



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

Date: Monday, June 23, 2025

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 and Interim Director of Human Resources, Adam Betteridge - Interim Chief Administrative Officer, Tatiana Dafoe - City Clerk, Karmen Krueger - Director of Corporate Services, Taylor Crinklaw - Director of Infrastructure Services, Tim Wolfe - Director of Community Services, Neil Anderson - Director of Emergency Services/Fire Chief, 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 - 11

Sub-committee minutes are attached for background regarding the discussion held at the June 10, 2025 Sub-committee meeting.

4. Delegations

4.1 Request for Delegation Regarding Housing and the Cost of Living Crisis in Stratford

The following persons requested to speak to Committee to request that the housing and cost-of-living crisis in Stratford be prioritized:

- Tanner Bergsma - requesting the building of a shelter in Stratford and that the total development of any new residential housing projects be paused and allocate land for purpose of affordable, transitional, and permanent housing.
- Justine Styles - requesting that the concerns raised be taken seriously and to consider where funds are allocated.
- Hailey Houston - requesting approval of housing ideas and to meet the needs of the community. Specific requests are: to conduct a housing needs survey every year with input by marginalized communities, approve permanent supportive and transitional housing, and ensure requirements are met when building on indigenous lands.
- Barb Howard - requesting that a men's shelter be developed in Stratford and that there be more programs for geared rent to income.

Motion by

THAT Tanner Bergsma, Justine Styles, Hailey Houston and Barb Howard be heard.

5. For the Information of Committee

5.1 Department Update

12 - 16

The following Department Update Infographics of April, 2025 were provided for the information of Committee:

- Monthly Children's Services Report
- Monthly Homelessness Report

- Monthly Housing Report
- Monthly Ontario Works Report
- Monthly Social Services Stratford Report

6. 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: June 10, 2025
 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: Kim McElroy - Director of Social Services, Audrey Pascual - Deputy Clerk, Miranda Franken - Council Clerk Secretary

Also present: Members of the public and media

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 June 10, 2025, Social Services Sub-committee meeting.

3. ADDED - Adoption of the Addenda to the Agenda:

Motion by Councillor Biehn

THAT the Addenda to the Social Services Sub-committee dated June 10, 2025, be added to the Agenda as printed.

Carried

4. Delegations

4.1 AMENDED - Request for Delegation regarding Housing and the Cost-of-Living Crisis in Stratford

Motion by Councillor Nijjar

THAT Tanner Bergsma, Patricia Gallant, Ken Wood and Martine Lee be heard.

Carried

Tanner Bergsma spoke to Sub-committee. Highlights of the presentation included:

- noted society having failed and cited risks for homeless individuals in winter, for seniors and for families;
- being that Stratford is writing a 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan the public should be consulted to fix the crisis with public input having been surveyed for the Official Plan;
- statistics were provided on housing needs and it was noted 254 households being on the housing waitlist and 160 people being homeless in the region with the numbers not reflecting people who disappear or are afraid to speak up;
- requested council implement the following:
 - a full pause in residential development until clear affordable housing targets are met;
 - immediate public consultation on the 10-year Housing Plan;
 - a permanent lived experience advisory committee;
 - an emergency shelter and mobile outreach team;

- permanent protection of City owned land for non-market and co-op housing;
- stronger tenant protections and rent control;
- housing being a basic human right and the purpose of governance to serve the Canadian people;
- noted no one should be invisible in the place they call home; and
- a vision of a Stratford that will lead the nation to solve the problem.

Discussion occurred between the Sub-committee, Staff and Tanner Bergsma. Highlights of the discussion included the following:

- the crisis being across Canada;
- the City priority being to build permanent housing not temporary;
- the Director of Social Services clarified public consultation is always being requested in housing plans including a larger public consultation and consultation with various community agencies;
- Tanner Bergsma having surveyed over 700 residents and willing to share with staff and help to connect staff to people;
- the City working together with community groups including United Way and investStratford;
- the City overseeing Stratford, County of Perth and St. Marys with supported housing requiring staffing for support at all hours;
- the City providing housing to women, children and men as available with no requirement that the women have been abused;
- challenges noted include individuals not wanting to relocate if housing is available outside their area and the length of time to access housing; and
- staffing hired in this regard under the 2025 budget to start over the summer.

Patricia Gallant spoke to Sub-committee to share their story about homelessness and challenges with City housing. Highlights of the presentation included:

- having been homeless in October 2022 and noted underhoused through the Supported Housing of Perth Program (SHOPP) with the intention that it be temporary;
- information on housing transitions having changed with units sitting empty;
- a toll being taken by the fear of losing children;
- their brother having died in winter 2025 from homelessness;
- commented many will have a hot meal and warm bed while someone else will push a cart and hope someone will be kind enough to feed them; and
- it was questioned why the City doesn't choose a shelter and noted the 10-year plan not helping individuals tonight.

Discussion occurred between the Sub-committee and Patricia Gallant regarding the length of wait time for housing and the risks that the time period can have.

Ken Wood spoke to Sub-committee. Highlights of the presentation included:

- it was noted that requests have been made to the City to prioritize rental accommodations above luxury family homes since 2014;
- Councillors and City Directors having power to make decisions and action them;
- it was recommended that Members and Staff put themselves in position of others and monitor social media where people share stories;
- noted the safety of the citizens being failed and the City gentrified;
- the homeless population not having money for housing with wages not having kept pace with inflation or housing costs;
- this being a complicated problem but there being immediate things that can be done;

- the 10 Year Provincial Plan having ended in 2024, and it being wise to hire someone to continue monitoring;
- mental illness and lack of supports being contributing barriers for some to be housed;
- Optimism Place, ShelterLink and Emily Murphy being provided with limited funds and having to narrow parameters with people not fitting within them and stated women should not have to prove abuse to receive assistance;
- they want to leave their housing unit citing challenges with other tenants and noted much has been cleaned up but there still being evictions and it taking time to identify how to help;
- units sitting empty with some people capable of creating significant damage to units;
- recommended the monitoring of move ins, outs and evictions and evictions prevented through assistance and programs;
- recommended the City prioritize keeping citizens healthy and alive as was done with Climate Change and Diversity Equity and Inclusion; and
- it being noted Strong Mayor Powers could be used to create a task force on housing and homelessness to identify blockages and problems.

Discussion occurred between Sub-committee and Ken Wood regarding support staff for the City housing and requests to developers to build affordable units.

Martine Lee spoke to Sub-committee. Highlights of the presentation included:

- related the stories of two friends who experienced homelessness and contributing factors;
- factors contributing to homelessness being job loss, abuse or mental illness and these could affect anyone or loved ones;
- an overview of Martine Lee's current housing situation, contributing factors and personal experiences;

- an overview of the circumstances that led to access to low-income housing and the challenge that others may face in accessing the service if under different circumstances;
- it was noted the economy is getting worse with a minimum wage part time job not being sufficient to afford rent and noted mental health challenges leading to unemployment at times; and
- requested that if Council cannot build homeless shelter to take small steps to build one in the next five to ten years.

Discussion occurred between Members and Patricia Gallant regarding clarification on their housing situation and additional comments by Tanner Bergsma. A Member suggested Tanner Bergsma speak to the Stratford Builders.

Motion by Councillor Biehn

THAT Amber Timmons be heard.

Carried

Amber Timmons spoke to Sub-committee. Highlights of the presentation included:

- having looked at the City Budget for a number of years;
- noting some spending received from the Province with the City having the budget for this and overspending in other areas; and
- the area of overspending noted being tourism.

Discussion occurred between Members and Amber Timmons regarding the budget and provincial funding. Highlights of the discussion included the following:

- the City not funding the Stratford Festival and does contribute to Hospital funding;
- tourism providing job;
- Amber Timmons spoke of their experience with homelessness and contributing factors including mental health and noted the loss of family members to homelessness; and
- Amber Timmons noted the Grand Trunk Renewal project being an opportunity if utilized appropriately and meaningfully.

Discussion occurred between Members and the Director of Social Services. Highlights of the discussion included the following:

- the delegations were thanked for their vulnerability, for sharing their stories and being advocates;
- the City needing mixed housing and right fit of housing;
- a shelter being a short-term solution and not keeping people housed;
- the priority and biggest impact being supportive or supported housing in working with the Ministry of Health to provide supports to keep people housed;
- it was noted without supportive housing there being a cycle of eviction, unhoused and rehoused again;
- the question being how to house people who for reasons beyond their control cannot live independently and finding these supports;
- it was noted that if there is proper operational funding 398 Erie Street can make an impact on community homelessness, with supports for individuals at all hours;
- a basic shelter cost being 35-50 million dollars to build barring a no delays labour structures;
- Council and staff pushing government to create better structure that incentives creating affordable housing,
- it was noted at the Federal level for profit builders receiving a GST tax break to build housing with this not extended to not for profit builders who are focused on building affordable homes with this being an advocacy point;
- funding from the Province being provided with an obligation to be spent on specific things;
- the City not having received accelerated funding for homelessness with this being provided for shovel ready projects and making this a challenge; and
- noted a unified voice having potential to affect change.

5. Department Update

The following Department Update Infographics of April, 2025 were provided for the information of Sub-committee:

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

6. Next Sub-committee Meeting

The next Social Services Sub-committee meeting is July 15, 2025 at 4:30 p.m. in the Council Chamber, City Hall.

7. Adjournment

Motion by Councillor Biehn

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

Carried

Meeting Start Time: 4:30 P.M.

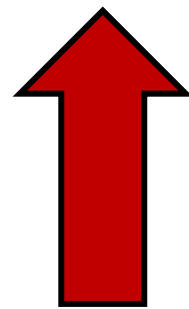
Meeting End Time: 6:02 P.M.

SOCIAL SERVICES MONTHLY CHILDREN'S SERVICES REPORT

Stratford, Perth County, & St. Marys

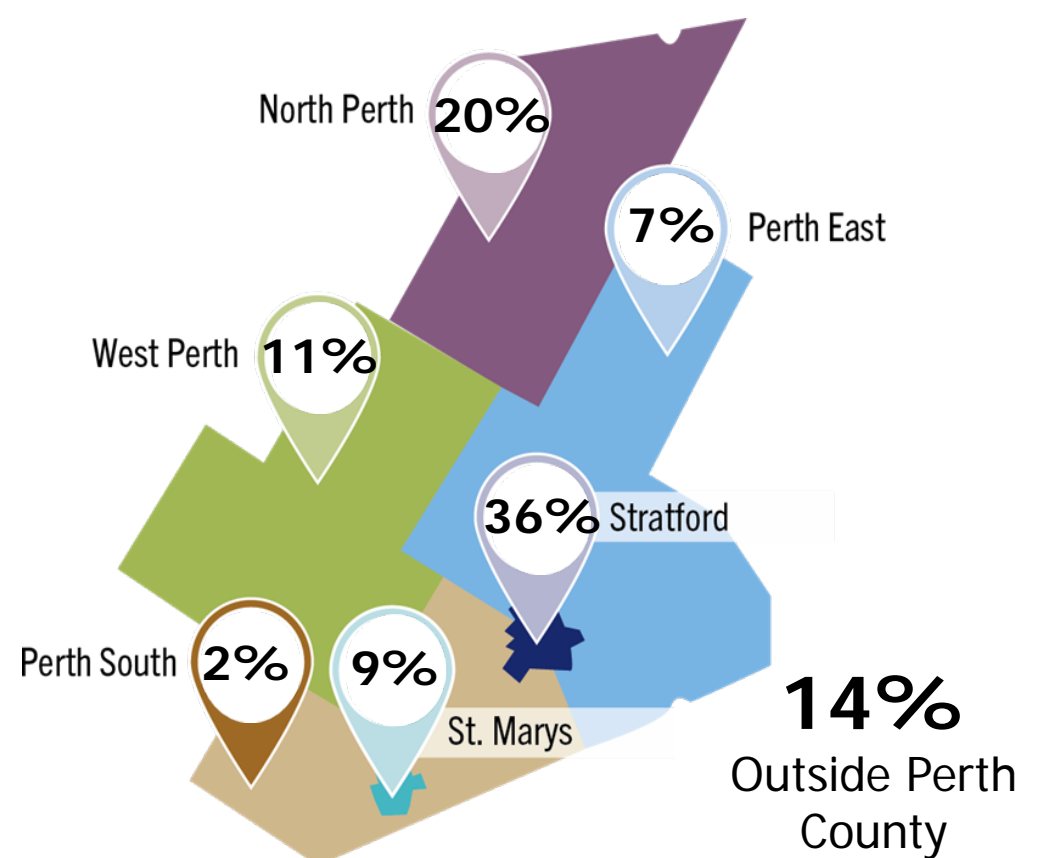
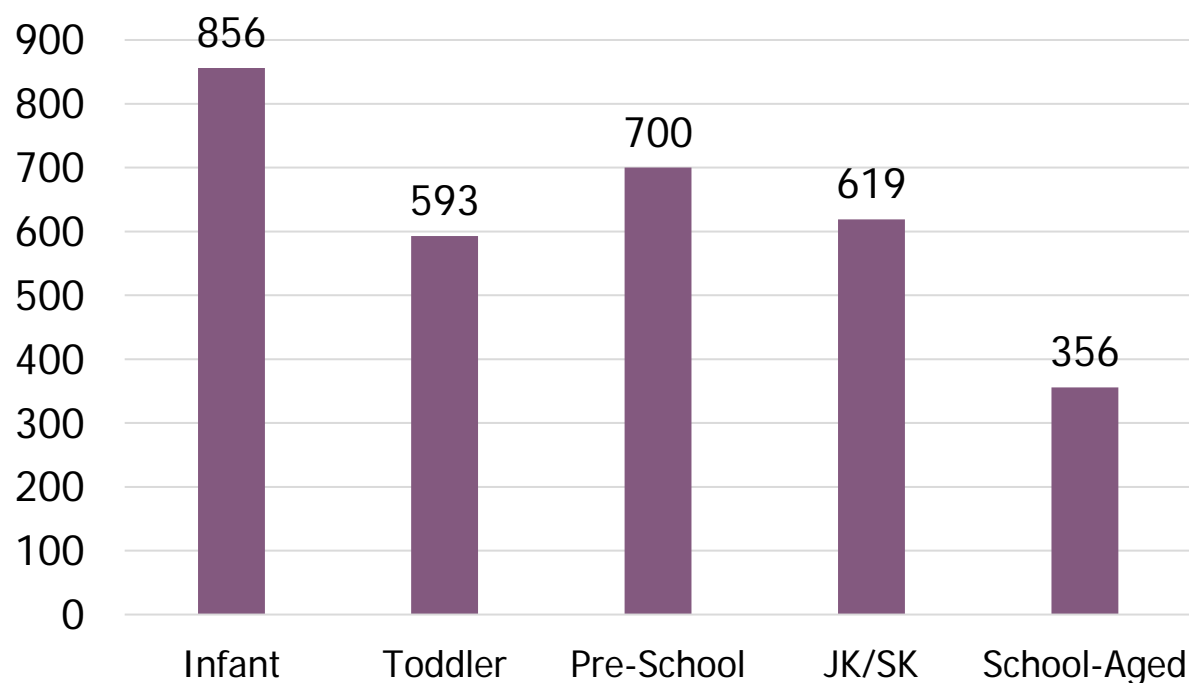
3,124

Total number of children
on the child care waitlist



This is an increase from
March 2025, when there
were **3,078** children on the
child care waitlist

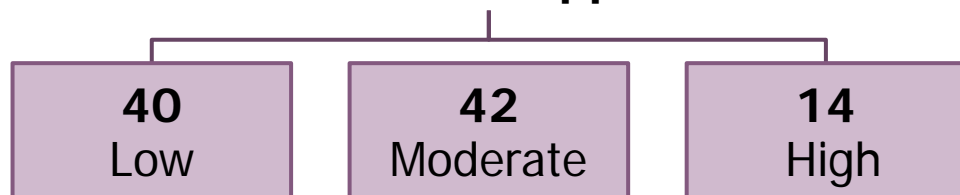
Age Category on the waitlist



Resource Consulting

96 Total children
supported by the
Program

Level of Support



EarlyON

599 Unique
children (0-6
years) served

476 Unique parents/
caregivers
served

1,640 Visits by
children (0-6
years)

1,337 Visits by
parents/
caregivers

i Information Bulletin

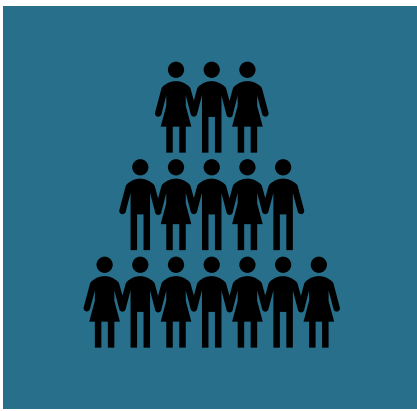
The Children's Services Division is the manager for child care in Stratford, St. Marys and Perth County. In partnership with the community, the Children's Services Division promotes fair and equal access to high quality care for children, and support to their families and caregivers.

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



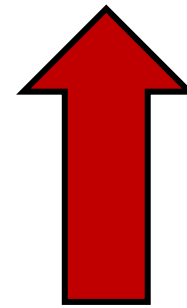
SOCIAL SERVICES MONTHLY HOMELESSNESS REPORT

Stratford, Perth County, & St. Marys



148

Total number of households
experiencing homelessness



This is an increase from
March 2025, when there
were **140** households
experiencing
homelessness



8

New households
entering into
homelessness



12

Households returned
to service area or
reconnected with
services



5

Households who
lost their housing



4

Households who
became housed



13

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

Population Specific Information

109 Single Adults

18 Youth (16-24)

21 Families

128 Chronic

23 Unsheltered

19 Identify as
Indigenous

Information Bulletin

A variety of different factors can contribute to an individual's experience of homelessness. Often, people experience homelessness when all other options have been exhausted, and/or they are dealing with circumstances that make it difficult to maintain housing. Some of these obstacles that may lead people to their experiences of homelessness include:

- Eviction
- The affordable housing crisis
- Coping with mental illnesses or addictions, which makes it difficult to maintain housing

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>

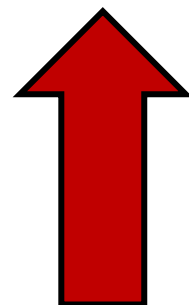


SOCIAL SERVICES MONTHLY SOCIAL HOUSING REPORT

Stratford, Perth County, & St. Marys

600

Total number of Households
on the centralized waitlist



This is an increase from
March 2025, when there
were **597** households on the
centralized waitlist

Unit Size

1 Bedroom	61%
2 Bedroom	15%
3 Bedroom	13%
4+ Bedroom	12%

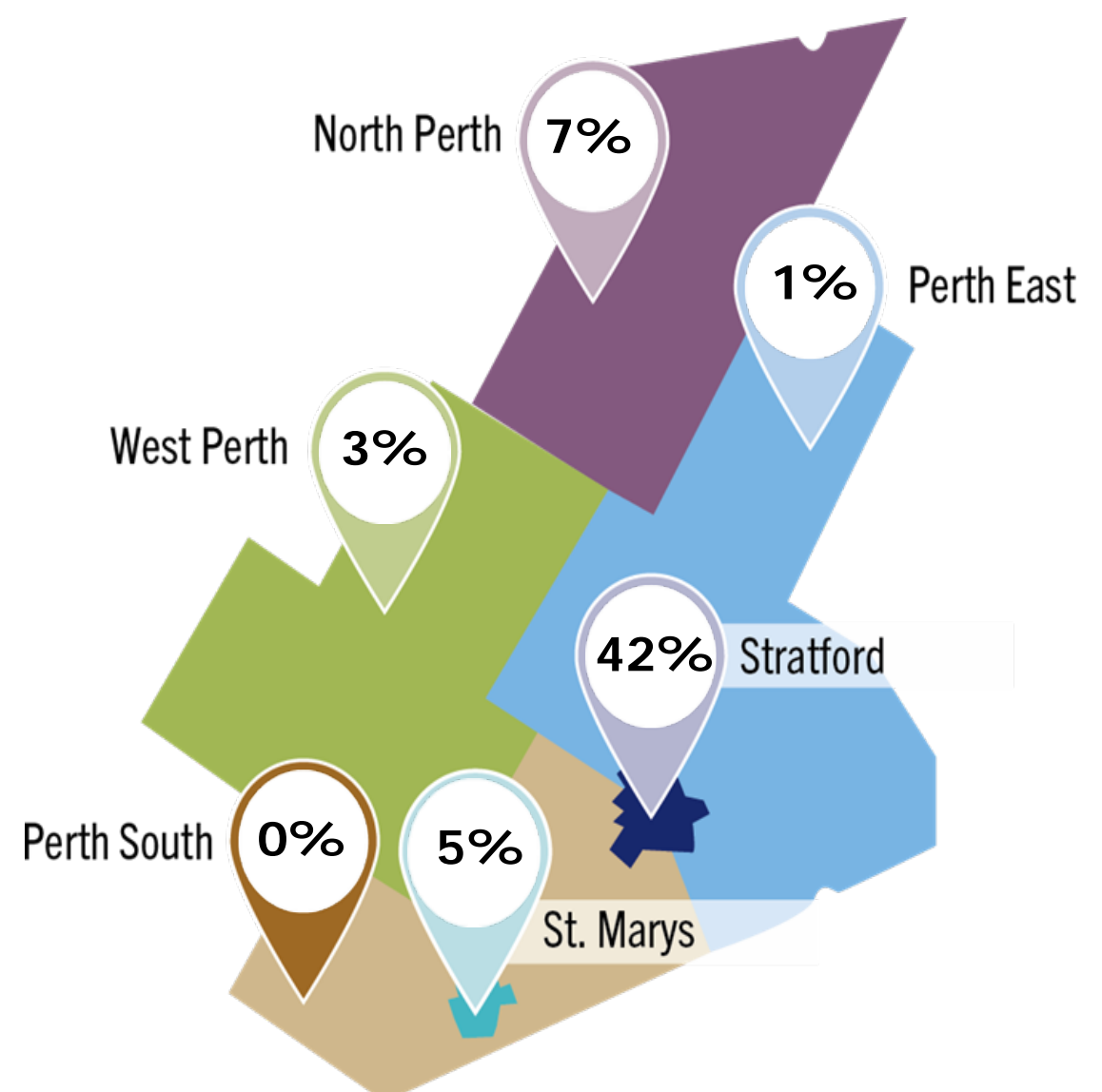
Applicant Type

Single/Couple	53%
Family	37%
Senior	11%

Priority Status

Chronological Order	88%
Homeless	8%
Special Provincial Priority (SPP)*	5%

*SPP: Survivor of domestic abuse or trafficking



Unknown: **7%**
Outside Perth County: **35%**

*Current applicant address

Move ins & Move outs

7 Total number of move outs

7 Total number of move ins

Maintenance



320

Number of
Work orders
requested

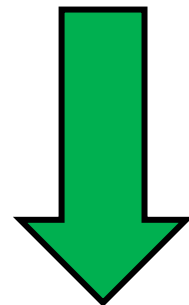
For more information about housing services and supports please
visit: <https://www.stratford.ca/en/inside-city-hall/housing.aspx>



SOCIAL SERVICES MONTHLY ONTARIO WORKS REPORT

Stratford, Perth County, & St. Marys

842 Total number of
active caseloads



This is a decrease from
March 2025, when there
were **846** active cases

49 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.



25%

Percentage of
caseload
terminations exiting
to employment



8%

Percentage
of Caseload
terminated



73

New applications
received



13%

Percentage of
caseloads with
employment earnings



\$853

Average monthly
employment
earnings

Population Specific Information



69%

Singles without
dependents



26%

Lone parent
families



5%

Couples with
or without
dependents

**2.3
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)
- 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>



SOCIAL SERVICES MONTHLY CITY OF STRATFORD REPORT

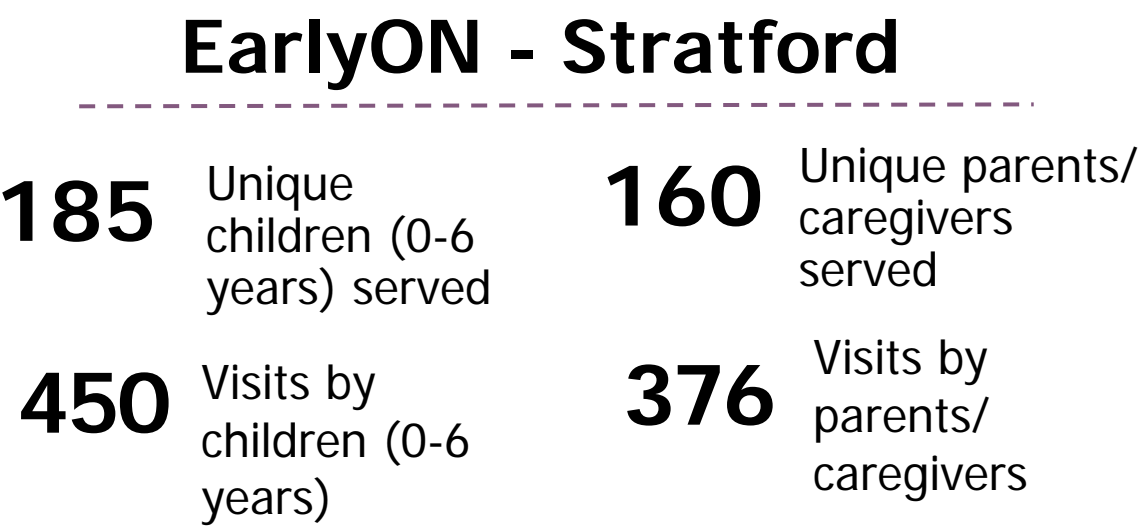
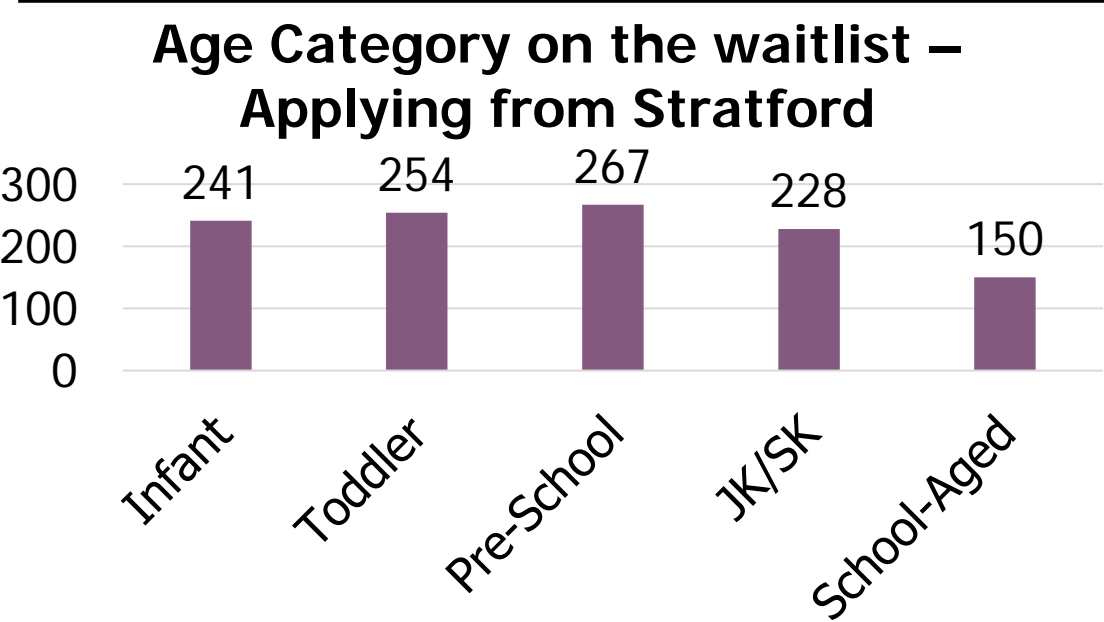
Children's Services

1,140

Total number of children on the child care waitlist applying from Stratford

37%

Percentage of the total child care waitlist applying from Stratford



Social Housing

254

Total Households on the centralized waitlist applying from Stratford

Unit Size	
1 Bedroom	67%
2 Bedroom	13%
3 Bedroom	11%
4+ Bedroom	9%

Applicant Type	
Single/Couple	59%
Family	30%
Senior	11%

42%

Percentage of the total centralised waitlist applying from Stratford

Priority Status	
Chronological Order	84%
Homeless	10%
Special Provincial Priority (SPP)*	6%

*SPP: Survivor of domestic abuse or trafficking

Ontario Works

504

Total number of active cases in Stratford

60%

Percentage of the total Ontario Works caseload that are in Stratford