



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

Date: Monday, November 24, 2025

Time: 7:10 P.M.

Location: Council Chamber, City Hall

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

Staff Present: André Morin - Chief Administrative Officer, Tatiana Dafoe - City Clerk, Audrey Pascual - Deputy Clerk, Kim McElroy - Director of Social Services and Interim Director of Human Resources, 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

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**

5 - 15

Sub-committee minutes are attached for background regarding the discussion held at the November 12, 2025, Sub-committee meeting.

4. **Delegations**

None scheduled.

5. **Report of the Supervisor of Social Services - Housing**

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

16 - 19

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.

Motion by

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.

6. **Report of the Manager of Children's Services**

- 6.1 The Early Development Instrument (EDI) in Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County (SOC25-013) 20 - 24

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

Motion by

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.

7. Report of the Manager of Ontario Works

- 7.1 Partnership with The Local Community Food Centre (SOC25-014) 25 - 28

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

Motion by

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

- 7.2 Sports and Leisure Program - Outcomes and Impact (SOC25-015) 29 - 31

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

Motion by

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

- 7.3 Stratford, St. Marys and Perth County Employment Ontario Services (SOC25-016) 32 - 33

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

Motion by

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

8. For the Information of Committee

8.1 Department Update

34 - 38

The following Department Update Infographics of September, 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

9. 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 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.



MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: November 12, 2025
To: Social Services Sub-Committee
From: Kelly Stone, Supervisor of Social Services, Housing
Report Number: SOC25-017
Attachments: None

Title: Implementation of Seniors Designated Housing Pilot Project within the Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation

Objective: To provide information to Council regarding connecting low-income seniors with attainable and appropriate housing options in the City of Stratford, Town of St. Marys and Perth County and to seek support for the department to proceed in creating and maintaining local eligibility rules.

Background: The *Housing Services Act, 2011*, provides that a service manager may determine local eligibility rules for selection from the Rent-Geared-to-Income Centralized Waitlist. Unlike some municipalities across the province, the Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation does not currently hold a local priority designation for the senior population.

Data collected from the Centralized Waitlist for Rent-Geared-to-Income Housing for the City of Stratford, Town of St. Marys and Perth County shows that as of October 2025, of the 668 current applicants, 186 are aged 55 and over and 133 applicants are aged 60 and over. This means that 28% of the overall waitlist are above age 55 and 19% are above age 60. This demonstrates that the need for seniors designated housing exists and that filling vacancies as they arise could be feasible.

The provision of seniors designated Rent-Geared-to-Income housing supports the goal of prioritizing aging populations the opportunity to successfully age at home. This can be accomplished through consideration of location of residence and building sizes and accessibility needs, as well as through increased financial stability for low-income seniors.

The designation of certain buildings for seniors is permitted under the Ontario Human Rights Code, which allows for age-specific housing programs where such designations serve a legitimate purpose, such as addressing the unique needs of older adults. As

such, reserving units in designated buildings for seniors is not considered discriminatory or preferential treatment under the Code.

Analysis: The Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation follows provincially legislated mandates as well as municipally approved local rules to ensure offers and transfers comply with both the *Residential Tenancies Act, 2006* and the *Housing Services Act, 2011*.

The Housing Division intends to begin implementation of seniors-designated buildings with a pilot project. Once this is complete and the outcomes have been reviewed, the program could potentially be expanded at select buildings. The location of the potential pilot project is being determined but the intention is to designate a multi-residential building for seniors, to prioritize seniors as units become vacant, and to work with community partners to bring appropriate resources to serve the seniors demographic. The pilot would begin with a building with both seniors and non-seniors as tenants with non-seniors being replaced by seniors as they move out of the building.

Potential capital and accessibility enhancements could include increasing safety through environmental design through projects such as improved lighting and the installation of key-fob entry on secure exterior doors. Additionally, areas with significant greenspace will allow for positive and interactive outdoor activities which could promote socialization amongst neighbours. Potential locations of seniors designated buildings would look at proximity to shopping, parks, libraries, and seniors' programs. The intention is that they would also offer ample parking for those with access to vehicles, and be placed in communities where accessible transportation options are available.

The Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation has committed to increasing staff presence and community collaboration in all locations across the portfolio. Ongoing hosting of social events, community agency information sessions, and facilitating bringing resources to tenants where possible, including community outreach and mobile healthcare partnerships, will keep tenants of all ages better supported with their tenancies, including those who are aging at home. Currently, tenants with medical needs requiring ground floor access or fully accessible units are already prioritized for transfers within the Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation through an internal transfer list and this process would remain unchanged, ensuring that priority status continues to be given to those with the highest need.

Following an evaluation of the success of the pilot project and provided data continues to reflect the need for an expansion within seniors designated housing, additional properties may be considered for suitability in the future.

Financial Implications:

Financial impact to current year operating budget:

Impact is expected to be nominal, as the operating budgets include estimates for general maintenance required within property management and paint, repairs and cleaning, and minor accessibility modifications when unit transfers occur.

Financial impact on future year operating budget:

Impact is expected to be nominal.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities:

Build Housing Stability

This report aligns with this priority as dedicated housing for a targeted population allows resources to be tailored to the unique needs of tenants

Work Together For Greater Impact

This report aligns with this priority as it provides the opportunity to support tenants of all ages and abilities. Focusing on housing stability and aging at home allows members of our community the ability to age with independence and stability, and being strategic with designating the right properties should also see a decrease in social isolation for seniors.

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.

Travel and Transport

Reducing the need to travel, encouraging walking, cycling and low carbon transport.

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.

Prepared by: Kelly Stone, Supervisor of Social Services, Housing
Recommended by: Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services
André Morin, CPA, Chief Administrative Officer



MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: November 12, 2025
To: Social Services Sub-committee
From: Mandy Koroniak, Manager of Children's Services
Report Number: SOC25-013
Attachments: None

Title: The Early Development Instrument (EDI) in Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County

Objective: To provide Sub-committee with information about the Early Development Instrument (EDI), including results for children in Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County.

Background: The [Early Development Instrument \(EDI\)](#) is a teacher-completed, population-level questionnaire that was developed at the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University to measure children's ability to meet age-appropriate developmental expectations at school entry. Teachers complete the EDI in the second half of the school year for children in year two (senior) kindergarten.

About the EDI

The EDI started in Canada and has been implemented in 12 out of 13 provinces and territories, and over 30 countries worldwide. Widely tested, the EDI is known to be a reliable and valid source of data for children between the ages of 3.5 to 6.5. The tool has a long history in Ontario, and there have been six cycles of the EDI completed from 2004 to 2023. The EDI in Ontario is currently sponsored by the Ministry of Education. Operating under a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry, the Children's Services Division exclusively receives the EDI data that pertains to the City of Stratford, Town of St. Marys, and Perth County for service system planning purposes described under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* (CCEYA). This data informs the Division's service delivery, including planning for child care and early years programs and services that best support the needs of communities.

The EDI focuses on the overall outcomes for children as a health-relevant, measurable concept that has long-term consequences for individuals and populations. The data from its collection helps monitor the developmental health of our young learners. It

measures children's ability to meet age-appropriate developmental expectations across five domains, described below.

The 5 Domains of the EDI

Physical Health & Well-Being

- Assesses children's physical readiness for the school day, physical independence, and gross and fine motor skills.

Social Competence

- Assesses children's willingness to explore new things, approaches to learning, the amount of respect and responsibility they show, and overall social competence.

Emotional Maturity

- Assesses children's prosocial and helping behaviour, aggressive behaviour, ability to balance between being too fearful and too impulsive, amount of hyperactivity and inattention, and ability to deal with feelings at an age-appropriate level.

Language & Cognitive Development

- Assesses children's basic and advanced literacy skills, basic numeracy skills, interest in math and reading, memory, and ability to understand similarities and differences.

Communication Skills & General Knowledge

- Assesses children's ability to communicate in socially appropriate ways, use language and storytelling, and age-appropriate knowledge of life and the world around them.

Vulnerable Children and Approaches to the EDI

The EDI has been designed as a tool to assist communities and policy makers to mobilize and facilitate positive impact locally.

Children whose EDI scores on any domain fall below the lowest 10% from baseline (data collected in Ontario from 2004-2006) are referred to as vulnerable in that domain. More vulnerability indicates that a greater percentage of children are struggling, even when those struggles are not apparent.

Research shows that without support, these children are more likely to experience poorer outcomes later in life: academically, emotionally, and in their relationships with their peers. Vulnerability at school entry is associated with poorer scores on provincial

standardized tests in Grades 3 and 4, and with having some form of Special Needs status by Grade 9.

It is important to note that children with special needs are reported separately to not lose the individuality of their results. The data shared in this report therefore does not include children with special needs.

Analysis:

EDI data collection typically occurs every three years, but the last cycle was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This instead left a 5-year data collection gap between Cycle V (2017/2018) and Cycle VI (2022/2023).

The questionnaires for Cycle VI were also completed later in the school year, and it is important to keep in mind that children in Cycle VI are slightly older than in previous cohorts. In addition, in Cycle VI, five school boards in Ontario did not collect EDI data.

EDI data shows that within the Province of Ontario, 31% of kindergarten children are vulnerable in at least one domain. While data for Cycle VI in Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County shows lower vulnerability than for Ontario, 25% of children locally are still vulnerable in one or more domains.

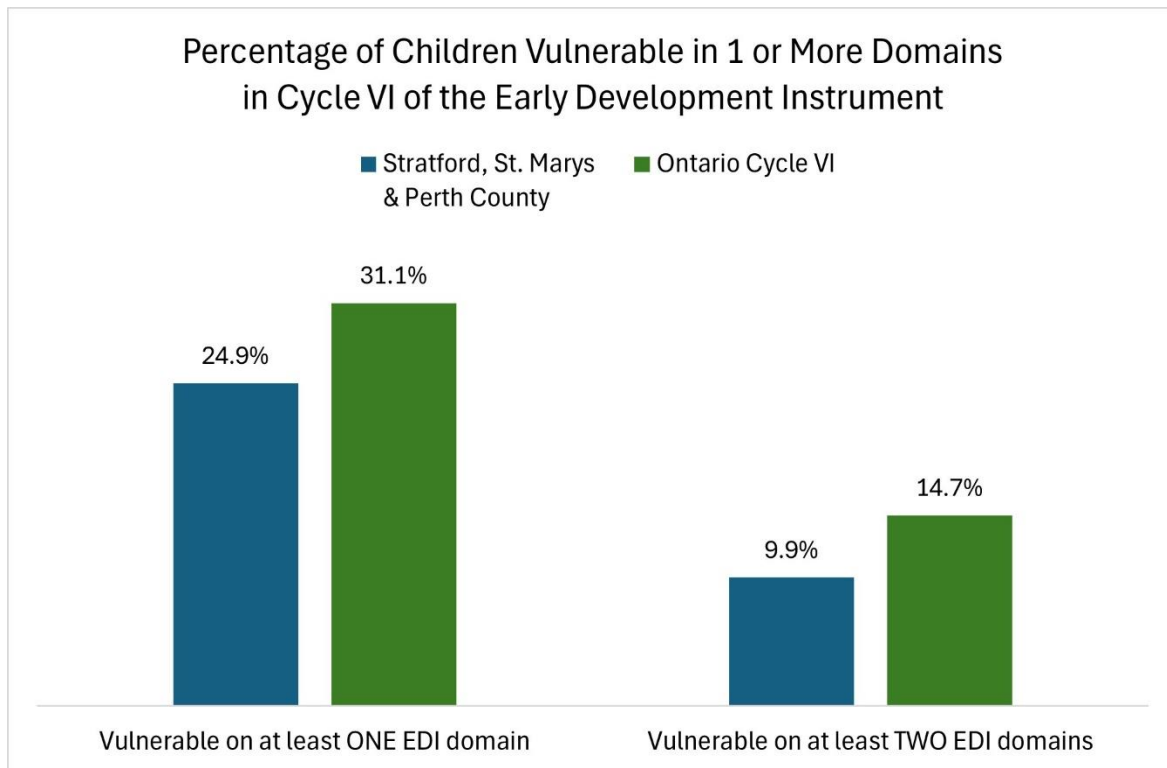


Fig. 1: Percentage of children in Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County vulnerable on at least one EDI domain in Cycle VI of the EDI.

Similarly, across each of the five domains of the EDI, Cycle VI of the EDI shows lower vulnerability for children in Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County when compared to the Province of Ontario.

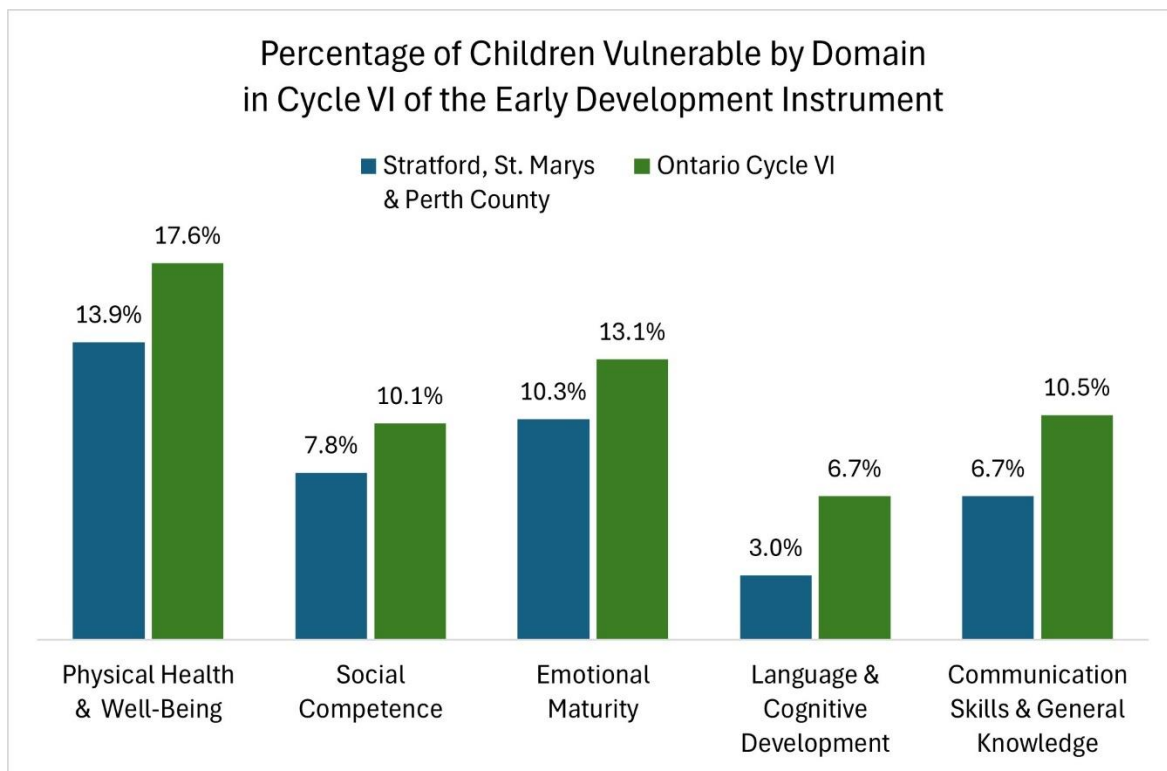


Fig. 2: Percentage of children in Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County vulnerable on each of the five domains in Cycle VI of the EDI.

Province-wide, vulnerability is trending lower in Language & Cognitive Development and Communication Skills & General Knowledge, and is trending higher in Physical Health & Well-Being, Social Competence, and Emotional Maturity.

Some of the variables that are known to influence EDI scores include the following:

- Sex: girls tend to have higher scores than boys, and therefore less vulnerability
- Age: older children tend to have higher scores than younger children
- First language: children whose first language is English or French tend to have higher scores on the Communication Skills and General Knowledge domain

Next Steps and Cycle VII of the EDI

The Children's Services Division supports the sharing and use of aggregate EDI data by community partners and agencies supporting children and young families, including those offering early years programming. The EDI can help identify both strengths and needs within communities to advance healthy child development, well-being, and to improve life-long outcomes for children and their communities.

Cycle VII of the EDI is scheduled to be collected across Ontario in Spring 2026.

References and Resources

Offord Centre for Child Studies. (2025). EDI in Ontario Over Time – Cycles 1-6 Report. Offord Centre for Child Development, McMaster University.

Offord Centre for Child Studies. (2024). Summary Report: Ontario, City of Stratford, 2022/2023. Offord Centre for Child Development, McMaster University.

Offord Centre for Child Studies. (2016). [EDI and the Early Years Video](#).

Financial Implications:

Not applicable:

This report shares local data on the developmental health of children and is provided for information only.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities:

Work Together For Greater Impact

This report aligns with this priority as the Children's Services Division, in collaboration with community partners and leveraging Province-wide research, plans for a system of licensed childcare and early years programs and services that is accessible, responsive, of high quality, and responsive to local needs.

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, "The Early Development Instrument (EDI) in Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County" (SOC25-013), be received for information.

Prepared by:

Mandy Koroniak, Manager of Children's Services

Recommended by:

Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services and Acting Director of Human Resources

André Morin, CPA, Chief Administrative Officer



MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: November 12, 2025
To: Social Services Sub-Committee
From: Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works
Report Number: SOC25-014
Attachments: None

Title: Partnership with The Local Community Food Centre

Objective: To provide Council with an update regarding an ongoing partnership between The Local Community Food Centre and the Social Services Department/Ontario Works Division.

Background: The Local Community Food Centre (The Local) has been operating in Stratford since 2012. Since it's inception, The Local has been an integral part of the community and a key resource for recipients of Ontario Works benefits as well as caseworkers within the Ontario Works program. The Local operates programs that reduce food insecurity and social isolation in the community and offer an opportunity for individuals to connect with others and participate meaningfully in a caring and barrier-free environment.

The Local's website identifies three primary aspects within their programs: Access to Food, Acquisition of Food Skills and Education and Community Engagement. In addition to providing weekly community meals, the Local also manages an Urban Farm within the City of Stratford boundaries and offers a community access market in both Stratford and St. Marys. The Access Market offers fresh local foods including vegetables, fruits and meats at wholesale prices. Everyone is welcome in the space. The markets operate on Monday evenings and Friday afternoons in Stratford, and the 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month in St. Marys. Recently, The Local also announced a partnership within St. Marys to support residents with transportation to and from the Market.

Analysis: As the cost-of-living increases across the country, Ontario Works recipients are left living in difficult situations because rates have not increased since 2018. Presently, a single adult on Ontario Works (with shelter costs) can receive a maximum of \$733 per month. An unsheltered individual can receive a maximum of \$343 for their basic needs. Food security continues to be the most pressing issue for clients, alongside challenges related to housing insecurity and lack of access to proper healthcare. Food

security touches on all aspects of someone's life. PROOF, an interdisciplinary research program studying food insecurity, identified the following through its research:

"Adults living in food-insecure households are more likely to also experience infectious diseases, poor oral health, injury, and chronic conditions, like depression and anxiety disorders, heart disease, hypertension, arthritis, back problems, and chronic pain. They are also more likely to be diagnosed with multiple chronic conditions. The negative implications for health are greatest for those living in severely food-insecure households."¹

Statistics Canada data from 2024 indicates that 26.4% of households living in Ontario are facing food-insecurity and that 1/3rd of children are currently living with food insecurity. Over half of female lone-parent families are affected by food insecurity.² When looking at the local caseload, lone-parent families represent approximately 28% of those in receipt of assistance and female-led households comprise 54% of benefit units.³ Anecdotally, it should be noted that a significant majority of single parent households in receipt of Ontario Works locally are led by a female.

The Ontario Works Division first partnered with The Local in 2023 to support access to their market through the provision of store credits for OW and ODSP recipients. In 2024, the program was modified to include gift certificates and in 2025, transitioned to physical gift cards. This transition has supported with better accessibility for clients, less stigma when attending the market and more personal choice for individuals accessing services. It is important to note that this funding is not supporting operational needs of The Local Community Food Centre, but rather, is funding directly provided to clients to access the market. The Local does not retain any portion of funding for administration and food is sold at cost, meaning that the funds invested go directly to addressing food insecurity. As a local non-profit, funding remains precarious, and sustaining operations continues to pose a challenge in the current economic climate. The Ontario Works Division is committed to partnering with The Local whenever possible, but it is important to denote the fiscal constraints that are present when addressing food insecurity in the community. While this is an important starting point in better supporting our clients, we acknowledge there is further work to be done.

In 2024, 70 unique individuals were provided with gift cards to access the market. Due to provincial funding parameters, only Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program recipients can access the program. In 2024, most gift cards were provided to clients in receipt of Ontario Works (65). To date in 2025, 75 unique individuals have been provided with access to the market at The Local. Eligibility criteria has changed over the past 12 months, and the cards can now be issued on an as-needed basis. With that in mind, OW also can provide gift cards to other grocery stores and can provide

¹ <https://proof.utoronto.ca/food-insecurity/what-are-the-implications-of-food-insecurity-for-health-and-health-care/>

² <https://proof.utoronto.ca/2025/new-data-on-household-food-insecurity-in-2024/>

³ Ontario Works Caseload-at-a-Glance, September, 2025.

additional funding through discretionary benefits, participation benefits and mandatory benefits available through the program.

This partnership is an extremely important and unique relationship that allows caseworkers to address food security immediately and with dignity. Clients can attend the market, choose what they need, and utilize the funds as they see fit. They are also able to secure a meal while at The Local and speak to the staff there so that they can be supported with any issues that may arise. The Ontario Works Division has recently made another purchase of gift cards from The Local and will continue to provide these essential tools to social assistance recipients.

Financial Implications:

Financial impact to current year operating budget:

There is no anticipated impact on the municipal tax levy because of this program.

Financial impact on future year operating budget:

Moving forward, the Ontario Works Division will continue include food security items such as gift cards for The Local Community Food Centre in the Discretionary Benefits program. This program is funded through 100% Provincial sources and there is no anticipated impact on the municipal tax levy moving forward.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities:

Build Housing Stability

This report aligns with this priority as greater food security can positively impact housing stability and free up funding to ensure rental payments can be made on time.

Work Together For Greater Impact

This report aligns with this priority as the partnership between The Local and Ontario Works promotes a meaningful relationship that is meeting the basic needs of citizens within the community. The gift cards also ensure that funding stays within the community. Whenever possible, the food is locally sourced and supports local business and the products are sold at cost. Every dollar invested is a dollar retained within the community.

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.

Culture and Community

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

Local and Sustainable Food

Promoting sustainable humane farming and healthy diets high in local, seasonal organic food and vegetable protein.

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

Prepared by:	Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works
Recommended by:	Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services
	André Morin, CPA, Chief Administrative Officer



MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: November 12, 2025
To: Social Services Sub-Committee
From: Robin Brown, Supervisor of Social Services
Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works
Report Number: SOC25-015
Attachments: None

Title: Sports and Leisure Program - Outcomes and Impact

Objective: To provide Council with summary information regarding services provided by the Ontario Works division to families receiving social assistance, through both the Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Programs, who access Sports and Leisure Program funding.

Background: The Sports and Leisure Program, initiated by the Social Services Department has been supporting children whose families receive social assistance in the City of Stratford, the Town of St. Marys, and Perth County. This program has been operating for over a decade. Families can access funding to aid with the cost of supporting their children in various activities throughout the year. The program promotes inclusion, equality, and community engagement through various recreational and social activities.

Eligible families can access up to \$500 per child per calendar year to help with funding towards an activity or program of their choosing. Some of these activities include soccer, baseball, dance and swimming lessons. The program also covers the costs for equipment and uniforms as necessary for participation.

The Sports and Leisure Program can have profound benefits for those children who access the program. It can help to develop stronger ties to the community. It can also promote equal opportunities for children regardless of their socio-economic status and enhance overall confidence and well-being.

Analysis: The program was allocated \$45,000 for funding in 2025. By October 1st, the entirety of the funding was dispersed. The program was able to support 139 different children from 72 different households.

To qualify for the program, the child must be active on a social assistance file and reside within Perth County. Of the 139 children that were supported, 105 resided in Stratford, accounting for 76% of those that accessed the funding. Residents of Perth County made up 24% of the children that were supported with 34 children accessing services. The Town of St. Marys made up a small portion with 7 children accessing funding, accounting for 5% of the total funding allocated.

The program allows children to access the funding as early as the parent chooses, up until their 18th birthday. For example, if a mother would like to take her 6-month old child to a 'mom and tots' swim class, funding would be approved for the child. For the older children, if registration paperwork is submitted before their 18th birthday, the funds will be approved, assuming all other eligibility criteria are met and funds remain.

The age ranges for the 2025 calendar year were age 1 through 17. The average age for accessing funding was 9 years old.

The program is open for nearly any request that can be considered a sports or leisure activity. For instance, the most popular reason to access funding was soccer, with 31 registrations. Summer camp registrations were also high, coming in at 29 registrations. Swimming lessons and pool passes were also popular.

The Community Services Department offers free passes to the Lion's Pool for children (2-15 years of age) who are residents of the city and who are receiving social assistance. If a child can access the Social Agency Pass, the Sports and Leisure funding can help with the cost of a swim pass for the parent of the child as they are required to accompany their children as per the rules of the facility.

While there are some challenges to the Sports and Leisure program, which include limited funding, dictated by the current budget constraints and the high demand for access to the funding, overall, the program offers the Social Services Department an opportunity to help residents of Perth County. The program can impact children's lives by fostering inclusion and development. The Social Services Department is looking forward to offering the same services in 2026.

Financial Implications:

Financial impact to current year operating budget:

The \$45,000 is a shared cost across the City of Stratford, Perth County and Town of St. Marys. The funds were included in the 2025 budget at the cost-shared rate determined by the municipalities. There will be no further anticipated budgetary impacts because of this program since the funds have been exhausted.

Financial impact on future year operating budget:

The \$45,000 to deliver the program has been included in the 2026 budget request for the Social Services Department.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities:

Build Housing Stability

This report aligns with this priority as this partnership provides gateways to housing stability for some of the most vulnerable members of the community, allowing families to focus their funding on their core needs while ensuring youth can participate in activities in the community.

Work Together For Greater Impact

This report aligns with this priority as it encourages and supports residents with attending and engaging with organizations and programs throughout the community.

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.

Culture and Community

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

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

Prepared by:

Robin Brown, Supervisor of Social Services
Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works

Recommended by:

Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services
André Morin, CPA, Chief Administrative Officer



MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: November 12, 2025
To: Social Services Sub-Committee
From: Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works
Report Number: SOC25-016
Attachments: None

Title: Stratford, St. Marys and Perth County Employment Ontario Services

Objective: To provide Council with an update regarding changes to the Employment Ontario network in Stratford, St. Marys and Perth County.

Background: The City of Stratford, in conjunction with the consortium members Bruce County, Grey County and County of Huron, acts as the Service System Manager (SSM) for the delivery of employment services in Perth, Grey, Bruce and Huron. The Stratford-Bruce Peninsula SSM is operated by Bruce County staff with guidance provided by the executive leadership committee. The City of Stratford is represented by the Social Services Department and InvestStratford on this committee. The details of the consortium agreement are outlined in report COU21-107 and the details regarding the SSM operations have been detailed in multiple reports at Social Services Sub-Committee, with the most recent update being provided through report SOC25-004.

The Ontario Works Division (OW) works extremely closely with Employment Ontario (EO) partners and has had an ongoing relationship since the inception of the Ontario Works program. In April 2023, the Ontario Works Division completed the Employment Services Transformation (EST) to the Provincially designated Integrated Employment Services (IES) system. Prior to April 2023, Ontario Works caseworkers completed both life stabilization and employment-related work with all OW clients, making referrals to EO as necessary, while working to address issues related to stability such as housing precarity, food insecurity, medical requirements, mental health and addictions concerns, and general well-being. After April 2023, the Ontario Works team now focuses solely on life stabilization and EO delivers all employment-related aspects of the work that we do.

Analysis: Since the transition to IES in 2023, Employment Ontario providers in Perth County have shifted and further transitions are currently underway. Conestoga Career Centre, a one-time EO provider in Perth County, left the system in 2024 which left only one EO provider in Perth County. As of September 30, 2025, Partners in Employment is

no longer delivering EO services within the catchment area after a decision made by the SSM to exit them from the current system.

Currently, Employment Ontario providers available to residents of Stratford, St. Marys and Perth County include Agilec, LEADS Employment Services and College Boreal. Ontario Works clients can be referred to all three agencies and members of the public are able to access services through these agencies. The SSM released a Request for Qualifications in July 2025 that received responses although no announcement has yet been made regarding another provider who will enter the Perth County area. The Social Services Department welcomes a wide range of Employment Ontario services as it ensures there is not only client choice, but a range of expertise available in the community.

Financial Implications:

Not applicable:

There are no financial implications because of this report. This report is being provided for information only and details changes to service delivery within the community that are not directly funded or operated by The Corporation of the City of Stratford.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities:

Work Together For Greater Impact

This report aligns with this priority as it encourages partnership across public sector and private sector agencies to move members of the community requiring employment support forward. A strong partnership between Social Services, InvestStratford, the SSM, Employment Ontario providers, and employers in the community will benefit the community at large and provide a key service that helps match qualified applicants with appropriate employment opportunities.

Alignment with One Planet Principles:

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, "Stratford, St. Marys and Perth County Employment Ontario Services" (SOC25-016), be received for information.

Prepared by:

Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works

Recommended by:

Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services

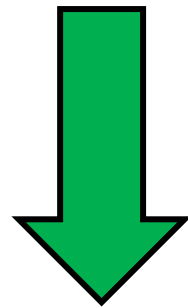
André Morin, CPA, Chief Administrative Officer

SOCIAL SERVICES MONTHLY CHILDREN'S SERVICES REPORT

Stratford, Perth County, & St. Marys

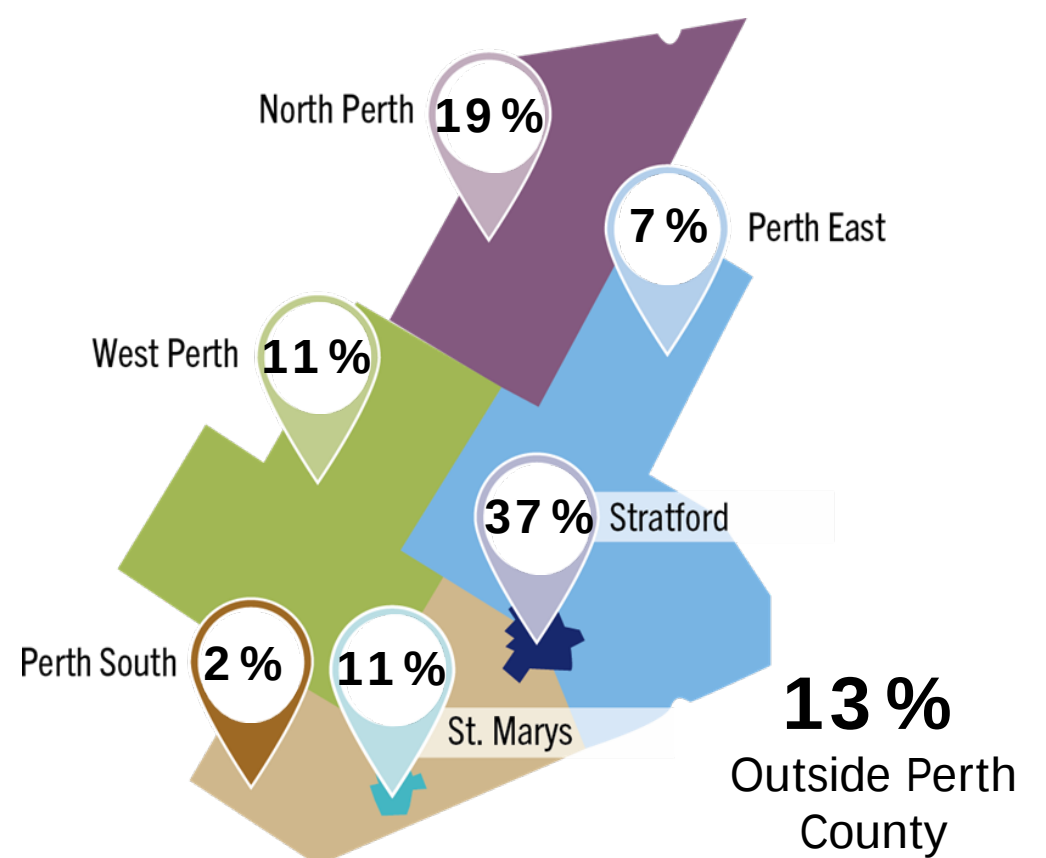
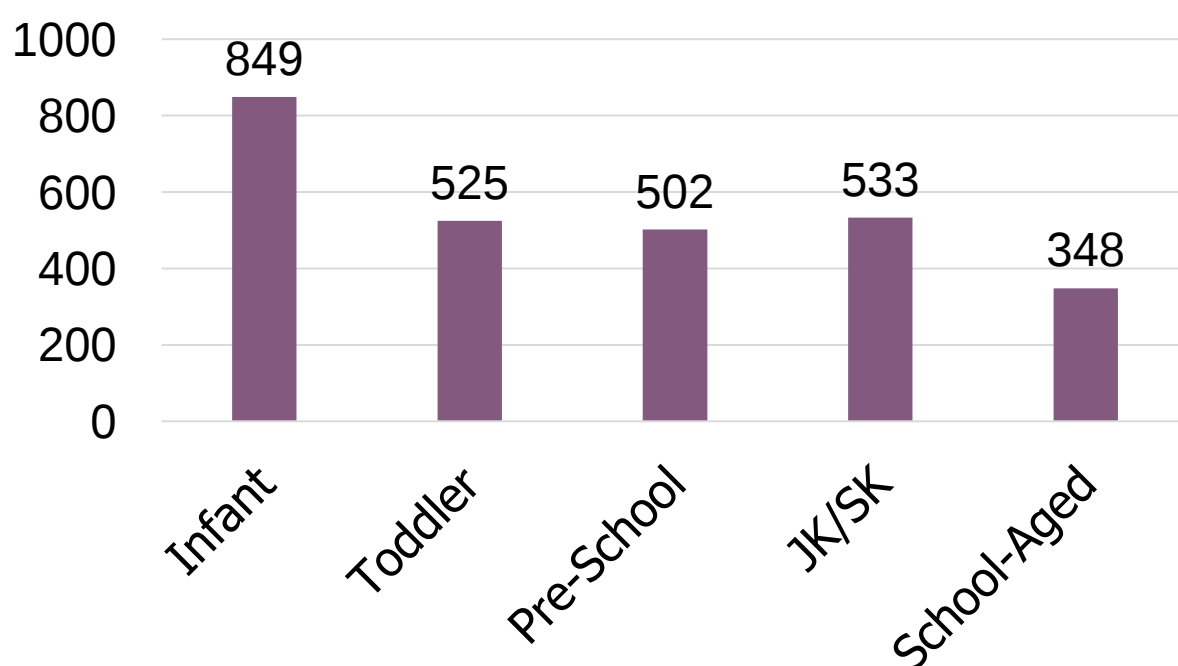
2,757

Total number of children
on the child care waitlist



This is a decrease from
August 2025, when there
were **2,093** children on the
child care waitlist

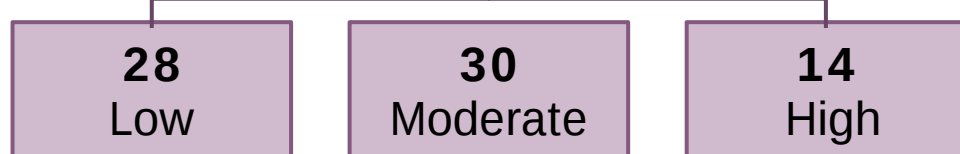
Age Category on the waitlist



Resource Consulting

72 Total children
supported by the
Program

Level of Support



EarlyON

522

Unique
children (0-6
years) served

409

Unique parents/
caregivers
served

1,453

Visits by
children (0-6
years)

1,243

Visits by
parents/
caregivers

i Information Bulletin

The Children's Services Division is the Service System Manager for licensed 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>



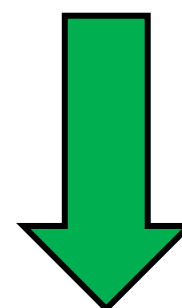
SOCIAL SERVICES MONTHLY HOMELESSNESS REPORT

Stratford, Perth County, & St. Marys



147

Total number of households
experiencing homelessness



This is a decrease from
August 2025, when there
were **154** households
experiencing
homelessness



11

New households
entering into
homelessness



0

Households returned
to service area or
reconnected with
services



2

Households who
lost their housing



9

Households who
became housed



11

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

Population Specific Information

119 Single Adults

14 Youth (16-24)

14 Families

123 Chronic

45 Unsheltered

22 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>

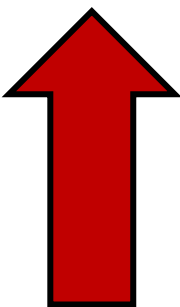


SOCIAL SERVICES MONTHLY SOCIAL HOUSING REPORT

Stratford, Perth County, & St. Marys

676

Total number of Households
on the centralized waitlist



This is an increase from
August 2025, when there
were **675** households on the
centralized waitlist

Unit Size

1 Bedroom	63%
2 Bedroom	15%
3 Bedroom	11%
4+ Bedroom	11%

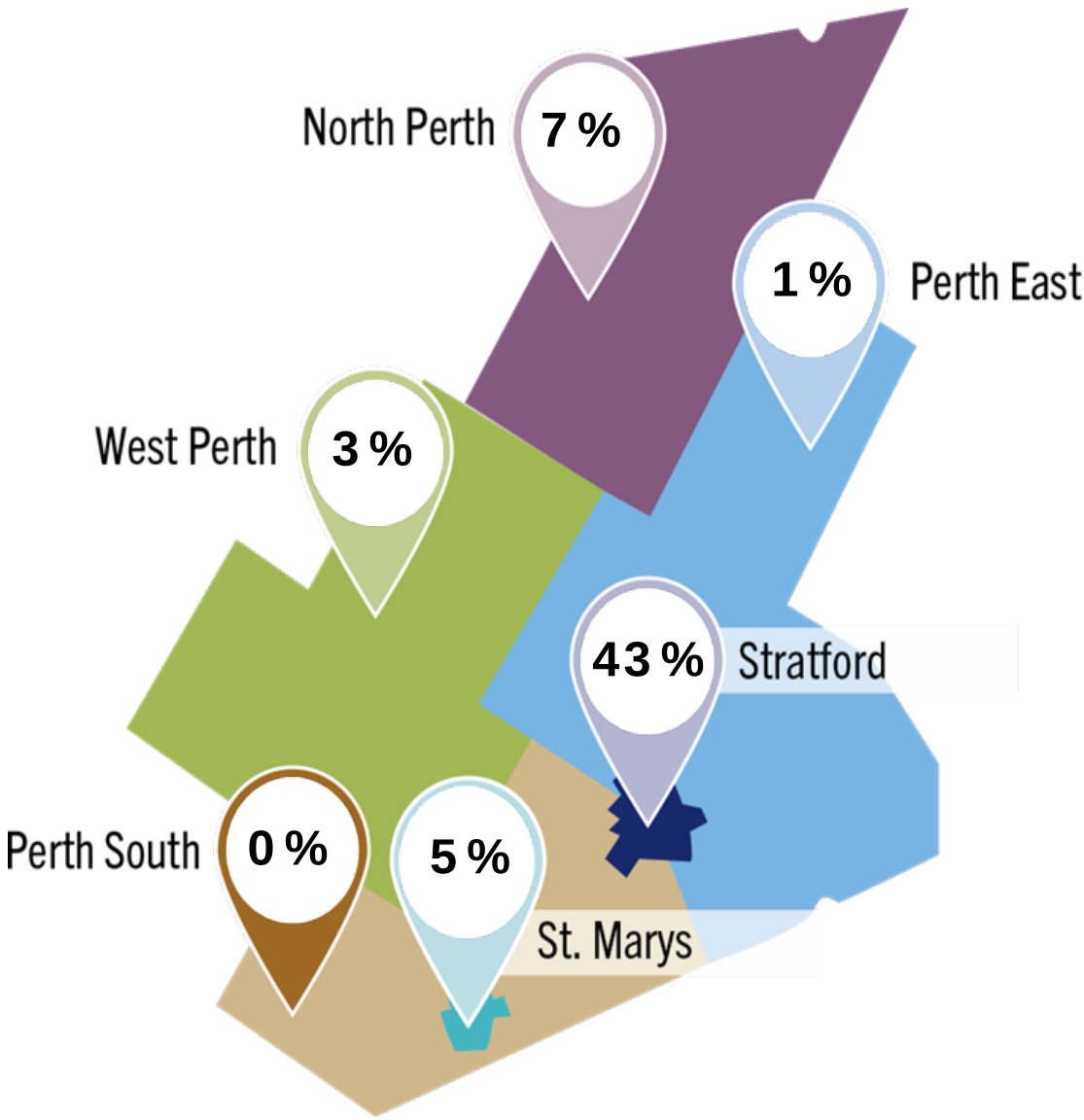
Applicant Type

Single/Couple	53%
Family	35%
Senior	12%

Priority Status

Chronological Order	87%
Homeless	7%
Special Provincial Priority (SPP)*	6%

*SPP: Survivor of domestic abuse or trafficking



Unknown: **6 %**

Outside Perth County: **35 %**

*Current applicant address

Move ins & Move outs

8 Total number of move outs
10 Total number of move ins

Maintenance



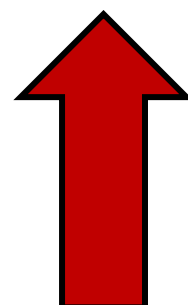
354 Number of
Work orders
requested



SOCIAL SERVICES MONTHLY ONTARIO WORKS REPORT

Stratford, Perth County, & St. Marys

840 Total number of
active caseloads



This is an increase from
August 2025, when there
were **839** active cases

53 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.



20 %

Percentage of
caseload
terminations exiting
to employment



8 %

Percentage
of Caseload
terminated



61

New applications
received



12 %

Percentage of
caseloads with
employment earnings



\$945

Average monthly
employment
earnings

Population Specific Information



67 %

Singles without
dependents



28 %

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

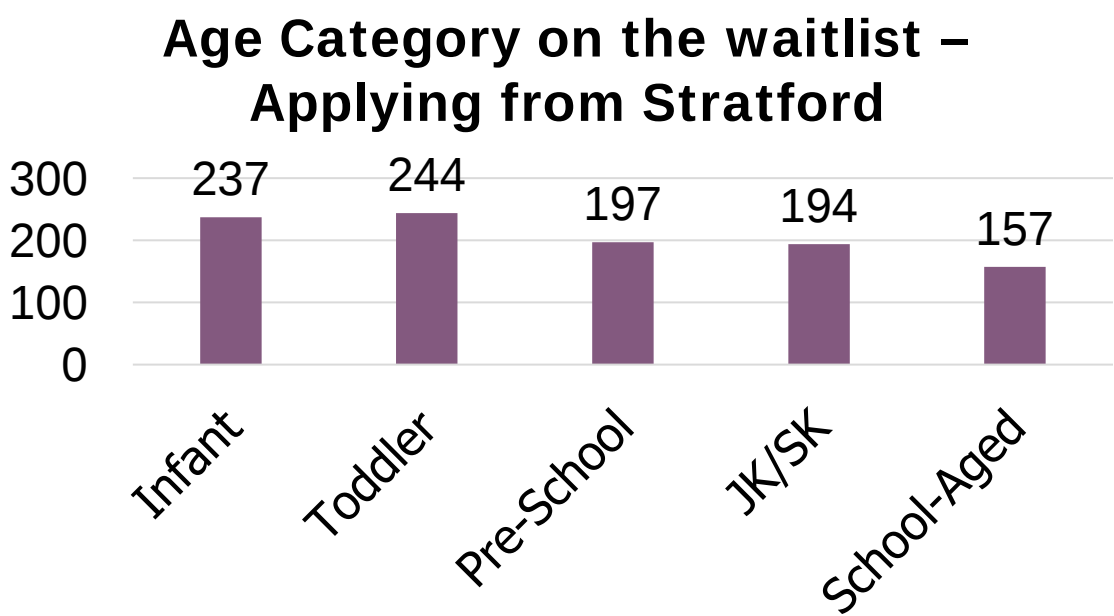
Children's Services

1,029

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

37 %

Percentage of the total child care waitlist applying from Stratford



EarlyON - Stratford

155

Unique children (0-6 years) served

127

Unique parents/ caregivers served

333

Visits by children (0-6 years)

363

Visits by parents/ caregivers

Social Housing

288

Total Households on the centralized waitlist applying from Stratford

Unit Size

1 Bedroom	69%
2 Bedroom	11%
3 Bedroom	10%
4+ Bedroom	9%

Applicant Type

Single/Couple	59%
Family	28%
Senior	13%

43 %

Percentage of the total centralized waitlist applying from Stratford

Priority Status

Chronological Order	82%
Homeless	11%
Special Provincial Priority (SPP)*	8%

*SPP: Survivor of domestic abuse or trafficking

Ontario Works

492

Total number of active cases in Stratford

59 %

Percentage of the total Ontario Works caseload that are in Stratford