 80% of clients currently applying online with the remaining 20% applying over the phone or in the local office;
- concerns with the transition having been expressed including that the most vulnerable in the community may be at risk with the new system;
- staff advocating for better turnaround time on issuance of cheques as the mandated processing time is 4 days, which is often not being met;
- staff reviewing a change in service delivery by having a staff member available to assist with application submissions on computers to be located in the lobby;
- Provincial messaging being centralization of the intake process and reduced administration burden to allow more staff time with clients doing high impact case management;
- this being a first step in the 2019 provincial plan to modernize social assistance;
- identification and filing taxes being two of the largest barriers for clients;
- through the action plan, staff continuing to identify needs for ID and are able to provide support covering cost of birth certificate applications and helping with submissions;
- clients without a bank account being given Reloadable Payment Cards (RPC);
- fewer than 30% of clients receiving cheques, and staff aiming to transition all clients to the RPC; and
- staff having access to large volume of client information and expecting the province will continue to provide reports, making data available to support the caseloads.

Motion by Councillor Briscoe

**Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Update on the Provincial Centralized Intake Initiative" (SOC24-013), be received for information.**

**Carried**

## **5. Department Update**

The following Department Update Infographics of September, 2024 were provided for the information of Sub-committee:

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

**Sub-committee Discussion:** The Director of Social Services provided the department update, highlighting the following:

- five households having been housed in September;
- the Sports and Leisure Program being delivered through the City's Grant Program offering up to \$500 annually for children in families actively on social assistance to access sports or leisure programs;
- 2,509 children on waitlists for licensed daycare;
- there being continued work towards capital funding to build additional licensed daycare facility;
- 25 licenses available through the local office for home day care candidates to become licensed; and
- if the home daycares are full with 5 children each, this could create 125 spaces.



## **6. Next Sub-committee Meeting**

The next Social Services Sub-committee meeting is January 14, 2025, at 4:30 p.m. in the Council Chamber, City Hall, pending Council approval of the 2025 Sub-committee Schedule.

## **7. Adjournment**

Motion by Councillor Briscoe

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

**Carried**

Meeting Start Time: 4:30 P.M.

Meeting End Time: 5:04 P.M.




---

## MANAGEMENT REPORT

**Date:** November 13, 2024  
**To:** Social Services Sub-committee  
**From:** Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works  
 Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services  
**Report Number:** SOC24-013  
**Attachments:** None

---

**Title:** Update on the Provincial Centralized Intake Initiative

**Objective:** To provide Council with an update regarding the Provincial expansion of the Centralized Intake initiative.

**Background:** On June 21, 2021, the local Ontario Works office was onboarded into the Centralized Intake initiative, which allowed applicants to apply online or over the telephone for Ontario Works services through a new Provincial unit, the Intake and Benefit Administration Unit (IBAU). This information was detailed in report SOC21-006 which was presented to Sub-committee in June 2021. Through this unit, applicants can now receive financial assistance through an automated process which determines eligibility utilizing a risk-based approach. This approach is intended to modernize and allow for a more seamless delivery of social assistance. Clients can now apply online or over the telephone, verify their identity and sign the applicable forms online, allowing them to receive their first month of assistance before they meet with a local Ontario Works caseworker. The Centralized Intake process has been iterated upon since its launch and continues to be studied and reviewed by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) with an aim to have all applications eventually submitted through the IBAU.

**Analysis:** In September 2024, the local office received a memo from MCCSS informing of their intention to expand the Centralized Intake program. Beginning on October 1, 2024, the Ministry would now be responsible for all initial eligibility decisions for ten select Consolidated Municipal Service Managers. The City of Stratford is not one of the ten sites that have been included in phase one of the roll-out. The ten local Ontario Works offices that are apart of the initial phase of the roll-out would now only process applications for Temporary Care Assistance (TCA), Emergency Assistance (EA) and Under-18 applications. Once an applicant is granted assistance, the local Ontario Works

office would be responsible for ongoing eligibility verification, case management and creating a suitable action plan which helps move the client toward self-sufficiency.

This is a significant shift from the way applications are currently processed within the Ontario Works program. Although the IBAU processes several types of Ontario Works applications currently, applicants still need to apply in the local office, and the local office is currently responsible for all applications requiring an interpreter, a trustee, clients with no fixed address, Under-18, TCA and EA. There is no change to files that are granted by the IBAU as the local office currently completes post-grant activities, ongoing case management and action plan maintenance. With the shift that has been undertaken in the 10 CMSM's that are included in phase one of the roll-out, applicants will no longer have the ability to apply in the local office nor will they be able to meet with a local office caseworker until their application is granted by the IBAU. The CMSM's across the Province have raised concerns regarding the impacts this may have on clients, specifically those without a phone or access to email, those with no fixed address, clients requiring interpreters and those in immediate need of assistance. MCCSS has advised that this process is iterative, and they will modify as needed based on the feedback and learnings from the first ten sites.

The expansion of Centralized Intake will continue to occur across the remainder of the Province by the end of 2025. Although there are no firm dates, the local office is beginning to review processes, provide the means for clients to apply online within the office and train staff on the pending changes. Furthermore, once a date is established, the Ontario Works Division will communicate the changes to community partners who may see an increase in clients needing to access computers to complete their online application.

The last change to highlight because of this expansion is a significant regulatory and legislative change to the Ontario Works Act which designates MCCSS as the delivery agent, and CMSM's as delivery partners. This change is required to allow the Ministry to be responsible for initial eligibility decisions, authorizing initial payments and notifying applicants of their decisions. Furthermore, the Ministry will begin to hear appeals regarding initial eligibility decisions including Internal Reviews and appeals to the Social Benefits Tribunal, both of which are currently completed by the local OW office. With the regulatory change to the Ontario Works Act, the Ministry will now appoint an Ontario Works Administrator at the Provincial level. The City of Stratford will continue to be a delivery agent up until the point that we are onboarded into the Centralized Intake expansion, at which time we will become a delivery partner. The Ministry has also indicated that there are no changes to the cost sharing relationship or funding levels that currently exist because of these amendments.

**Financial Implications:****Not applicable:**

There are no financial implications identified at this time. If at any point there are financial implications because of these changes, a further report will be provided to Council detailing those impacts.

**Alignment with Strategic Priorities:**

**Not applicable:** This report does not align with one of the Strategic Priorities as this report is informational only and relates to changes that are forthcoming within the local office. Currently, there is no impact to service delivery within the City of Stratford nor are there changes which relate to the strategic priorities.

**Alignment with One Planet Principles:**

**Not applicable:** There is no environmental impact detailed in this report as the changes highlighted are related to technical processes, regulations, and legislation.

**Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Update on the Provincial Centralized Intake Initiative" (SOC24-013), 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



---

## MANAGEMENT REPORT

**Date:** November 25, 2024  
**To:** Social Services Committee  
**From:** Darren Barkhouse - Manager of Children's Services  
**Report Number:** SOC24-014  
**Attachments:** None

---

**Title:** EarlyON Service Provider Transition Update

**Objective:** To provide Mayor and Council with an update on the transition of EarlyON Family Centre services to the YMCA of Three Rivers for programs provided in the City of Stratford, beginning in January 2024.

**Background:** Upon the completion of a Request for Proposal (RFP) process, the YMCA of Three Rivers was identified as the successful service provider to oversee all EarlyON Family Centre programs and services for the City of Stratford catchment area, replacing Perth Care For Kids (PCFK). They join three current providers – Municipality of North Perth, Town of St. Marys and PCFK (West Perth, Perth East). The YMCA of Three Rivers brings a wealth of experience and early years expertise as they currently provide EarlyON programs in neighbouring municipalities and are committed to program growth and expansion of services.

**Analysis:** This new EarlyON partnership expands the current base of service providers and brings added programs and support for children and families in the Stratford area. This new service delivery model provides more targeted locations to best suit the community and promotes increased capacity for more families to attend. Initial program growth had been the focus in the first quarter to maintain past service levels, and to establish new relationships in the community. Second quarter growth continued through expanded partnerships and collaborations with current service providers. One such partnership highlighted with the Wildwood Conservation Area and two other EarlyON service providers (PCFK/Town of St. Marys), saw over one thousand children and families participate in a unique outdoor program over a 7-week span through July and August. The YMCA continues to reach the early benchmarks of their operational plan, and there has been continued growth into the third quarter through increased participation numbers and added program offerings.

## **Financial Implications:**

### **Financial impact to current year operating budget:**

There are no impacts on our current 2024 projections as all funding approved falls into our overall EarlyON allocation provided by the Province.

### **Financial impact on future year operating budget:**

This new partnership is under contract for the next three years, with the option for two additional one-year terms before another RFP process would be required. There may be some amendments to the funding schedules throughout the contract life span which is expected given the Province only confirms our EarlyON funding allocations annually.

## **Alignment with Strategic Priorities:**

### **Work Together for Greater Impact**

This report aligns with this priority as it will develop a collaborative model for service providers to provide EarlyON services.

### **Intentionally Change to Support the Future**

This report aligns with this priority as the changes to EarlyON programs reflect the changing needs in the community and the best practices in the sector.

## **Alignment with One Planet Principles:**

### **Health and Happiness**

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

### **Culture and Community**

Nurturing local identity and heritage, empowering communities, and promoting a culture of sustainable living.

**Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "EarlyON Service Provider Transition Update" (SOC24-014), be received for information.**

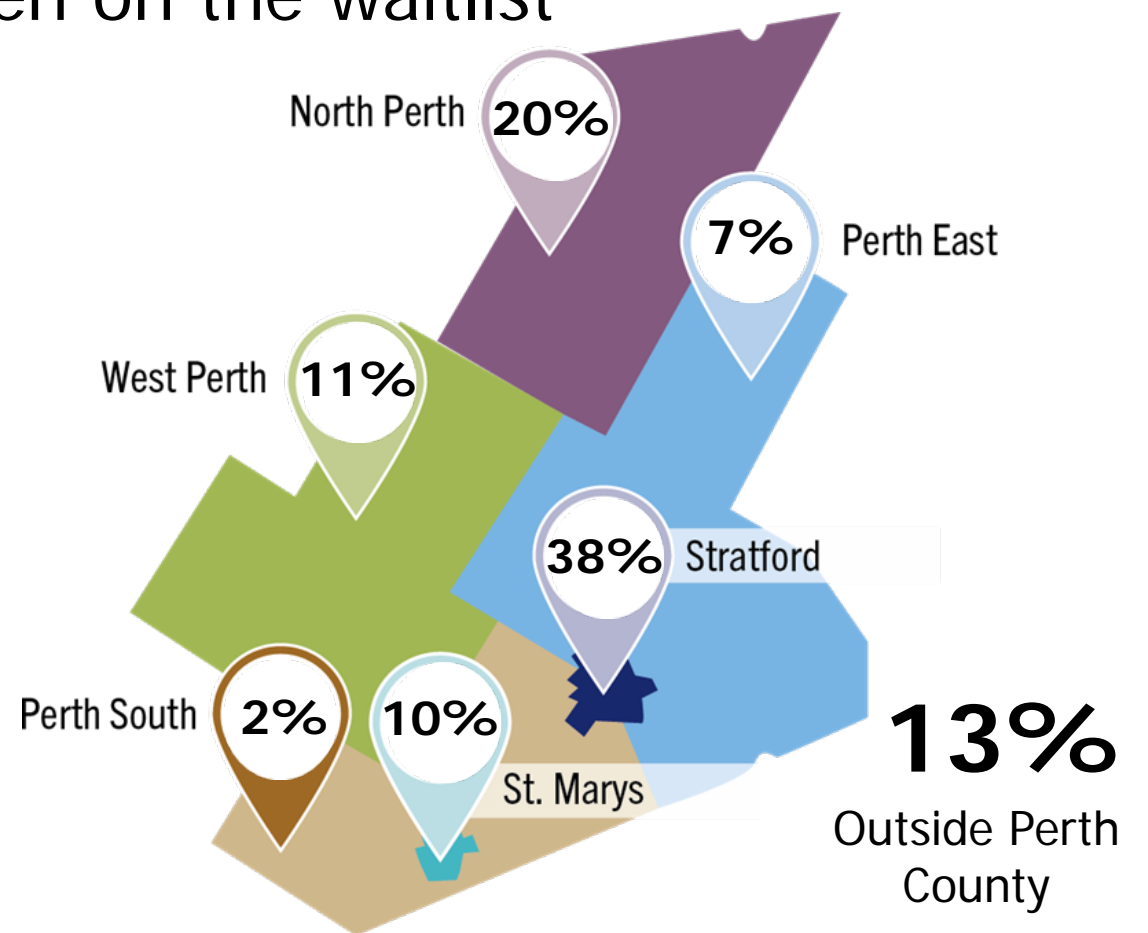
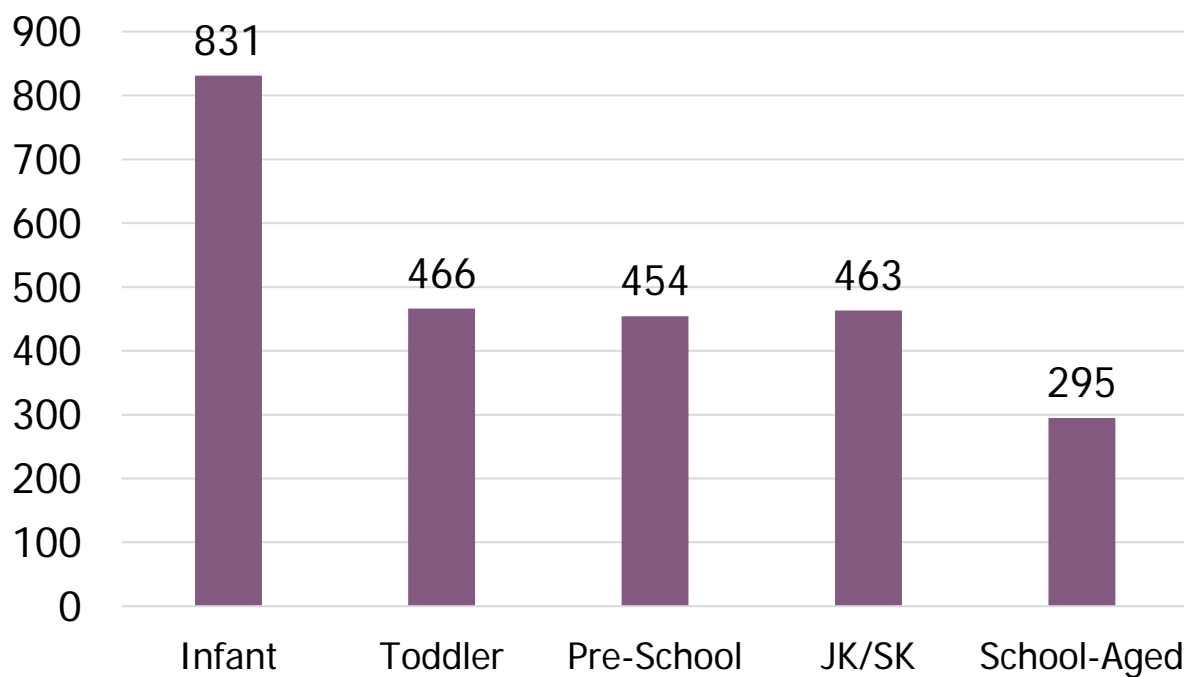
**Prepared by:** Darren Barkhouse, Manager of Children's Services  
**Recommended by:** Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services  
 Joan Thomson, Chief Administrative Officer

# SOCIAL SERVICES MONTHLY CHILDREN'S SERVICES REPORT

## Stratford, Perth County, & St. Marys

**2509** Total number of Children on the waitlist

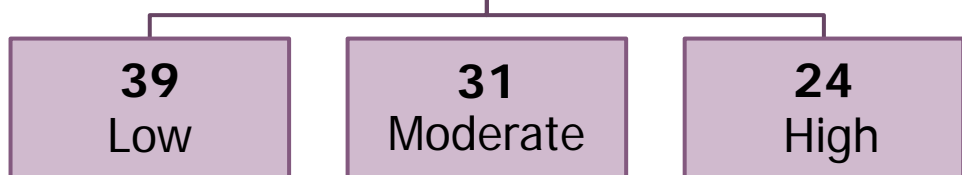
Age Category on the waitlist



### Resource Consulting

94 Total Children supported by the Program

#### Level of Support



### EarlyON

**558** Unique children (0-6 years) served

**428** Unique Parents/ Caregivers served

**1353** Visits by children (0-6 years)

**1071** Visits by Parents/ Caregivers



## Information Bulletin

Through our continued partnership with Conestoga College, we are expanding our current ECE cohort of educators by adding a full time ECE diploma program right here in Stratford, contact [childrenservices@stratford.ca](mailto:childrenservices@stratford.ca) for more information.

For more information about Children's Services and supports please visit: <https://www.stratford.ca/en/inside-city-hall/childcare.aspx>



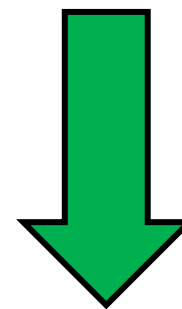
# SOCIAL SERVICES MONTHLY HOMELESSNESS REPORT

Stratford, Perth County, & St. Marys



151

Total number of households experiencing homelessness



This is a decrease from August 2024, when there were **158** households experiencing homelessness



6

New households entering into homelessness



12

Households returned to service area or reconnected with services



1

Households who lost their housing



5

Households who became housed



21

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

## Population Specific Information

109 Single Adults

17 Youth (16-24)

25 Families

133 Chronic

32 Unsheltered

24 Identify as Indigenous

## Information Bulletin

Many people experiencing homelessness are employed; however, it is much more difficult to find a job while experiencing homelessness because of several challenges, such as: lacking a permanent address, not having regular access to showers, barriers to transportation, and other difficulties like mental illness, make it difficult to obtain employment. Even when individuals experiencing homelessness find jobs, they are often part-time or minimum wage positions.

**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

**576** Total number of Households on the waitlist

### Unit Size

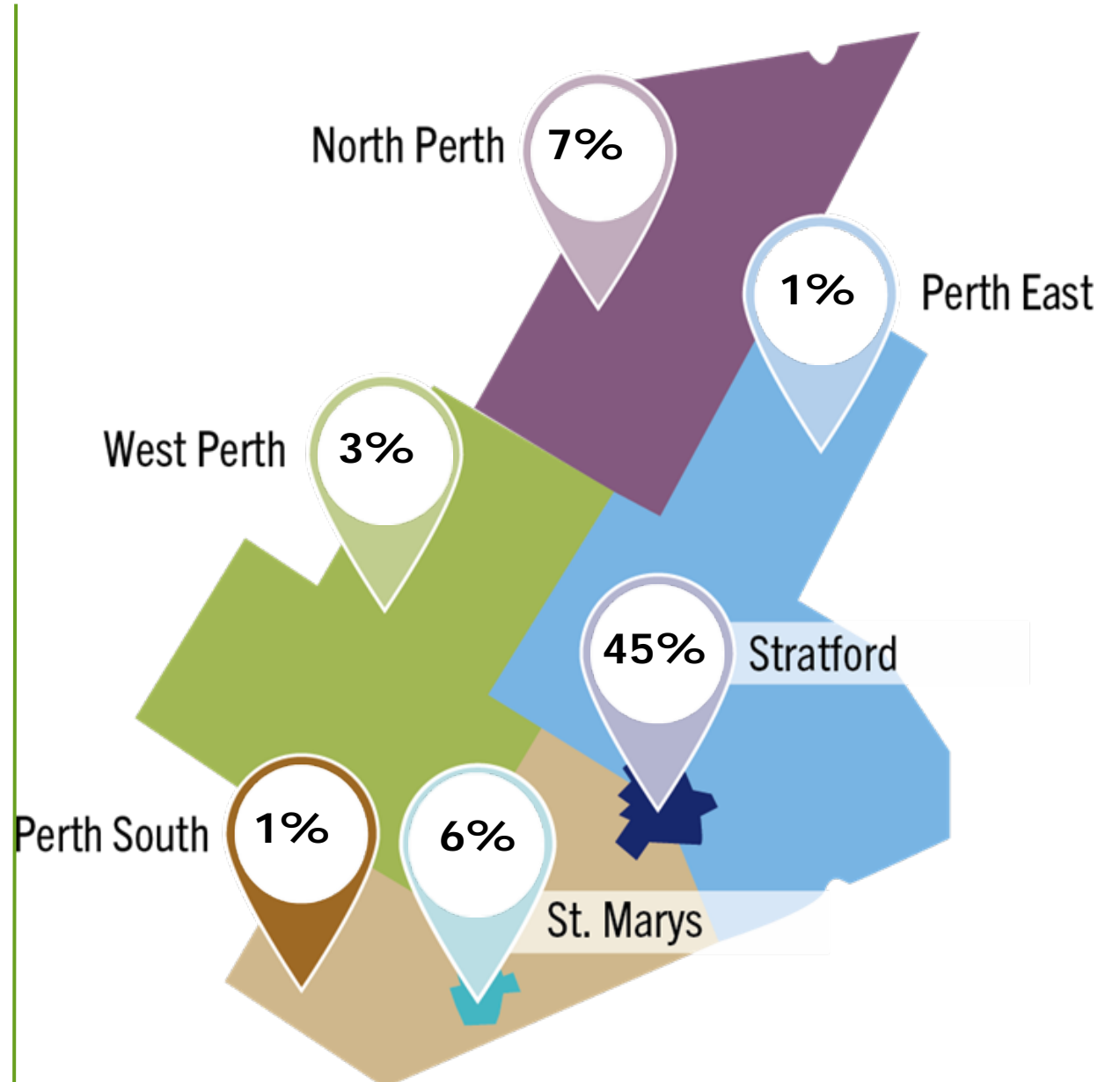
1 Bedroom	62%
2 Bedroom	16%
3 Bedroom	12%
4+ Bedroom	11%

### Applicant Type

Single/ Couple	54%
Family	35%
Senior	12%

### Priority Status

Chronological Order	87%
Homeless	10%
Special Provincial Priority (SPP)*	4%



Unknown: **6%**

Outside Perth County: **32%**

\*SPP: Survivor of domestic abuse or trafficking

\*Current applicant address

### Move ins & Move outs

**4** Total number of move outs

**9** Total number of move ins

### Maintenance



**344**

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



**797** 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.



**31%**

Percentage of caseload terminations exiting to employment



**5%**

Percentage of Caseload terminated



**85**

New applications received



**13%**

Percentage of caseloads with employment earnings



**\$945**

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

The Sports & Leisure program provides children under the age of 18, who are active on a Social Assistance file, up to \$500 per year to access various sports or leisure activities. The program spent \$50,000 in 2024 supporting 150 children across Perth County (118 in Stratford, 26 Perth County, 6 St. Marys). Activities included Soccer, Hockey, Martial Arts, Dance lessons, Swimming Lessons, YMCA Passes, summer camps, youth groups (ie: girl guides), school trips, and music lessons. Funding will reset in January 2025.

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>

