



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

Date: Tuesday, March 10, 2026
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, Tatiana Dafoe - City Clerk, Mandy Koroniak - Manager of Children's Services, Alex Burgess - Manager of Ontario Works, Jeff Wilson - Manager of Housing, Shannon Archer - Business Integration Manager, Miranda Franken - Council Clerk Secretary

To watch the Sub-committee meeting live, please click the following link:
<https://stratford-ca.zoom.us/j/86552407994?pwd=Z1Hi2PIpeFhy5UpXFyvIvbJtmiIfqz.1>
A video recording of the meeting will also be available through a link on the City's website
<https://calendar.stratford.ca/meetings> following the meeting.

Pages

1. Call to Order

The Chair to call the Meeting to Order.

Land Acknowledgment

Moment of Silent Reflection

Respectful 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

3. Delegations

None scheduled.

4. Report of the Business Integration Manager

4.1 2025 Rent Supplement and Housing Allowance Review (SOC26-003)

4 - 6

Motion by

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "2025 Rent Supplement and Housing Allowance Review" (SOC26-003), be received for information.

5. 2025 Year in Review Reports

The Director of Social Services to introduce the 2025 Year in Review Reports followed by division overviews by the Manager of Ontario Works, the Manager of Children's Services and the Manager of Housing.

5.1 Ontario Works Division 2025 Year in Review (SOC26-006)

7 - 13

Motion by

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Ontario Works Division 2025 Year in Review" (SOC26-006), be received for information.

5.2 Children's Services Division 2025 Year in Review (SOC26-004)

14 - 20

Motion by

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Children's Services Division 2025 Year in Review" (SOC26-004), be received for information.

5.3 Housing and Homelessness Divisions 2025 Year in Review (SOC26-005)

21 - 28

Motion by

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Housing and Homelessness Divisions 2025 Year in Review" (SOC26-005), be received for information.

6. Department Update

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The following Department Update Infographics of December, 2025 and January, 2026 have been 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

7. Next Sub-committee Meeting

The next Social Services Sub-committee meeting will be held on April 14, 2026, in the Council Chambers if required.

8. Adjournment

Meeting Start Time:

Meeting End Time:

Motion by

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



MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: March 10, 2026
To: Social Services Sub-Committee
From: Shannon Archer, Business and Integration Manager
Report Number: SOC26-003
Attachments: None

Title: 2025 Rent Supplement and Housing Allowance Review

Objective: To provide the Mayor and Council with an update of City initiatives relating to housing and homelessness programs, including rent supplements and housing allowances provided during 2025.

Background: Background: The Social Services Department of The City of Stratford serves as the Consolidated Municipal Services Manager (CMSM) for social services programs within the City of Stratford, Town of St. Marys, and the County of Perth. The department is responsible for addressing housing and homelessness by offering a variety of programs and services to community members who are actively experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

The Housing and Homelessness and Housing Stability divisions within the Social Services Department jointly administer housing allowance and rent supplement programs within the service area. These programs receive funding from both the Municipal and upper-tier government levels. Changes to program funding from upper-tier government levels in 2022 shifted toward streamlined funding to provide CMSMs with flexibility in targeting the greatest community need.

Staff actively pursue applicable program grants as they become available in order to enhance rent supplement and housing allowance programs. In 2025 The City of Stratford was successful in securing \$120,000 in funding through the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH), specifically through the Homelessness Reduction Innovation Fund (HRIF). Details of this program are outlined in report SOC25-009.

Analysis: The City of Stratford is committed to ending chronic homelessness and increasing the range of housing options is a crucial step in achieving this goal. Housing allowances and rent supplements play a significant role in assisting community members in securing appropriate and affordable housing.

In 2025, a total of \$943,205 in housing allowances and rent supplements was provided to 195 households in the CMSM service area. Further, twelve households were referred to the Canada Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) program administered by the Province of Ontario.

Housing Allowances

Housing allowance agreements are provided directly to the household members and are a fixed monthly subsidy intended to assist in bridging the gap between current market rents and the household's calculated ability to pay. Because the allowance is tied to the members the benefit is portable if the client remains within the CMSM service area and continues to meet eligibility requirements. During 2025 there were forty-nine households assisted through housing allowances with an average monthly benefit of \$269.

Rent Supplements

Rent supplement agreements are entered directly with property owners and are based on the difference between the private market rent charge and the rent-geared-to-income calculation for the household. Because the rent supplement is tied to the property the benefit remains with the unit should a client relocate. A new eligible household would be referred to that unit and the benefit may be adjusted based on the new rent-geared-to-income calculation. During 2025 there were 146 households assisted through rent supplements with an average monthly benefit of \$448.

Canada Ontario Housing Benefit

The Canada Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) is a housing allowance program administered by the Province of Ontario. Agreements are made directly with the household and are based on a calculation between the area's average market rent and the household's calculated ability to pay. Because this benefit is administered at the provincial level, the benefit is portable anywhere in Ontario provided the client continues to meet eligibility requirements. Since the inception of the COHB program in 2020 there have been a total of 162 households referred from the City of Stratford CMSM area to this program.

Financial Implications:

Financial impact to current year operating budget:

There are no financial implications resulting from this report as it is for information only.

Financial impact on future year operating budget:

Future financial impacts may result from any changes in upper-tier government funding, changes in private property owner participation or changes in community need.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities:

Build Housing Stability

Providing housing allowances and rent subsidies helps to bridge the gap between what a household can afford and prevailing market rents. This promotes stabilization of tenancies, prevents arrears accumulation, and reduces instances of homelessness.

Work Together For Greater Impact

Partnering with private landlords and working directly with qualified households expands the range of attainable housing options across 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, "2025 Rent Supplement and Housing Allowance Review" (SOC26-003), be received for information.

Prepared by: Shannon Archer, Business and Integration Manager

Recommended by: Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services
André Morin, Chief Administrative Officer



MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: March 10, 2026
To: Social Services Sub-committee
From: Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works
Report Number: SOC26-006
Attachments: None

Title: Ontario Works Division 2025 Year in Review

Objective: To provide the Mayor and Council with an update on the 2025 activities of the Ontario Works Division and future directions for the Division.

Background: As the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) for Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County, the Ontario Works Division is responsible for the effective and efficient delivery of the Ontario Works (OW) program, including financial assistance, emergency assistance, temporary care assistance, discretionary benefits for OW and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) clients and life stabilization assistance. The program is governed by the Ontario Works Act, 1997 and the associated regulations and directives. The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services provide the entirety of social assistance payments made to clients and discretionary benefits funding, while administrative costs for the program are cost-shared between the Ministry and the local municipalities.

This report provides an analysis of local data related to these areas of service delivery, and directions for the Division in 2026.

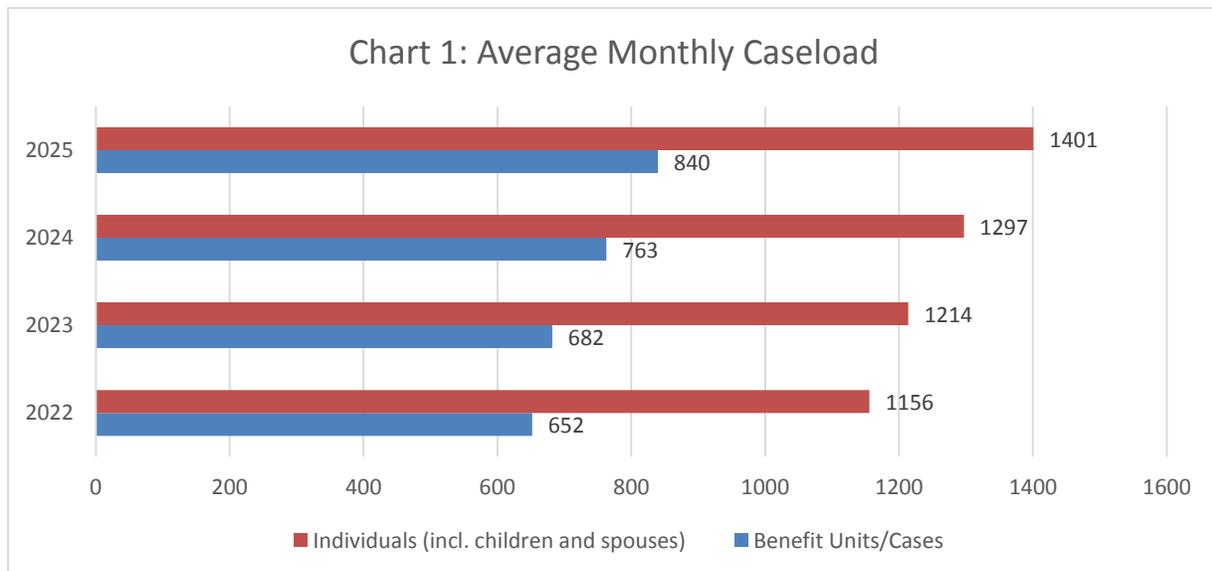
In report SOC25-001, the 2024 Ontario Works Business Plan was provided to Council for review. Within this document was a caseload review, focused on demographics and time on assistance, as well as a review of program operation and efforts being made to achieve the Ministry-set targets. This report will focus on an analysis of the current Ontario Works caseload, achievement against Ministry targets, and the planned focus of the Division in 2026.

Analysis:

Caseload

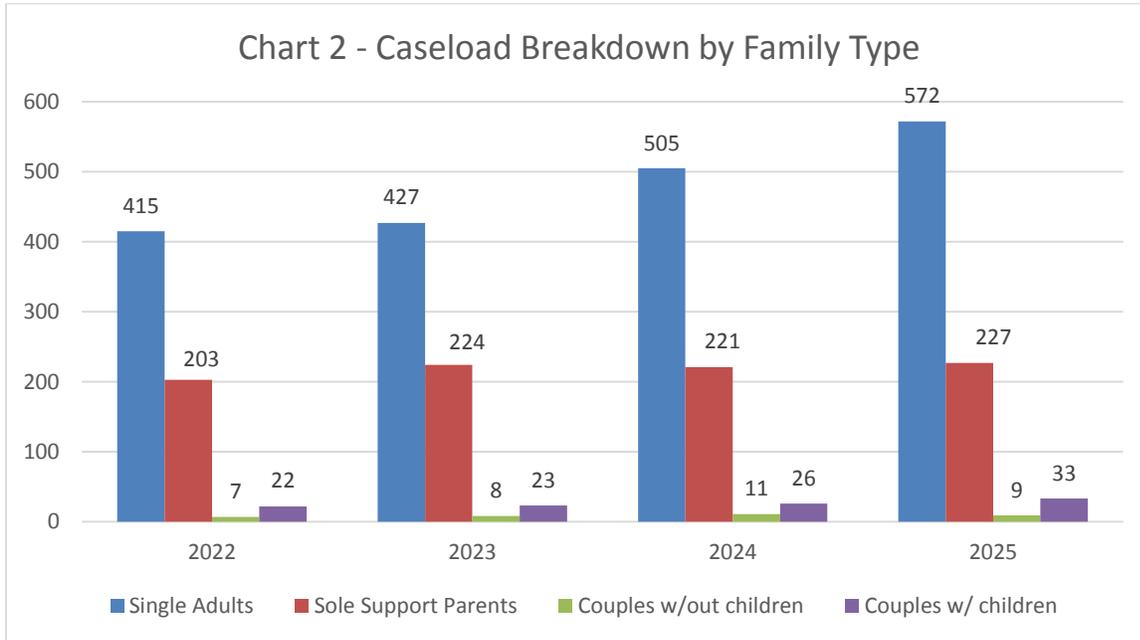
Since 2022, the Ontario Works program has seen a steady increase in caseloads across the province, with the local office experiencing a 28.8% increase over that time in overall cases and a 21.2% increase in individuals on the caseload. The Provincial caseload has risen 37.7% over that time while individuals in receipt has risen by 28.5%. These increases reflect an overall level of concern regarding cost of living within the province and the increasing levels of poverty that are being experienced. It is important to note that there have been no increases in Ontario Works rates over this time period.

Over the course of 2025, the Ontario Works caseload reduced slightly in both total number of ongoing cases and recipients of the program. January 2025 saw a caseload of 852 benefit units representing 1416 individuals, and the year ended with 828 benefit units representing 1373 individuals. The 24-case reduction, albeit not significant, represents a shift in the trends seen throughout 2023 and 2024 whereby the caseload was steadily increasing. It is not known at this time if this is simply a trend within 2025 or if this will be sustained in years to come. January 2026 saw a sharp increase in the caseload as it rose to 865 cases representing 1417 individuals. The average monthly caseload per year is displayed below, highlighting the increases that the local office has seen since 2022.



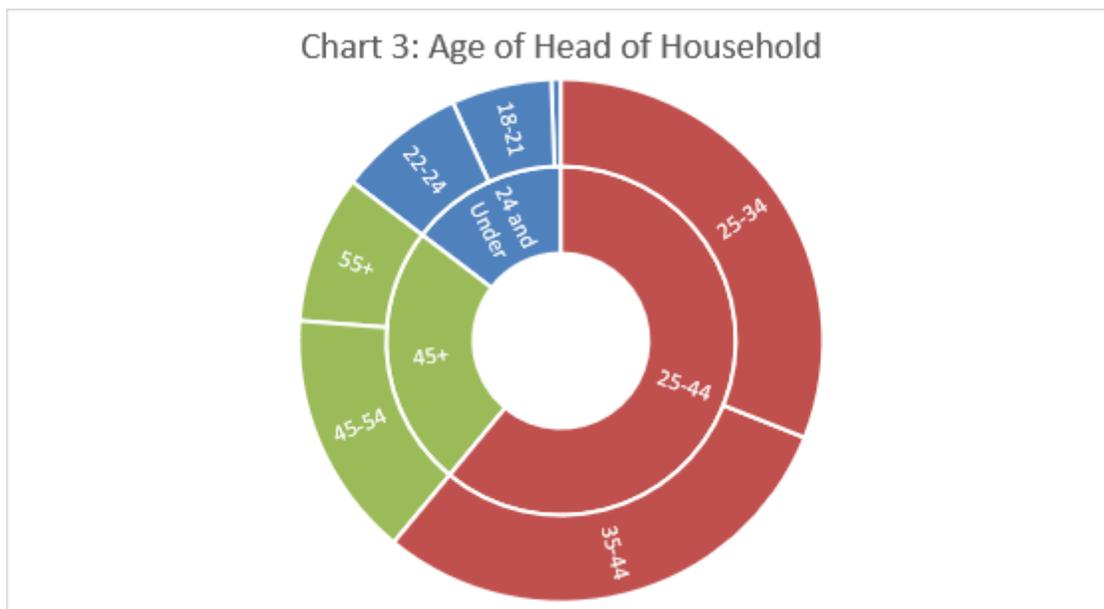
As has been the case over the past several years, the caseload is mostly represented by single adults without children who, as of December 2025, represented 68% of the caseload. This is consistent with previous years data and shows consistency in the type of client accessing services through the local Ontario Works office. The rest of the caseload composition remains consistent with previous years. Sole-support parents represent 27% of the caseload, couples without children represent 1% and couples

with children represent the remaining 4%. The below chart highlights family types over the past 4 years.



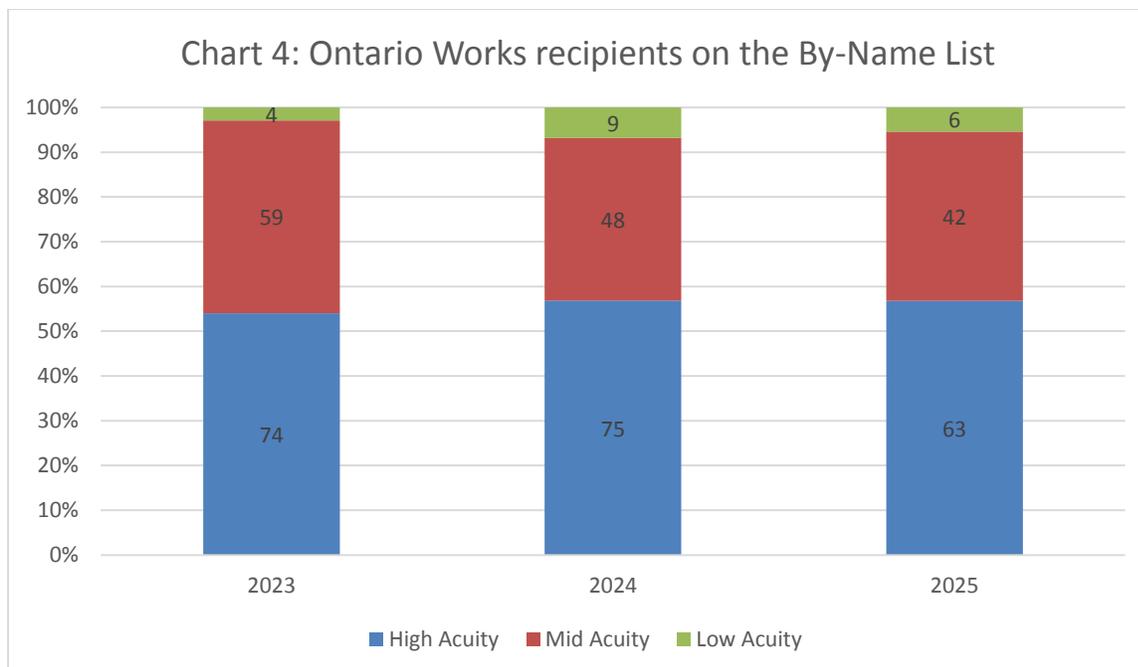
The average months on assistance continues to decline, hitting a year-over-year low of 28 months in 2025. The local office has seen a higher volume of first-time applicants for Ontario Works, while still seeing a large number remain on the program for over 12 months. As of December 2025, 56% of the caseload had been on assistance for 12+ months and 36% for 24+ months.

Chart 3 below outlines the average age of the head of household in receipt of assistance.



Newcomers to Canada continue to increase in the local service manager area. We have seen an increase of 111% since 2023 in total cases although this represents a significant increase in individuals in receipt. In 2022, we dedicated a caseworker who has previous experience and expertise in immigration matters to supporting Newcomers within the service manager area. This allows for more streamlined and comprehensive services, ensuring that community partners are involved and that settlement plans are reflecting the Ontario Works action plans, and that participants are moving towards self-sufficiency with the appropriate wrap-around supports.

To highlight the complexity of the Ontario Works caseload locally, a detailed analysis was completed of the local homelessness By-Name list (BNL). While this is not a comprehensive review of all clients experiencing housing instability, it paints a clear picture of the depth of need for the local Ontario Works caseload. The chart below details the number of unique individuals on the BNL each year who were in receipt of Ontario Works, alongside the reported acuity. These statistics reflect the depth of need and the experiences of Ontario Works recipients in the service manager area. The Maytree Foundation recently released a report that showed a 72% increase in people experiencing homelessness while in receipt of Social Assistance benefits between 2019 and 2025.¹ Alongside the increasing complexities of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness, the systemic failures of the social assistance system continue to drive deeper inequities and increased poverty rates making it much more difficult for individuals who enter the Ontario Works system to leave it.



Furthermore, it is important to note that of the 40 households identified on the BNL as currently living un-sheltered, 22 are in receipt of Ontario Works. This further reinforces the concerns raised across the Province regarding Ontario Works rates and high shelter

costs. There has not been a rate increase to the Ontario Works program since October of 2018.

¹ Laidley, Jennefer, and Tania Oliveira. Welfare in Canada, 2024. Toronto: Maytree, July 2025. https://maytree.com/wp-content/uploads/Welfare_in_Canada_2024.pdf. (maytree.com)

Employment, Targets and Outcomes

We have seen a slight increase in the number of Ontario Works clients who are employed while in receipt of assistance. In 2024, the average number of earners each month was 91 with average earnings of \$945. In 2025, the average number of earners was 103 with average earnings of \$883. As we see an increase in earners, it is accompanied by a decrease in the average earnings. Due to economic uncertainty in 2025, driven by tariffs and increased unemployment in our region, the reduced earnings may be a result of more transitional work or lower-paid work within the community.

The Ministry sets 4 primary targets each year; they are listed below alongside the local achievement:

Ministry Target	2025 Targeted Outcome	2025 Achieved Outcome
Percentage of Ontario Works adults and ODSP non-disabled adults with participation requirements that have a proper Action Plan created	100%	91.4%
Percentage of Ontario Works adults and ODSP non-disabled adults with participation requirements who are referred to Employment Ontario (EO)	39%	16.8%
Percentage of Ontario Works cases (individual or family units) that exited to employment	14%	12%
Percentage of Ontario Works cases (individual or family units) who exited the program for any reason and return within one year	37%	41.9%

The achievements noted above are a cumulative total for the year and represent the total achievement for the year as opposed to a singular month. For example, the first target regarding Action Plan completion requires that all new applicants have an action plan completed within 30 days and that all applicants have a proper action plan on file. For the entirety of 2025, there were 1390 members with participation requirements that

required an action plan, and the local office completed these for 1271 members. This does not mean that all members do not have an action plan but rather they did not have it completed within 30 days or they may not have ever shown up to have an appointment completed before their file was closed.

The low volume of Employment Ontario referrals is reflective of a few issues within the system, as well as concerns related to the targets that were set. The 39% is an arbitrary number that the Ministry utilized in multiple service managers within our geographic region. For context, this number would require the referral of 465 individuals from the caseload – a number that was not achieved. Part of the issue is that the clients we are supporting are not able to move toward employment and that clients who were not referred in years prior may still not be ready for a referral due to life circumstances. With that in mind, it is important to note that 38% of the current OW caseload is active with Employment Ontario. A further 12% of the caseload is deferred from participation and a significant number are working toward life stability goals such as supporting their physical and mental health, seeking childcare, pursuing ODSP and improving their housing situation. Furthermore, due to circumstances beyond the control of this office, the Employment Ontario network had undergone significant changes in 2025 which impacted the ability for referrals to be made. With that in mind, the current network is in a very strong position, with four providers available throughout the community. We expect to see not only an increase in referrals but in the quality of the work being completed by the Employment Ontario partners as we work closely to ensure our services are aligned and meeting the needs of shared clients.

Moving into 2026

As we look ahead to 2026, there are key themes that underscore the work that is being done by the local Ontario Works office, and they are as follows:

- 1) Reducing Administrative Burden
 - This work is focused on how we can improve processes, support automation of administrative tasks and create a more positive environment for client-focused time.
- 2) Improving Client Service
 - The work in this area focuses on co-design with the clients in receipt of Ontario Works and ensuring that the program is meeting the needs of the clients accessing services locally. We are increasing our presence in the County and the community at large, creating better pathways for clients to access benefits and advertising services to clients in a more comprehensive manner. Currently we have a presence in North Perth and St. Marys on a regular basis. We are working to expand our presence in other communities within the area while also positioning Ontario Works caseworkers within key community spaces such as the Connections Centre, Perth and Stratford Housing Corporation buildings and

Employment Ontario offices. We also plan to complete a client survey and co-design more targeted benefit programs in partnership with those in receipt of assistance. Utilizing 2026 as a baseline, we will be able to measure and monitor sustained improvements to program operations as we plan for future years of service delivery.

3) Improving Targeted Achievements

- The local team is working through strategies in consultation with other service managers in the area and creating processes that better align with the targets the Ministry has set, while ensuring that the human at the centre of the program is not forgotten.

Financial Implications:

Not applicable:

There are no financial implications to be reported as a result of this report. This report is for information only to provide detailed statistics regarding the Ontario Works caseload.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities:

Work Together For Greater Impact

This report aligns with this priority as the Ontario Works Division works closely with community partners and internal departments to ensure that the clients in receipt of assistance are supported across 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.

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Ontario Works Division 2025 Year in Review" (SOC26-006), 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: March 10, 2026
To: Social Services Sub-committee
From: Calvin Mackenzie, Research and Program Analyst
 Mandy Koroniak, Manager of Children's Services
Report Number: SOC26-004
Attachments: None

Title: Children's Services Division 2025 Year in Review

Objective: To provide Mayor and Council with an update on the 2025 activities of the Children's Services Division and future directions for the Division.

Background:

As the Service System Manager (SSM) for Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County, the Children's Services Division is responsible for planning, funding, administration and operation of licensed child care and early years programs in its service delivery area. It is mandated to oversee a number of supports to children, families, and the sector, including:

- *Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) System:* Local implementation of the CWELCC System, including funding to child care operators and directed growth of CWELCC spaces
- *Child Care Fee Subsidy Program:* Provide subsidies to support the cost of child care for eligible families
- *Special Needs Resourcing:* Support the inclusion of children with special needs in licensed child care and early years settings
- *EarlyON Child and Family Programs:* Oversee the local EarlyON system of free, high-quality programs for families and children from birth to 6 years old where families can learn and play together and get advice from early childhood professionals.

- *Professional Learning and Capacity Building:* Support the professional learning and development of child care and early years staff to enhance the delivery and provision of high-quality programs

This report provides an analysis of local data related to these areas of service delivery, and directions for the Division in 2026.

Analysis:

Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) System

Cost-Based Funding Formula and Increasing Affordability for Families

The Government of Canada and Province of Ontario entered into a CWELCC Agreement on March 28, 2022, and in Ontario, a new CWELCC Cost-Based Funding Formula took effect on January 1, 2025. This new funding formula shifted from a fee replacement model to a Cost-Based Funding approach, significantly increasing the financial complexity of delivering CWELCC funding to local operators.

As parent fees have decreased, there has been a corresponding increase in funding and in 2025, \$13,582,396 was distributed to licensed child care operators for programs serving children aged 0 to 5 years, subject to required year-end reconciliation.

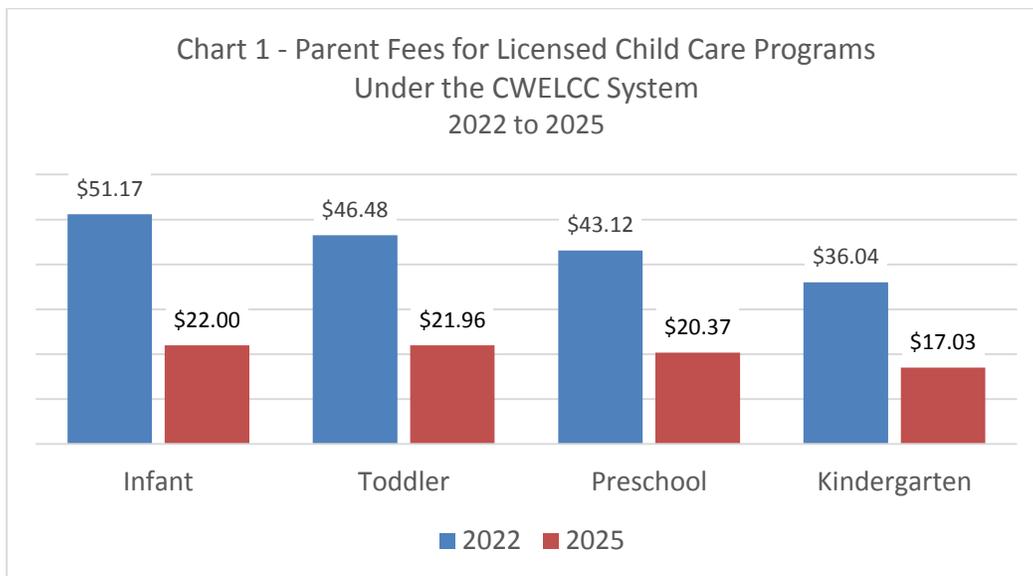


Chart 1- Source: O. Reg 137/15 March 28, 2022 and January 1, 2025: Table 1 - Maximum Child Care Centre Daily Fees for Full-Day Programs for Stratford

Directed Growth of Licensed Child Care Spaces

Under the terms of its CWELCC Agreement, Ontario committed to create 86,000 new CWELCC spaces (relative to 2019) by the end of 2026 and provided Service System Managers (SSMs) with notional targets for growth. The City of Stratford was provided

with a target of 461 CWELCC spaces for children age 0-5 for its service area of Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County.

As of December 31, 2025, there were 2,188 licensed child care spaces for children aged 0 to 12 in the service delivery area. This was an increase of 62 licensed child care spaces from December 31, 2024, when there were 2,126 licensed spaces. This is attributed to the opening of a new child care centre in Milverton, and increases to kindergarten spaces in two existing child care sites. This led to an increase in licensed child care access rates in Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth East.

Table 1 - Increased Licensed Child Care Access Rates 2024-2025

Municipality	Licensed Child Care Access Rate December 2024	Licensed Child Care Access Rate December 2025
Perth East	4.6%	5.5%
St. Marys	28.3%	31.2%
Stratford	23.2%	23.5%

Child Care Wait List and the Increasing Demand for Licensed Child Care

The introduction of more affordable licensed child care under the CWELCC System has led to a corresponding increase in the demand for licensed child care. The number of unique children on the child care wait list was only 1,382 in March 2022 when the Province first entered into the CWELCC agreement. This increased to 2,562 unique children in December 2025, representing an 85% increase for Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County.

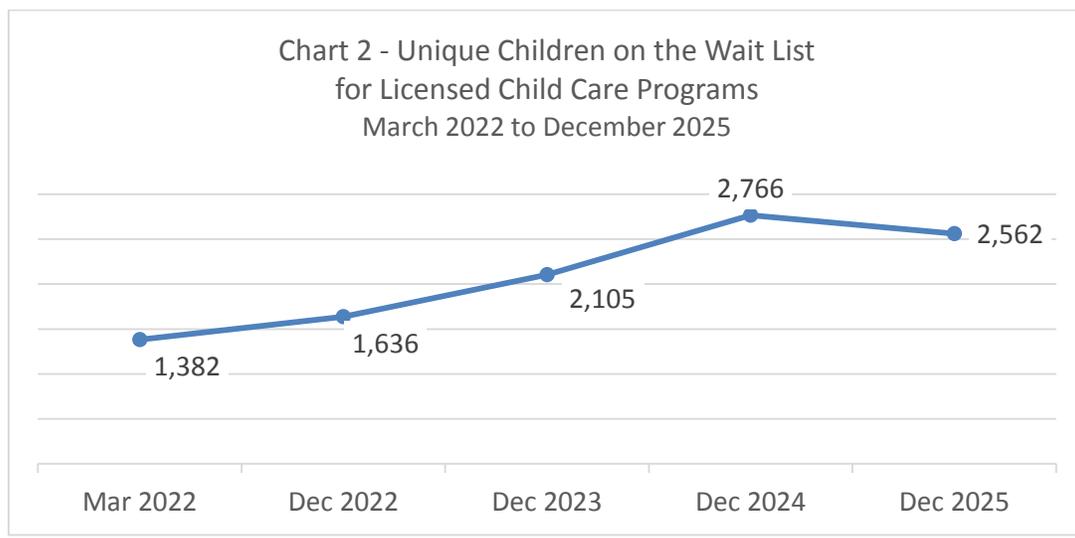


Chart 2 - Source: OneHSN Stratford Child Care Wait List

Child Care Fee Subsidy Program

The Child Care Fee Subsidy program provides financial assistance to eligible families who may require help in paying for the costs of child care, supporting workforce participation and the pursuit of education or training. Families may be determined to be eligible based on income, and their reason for service, including employment and educational activities.

In 2025, 154 unique families and 242 unique children were supported with child care fee subsidies. As of December 31, 2025, there were 108 children actively being served by child care fee subsidies, of these, 25 (23%) had a family income between \$0 and \$30,000, and the families of 42 (39%) children had a parent fee of \$0.

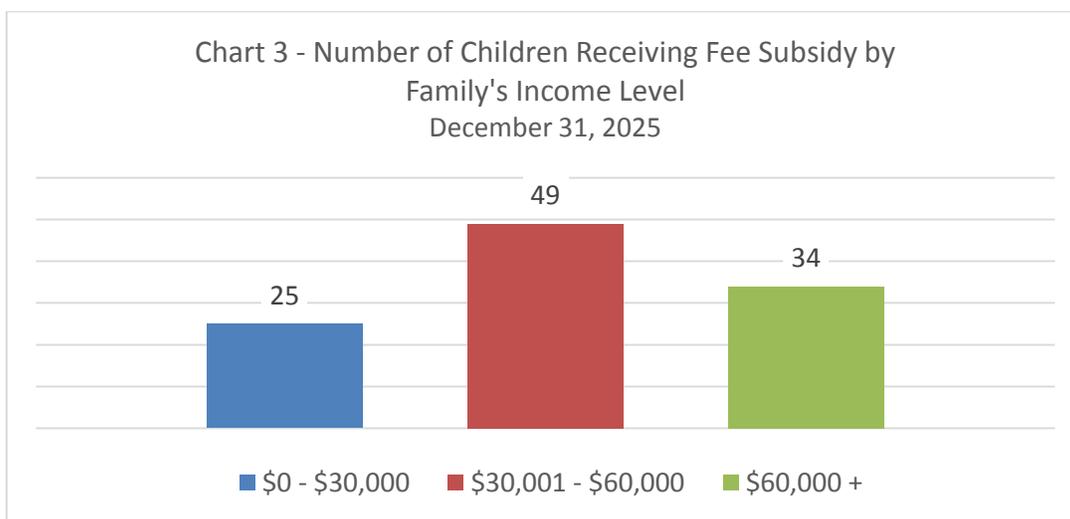


Chart 3 - Source: Ontario Child Care Management System (OCCMS) Stratford

As of December 31, 2025, 83% of children were receiving fee subsidy because of their parents' employment. The remaining 17% were receiving fee subsidy because their parents were in receipt of social assistance (Ontario Works and ODSP), needed temporary care, were attending school, or other reasons.

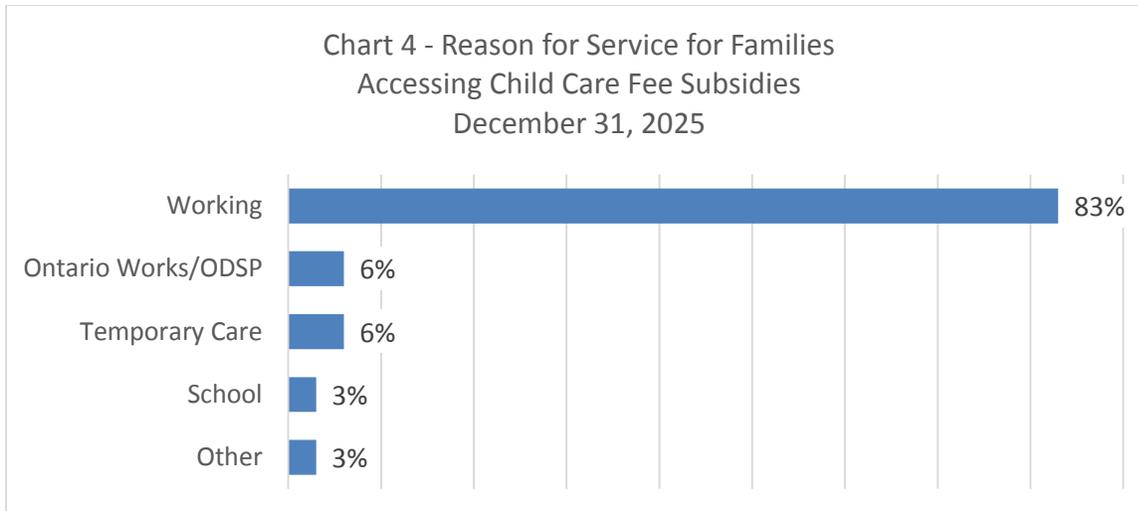


Chart 4 - Source: Ontario Child Care Management System (OCCMS) Stratford

Special Needs Resourcing

Special Needs Resourcing (SNR) supports the inclusion of children with special needs ages 0 to 12 in licensed child care settings, including camps, and children's recreation programs. A child with special needs is defined as a child whose cognitive, physical, social, emotional, or communicative needs, or whose needs related to overall development, are of a nature that additional supports are required for the child.

The available supports include a Resource Consultant who provides a range of services and supports such as providing child care staff with program adaptation strategies, supporting the development of individualized support plans, conducting developmental screens, providing referrals to community agencies, providing resources to parents, and assisting with the purchase of specialized equipment to support inclusion. The SNR program may also provide funding for additional support staff, where required. In 2025, City of Stratford Resource Consultants served 144 unique children within 28 licensed child care centres and at EarlyON Child and Family programs in Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County.

EarlyON Child and Family Centre Programs

EarlyON Child and Family Centres programs offer free, high-quality programs for families and children from birth to age 6. Within the programs, children and their families participate in inquiry-based programs in a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment. Families and caregivers can seek advice, find support, and access resources.

Within the service delivery area, EarlyON programs are available at 20 sites, delivered by 4 EarlyON service providers: YMCA of Three Rivers, Municipality of North Perth, Perth Care for Kids, and the Town of St. Marys.

Table 2 - Participation at EarlyON Child and Family Programs, January-December 2025

Participant	Unique Participants	Visits
Children	2,268	19,297
Parents and Caregivers	1,838	15,633

Professional Learning and Capacity Building

Children’s Services supports professional learning to improve recruitment and retention of the Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE) workforce and other program staff, and to support the implementation of the CWELCC Agreement, through funding and direction of the Ministry of Education. This supports professional learning opportunities that build capacity of the early years and child care sector to support the provision of high-quality programs that align with *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years*.

To advance this work, each year educators and support staff working in both child care and EarlyON programs are provided with the opportunity to participate in one professional learning day, and additional workshops are also provided throughout the year. In 2025, a system-wide professional learning day for early years educators and staff was held on May 2, 2025, and an additional 8 workshops were held throughout the year. Overall, 200 educators were supported through this work.

Directions for 2026

In 2026, the work of the Children’s Services Division will focus on the following areas of its service delivery:

1) Supporting Access to Affordable Licensed Child Care

As 2026 is the final year of the current CWELCC Agreement between the Government of Canada and Province of Ontario, Children’s Services will continue to work towards the directed growth of deeply affordable CWELCC childcare spaces where they are needed most. The Division will also provide enhanced supports to child care operators as the sector continues to navigate transitions under the Ministry of Education’s new funding model, supported by new procedures and accountability measures to ensure effective and responsible use of public funds.

2) Planning for an Inclusive and Accessible Child Care and Early Years System

The Children’s Services Division is mandated to have a child care and early years programs and services plan for its service area that addresses matters of provincial interest. To best address the needs of the community with informed planning and decision-making during this time of system transformation and growth, the Children’s

Services Division will undertake a service system planning process, including engagement with community partners.

3) Innovation in Workforce Recruitment and Retention

To support increased staffing demands corresponding to the growth of licensed child care, the Children's Services Division will continue to support recruitment and retention in the sector. These activities involve collaborations with Ontario Works and community partners as the Division works to enhance the capacity of the workforce, support recruitment, and guide early learning and child care workforce policy development and planning.

Financial Implications:

Not applicable:

There are no financial implications to be reported because of this report. This report is for information only to provide an information update regarding the activities of the Children's Services Division.

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, 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, "Children's Services Division 2025 Year in Review" (SOC26-004), be received for information.

Prepared by: Calvin Mackenzie, Research and Program Analyst
Mandy Koroniak, Manager of Children's Services

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



MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: March 10, 2026
To: Social Services Subcommittee
From: Michelle Melady, Research and Program Analyst
 Jeff Wilson, Manager of Housing
Report Number: SOC26-005
Attachments: None

Title: Housing and Homelessness Divisions 2025 Year in Review

Objective: To provide the Social Services Subcommittee with an update on the 2025 activities of the Housing and Homelessness Divisions and future directions for the Divisions.

Background: As the Service System Manager (SSM) for Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County, the Housing and Homelessness Divisions are responsible for oversight of social housing and homelessness response programs in the local service delivery area. The 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan identifies as its priority areas: Ending Homelessness, Creating Affordable (formerly Attainable) Housing Options; Sustaining Community Housing; and Addressing a Diversity of Needs. Programs which support these priority areas include:

- *Housing Allowances and Rental Supplements:* These benefits are a targeted way to increase rental affordability, are administered by the Housing and Homelessness Divisions, and may be funded through the municipal, provincial, or federal governments.
- *Local Housing Providers:* The City of Stratford is the sole shareholder and operator of the Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation, which includes 652 rent-geared-to-income units. The Housing Division has funding and administrative partnership with seven not-for-profit housing programs which provide 197 rent-geared-to-income units in the community.
- *Homelessness Prevention and Housing Stability –* As Consolidated Municipal Services Manager, the City of Stratford is responsible for administering homelessness prevention and housing stability programs, in partnership with local municipalities and community partners.

This report provides an analysis of local data related to these areas of service delivery, and directions for the Divisions in 2026.

Analysis:

Housing Allowances and Rent Supplements

Housing allowances, rent supplements, and housing benefits are a targeted way to increase affordability without having the need for a capital project to be budgeted for and built. These benefits are issued to either the tenant or landlord, based on eligibility, with the purpose of making private market rentals be able to be geared to income and need. The chart below shows that there was a decrease in housing allowances issued from 2024 to 2025. This decrease is primarily due to a reduction in provincial funding for rent supplements and housing allowances as well as a change in the calculation for the amount of funding to be provided.

Chart 1: Rental Supplements and Housing Allowances 2024-2025

	2024	2025	Increase/Decrease
Rent Supplements			
Total Households Supported	147	146	-1
Average Amount	\$471	\$448	-\$23
Housing Allowances			
Total Households Supported	81	49	-32
Average Amount	\$465	\$269	-\$196
Canada Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB)			
Cumulative Households Referred	150	162	+12

Capital Investment

Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative spending was \$849,300 in 2025, which is an increase from 2024 due to the previous Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative (COCHI) allocation used towards the rebuild of Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation building of 9 Fulton St., Milverton. 2025 COCHI funding was allocated to social housing providers for the following projects:

- Windows and furnaces for Banbury Cross Housing Co-Operative
- Gutters, downspouts, asphalt, balconies, fencing and furnaces for Bard of Avon Housing Co-Operative
- Accessibility improvements for the Emily Murphy Centre
- Windows and accessibility improvements for Festival City Co-Operative Housing
- Plumbing, a retaining wall, and access improvements for Little Falls Co-Operative Housing

- Access improvements for the Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation
- Elevators, concrete, plumbing and accessibility improvements for Spruce Lodge Non-Profit Housing
- Sidewalks, steps, and furnaces for Vineyard Village Non-Profit Housing

Chart 2: Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation Repairs 2024-2025

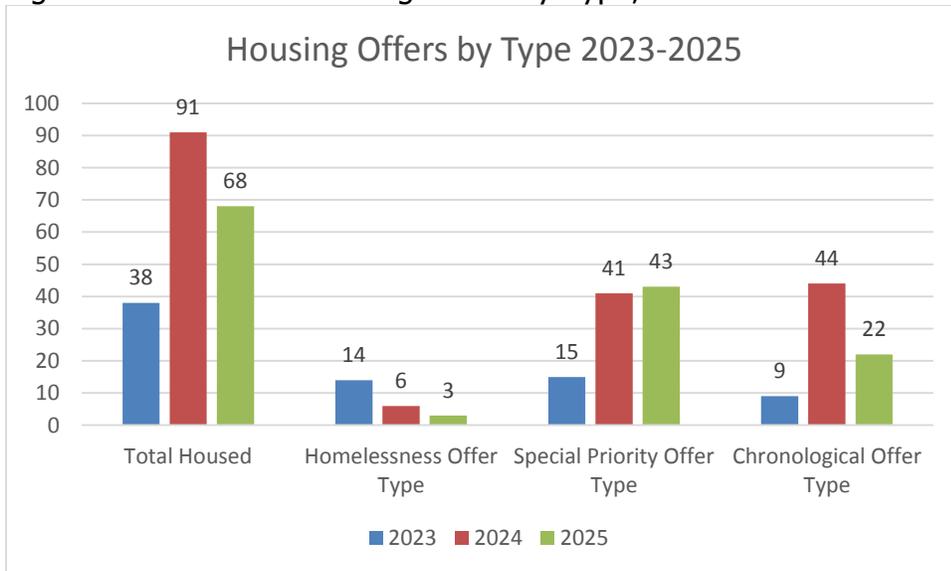
	2024	2025	Increase/Decrease
PSHC Repairs	\$3.1 million	\$3.4 million	+\$300,000
PSHC Capital Upgrades	\$1.7 million	\$941,000	-\$759,000
Work Orders	4,196	5,546	+1,350

This data shows an increase in overall repairs spending, which coincides with the number of work orders completed in 2025 also increasing. Capital upgrades fluctuate year-over-year.

Centralized Waitlist and Housing Offers

Overall, the waitlist has steadily been increasing. As of December 2023, there were a total of 459 households on the waitlist, increasing 28% to 590 households in December 2024, and increasing 19% to 704 households in December 2025. The waitlist only decreased for 4 months of the 36 months in the period discussed.

Figure 1: Number of Housing Offers by Type, 2023-2025



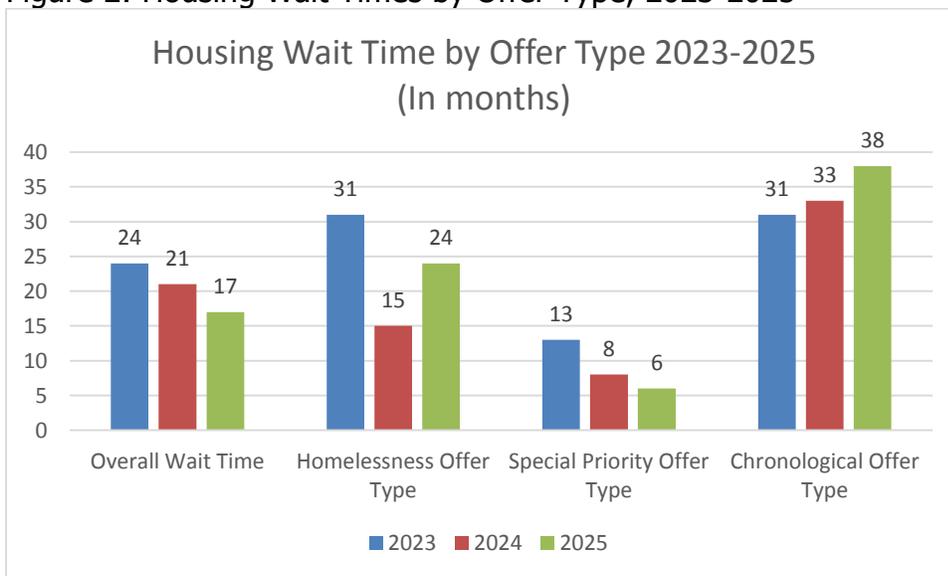
The chart above shows the number of offers by offer types from the Centralized Waitlist for all rent-gear-to-income housing placements including rent supplements and social housing providers. An increase of 78% from 2023-2025 in total households housed was observed, although a decrease of 25% from 2024-2025 in total households housed was observed. The offer type of homelessness is consistently decreasing over the past three

years. The offer type of Special Priority Status, which can include individuals who have experienced abuse or trafficking, has increased significantly over the past three years.

This is due to most offers going to households with Special Priority Status. Every fifth offer outside of Special Priority Status is issued to an individual or family experiencing homelessness from the waitlist who is also on the local By-Name-List, with the rest being considered a chronological offer within Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation. The offers shown in this figure captures all programs that house individuals and families from the Centralized Waitlist and do not reflect the 1:5 ratio of homelessness offers that Perth and Stratford Housing Corporation practices.

Wait times are increasing for those waiting on the waitlist and receiving offers based on chronological order. The length of time between application and housing offer have increased 22% from 2023-2025 for chronological offers. The average wait time for all of Ontario for rent-geared-to-income housing programs is 65 months. Wait times per offer type are shown below.

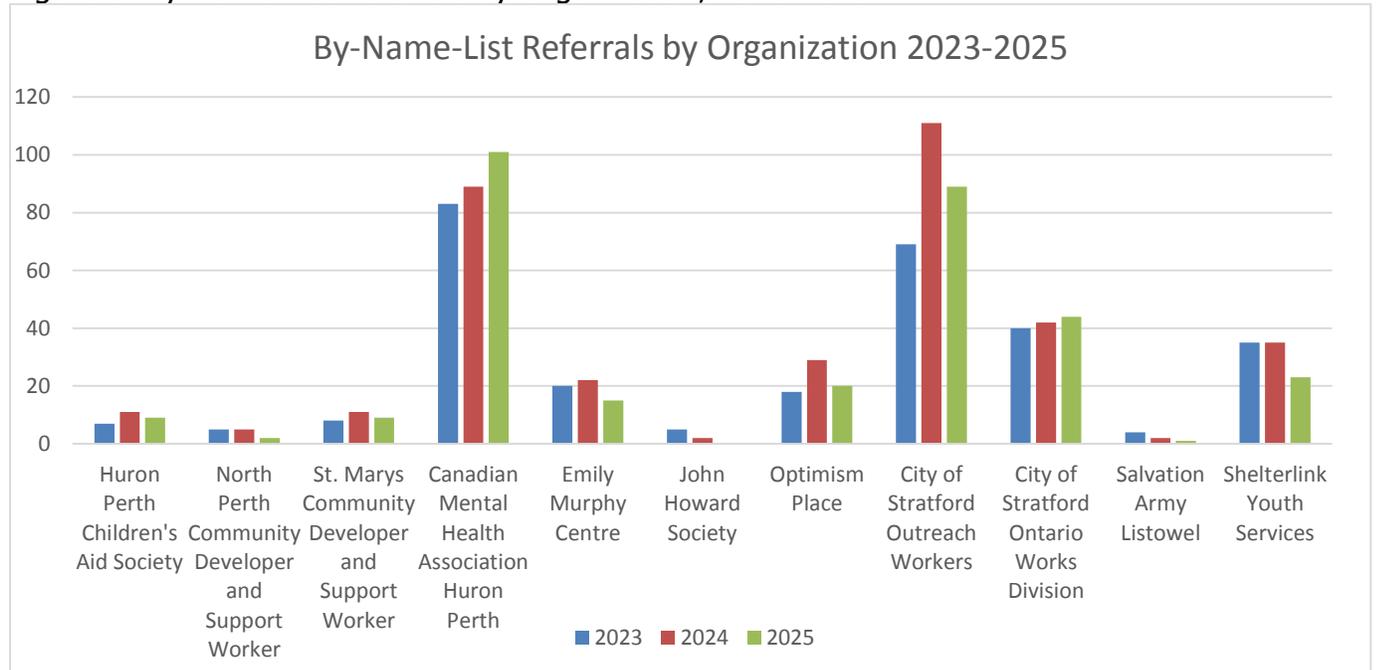
Figure 2: Housing Wait Times by Offer Type, 2023-2025



Homelessness

The following data was collected by using the By-Name-List. This data is collected by several local agencies that support and/or frequently come in contact with those experiencing homelessness. The below chart shows referrals to the By-Name-List by organization. Exact numbers are not shown because one person may be referred to the By-Name-List by more than one agency. The three largest referral sources are the City of Stratford Social Services Outreach Workers, the Canadian Mental Health Association Huron Perth, and the City of Stratford Ontario Works Division.

Figure 3: By-Name-List Referrals by Organization, 2023-2025



Temporary, informal living arrangements, informally known as 'couch-surfing,' are the most common form of homelessness reported in the service manager area with 117 individuals reporting this during at least one monthly update in 2023, 127 in 2024, and 112 in 2025. This shows there is a bit of variation but overall, this is a steady trend for those experiencing homelessness.

Unsheltered homelessness has slightly decreased in the service manager area with eighty-seven reporting being unsheltered during at least one monthly update in 2023. This decreased to 85 in 2024 and 80 in 2025.

The number of individuals who accessed emergency accommodations in 2023 was 210, in 2024 was 211, and in 2025 was 201. While this represents a reduction, the decrease is not considered statistically significant.

Of those on the local By-Name-List, 221 reported being a victim of domestic violence in 2023, 241 in 2024, and 207 in 2025.

The total number observed for households with children or have children who would return to the household upon becoming housed, were 44 in 2023, 54 in 2024, and 34 in 2025. This shows an overall decrease. This may be attributed to the higher instances of Special Priority Status housing offers for rent-geared-to-income housing in 2025. The most common family household compositions are families with 1 or 2 children. An average of sixteen families per year have two children in the household and an average

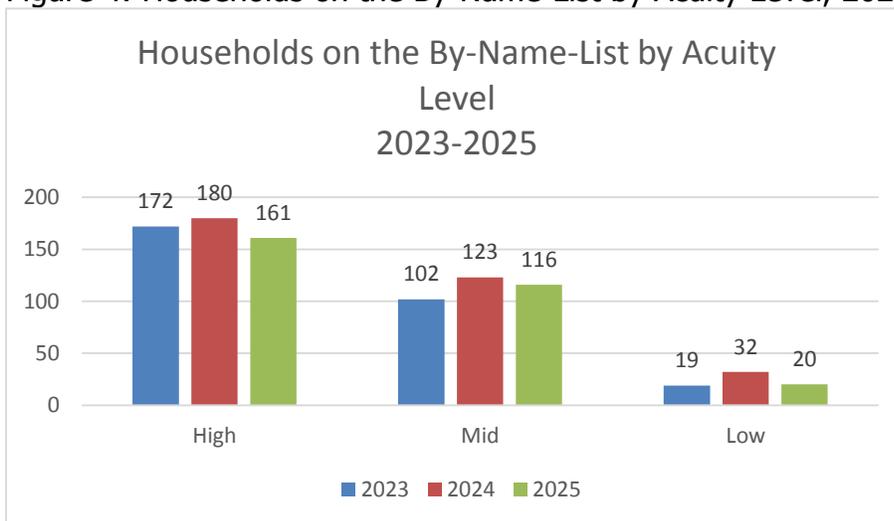
of fourteen families per year have had one child in the household. This indicates a larger need for 2-and/or 3-bedroom units.

Chart 3: Households on By-Name-List that secured housing, 2023-2025

	2023	2024	2025
Total Housed	83	115	88
Proportion Housed in Private Market Housing	48%	51%	58%
Proportion Housed in Subsidized Housing	36%	41%	32%
Proportion who were housed with type unknown	16%	8%	10%
Total who were housed and returned to homelessness	31	36	45

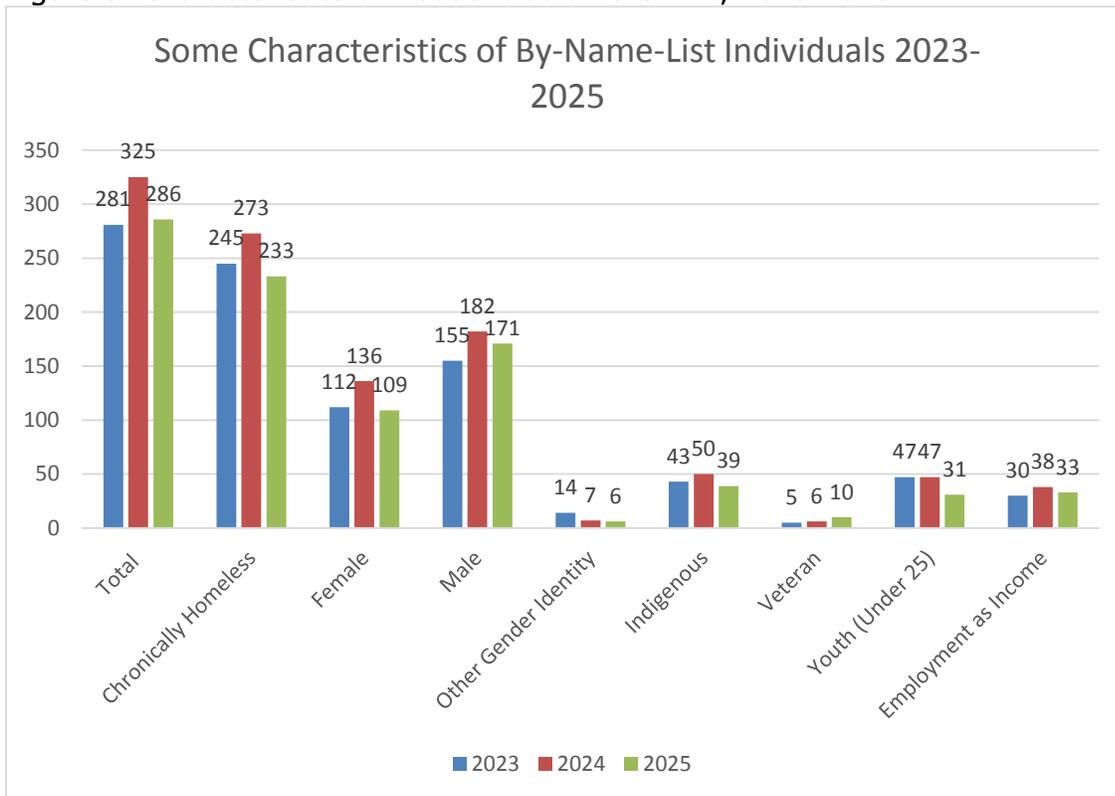
The insight from this chart is that there was a slight decrease in those housed from 2025 compared to 2024, although an overall increase from 2023. There is an observed increase in those securing housing in the private market, although this may be due to a change in May 2025 where the By-Name-List began considering someone in a room rental to be housed, whereas they would have been previously considered to be homeless although provisionally accommodated. There is a significant increase in those who returned to homelessness from housing, which may indicate that there is a lack of appropriate housing available for those who are exiting homelessness. Lacking appropriate housing may mean the housing is not affordable for the individual or the individual may require more support in order to live independently based on a complexity of barriers that people experiencing homelessness often face. The chart below shows that most individuals on the By-Name-List are of high complexity based on acuity level measured by the Vulnerability Index - Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool.

Figure 4: Households on the By-Name-List by Acuity Level, 2023-2025



The last figure, which is below, observes some characteristics of households on the By-Name-List. Many of the characteristics do not seem to change according to the proportion of total individuals on the By-Name-List. There is a slight decrease in individuals with a gender identity other than female or male. There is a slight increase in veterans experiencing homelessness. There is a slight decrease in youth experiencing homelessness.

Figure 5: Characteristics of Households on the BNL, 2023-2025



Moving into 2026

Key activities planned for 2026, following the 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan’s priority areas are as follows:

Ending Homelessness – The focus in the year ahead will be the strengthening of partnerships with local community agencies with the goal of promoting housing stability and ending homelessness.

Creating Affordable Housing Options – The Housing and Homelessness Divisions will continue working with private landlords with the goal of seeking more opportunities for rent supplement and housing allowance partnerships.

Sustaining Community Housing – The Housing and Homelessness Divisions are continuing to work with not-for-profit housing providers to determine and address long-term capital and operational needs.

Addressing a Diversity of Needs – In addition to strengthening partnerships with local community service agencies to better serve tenants and clients, the Housing and Homelessness Divisions will be continuing to expand the provision of transitional and supported housing.

Financial Implications:

Financial impact to current year or future year operating budget:

There are no financial impacts of this report but monitoring ongoing data and trends will inform planning and decision-making regarding housing and homelessness programs.

Link to Asset Management Plan:

With building condition assessment data being gathered currently, this link will be demonstrated in future reports.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities:

Build Housing Stability

Housing and homelessness programs managed by the City of Stratford are intended to support and strengthen vulnerable individuals in our community. Monitoring and reporting on trends and impact in these areas allow better-informed decision-making which can then strengthen services.

Alignment with One Planet Principles:

Health and Happiness

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

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Housing and Homelessness Divisions 2025 Year in Review " (SOC26-005), be received for information.

Prepared by: Michelle Melady, Research and Program Analyst
Jeff Wilson, Manager of Housing

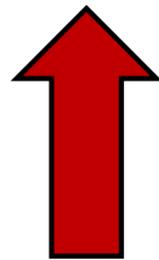
Recommended by: Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services
André Morin, CPA, Chief Administrative Officer

SOCIAL SERVICES MONTHLY CHILDREN'S SERVICES REPORT

Stratford, Perth County, & St. Marys

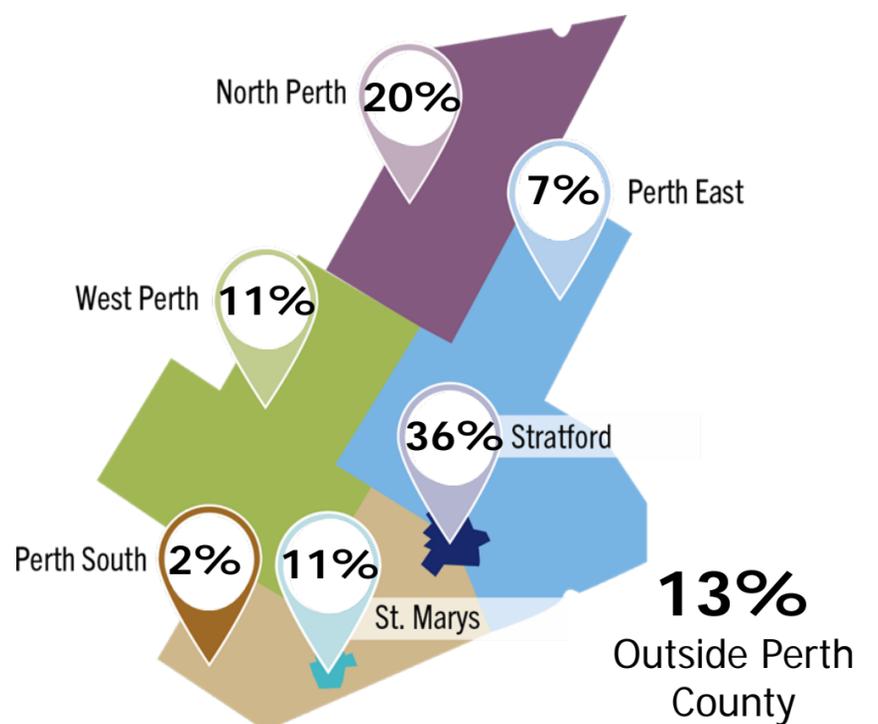
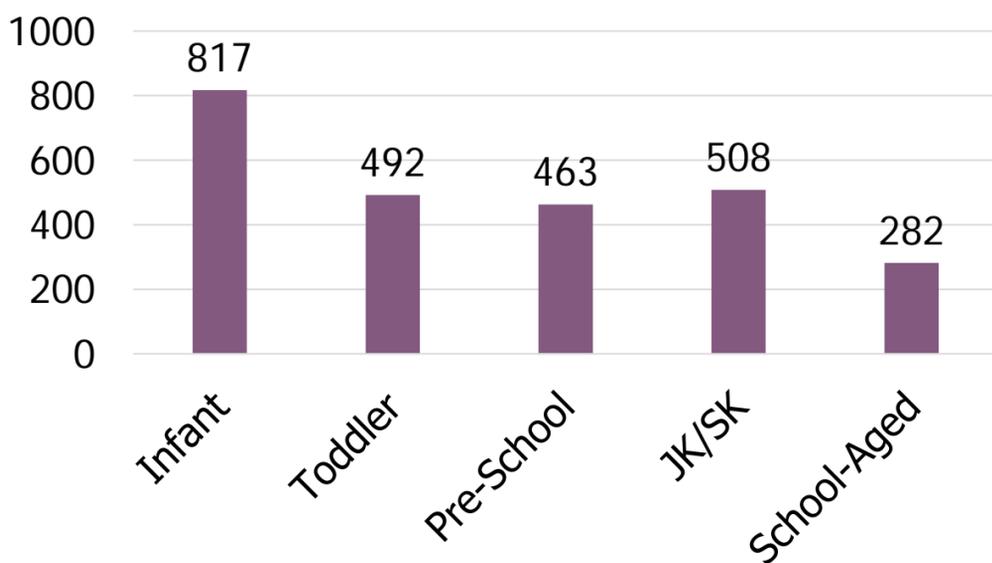
2,562

Total number of children on the child care waitlist



This is an increase from November 2025, when there were **2,554** children on the child care waitlist

Age Category on the waitlist



Resource Consulting

69 Total children supported by the Program

Level of Support



EarlyON

402 Unique children (0-6 years) served

309 Unique parents/caregivers served

1,061 Visits by children (0-6 years)

789 Visits by parents/caregivers

i Information Bulletin

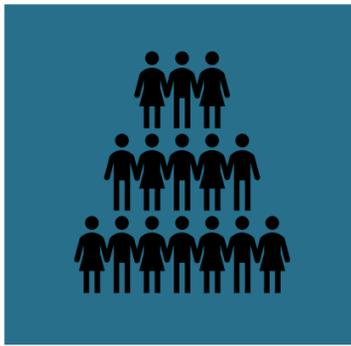
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For more information about Children's Services and supports please visit: <https://www.stratford.ca/en/inside-city-hall/childcare.aspx>



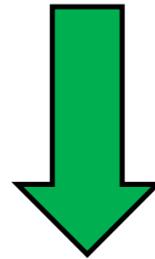
SOCIAL SERVICES MONTHLY HOMELESSNESS REPORT

Stratford, Perth County, & St. Marys



143

Total number of households experiencing homelessness



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



0

New households entering into homelessness



1

Households returned to service area or reconnected with services



2

Households who lost their housing



9

Households who became housed



5

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

Population Specific Information

120 Single Adults

12 Youth (16-24)

10 Families

122 Chronic

40 Unsheltered

17 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>

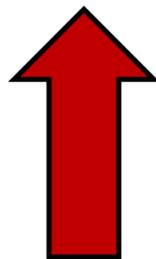


SOCIAL SERVICES MONTHLY SOCIAL HOUSING REPORT

Stratford, Perth County, & St. Marys

704

Total number of households on the centralized waitlist



This is an increase from November 2025, when there were **692** households on the centralized waitlist

Unit Size

1 Bedroom	60%
2 Bedroom	15%
3 Bedroom	12%
4+ Bedroom	12%

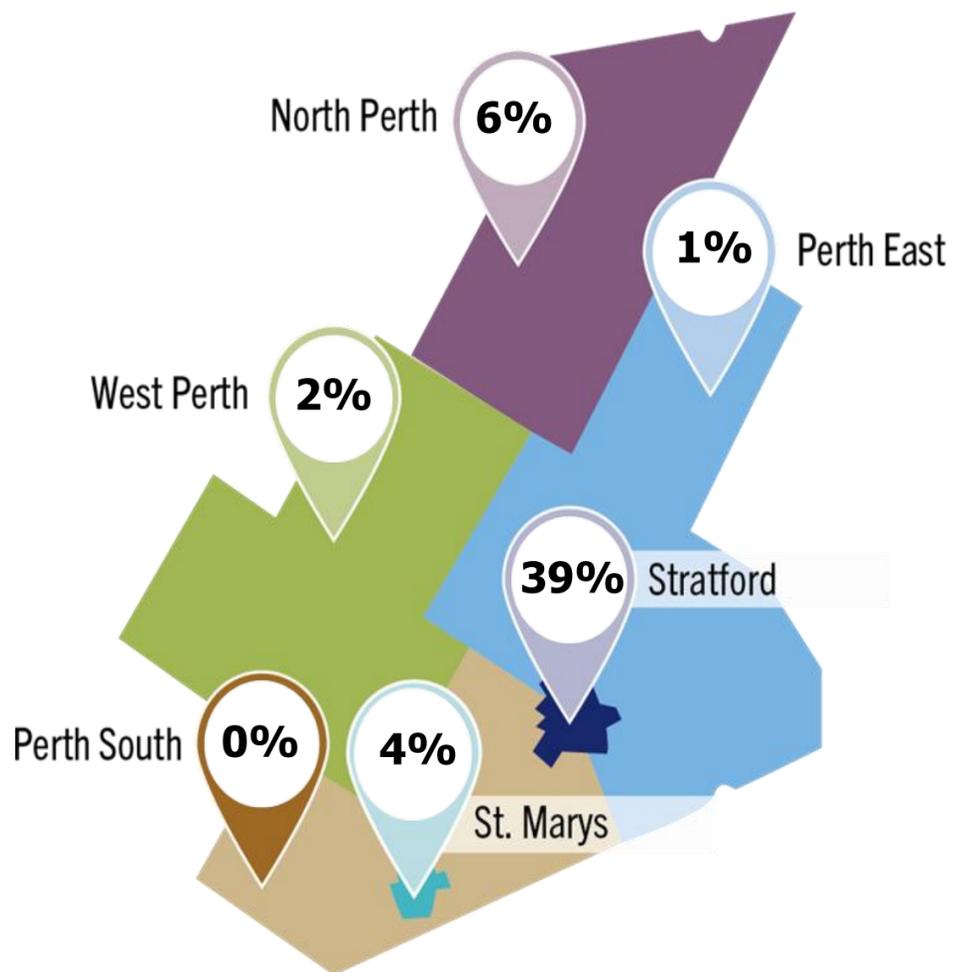
Applicant Type

Single/Couple	52%
Family	37%
Senior	11%

Priority Status

Chronological Order	88%
Homeless	6%
Special Provincial Priority (SPP)*	6%

*SPP: Survivor of domestic abuse or trafficking



Unknown: **13%**

Outside Perth County: **33%**

*Current applicant address

Move ins & Move outs

2 Total number of move-outs

9 Total number of move-ins

Maintenance



256

Number of work orders requested

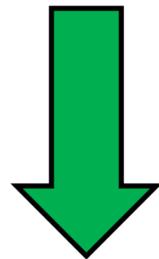
For more information about housing services and supports please visit: <https://www.stratford.ca/en/inside-city-hall/housing.aspx>



SOCIAL SERVICES MONTHLY ONTARIO WORKS REPORT

Stratford, Perth County, & St. Marys

828 Total number of active cases



This is a decrease from November 2025, when there were **833** 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.



24%

Percentage of caseload terminations exiting to employment



4%

Percentage of caseload terminated



64

New applications received



12%

Percentage of caseloads with employment earnings



\$874

Average monthly employment earnings

Population Specific Information



68%

Singles without dependents



27%

Lone parent families



5%

Couples with or without dependents

2.4

Years

Average time on assistance

\$733

The maximum amount a single on Ontario Works receives per month



Information Bulletin

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

- Financial assistance to help you cover the costs of your basic needs (example: food and housing costs)
- 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>



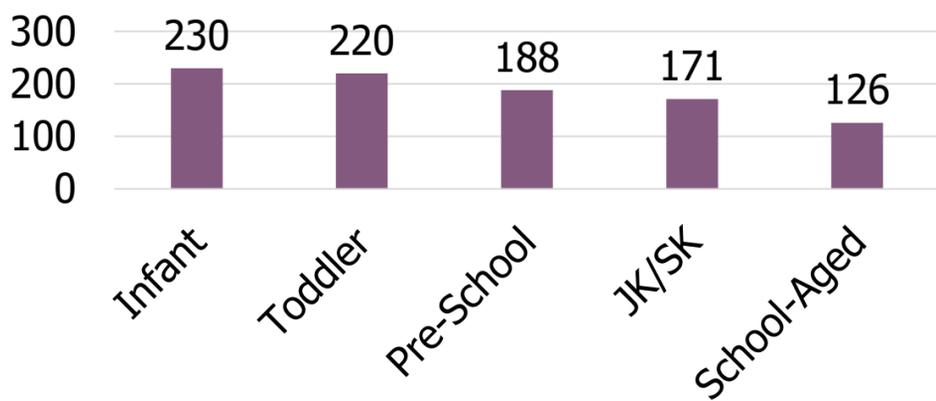
SOCIAL SERVICES MONTHLY CITY OF STRATFORD REPORT

Children's Services

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

36% Percentage of the total child care waitlist applying from Stratford

Age Category on the waitlist – Applying from Stratford



EarlyON - Stratford

112 Unique children (0-6 years) served

92 Unique parents/caregivers served

246 Visits by children (0-6 years)

184 Visits by parents/caregivers

Social Housing

278

Total households on the centralized waitlist applying from Stratford

Unit Size

1 Bedroom	67%
2 Bedroom	13%
3 Bedroom	10%
4+ Bedroom	10%

Applicant Type

Single/Couple	58%
Family	30%
Senior	12%

39%

Percentage of the total centralized waitlist applying from Stratford

Priority Status

Chronological Order	84%
Homeless	8%
Special Provincial Priority (SPP)*	8%

*SPP: Survivor of domestic abuse or trafficking

Ontario Works

498 Total number of active cases in Stratford

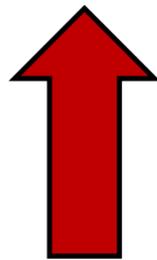
60% Percentage of the total Ontario Works caseload that are in Stratford

SOCIAL SERVICES MONTHLY CHILDREN'S SERVICES REPORT

Stratford, Perth County, & St. Marys

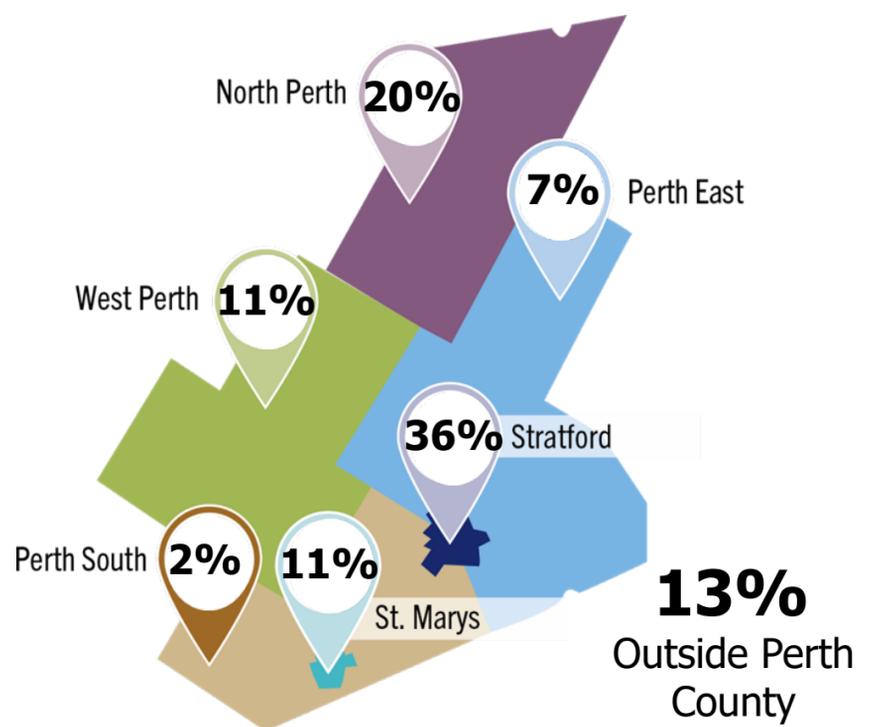
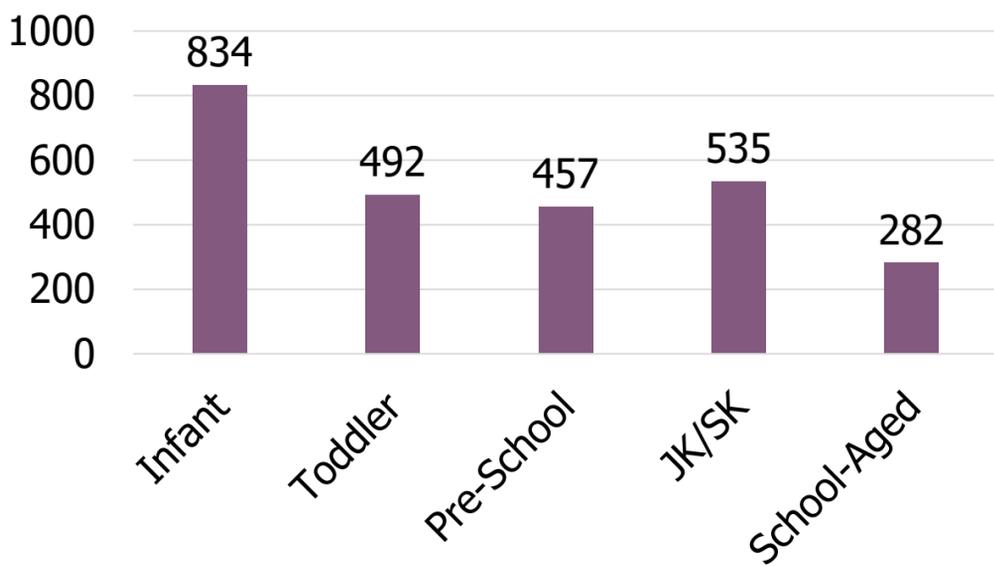
2,600

Total number of children on the child care waitlist

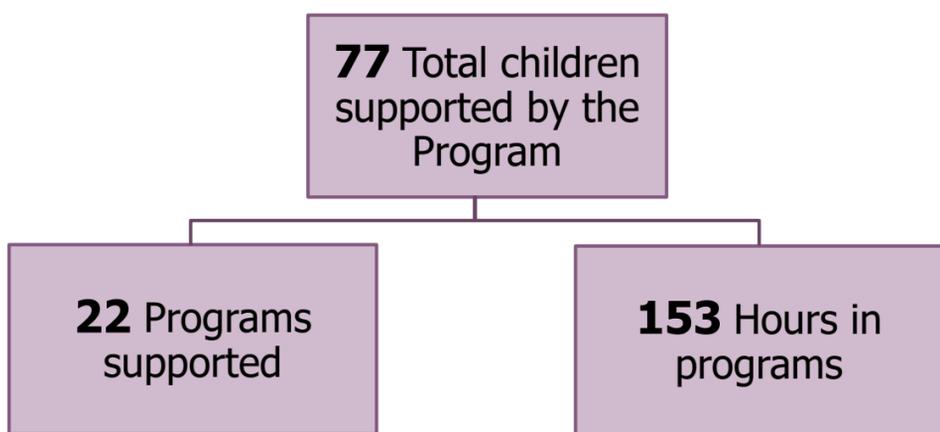


This is an increase from December 2025, when there were **2,562** children on the child care waitlist

Age Category on the waitlist



Resource Consulting



EarlyON

596 Unique children (0-6 years) served	448 Unique parents/caregivers served
1,627 Visits by children (0-6 years)	1,183 Visits by parents/caregivers

i Information Bulletin

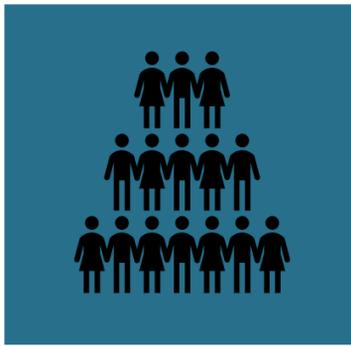
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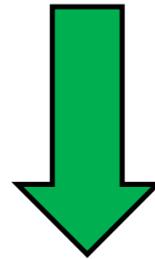
SOCIAL SERVICES MONTHLY HOMELESSNESS REPORT

Stratford, Perth County, & St. Marys



122

Total number of households experiencing homelessness



This is a decrease from December 2025, when there were **143** households experiencing homelessness



18

New households entering into homelessness



2

Households returned to service area or reconnected with services



2

Households who lost their housing



6

Households who became housed



37

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

Population Specific Information

103 Single Adults

8 Youth (16-24)

11 Families

106 Chronic

35 Unsheltered

14 Identify as Indigenous

Information Bulletin

Households who left the service area is over represented this month due to an administrative error which caused an underrepresentation of households who left the service area in the months of November and December 2025.



SOCIAL SERVICES MONTHLY SOCIAL HOUSING REPORT

Stratford, Perth County, & St. Marys

703

Total number of households on the centralized waitlist



This is a decrease from December 2025, when there were 704 households on the centralized waitlist

Unit Size

1 Bedroom	60%
2 Bedroom	15%
3 Bedroom	12%
4+ Bedroom	12%

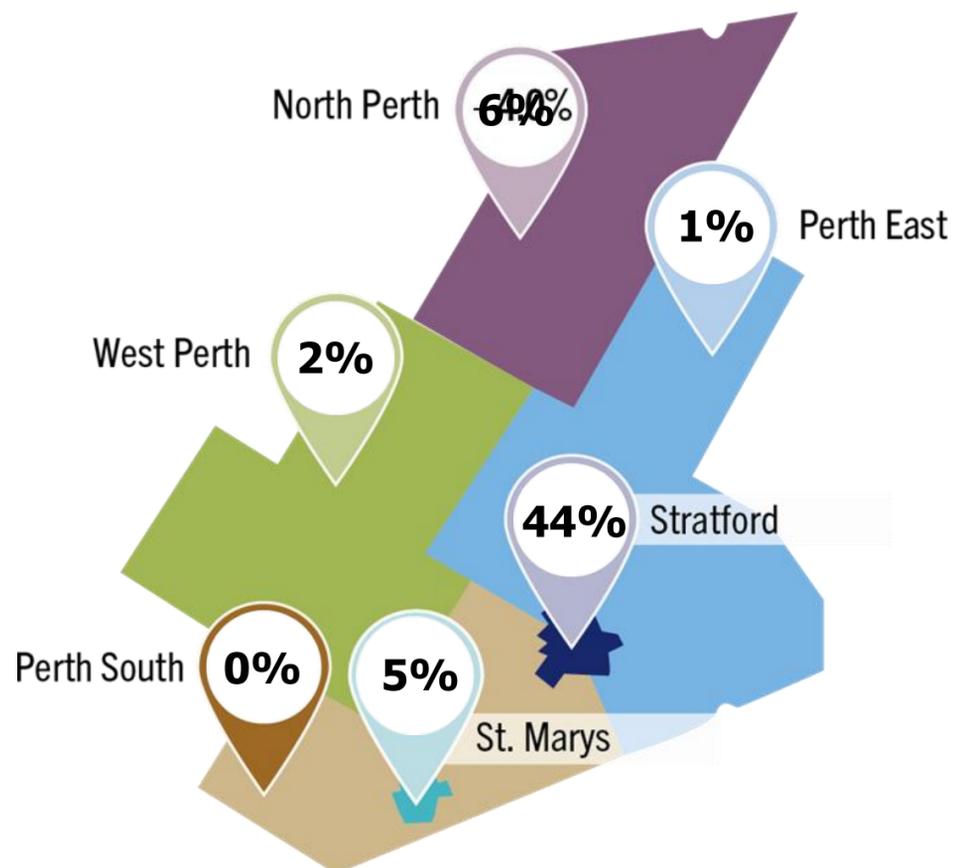
Applicant Type

Single/Couple	52%
Family	37%
Senior	11%

Priority Status

Chronological Order	89%
Homeless	4%
Special Provincial Priority (SPP)*	6%

*SPP: Survivor of domestic abuse or trafficking



Unknown: **6%**

Outside Perth County: **36%**

*Current applicant address

Move ins & Move outs

4 Total number of move-outs

9 Total number of move-ins

Maintenance



428

Number of work orders requested

Please note that previous "Number of work orders requested" was an underrepresentation of data due to not capturing work completed, or work in progress. Numbers for 2026 will appear higher than in previous reporting.

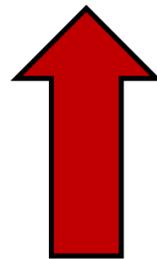
For more information about housing services and supports please visit: <https://www.stratford.ca/en/inside-city-hall/housing.aspx>



SOCIAL SERVICES MONTHLY ONTARIO WORKS REPORT

Stratford, Perth County, & St. Marys

865 Total number of active cases



This is an increase from December 2025, when there were **828** active cases

54 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.



27%

Percentage of caseload terminations exiting to employment



5%

Percentage of caseload terminated



85

New applications received



10%

Percentage of caseloads with employment earnings



\$696

Average monthly employment earnings

Population Specific Information



68%

Singles without dependents



27%

Lone parent families



5%

Couples with or without dependents

2.4

Years

Average time on assistance

\$733

The maximum amount a single on Ontario Works receives per month



Information Bulletin

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

- Financial assistance to help you cover the costs of your basic needs (example: food and housing costs)
- 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>



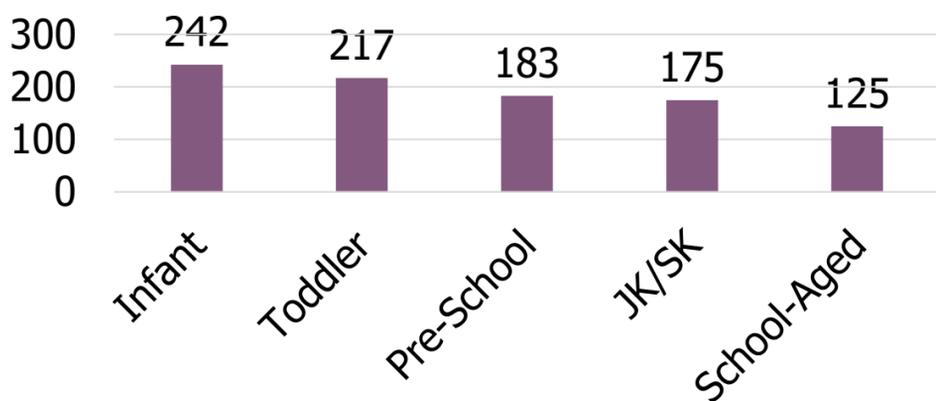
SOCIAL SERVICES MONTHLY CITY OF STRATFORD REPORT

Children's Services

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

36% Percentage of the total child care waitlist applying from Stratford

Age Category on the waitlist – Applying from Stratford



EarlyON - Stratford

177 Unique children (0-6 years) served

140 Unique parents/caregivers served

388 Visits by children (0-6 years)

278 Visits by parents/caregivers

Social Housing

308

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%

44%

Percentage of the total centralized waitlist applying from Stratford

Priority Status

Chronological Order	86%
Homeless	6%
Special Provincial Priority (SPP)*	8%

*SPP: Survivor of domestic abuse or trafficking

Ontario Works

515 Total number of active cases in Stratford

60%

Percentage of the total Ontario Works caseload that are in Stratford