



2024 to 2026 Business Plan & Budget

Community Services

The Community Services Division coordinates the department's investments and strategic directions to build capacity within the community. These efforts are concentrated across the provincially mandated pillars of Community Safety and Wellbeing, homelessness, social determinants of health, and support to food security. This work involves evidence-informed decision making, collection and analysis of data, the design of new services and programs, and offering support to a range of community partners for building capacity and wellness in the community.

The Community Services division continues to work as the homelessness system manager within Northumberland County Community and Social Services. This work includes developing and improving a system for coordinating and managing homelessness services across Northumberland by implementing the goals outlined in the 10-year Housing and Homelessness plan.

The Community Services division also delivers a comprehensive Community Outreach Program with case workers supporting those in crisis, living unsheltered, and/or living on low incomes who are not eligible for social assistance. Outreach case workers identify support services and help design plans of care to establish goals and actions to support successful life stabilization. In 2022-2023, a review of the homelessness system was completed and included recommendations for improving core homelessness services. Recommendations for street outreach that were included in the report will be implemented over the next three years, shifting the way Northumberland County provides outreach services.

Prior Year Accomplishments

Innovate for Service Excellence

Ignite Economic Opportunity

Funding Applications



- Completed an application to Employment and Social Development Canada and United Way Simcoe Muskoka's Reaching Home Rural and Remote project to enhance street outreach across Northumberland County. We received valuable feedback on where to strengthen the application for future grant opportunities.

Social Services Relief Fund

- Managed the funding allocations for Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF) 4 and 5 to support the provision of services to people actively experiencing homelessness and at-risk of experiencing homelessness. This funding also ensured that service providers had access to training and resources (including PPE) to continue providing Health and Safety services brought about by the pandemic.
- SSRF 5 funding assisted:
 - 3 shelter facilities (Warming Room, Emergency Shelter, and Motel Overflow) provide approximately 50 spaces for 196 households,
 - 20 households transition to long-term housing,
 - 3 community services (Meals on Wheels, Northumberland Eats, and the Warming Room Food Cupboard) provide food security for 1,661 households,
 - 86 households with mental health/addictions support and wellness supplies through a Mental Health Worker (through Northumberland Hills Hospital), and
 - 77 households with Shelter Benefit housing support.

Technology

- iPads were used to collect client and visit information at the 2022-2023 Warming Room. This enabled accurate and up-to-date data about warming room usage, as well as insights for planning and optimizing service delivery for the 2023-2024 Warming Hub.

Foster a Thriving Community

Community Safety and Well-Being

- The Provincially mandated Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Plan was prepared in 2021 and continues to be coordinated by Northumberland County Community and Social Services. The CSWB objectives are to reduce crime and improve health through adequate social supports using social development, coordination among community agencies, and by adopting prevention versus incident response and crisis interventions. These objectives focus on 4 priority areas, which include:
 - Homelessness and Affordable Housing,
 - Mental Health,
 - Poverty, Income, and Employment, and



- Substance Use and Addiction.
- Community and Social Services and United Way co-chair the CSWB Collaborative. The Collaborative is responsible for coordinating the guidance and leadership of the CSWB objectives. The CSWB Data Group coordinates the sharing of data amongst member agencies to foster assessments of service use, service availability, and improved service provision.
- The Data Group and Collaborative held meetings in May 2022 and will continue to plan meetings at least biannually. The recent Collaborative Meeting involved a year-in-review data presentation by the Community Services division. This meeting prompted discussion about the continuance of successful services (e.g., Northumberland Eats, Social Prescribing), filling Collaborative vacancies, and sharing training opportunities across agencies and providers.
- Community Services staff continue to attend Provincial CSWB meetings offered by the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA).

Social Prescribing

- Continued supporting the Social Prescribing pilot program that allows primary care and other providers to make referrals to community supports for health and well-being. The supports offered include:
 - Food (weekly/biweekly food box, Meals on Wheels),
 - Exercise (in-person and virtual classes, exercise kits),
 - Digital equity (home computer support, technology loaning),
 - Social and cultural support (art classes, YMCA day passes), and
 - Wellness supports (friendly check-in call program, counselling supports, support groups).
- From November 2002 to March 2023, Social Prescribing assisted 60 unique clients across 93 service referrals. This includes 9 for food support, 7 for volunteering opportunities, 16 for wellness and counselling support, 16 for digital equity, 22 for exercise, and 16 for social and cultural support.

211 Closed Loop Referral

- 211 is a service that connects people to social services and community programs across Ontario. Closed loop referrals are consent-based referrals made by Northumberland Paramedics to 211 after identifying possible patient needs during responses to calls. 211 contacts patients for follow-up and makes connections to supports.
- From April 1 to September 30, 2022, 73 referrals were made with 193 needs identified. Most of the identified needs included individual/family services (55), health (45),



transportation (22), food/meals (17), mental health (7), housing (9), and income support/financial assistance (3).

- 97 referrals were made from January 1 to June 30, 2023.

Training and Employment

- Bridges Out of Poverty training was attended by 128 internal department and external community service provider staff to continue building capacity among those interacting and engaging with individuals living in poverty, experiencing homelessness, or at-risk of experiencing homelessness.
- The Community Services Team attended 2 of 3 Supportive Approaches to Innovative Learning (SAIL) training sessions as of September 2023 (to be completed in December 2023). SAIL is a professional development program designed to improve interpersonal interactions within the workplace.
- The Community Services team offered 1 diversion training session for external agencies in 2022 and 1 diversion training session for internal staff in 2023. Diversion is used as a preventative measure to avoid a shelter stay if possible. These sessions offered techniques for finding appropriate and alternative options for individuals seeking emergency shelter and using available supports to realize diversion options.

By-Name List

- The By-Name List is a prioritized, real-time list of individuals known to be experiencing homelessness in Northumberland County. Individuals consent to being on the list and to being connected to community services and supports. Northumberland County's By-Name List meets the standards required by the province and is used to inform and influence planning, evaluate services, and improve the coordination of services for individuals.
- Community Services continued to inform and raise awareness of the BNL with community partners to build impactful interventions for people experiencing homelessness.
- Community Services provided data to the Canadian Alliance to End Homeless, retained our full membership of the Built for Zero-Canada (BFZ-C) campaign, and met ON BNL 2022 status. Monthly data submitted to BFZ-C provided context for the types of homelessness inflow (e.g., newly identified, return from housing, etc.) and outflow (housed, inactive, etc.) experienced by individuals in Northumberland County, and influenced the planning and service delivery options within our homelessness system.

Homelessness Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS)



- HIFIS is a secure web-based interface that enables the collecting, managing, and sharing of real-time data for clients and services in the homelessness system. We continued working toward implementing HIFIS by completing data sharing agreements with HCRT members and completing the HIFIS user guide.

Homelessness Coordinated Response Team (HCRT)

- Continued coordinating biweekly meetings for the 11 attending organizations that work with people experiencing homelessness in Northumberland County. HCRT supports people experiencing homelessness by encouraging the sharing of resources and expertise and coordinating access to community supports and services.
- HCRT manages and updates the By-Name List at bi-weekly meetings. HCRT continues to use the Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) to assess individuals and families for risk and prioritization of service. We continue to promote use of this tool and offer training to internal staff and staff from partner agencies to ensure that consistent and accurate assessments are carried out.

Homelessness Leadership Table (HLT)

- Continued to coordinate the Homelessness Leadership Table. The HLT consists of 11 member agencies that supports the work of HCRT by identifying barriers and gaps to equitable service delivery, identifying trends in service use across the County, and identifying and implementing homelessness prevention measures.

Community Outreach Program

- Two outreach case workers continue to engage people not eligible for social assistance but are experiencing homelessness, at-risk of experiencing homelessness, and/or are in precarious financial situations. Common requests for assistance include Shelter Funds, furniture, Emergency Assistance, transportation assistance, emergency dental work, glasses, medication coverage, Housing Allowance Program (HAP), dentures, gift cards, and hygiene bags. Other types of assistance provided are support for financial literacy, connections with other community services, and working toward life stabilization.
- Northumberland County is a mix of small towns and rural areas. From January to September of 2023, the caseload spread across the lower-tier municipalities was as follows: Town of Cobourg (39.4%), Municipality of Port Hope (22.4%), Municipality of Brighton (12.4%), Municipality of Trent Hills (10.0%), Township of Hamilton (5.3%), Township of Alnwick/Haldimand (6.5%), and Township of Cramahe (4.0%). This caseload distribution is proportionate to municipality population size and shows the Community Outreach Program is accessible to all areas of Northumberland County. Considering that rural homelessness often remains hidden (with people couch surfing or staying in



temporary accommodations), continued exploration is needed to develop unique responses for meeting the needs of rural homelessness.

Warming Room

- The Warming Room was offered from December 5, 2022, to April 11, 2023, in St. Peter's Anglican Church in Cobourg. It was open nightly from 8pm-8am and offered daytime availability on most Mondays (1-4pm) and Fridays (8am-1pm). The Warming Room offered furniture for rest and light food provisions.
- Organizing and setting up the space involved identifying a location, negotiating the use of space, employing and training staff, hiring adequate security, consulting with community members, and providing resources for the space.
- Planning for Warming Room services included the results of a survey completed in October 2022 by 16 individuals with lived and/or living experience of homelessness.
- 1,519 total visits were made to the Warming Room during its nighttime availability in 2022-2023, which is almost double the number from the previous year. On average, the Warming Room supported 13.4 unique visitors per night and 119 total unique visitors throughout its availability. Of these clients, 78 returned to the Warming Room for more than 1 visit (66% of all unique clients). The number of nighttime visits for return clients ranged from 2 to 83 (median = 12) and accounted for 92% of all nighttime Warming Room visits.
- Daytime use received 49 unique clients and averaged 8 unique visitors per availability. Throughout the season, Friday availabilities totaled more visits (136 visits across 12 days) than Monday availabilities (41 visits across 10 days).
- Of the 119 unique clients that visited the Warming Room (across both day and night availabilities), personal information was provided by 91 of these individuals. Accordingly, the income sources among these clients were 38.5% ODSP, 19.8% OW, 13.2% employed, 1.1% pension, and 27.5% not provided. Most of these individuals reported as being single (81.3%).

Case Management

- The Community Services and Ontario Works Managers continued collaborations to review opportunities to support consistent case management approaches for the Ontario Works and Community Services divisions. This approach aligned with the delivery of stability supports and focused on developing consistent delivery standards for financial and person-centered supports by case workers within the Community & Social Services department. We will align the approach with the Social Assistance Renewal and Community Safety and Wellbeing Plans by developing a "Northumberland-



approach” to emerging issues or trends within our community using the existing capacity of caseworker staff.

Food Security

- Continued to invest in the Northumberland Eats program that supports food security across the County. Northumberland Eats is administered by Northumberland United Way in partnership with Northumberland County Community and Social Services. The program provides vouchers that allow people to purchase food from nearly 25 participating restaurants and food vendors in the community that provide a range of food options. The vouchers are distributed by several community organizations, including Northumberland County Community and Social Services.
- From January to November of 2022, Community and Social Services distributed 6,360 vouchers across 1,132 interactions. From January to August of 2023, Community and Social Services distributed 5,990 vouchers to 306 unique individuals.
- Supported Community Care Meals on Wheels program. Community Care Meals on Wheels provides nutritious and affordable meals to seniors living alone, adults with disabilities, and those discharged from the hospital who require assistance while recovering. Community Care provided meal subsidies through the Dining Program, which enhances social connectedness for seniors living in isolation. This program served 428 individuals from July to December 2022.
- Received funding from the Food4All division to provide food provisions for the 2022-2023 Warming Room and the food cupboard at the Community and Social Services office.

Community Transport

- Recognizing that transport remains a priority for residents of Northumberland, Community Services continues to support community transport initiatives managed through Community care.
- The Community Outreach Program continued to support individuals in Northumberland to access transportation through emergency funding, organizing rides through local programs, and providing transit passes. This transportation support has connected residents to vital services such as medical appointments, emergency shelter services, apartment viewings, employment opportunities, and homelessness diversion opportunities.

Mental Health and Wellness



- By supporting the Community Health Centers of Northumberland dental program, we developed a service agreement and will monitor outcomes for the services provided. Meetings and reports with program delivery staff will be completed bi-annually.
- Continued to invest in an outreach position for the Emergency Shelter. This position acts as a daily wellness check for those living in shelter and motel overflow.

Ten Year Housing and Homelessness Plan

- Completed the 2022 Annual Report and submitted to County Council and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for approval as required by legislation.

Propel Sustainable Growth

Homelessness System Review

- Worked with Vink Consulting to review the Northumberland homelessness system and develop recommendations for advancing a community-wide response model involving infrastructure and services to support those experiencing or at-risk of experiencing homelessness. This review was a critical step in building a collaborative, culturally competent, trauma-informed, Housing First system approach to addressing homelessness.
- The review was aligned with current best practices and sector trends, and formed data-based plans for meeting the community homelessness system needs over the short- (1-3 months), medium- (3-6 months), and long-term (6+). This included:
 - Funding Models
 - Partnership Opportunities
 - Core Emergency Shelter Service Level Standards, and
 - Strategies for Supporting Impactful Program Delivery and Coordinated Access.
- Completing this review was an important step in strengthening the coordination of homelessness services to ensure that individuals in our community have access to the proper supports when and where they enter the system. The first action item to be achieved from this review is adding a street outreach worker to the Community Services division in the last quarter of 2023.

2024 to 2026 Service Objectives & Initiatives

Innovate for Service Excellence

Ignite Economic Opportunity

Food Security



- There is continued effort from the Public Health Unit to engage members of the food policy council. As a member of this council, the Community Services Manager will attend meetings and be an active participant of this re-established group focused on food policy options such as decreasing food waste, incentives for institutions to purchase local food, land use planning, and community gardens.
- Community Services will work conduct an evaluation of the investment in the Northumberland Eats program and provide recommendations with respect to opportunities related to food security and the role of Social Services.

Foster a Thriving Community

Community Outreach Program

- The goal of the Community Outreach Program is to reduce the impact of homelessness on people living unsheltered in Northumberland County. This includes engaging individuals not eligible for social assistance but who are experiencing homelessness, at-risk of experiencing homelessness, and/or are in precarious financial situations.
- This includes formal changes to the Community Outreach Program to enhance services, provide comprehensive coverage to all of Northumberland County, and ensure back-up coverage for anticipated and unanticipated time off. There will be an intentional analysis of the Byname list and caseloads can be built using this list in an action-oriented way.
- Continue collaboration with the Ontario Works division to build on case management approaches and the delivery of stability supports to those most in need while responding to emerging issues or trends within the community through enhanced capacity of existing staffing models.
- Support learning and development opportunities for Outreach workers, other department staff, and community agencies by focusing on:
 - Trauma-informed approaches to case management,
 - Working in an enhanced outreach capacity, and
 - Risk assessments.

Warming Hub

- Formerly referred to as the Warming Room, the Warming Hub will continue to offer daytime and nighttime availability in the Winter months (typically November to April) for individuals seeking warmth, rest, and light food provisions.
- A Warming Hub working group is operationalized in Northumberland County Community and Social Services to develop and support the set-up and operations of the Warming Hub. The working group is a cross-section of divisional members (e.g., Director, Managers, Coordinators, and Caseworkers) with varied skills in organizing



community projects, engaging with individuals with lived and/or living experiences of homelessness, and managing data for the purposes of reporting and informing.

- The working group will work with community partners on the design and set up of daytime and nighttime Warming Hub availabilities, and will continue efforts to offer food, furniture, security, and warmth as the key elements for its set-up. Work will also continue toward identifying and negotiating use of suitable space(s), employing and training staff, and consulting with community members.
- Planning and implementing Warming Hub operations will prioritize engaging persons with lived and/or living experience of homelessness (i.e., annual Warming Hub Feedback Survey).

Ten Year Housing and Homelessness Plan

- Develop opportunities for people with lived and/or living experience of homelessness to be involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of homelessness and housing services.
- Build further collaboration with community agencies to design opportunities and solutions to meet the needs of people seeking housing in the County.
- Continue providing Annual Reports for submission to County Council and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

HPP Housing Stability Program

- Northumberland County Community and Social Services, through the Housing Services Division, offers rental subsidies to eligible households within Northumberland County to help bridge the gap between income and market rent units. Priority will be given to those who are actively homeless and who have consented to be included on the Northumberland County By-Name List (BNL) or those folks who are at risk of homelessness.

Social Prescribing

- Continue supporting the Social Prescribing program in partnership with the Community Health Centres of Northumberland (CHCN). This program allows primary care and other providers to make referrals to community supports for health and well-being. The supports offered include food, exercise, digital equity, social and cultural support, and wellness supports.

211 Closed Loop Referral Program



- Continue collaborating with Northumberland Paramedics in providing the 211 Closed Loop Referral Program. 211 is a service that connects people to social services and community programs across Ontario. Closed loop referrals are consent-based referrals made by Northumberland Paramedics to 211 after identifying possible patient needs during responses to calls. 211 contacts patients for follow-up and makes connections to supports.

Homelessness Coordinated Response Team (HCRT)

- HCRT supports people experiencing homelessness in Northumberland County by encouraging the sharing of resources, providing expertise, and coordinating access to community supports and services. HCRT will continue being chaired by the Community Services division and engage attending organizations by:
 - Coordinating biweekly meetings,
 - Updating Terms of Reference, and
 - Managing updates to the By-Name List.
- HCRT will continue working toward transitioning the By-Name List to HIFIS.

Homelessness Leadership Table (HLT)

- The HLT consists of 11 member agencies that supports the work of HCRT by identifying barriers and gaps to equitable service delivery, identifying trends in service use across the County, and identifying and implementing homelessness prevention measures.

By-Name List

- The BNL is a prioritized, real-time list of individuals known to be experiencing homelessness in Northumberland County. Community Services will continue working with HCRT members to engage individuals experiencing homelessness (i.e., collecting consent to be added to the list) and connecting these individuals to community services and supports.
- Northumberland County's By-Name List will continue to inform planning, service evaluation, and the coordination of services for individuals experiencing homelessness. This will be fostered by continued collaboration with the Canadian Alliance to End Homeless and by retaining full membership with the Built for Zero-Canada (BFZ-C) campaign. The latter will involve monthly data submissions to track the types of homelessness inflow (e.g., newly identified, return from housing, etc.) and outflow (housed, inactive, etc.) experienced in Northumberland County.
- Work will continue moving the By-Name List to HIFIS.



Homelessness Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS)

- HIFIS is a secure web-based interface that enables the collecting, managing, and sharing of real-time data for clients and services in the homelessness system. Work will continue toward incrementally completing Northumberland County's phased approach to HIFIS implementation.
- The Community Services Team will continue to engage partners in the use of HIFIS as a method to capture data in real time. There will be a review of the implementation and ongoing improvements made as needed.

Mental Health and Wellness

- Maintain two mental health homelessness worker positions (as suggested by the Homelessness System Review) to conduct outreach with clients who are experiencing homelessness and who are identifying with mental health related concerns. There is an intensive case management component for those clients needing housing outcomes (e.g., to remain housed, obtain housing, in shelter, diversion, etc.).
- Continued investment in an outreach position for the emergency shelter. This position acts as a daily wellness check for those living in shelter and motel overflow.

Training and Employment

- The Community Services division will continue developing and offering training opportunities for internal departmental and external community service provider staff that engage with individuals in Northumberland living in poverty, experiencing homelessness, or at-risk of experiencing homelessness. This includes:
 - VI-SPDAT training
 - The Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) assess individuals and families for risk and prioritization of service. Training sessions will offer consistent and accurate assessments across agencies.
 - Diversion training
 - Diversion is used as a preventative measure to avoid a shelter stay if possible. Training sessions offer techniques for finding appropriate and alternative options for individuals seeking emergency shelter and using available supports to realize these options.
- As of December 2023, all members of the Community Services division will have completed SAIL training.
- We will continue to seek out and engage in professional development training opportunities.

Community Transport



- Community Services will support community transport initiatives managed through Community Care.
- The Community Outreach Program will support access to transportation through emergency funding, organizing rides through local programs, and providing transit passes. This transportation support will remain a critical program for connecting residents to vital services such as medical appointments, emergency shelter services, apartment viewings, employment opportunities, and homelessness diversion opportunities.

Propel Sustainable Growth

Homelessness System Review – Short-, medium-, long-term goals

- In 2022-2023, Community and Social Services worked with a consulting agency to review the Northumberland homelessness system and develop recommendations for advancing a community-wide response model (including infrastructure and services) to support those experiencing or at-risk of experiencing homelessness. The review was aligned with current best practices and sector trends for meeting the community homelessness system needs with funding models, partnership opportunities, core emergency shelter service level standards, and strategies for supporting impactful program delivery and coordinated access.
- Community and Social Services will use available opportunities to implement the short (1-3 months), medium (3-6 months), and long-term (6+ months) goals addressed by the review. This review will be critical for realizing a coordinated homelessness system in Northumberland County that is collaborative, culturally competent, trauma-informed, and Housing First.
- The first action item achieved from this review is adding an outreach worker to the Community Services division in the last quarter of 2023.

Community Outreach Program Standard Operating Procedures

- Continue developing outreach plans and activities with community partners to ensure that the most vulnerable people in our communities have access to food and community programs.
- Partner with programs that promote healthy food and cooking (Port Hope Northumberland Community Health Centre) to encourage the uptake and promotion of these programs.
- Develop standard operating procedures and to move towards transformational case management.



- Develop a team that will focus on street outreach and intensive case management for those most in need and on the by name list

Evidence-informed decision making

- Continuing to ensure that service planning and implementation follows from the collection and analysis of data. This will require continued development of robust systems for data collection and sharing through service agreements.
- Prioritize using feedback from individuals with lived and/or living experience of homelessness for the planning and implementation of homelessness services. This includes an annual Warming Hub Feedback Survey.

Technology

- Continue using iPads to collect client and visit information at the 2023-2024 Warming Hub. Data collected provides up-to-date information about Warming Hub usage, which is critical for optimizing planning, service delivery, and quarterly and year end Ministry reporting.

Steward a Green Future

Community Outreach Program – Outreach Vehicle

- Review policy for replacing current Outreach vehicle with procurement and exploring energy efficient options.

Long Term Plan & Strategic Objectives

Innovate for Service Excellence

Ignite Economic Opportunity

Funding Applications

- Continue searching for and completing relevant funding applications to enhance the programs and services offered.

Foster a Thriving Community

Community Safety and Well Being (CSWB)



- The Provincially mandated Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Plan will continue to be co-chaired by Northumberland County Community and Social Services and Northumberland United Way. The CSWB objectives are to reduce crime and improve health through adequate social supports using supportive social development, coordination among community agencies, and by adopting prevention versus incident response and crisis interventions. These objectives focus on 4 priority areas, which include:
 - Homelessness and Affordable Housing,
 - Mental Health,
 - Poverty, Income, and Employment, and
 - Substance Use and Addiction.
- The CSWB Collaborative is responsible for coordinating the guidance and leadership of the CSWB objectives. The CSWB Data Group coordinates the sharing of data amongst the member agencies to foster assessments of service use, service availability, and improved service provision. Both groups will continue quarterly meetings and will work with leaders of action groups, service providers, and agencies across the community to establish agreements for data sharing and reporting. Continue to support the priorities of the CSWB plan for Northumberland by ensuring education and promotion of the plan and ensuring adherence to the established governance. This includes filling vacancies on the Collaborative.
- Community Services staff will continue attending Provincial CSWB meetings offered by the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA).

Northumberland Coordinated Entry System to Homelessness Services

- Business planning will continue to incorporate local opportunities, best practice, and legislative requirements to build the services available to support people experiencing homelessness and build life stabilization and prevention into the system.
- The Community Services Team will continue to build capacity, develop, and maintain community partnerships to co-create programs and services that are agile and sustainable.

Propel Sustainable Growth

Steward a Green Future

2024 to 2026 Business Plan & Budget

Early Years Services

Northumberland County Early Years Services continues to evolve policies, programs, and services to greater align with and better reflect the Ontario government's vision and ongoing transformation of the child care and early years system. The *Early Years and Child Care Act, 2014*, emphasizes the role of the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager as the system planner for early learning and child care. In March 2022, the Province of Ontario signed onto the Federal Government's Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care System (CWELCC) with a goal to increase child care spaces and reduce fees to an average of \$10.00 a day for children birth to 5 years by 2026.

The initial implementation of the CWELCC system has been onerous with ongoing challenges and changes since it was announced on March 28, 2022. Over the next three years, Early Years Services in Northumberland County will continue to be influenced by the ongoing implementation of the overall system transformation related to CWELCC.

Many of the action items on Northumberland County's Early Learning and Child Care Five-Year Service Plan were placed on hold while the Early Years Team was reacting, planning, and supporting the early learning and child care community through the ongoing response and recovery initiatives related to the pandemic and the implementation of CWELCC. To address the ongoing changes and challenges to the system, the Service Plan has been updated. One addition to the Plan is the County's Access and Inclusion Framework as directed by the Ministry of Education (EDU) to address the targeted growth of licensed care for children birth to 5 years.

As the Service System Planner designated by the Province, the Northumberland Early Years Team provides guidance, services, and financial support to assist children, parents/caregivers, and child care and early learning partners in accessing and delivering programs that align with Provincial, Federal, and Municipal funding and guidelines. A highlight of key areas where supports are provided:

- For Families
 - Fee Subsidy to support the cost of licensed child care (CWELCC and non CWELCC).
 - Special Needs Resourcing supports for children in licensed child care.
 - CWELCC fee reduction funding.



- EarlyON Child and Family Centres that provide free programming and connections to community supports for families (prenatal to children 6 years old).
- For Early Learning and Child Care Partners (supports based on individual Service Agreements)
 - General Operating Funding.
 - Wage Enhancement Funding.
 - CWELCC funding to support fee reduction, wage compensation and increased access and inclusion.
 - Special Purpose Funding (Repairs and Maintenance, Play-based and Business Transformation supports).
 - Capacity Building/Professional Development opportunities (community wide and centre based).
 - Workforce Recruitment and Retention strategies.
 - Operating funding for EarlyON Child and Family Centres and family support programs (i.e., Triple P Parenting Programs)

There are 11 head offices that operate 35 licensed child care sites and 2 licensed home child care agencies. Available spaces in these locations are limited, and waitlists for child care across the County are extensive. With the introduction of CWELCC, the waitlists have continued to grow, especially for the younger age groups. The increased demand for care is further impacted by a workforce crisis in the Early Years sector. Child care operators are limited in their ability to operate at maximum capacity, due to staffing pressures. This is an issue across all of Ontario. To assist with issue the EDU has rolled out an Access and Inclusion Framework, working towards a common provincial access ratio of 37% of licensed child care spaces for children birth to 5 years.

Prior Year Accomplishments

Innovate for Service Excellence

- Due to the continued implementation of CWELCC, which has been very time consuming and has increased the workload of the Early Years Team and Finance partners exponentially with the additional requirements for increased accountability, policy development, and reporting, a temporary Financial Analyst, Early Years was created, to assist.
 - The need for this position ongoing will be re-evaluated in quarter two of 2024. The review will look at current and anticipated workload and EDU funding.
- Continued to reach out and work with lower tier municipalities and school board partners to look for opportunities where there may be space available in their



buildings to bring licensed child care and/or free EarlyON Child and Family programs to more communities.

- Opportunities for dedicated or shared space for community partners to bring free EarlyON programs or licensed child care.
- Supported the relaunch of the Supportive Approaches through Innovative Learning (SAIL) professional development series for all department staff.
 - All team members participated in 3 modules between April and December.
 - 2 Early Years team members part of the staff-led Working Group to support normalizing SAIL concepts in the department and enhance their facilitation skills by leading sessions.

Foster a Thriving Community

Licensed Child Care including Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care

2023, continued to be a year of transition with the expectation this will continue into 2024 and beyond. The rollout and implementation of the CWELCC system has had many setbacks as the sector strives to implement the extremely complicated policies and procedures. One example of the challenges is, updated guidelines for 2023 were released in June 2023 which made it hard to plan and implement changes in 2023. Northumberland County's Early Years team in partnership with the finance department continued to work closely with EDU and CMSM/DSSAB partners provincially and regionally.

- Phase 2 of implementation began in 2023. This continued to be a year of transition with the anticipation of proposed new early learning and child care funding model for 2024 that incorporates all funding sources including CWELCC.
- In Northumberland County, 34 of 35 licensees are participating in CWELCC. A new for-profit operator chose to opt out.
- For licensees who opted-in January 2023:
 - Fees for children birth to 5 were reduced by 52.75% from the March 2022 frozen fees to a floor of \$12.
 - Under workforce compensation, all eligible Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECE) received an annual wage increase of \$1/hour and licensees received funding to support a wage floor for RECEs of \$19. Base wages plus any additional wage supports have a ceiling of \$25.
- Access and Inclusion Framework – Directed Growth Strategy
 - EDU has allocated 404 spaces to be created in Northumberland County by the end of 2026 that align with the County's Directed Growth Strategy. Space creation is focused on infant, toddler, and preschool spaces.
 - Northumberland's Directed Growth plan was designed by analyzing various data sources such as, Census Canada, local Early Development Instrument (EDI), Special Needs Resourcing (SNR), Ontario Works and waitlist information. A County wide child care needs assessment survey was included as part of the process.



- Start-up grant funding is available to support licensees with some of the costs associated with expanding/opening a new site (minor capital for retrofits and renovations, equipment, IT infrastructure, etc.). Funds are limited with a maximum of \$350,000 for a 50-space child care centre.
- The County is working with licensees and community partners to identify locations for expansion. This includes looking for ways to partner with lower tier municipalities to bring licensed child care to communities across the County.
- In 2023, three initial projects have been identified and have moved into the development stage with a plan to open in 2024. The Municipality is working with two licensees, the YMCA, and Ganaraska Child Care to open 2, 49-spaced child care locations. The YMCA has purchased a building to bring a 49-space site to Trent Hills.
- Increase in Licensed Child Care Spaces
 - These projects were planned prior to the plan although the spaces count towards the 404 directed growth strategy.
 - In partnership with the EDU, Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board (KPRDSB) and the County, Brighton Children's Centre opened a 10-space infant room and an onsite kitchen to support the 105 infants to school-age centre.
 - A family-age grouping for 15 children operated by the YMCA located in Northumberland Centre for Individual Studies (CIS) opened in the fall.
- Other key highlights and challenges of Licensed Child Care Management and CWELCC implementation in 2023
 - Implemented a new multi-year Service Agreement for Early Years partners. Built in a framework to monitor accountability measures that are part of the Quality Improvement Framework.
 - Continue to monitor and plan for EDUs previously announced funding administrative reductions and restrictions which were put on hold. Anticipated changes may also be impacted by a proposed provincial Early Years funding formula update for 2024.
 - Joint submissions with Peterborough, Victoria, Northumberland, Clarington Catholic District School Board (PVNCCDSB) to request a full licensed child care program be included in their new build if their application is successful (in Cobourg).
 - Shifted Ontario Works Student and LEAP caseload back to Ontario Works to now have 2 caseworkers fully dedicated to support Early Years. This will support improved case management which will include outreach to the centres to support their work with families, especially regarding fee subsidy/CWELCC fee supports. This shift provides the opportunity to continue to review and update programs, policies, and procedures as part of the transition.



Child Care and Early Years Workforce Strategy

To address the workforce challenges, EDU provided one-time federal funding (January 2022 to December 2024) to support innovative retention and recruitment strategies. This funding allocation was designed to support both workforce development and to enhance capacity building opportunities. Northumberland County's Workforce and Professional Learning Strategy was designed in consultation with Northumberland's Early Learning Community. These initiatives build on and are designed in collaboration with the County's ongoing capacity building strategy. Many of the strategies started in 2022 and been further enhanced in 2023.

Key Accomplishments 2023:

- **Early Years Employment Initiative, Year 2**
 - Early Years partnered with the Ontario Works Team, Watton Employment Services, Fleming College, Northumberland YMCA, and Brighton Children's Centre to offer a six-week paid employment opportunity.
 - The program consisted of two weeks of in class training (including certificate courses in Food Handlers, CPR/First Aid, WHIMS) which prepared them for their four-week paid placement at a licensed child care centre.
 - The second intake expanded by adding more participants, including high school students, entering grade 12 who are thinking of pursuing a career in Early Childhood Education.
 - 15 participants started the program with 10 graduating. Of the graduates, 5 secured employment in child care programs, 1 is starting the ECE program in January and is also working in the field now, 1 is working on applying for the fall of 2024 and the rest are completing their grade 12, although thinking they may apply to college for their ECE diploma.
- **Self-Reg-Early Childhood Development Program**
 - 2 intake, 37 educators across Northumberland completed a 12-week certificate program.
 - 10 participants completed the Self-Reg Facilitator Program. This will greatly increase Northumberland's ability to continue this journey with educators across all of Northumberland.
- **Not-for-profit Leadership Certificate**
 - 19 Early Learning Leaders participated in the program offered in partnership with Ontario Tech University (UOIT) with a focus on succession planning.
- **Dr. Jean Clinton, "Connections are Key."**
 - Over 100 educators participated in an educational and inspiring session.
- **Outdoor Pedagogy**
 - Supported a three-day ECE Outdoor Research and Discovery Expedition that was led by Dr. Beverlie Dietz, Professor at Okanagan College, and editor of PlayOutdoors magazine and the YMCA.
- **Child Care Worker and ECE Appreciation Day**



- October 17th, 2023, was proclaimed Child Care Worker and ECE Appreciation in Northumberland County.
- 250 plus educators across the county participated in the Second Annual Professional Learning Closure of all centres to celebrate on October 27th.
- Theme is “*Educators are Worth It*” with a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion, self-care.
- The Northumberland Workforce and Capacity Building Mentor
 - Able to extend the contract position housed out of Five Counties Children Centre to the end of 2023 which has been invaluable in supporting the initiatives, including mentoring ECE students.
- Provincial Marketing Strategy
 - Was rolled out in partnership with CMSM/DSSABs on promoting quality child care across the province.

EarlyON Child and Family Centres

The EarlyON Child and Family Team, led by the Early Years Coordinator, in collaboration with the four lead agencies: Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre, Northumberland YMCA, Brighton Children’s Centre and Compass Early Learning and Care, continued to adapt and adjust programs and supports based on community needs and client feedback. Currently across Northumberland County there are 8 dedicated indoor EarlyON Child and Family Centres for parents, caregivers, and children to attend together. EarlyONs also offer outreach programs at outdoor locations (forest, beach, etc.), community partners/outreach (libraries, community centres, etc.) and virtual programs. EarlyON is always looking for new and innovative ways to reach children and families.

- Officially opened the Nogojiwanong EarlyON space at 800 Division Street to support culturally relevant and responsive programming for Indigenous children and families and the community as a whole.
- As in person programming continued to expand with the re-opening of all in person programming post pandemic (spring 2023), the participation at all EarlyON programs has been steadily increasing.
 - Between January and August 2023, there were more than 10,000 total visits to EarlyON programs by children aged 0 to 6.
- Continued to expand outreach programming to include more locations that highlight all that Northumberland has to offer families:
 - Partnership with County Departments:
 - Forestry Team to deliver programs on the trails, such as our Jr Hikers program and the Oaktober event.
 - Supported the Paramedic’s Family Day
 - In conjunction with the Communications Department planned and implemented campaigns to promote EarlyON and family activities such as March Break Bingo and Look for the Logo Events.



- Other destinations include: Roseneath Carousel, Nawautin Nature Sanctuary, Baltimore Turf, Libraries across the County, Presquile Provincial Park, Haute Goat Farm, Old Mill Alpacas, Cobourg Beach, Peter's Apple Yard, Burnham Family Farm, etc.
- Developed a free two-day Pre-natal Program for expecting parents.
 - Offered 4 program sessions in 2023.
 - Delivered at the Cobourg EarlyON location by a registered nurse/prenatal educator.
 - Fulfills a void as this program is no longer offered free by other community partners.
- In partnership with Five Counties Children's Centre (FCCC), developed an EarlyON Welcome Package for all parents who have a baby at Northumberland Hospital's.
- Increased partnerships i.e., forestry, libraries, etc.
- Continued supported of the Triple P, Positive Parenting Program, providing in person and virtual options for parents.
- Provided ongoing support to the United Way Back Pack Program.
- Continued to seek funding for the Northumberland Backyard Project in partnership with the Communications Department, FCCC and Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre, to support a culturally appropriate, accessible, and inclusive playground for program delivery and increased outdoor activities at the 800 Division location.
- Started a review that will carry into 2024 of the EarlyON Child and Family Centres focusing on what is working and what can be improved with input from families, community partners and operators. Will guide the direction of programming into 2024 and beyond.

Early Learning and Child Care Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- Established a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Early Years Working Group with representation from all Early Learning Partners, Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre, FCCC, and the Early Years Team.
 - Each program developed a DEI Commitment Plans. Plans are intentional, authentic, and measurable as to how they will support EDI within all their programs.
- Offered an evening event "*More than a book on the shelf....*" a talk about diversity in ECE classrooms, anti-bias education, breakdown of diversity and more, facilitated by Anisha Angella that was attended by over 100 Educators.
- Delivered 8 DEI/antiracism workshops/book studies.
- In Partnership with Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre
 - Continued to increase awareness of the supports for urban Indigenous, Métis and Inuit families in Northumberland.



- Continued to expand and deliver relevant programming to be delivered at the Nogojiwanong EarlyON program, EarlyON Centres and child care centres across the County that are culturally relevant and fosters cultural sensitivity.
- Nogojiwanong Early Years team continued to build and enhance the coordination of community connections with Alderville First Nations.
- Provided educational opportunities including book studies and Indigenous Perspective discussions to educators across the County.
- Hosted Northumberland's Early Years first celebration for Indigenous People's Day with 60 participants of all ages in attendance.
- Hosted an event of reflection to commemorate National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, Orange Shirt Day on September 29th to reflect upon the history and ongoing impacts of the Residential School system, and honour survivors, their families, and communities.

Special Needs Resourcing

Five Counties Children's Centre delivers the Special Needs Resourcing Program in Northumberland County.

- Continued to see an increase in demand for all Resource Consulting supports including enhanced supports due to increased needs due to ongoing effects of the pandemic and an increase in diagnosis. This has led to an increase in enhanced funding and supports, all done within budget.
- FCCC reviewed and updated guidelines to support the delivery of service in response to the increased demand.
- Continued to offer training, guidance, and support to continue to build capacity of educators within each child care and early learning program.
 - Includes monthly Network meetings with varying topics focused on the different age groupings, Children with Special Rights, Pedagogical leads, self-regulation, leadership, and dietary technicians.
 - New 4-part Workshop Series designed specifically to support enhanced support workers, many who are not trained ECEs.
- Continued to build in Resource Consultant services and supports at EarlyON Child and Family Centres to assist families with early identification. This also includes sessions that are hosted by the KPRHU and FCCC Occupational and Speech Therapists.
- Re-introduce and reinforce the importance of the Quality Improvement Framework using self-reflection tools for educators.
- Conducted a review of SNR programs and services to see what is working and what can be improved. This will guide work in 2024 and beyond.

Early Years Service Planning and Community Engagement

- Continued to collaborate with community partners on improving service delivery and coordination to support child and families across Northumberland.



- Early Years Team member co-chair both the Northumberland Children and Youth Collaborative and Northumberland Early Years Working Group (which is a sub committee of the collaborative).

2024 to 2026 Service Objectives & Initiatives

Innovate for Service Excellence

- It is anticipated with the introduction of a new funding model for child care and early years funding that incorporates CWELCC, it is anticipated the need for the temporary Financial Analyst will continue to be required. In quarter 2 of 2024, the temporary Financial Analyst, Early Years position will be re-evaluated. The review will look at current and anticipated workload and EDU funding to determine if the position is required and can be supported ongoing. Highlights of additional or enhanced tasks that will be supported by this position:
 - Comprehensive operational reviews of child care and early years programs that receive funding, especially related to CWELCC (includes detailed financial viability).
 - Compliance Audits.
 - Enhanced EDU reporting.
 - Access and Inclusion Start-Up Grant application process, approval, reporting.
 - CWELCC Base Fee calculations/new funding method.
 - Assist with writing new and updating early years policies and procedures.
 - Increase attendance at EDU/sector related meetings and training.
 - Assist with managing all funding envelopes including wage enhancement, general operating, repairs, and maintenance, play-based, etc. which includes template development and reconciliation process.
 - Design a Reserve Fund Policy for all Early Years partners, with additional requirements for multi geographical and multi-use operators to ensure Early Years funds are directed to Early Years programs.
- The Early Years Team will continue to evaluate staffing levels and required skills sets required to implement the proposed new funding model, the continued expansion of licensed home child care and the continued updates and changes to EDU's Child Care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres Service Management and Funding Guidelines to determine if additional staffing is required to support this work.
- Continue to collaborate with the Community Services division to build on case management approaches and the delivery of stability supports to those most in need while responding to emerging issues or trends within the community



through enhanced capacity of existing staffing models with consideration to the need for additional staffing supports.

- Build on the 2023 re-launch of the Supportive Approaches through Innovative Learning (SAIL) program, by utilizing the internal working group to embed training in onboarding plans and further learning and development opportunities.
- Support Learning and Development opportunities for department staff and community agencies focusing on:
 - Case-Management from a Trauma-Conscious lens
 - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in service delivery
 - Coaching for successful outcomes
 - Motivational Interviewing techniques and skills
 - Working with an intergenerational client-base
- Work collaboratively with other department resources to maintain appropriate data sources that will support future programming and operational needs, using metrics and evidence-based planning.
- Continue to reach out and work collaboratively with lower tier municipalities and school board partners to look for opportunities where there may be space available in their buildings to bring licensed child care and/or free EarlyON Child and Family programs to more communities.

Foster a Thriving Community

Licensed Child Care and Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care

- EDU has indicated that Early Years will have a new funding model in 2024 that will incorporate all early years and child care funding including CWELCC. Next steps in the rollout of CWELCC are unclear at this time.
- There has been an increase in administrative burden put on CMSMs with CWELCC. The CWELCC pressures will continue into 2024 to 2026 and beyond. There will be challenges if the proposed reduction of EDU core child care administration funding from 10% to 2.5% is implemented. Although there are contingency plans in place to balance the proposed 2024 budget if the funding changes it will affect our ability to ensure compliance.
- As the 2024 EDU Guidelines and Funding for Child Care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres and the new funding model have yet to be announced (September 2023) it is difficult to fully anticipate what changes will be required to be implemented in 2024. The Early Years Team and the Finance Department are anticipating some of the future requirements such as:
 - Determining base fees for each licensed program based on true expenses and operating enrollment.

- May be required to determine reasonable administration costs including what percentage is allowed for administrative salaries.
- Continued opportunities for capital funding to address the high demand for quality licensed child care.
- Continued focus on ECE retention and recruitment.
- With the introduction CWELCC, the evolution of the fee subsidy program and administration will continue to be a focus going into 2024 to 2026 and beyond.
 - As CWELCC becomes a standard pillar of support to the Early Years framework in Northumberland County, the overall delivery of Fee Subsidy will further continue to be impacted and will evolve with system changes.
 - Planning to have Caseworkers attend EarlyON and child care programs to promote fee subsidy, to answer questions, support deeper case management strategies and build stronger connections with child care operators.
- Access and Inclusion Framework – Directed Growth Strategy
 - Continue to work with Early Years partners on creating 404 new licensed child care spaces by the end of 2026 that aligns with the County's Directed Growth Strategy.
 - Review and improve the Start-up Grant application and approval process with input from Early Years team and Finance.
 - Continue to work with the child care operators on exploring innovative ideas to improve access to licensed child care for families (space, hours of care, flexibility, inclusion).
 - Continual update the plan based on new information and data (waitlist).
 - School Board and lower tier municipalities are key.
 - In partnership with Mon Avenir Conseil Scolaire Catholique, open a 49-space licensed child care centre for infant to preschool and a before and after school program in the new school planned to open in 2026 in Cobourg.
 - As Start-up Grant funding is insufficient to support most renovations/retrofits to support the growth of licensed care, it is anticipated additional funding from other sources will continue to be required (like the Brighton infant addition). To support ongoing demand, Finance and the Early Years Team will be investigating the possibility of creating a reserve fund to support projects that might require additional funding for expansion.
- Continue to work with the licensed home child care sector:
 - To ensure compensation for and between providers and operators is transparent and equitable.
 - Continue to increase public awareness of licensed home child care as a viable option for families.



- Focus on recruitment of home providers that fits with natural and targeted growth on licensed care.
- Continue to engage child care operators and their Board of Directors in working on process and policies to support program viability and enhanced accountability.
- Maximize the Ontario Child Care Management System (OCCMS) tools by implementing on-line applications for parents and the parent portal for documentation and information sharing. EDU has initiated a review of OCCMS and has indicated that they are aiming for a new system 2027/2027. This will dictate future direction and planning that cannot be predicted at this time.

Child Care and Early Years Workforce Strategy

- The one-time funding specific to this initiative is set to end December 2023, anticipating funding will continue into 2024 and beyond as current pressures continue to be a challenge.
- Northumberland Early Years Community already had an established and effective professional learning system prior to 2022 and the plan is to continue building on these initiatives within the funding parameters of 2024 to 2026.
- Retention and recruitment of ECEs will continue to be the main focus.
- Professional development will be planned with input from early learning partners and responses from training surveys and the overall staff satisfaction survey.
- A focus will remain on:
 - Self-regulation strategies
 - Building Leaders in Early Years
 - Outdoor Pedagogy
 - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (Children with Special Rights, New Comers)
 - Mental Health and well-being
- Early Years Employment Initiative
 - Continuing the partnership with Ontario Works, Watton Employment Services, Fleming College, and the child care community to continue the program on an annual basis.
 - Building on this initiative, the plan is to work with KPRDSB and PVNCCDSB to develop a co-op program for high school students to introduce them and encourage a career pathway in the Early Years sector.
- Plan for the continuation of the Annual Child Care Worker and ECE Appreciation Professional Learning Day (Early Years system closure for a day).
- Early Years Coordinator and Caseworker to develop and deliver a program that integrates Self-regulation and SAIL concepts.
- Implement a bi-annual County-wide staff satisfaction survey for all Early Learning staff to assist with recruitment and retention strategies.



EarlyON Child and Family Centres

EarlyON is always looking for new and innovative ways to reach children and families. There is a continual increase in attendance numbers at EarlyON Child and Family Centre Programs. Our communities are growing and battling inflation. The need is even greater for FREE programs that support families, foster connections and are within their own communities. Programs and services 2024 to 2026 and beyond will be guided by the evaluation of programs and service that started in 2023.

- In partnership with the Communications department continue to build on the marketing strategies to promote the free programming offered at the Centres.
- Continue to seek funding for the Northumberland Backyard Project in partnership with the Communications Department, FCCC and Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre, to support a culturally appropriate, accessible, and inclusive playground for program delivery and increased outdoor activities at the 800 Division location.
- Work in partnership with Communications and community partners to connect with nontraditional and corporate partners to seek opportunities for program sponsorship through in kind or financial support for Early Years Programming.
- Continue to enhance connections between County departments and within the C&SS Division to explore opportunities to partner or support County events.
 - Forest, Paramedics, New Comer Events, partner with Housing to bring programs to Family Buildings, etc.
- Continue to build partnerships with lower tier municipalities (i.e., libraries) to assist with offering programs across all of Northumberland County.
- Build on and continue to explore opportunities for community partner agencies and the C&SS to offer programs and services at EarlyON locations, enabling them to provide services across the County. Building on the Hub philosophy.
- Expand on the Ontario Works/Early Years EarlyON project.
 - Model the program with the Housing Division to offer programming at the County's Housing complexes.
 - Expand to offer the program to Ontario Disability Support Program participants with children under six.
- Explore how Early Years, in partnership with community partners, can support and develop programs that meet the needs of Newcomers to Northumberland.
- Prenatal and infant care supports for low-income residents of Northumberland County has been identified as a need by the community.
 - The benefits of prenatal supports such as the regular use of prenatal vitamins and dietary health is well documented as a predetermination for healthy infant and child development.
 - With the increasing impact of inflation and the cost-of-living increases, low-income families are facing financial barriers that may place them at risk of sacrificing prenatal and infant care needs due to lack of affordability. Basic items such as prenatal vitamins, infant diapers and



formula are a necessity that are unavoidable for healthy prenatal and infant care.

Early Learning and Child Care Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- Continue to expand on the initiatives started, rooting meaningful engagements and interactions as best practice.
- Will continue to be a focus of ongoing professional development for the early year community.
- Seek out opportunities to make connections and build relationships with community partners who support new comers and see how Early Years can better support children and families.
- Nogojiwanong Early Years team will continue to build and enhance the coordination of community connections with Alderville First Nations, local Indigenous organizations, and Indigenous early years stakeholders.
 - Continue to develop and expand programming that is culturally relevant and fosters cultural sensitivity.
 - Expansion of the book studies offered. Areas of focus are the 7 Grandfather's Teaching Toolkit workshop and the Indigenous documentation workshop.
- In partnership with the communications department build greater awareness and expand relevant programing to honour and recognize:
 - National Indigenous History month, including National Indigenous People's Day.
 - National Day of Truth and Reconciliation, Orange Shirt Day.

Special Needs Resourcing

- Resource Consultants will support the rejuvenation of the implementation of the Learning Quality Reflection Tool.
 - There will be a renewed focus on the tool, supporting the revitalization of the educator teams who during the struggles of the past few years have had to shift focus to other priorities.
 - Focus is on a continuous cycle of evaluation/monitoring, goal setting, training/ improvement initiatives, mentorship, and transfer to practice.
- Direct more resources to frontline educators to build capacity to better support children with unique needs.
- Explore opportunities to support inclusion through programming or equipment.
- As licensed child care spaces continue to grow, the demand for special needs resourcing supports will continue to grow. Will need to continually be re-



evaluating serve levels based on EDU guidelines and funding parameters and pressures.

- Build on the input from the system review that started in 2023 that will influence programs and services in 2024 and beyond.

Early Years Service Planning and Community Engagement

- The Early Years Team will be developing a new five-year Early Years System Plan. In anticipation of the new funding formula for Early Learning and Child Care, the start of this work is on hold as this information will be a major factor in the direction of the future of Early Years in Northumberland.
 - The Plan will continue to be data driven and focus on the outcome indicators.
 - To gather input and feedback on the plan, the Early Years Team will host separate community events for parents and early years stakeholders.
 - Implement the first bi-annual County-Wide Parent/Caregiver Child Care and Early Years Programming Feedback Survey. This will contribute to the development of the five-year plan.

Long Term Plan & Strategic Objectives

Innovate for Service

- The Early Years Team will continue to evaluate staffing levels and required skills sets required to implement the continued expansion of licensed home child care, workforce recruitment and retention strategies and the continued updates and changes to EDU's Child Care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres Service Management and Funding Guidelines to determine if additional staffing is required to support this work.

Foster a Thriving Community

Licensed Child Care and Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care

- There are many unknowns in the world of Early Learning and Child Care that will dictate the needs and demands of the future. With the continued rollout of CWELCC, and the anticipated new funding model there will be changes that affect the whole system 2024 to 2026 and beyond. The overall goal is to continue to build a high-quality, accessible, and affordable early years and child care system that is welcoming to all within the provincial funding allocations.
- Continue to monitor and plan for EDU funding changes that may have an impact on the Early Years budget.



- Funding allotments are usually communicated with little time to thoughtfully plan for and implement the changes in the EDU timeframes.
 - The direction of the Early Years Division is very dependent on Ministry plans and objectives.
- Continued monitoring and planning is required to ensure Provincial funding is fully maximized.
- Ensure the strong connection is ongoing between Early Years and the finance department.
- As the CWELCC system transformation continues and a new funding model is introduced, it is anticipated there will continue to be increased administrative burden placed on CMSMs and child care operators. This includes increased accountability measures such as determining viability, base fee calculations and reserve management.
- Ongoing evaluation and monitoring of the five-year Early Years Service System Plan.
- Access and Inclusion Plan
 - Continue to investigate opportunities to create additional licensed spaces within the directed growth strategy for birth to 4-year-olds with a focus on infants and toddlers to address waitlist demands across the County.
 - Continue to partner with KPRDSB, PVNCCDSB, Mon Avenir Conseil Scolaire Catholique and lower tier municipalities on capital build and retrofits to provide early years programs and services across the County.

Child Care and Early Years Workforce Strategy

- The shortage of qualified early childhood educators will be an ongoing issue for years to come. Focus will continue to be on workforce strategies to support recruitment and retention of early years educators and all staff.
- Continue to explore opportunities to support under qualified early years staff in becoming a Registered Early Childhood Educators. Explore various paths, such as the ECE Qualification Upgrade Program, a college program in Northumberland or distant education.
- Continue to provide ongoing support locally for professional development opportunities based on sector input.
- Continue to implement a bi-annual County-wide staff satisfaction survey for all Early Learning staff to assist with recruitment and retention strategies.

EarlyON Child and Family Centres

- Continue to work with lower tier municipalities, school boards and community partners to ensure programs and services are meeting the needs of children and families within the EDU framework.
- Continue to build and enhance in partnership with Communications, the promotion of free EarlyON programs across the County.



- Continue to foster relationships between County departments to enhance service delivery to residents.

Early Learning and Child Care Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- Through Indigenous-led programming, continue to increase access to family and support programs for Indigenous, Métis and Inuit families in partnership with Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre and Alderville First Nation.
- Continue to work with community partners to identify challenges and opportunities to increase supports to new comer families.
- Continue to monitor and adjust service levels and directions for children with special needs based on data and client needs.
- Reinforce and seek feedback on the Quality Reflection Tool.

Early Years Service Planning and Community Engagement

In conjunction with the Northumberland Children and Youth Collaborative and the Early Years Working Group, continue to increase awareness and access of quality early years programs.

- Continue to find opportunities to build on the Hub model. For programs and services at the EarlyON Child and Family Centres.
- Early Years Services recognizes the utility and power of data in planning, evaluating, and reporting and will continue to work with the department and community partners on sharing data and using data to inform decisions.
- Ongoing implementation of Early Years Staff Surveys and Parent/Caregiver Surveys to assist with system planning.



2024 to 2026 Business Plan & Budget

Food Security Services

Historically, most of the work being done within the Food Security Services division has been primarily focused on the Food 4 All operation. During the past 3 years, while working with the department's Director and Community Services Managers, additional work has been done to expand the focus of Food Security Services to look at broader issues that affect and impact food security in Northumberland.

In early 2021, initial discussions took place regarding a 5-year phased timeline of activities specific to the broader issues of food security. This timeline includes plans that are specific to the Food 4 All operation.

The first year of the timeline in 2021 began with a thorough review of the Food 4 All membership fee structure. In 2022, after having created a new usage-based membership fee structure that was approved by County council and included in the County's 2022 Fees and Charges By-Law, all member groups were charged their annual fee based on this new structure. Later in 2022, the focus turned to customizing and installing a new inventory management system upgrade for the operation. With the implementation of the new system there were new processes created in 2022 with more to take place in early 2023 for the handling, tracking, distributing, sourcing, and reporting on the product that is received into and distributed from the warehouse.

In 2023, work continued utilizing the new inventory management system for a full year of tracking all product received into and distributed from the warehouse. Additionally, work in 2023 involved creating other new workflow processes at the warehouse utilizing the new system. Other work in 2023 involved conducting the initial review of the current governance structure of the Food 4 All operation.

Further work on the 5-year phased timeline will continue in 2024 with the review and implementation of potential new governance structure changes (based on the 2023 review), followed by the ongoing monitoring and review of the Food 4 All operation in 2025. This work will help to ensure the continued sustainability and positive impact of the Food 4 All operation and help to focus the work of Food Security Services in the coming years.



Prior Year Accomplishments

Innovate for Service Excellence

Volunteer Opportunities/Development

- Work continued providing 3 new volunteer opportunities at the warehouse
- Continued to develop the volunteer program including integrating the new volunteer coordinator position into the operation

Increase Local food Purchasing

- As healthier food options are always being sought out, continued efforts were made to make these purchases from local producers/suppliers whenever possible

Ignite Economic Opportunity

Food Security/Community Services (Continued work under the 4 pillars of food security)

While work since the beginning of the pandemic has focused primarily on food access and availability, work will be intentionally directed back on plans made for 2023 including:

- Food waste (Availability)
 - Continued to work with local retailers including Post Brand Cereals (Weetabix), Walmart and Shoppers Drug Mart to pick up donated food items
 - Continued to look for new partnerships with other local retailers and farmers, to pick up additional food items for distribution to local feeding programs and diversion from local land fills
 - Continued to work with local partners including the food policy council and other local providers and businesses to make this a sustainable plan with the opportunity for future growth
- Outreach and Independence (Utilization)
 - Continued to develop outreach activities and plans to ensure that the most vulnerable people in our communities have access to food
 - We worked with community partners to ensure that food and access to food was part of planning care and services in community programs
 - We partnered with programs that promoted healthy food and cooking (Porth Hope Northumberland Community Health Centre) to encourage the uptake and promotion of these programs

Staff/Volunteer Training & Development

- Ongoing monitoring of staffing and volunteer needs within the Food 4 All operation and continued to develop a plan to determine how to best utilize current staff and volunteers



- Continued with development and training opportunities for staff and volunteers

Foster a Thriving Community

Food Security/Community Services (Ongoing work under the 4 pillars of food security)

- Ensured financial accountabilities for all donations that are received (Access)
- Worked to maximize the use of excess food items that are available at the warehouse (Access)
- Food waste (Availability)
- Outreach and Independence (Utilization)
 - Continued to develop outreach activities and plans to ensure that the most vulnerable people in our communities have access to food
 - Continued to work with community partners to ensure that food and access to food is part of planning care and services in community programs
 - Continued to encourage case workers to ask people about food, to tell them about where to get food

Ongoing Community Development Plans

- Continued the “Moving from Good to Great” professional development program with our Food Banks Northumberland partners and their volunteers
- Continued to review and improve the Milk 4 Families program to determine need and Impact
- Continued working with the Community Services data coordinator to create reports using the Link2Feed hunger tracking software and the new inventory management software to help with decision making and planning for the Food 4 All operation and food security

Propel Sustainable Growth

Staff/Volunteer Training & Development

- Continued the training and development opportunities for both staff and volunteers including but not limited to:
 - First aid, Health & Safety, Safe Food Handling and Forklift Certification, and Mental Health First Aid

Revise/Update Warehouse Operational Policies

- With recent changes to the membership fee structure, addition of new inventory management software and related processes, significant updates were required to reflect these changes in our operational policies in 2023



New policy document will be kept as an electronic file to assist with ease of distribution and ease of updating.

Steward a Green Future

Food Waste Diversion

- Continued to look for new partnerships with other local retailers and farmers, to pick up additional food items for distribution to local feeding programs and diversion from local landfills
- Included information on the 2023 “30 Ways in 30 Days” calendar encouraging individuals to understand food dates, buy food according to planned menus and to compost food waste, all of which will help divert excess food waste from local landfills

2024 to 2026 Service Objectives & Initiatives

Further work on the 5-year phased timeline will continue in 2024 through 2026 with the final review and implementation of potential new governance structure changes (based on the 2023 review), followed by the ongoing monitoring and review of the Food 4 All operations. This work will help to ensure the continued sustainability and positive impact of the Food 4 All operation and help to focus the work of Food Security Services in the coming years.

Innovate for Service Excellence

Staff/Volunteer Training & Development

- Continue the training and development opportunities for both staff and volunteers including but not limited to:
 - First aid, Health & Safety, Safe Food Handling and Forklift Certification, and Mental Health First Aid

Food Banks Northumberland (FBN) – Improved Service Standards

- Continue to work with local food banks and key community partners to establish consistent levels of service to local food bank visitors which has been increasingly important since the start of the pandemic
- Continue to provide more food items based on the revised Canada’s Food Guide
- Continue our work to identify service gaps between locations and identify ways to fill these gaps



Ignite Economic Opportunity

Local food Purchasing/Investment

- Continue to use local producers/suppliers whenever possible for food purchases for the operation
- Continue work to source out new local suppliers for additional food purchases as required

Foster a Thriving Community

Ongoing Community Development Plans

- Continue the “Moving from Good to Great” professional development program with our Food Banks Northumberland partners and their volunteers

Propel Sustainable Growth

Warehouse Operations Review

- In following our 5-year plan which started in 2021, work will continue in 2024 regarding the governance structure review and changes. This work began in mid-2023 and will continue into 2024.

Warehouse Technology

- After sourcing out new warehouse inventory management software in late 2021, significant work was done in 2022-23 to customize and implement the new software into the Food 4 All operation.
- Some of the many upgrades and advantages that the new system will provide include:
 - Ensuring a fairer and more equitable distribution of product based on inventory levels and the requests of various community member agencies.
 - Significantly better reporting options not currently available on existing software including reporting on the actual weight, variety/type and source of products being distributed.
 - Bar code scanning for product entering and leaving warehouse.
 - Smart phone app compatibility for off-site access to inventory program.
 - Significant reductions in administrative time required tracking product when compared to the old system.
- We continue to utilize other technology for the operation including:
 - Walk-in cooler and freezer temperature monitoring software (iMonnit)
 - GPS tracking of warehouse vehicles
 - Online appointment scheduling software (Setmore)



- Hunger count tracking software used by most Food 4 All member agencies (Link2Feed)
- Smarter Needs Allocation Program (SNAP) through Feed Ontario

Steward a Green Future

Food Waste Diversion

- Continue to look for new partnerships with other local retailers and farmers, to pick up additional food items for distribution to local feeding programs and diversion from local landfills
- Continue to promote education regarding buying food according to planned menus, understanding best before dates and to compost food waste, all of which will help divert excess food waste from local landfills

2024 to 2026 Business Plan & Budget

Housing Services

The direction and strategic priorities of the Housing Services division continues to evolve to better reflect the strategic direction of the department and County, specifically focusing on the renewed 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan, the Northumberland County Affordable Housing Strategy, and the Community Housing Master Plan. Housing Services continues to strive to better address the needs of Northumberland County residents facing housing insecurity and remains committed to implementing a housing retention framework in the delivery of community housing. Housing Services continues to prioritize the development and implementation of key strategic planning initiatives to guide investments into the long-term maintenance of existing community housing stock alongside the creation of new affordable and community rental housing across the County.

Housing Services also leads the implementation of the purchased services agreement between the County and the Northumberland County Housing Corporation (NCHC). As the General Manager of the NCHC, the Housing Services Manager leads this work with the support of the Housing Services team. This specific work is outlined in the 2024-2026 business plan and budget as well as annual reporting processes of the NCHC with the strategic vision outlined in the 2023-2027 NCHC Strategic Plan.

Prior Year Accomplishments

Innovate for Service Excellence

Service Manager RGI Directives

- Adopted Community Housing Directives to ensure alignment with new provincial legislation and provide further clarity to all community housing providers and tenants. Clarify delegated authority for the approval of specific directives and policies.
- Provided training to community housing providers and County staff on new directives and legislation.

Implementation of Housing Services Act, 2011 Regulation Changes and the Community Housing Renewal Strategy



- Implemented regulation changes required in 2023 including:
 - Introducing an asset limit for all households in receipt of rent-geared-to-income or on the centralized waitlist.
 - Worked with the Communications department to support the creation of a comprehensive access system for housing supports in Northumberland.
 - Reported to the province on the revised service level standards.
 - Developed framework for entering into service agreements with housing providers post end of operating agreements/mortgages. Entered into agreements with housing providers whose agreements have ended.

Professional Development for Frontline Staff

- Introduced professional development opportunities that supported both Housing Services staff and Facilities staff to work toward a successful implementation of the Housing Retention Framework alongside supporting the NCHC Purchased Services Agreement.

Strategic Plans Master Action Plan

- Develop master action plan for the various housing strategic plans to ensure fulsome implementation of all key action items are underway or scheduled for future implementation.

Ignite Economic Opportunity

Elgin Park Redevelopment

- Completion of Phase One of Elgin Park, introducing reasonable market rent units to support the development of affordable and attainable housing.

Foster a Thriving Community

Implementation of the Northumberland County Affordable Housing Strategy

- Continued working on land acquisition strategies to support the expansion of housing across the community.
- Continue implementing the Affordable Housing Capital Grant program.
- Began reporting on progress made toward the Affordable Housing Strategy targets.
- Finalized joint contribution agreement templates for County/municipal investments into affordable housing developments, with administration of funding by the County.

Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative (COCHI) and Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI)



- Oversaw the completion of 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 projects for low-income homeowners and community housing providers.
- Develop investment plan for 2023/2024 upon receipt of funding allocations from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) Implementation

- Continued implementing the COHB, including working with internal department stakeholders, community partners and the broader homelessness systems to provide input into the prioritization of applicants.

Home Ownership Revolving Fund

- Provided down payment assistance to homeowners through Habitat for Humanity Northumberland using funds in the Home Ownership Revolving Fund.
- Continued planning with Habitat for Humanity Northumberland to support the longevity of this fund and supporting long-term home ownership affordability initiatives.

Expansion of Rent Supplement Programming

- Continued the expansion and implementation the Made in Northumberland Rent Supplement Program, to support households on the centralized waitlist obtain rent-geared-to-income (RGI) housing.
- Shifted subsidy calculation processes for former Strong Communities Rent Supplement Program Recipients to support more households by considering max shelter rates for social assistance recipients.

Creation of Housing Stability Program

- Creation of Housing Stability Program for households experiencing homelessness that provides a monthly rental subsidy to support access to permanent housing.

152 Cockburn Street, Campbellford

- Worked with facilities staff to complete construction through extensive renovations, transitioned site to the NCHC for oversight and operations.
- Partnered with a community agency to begin offering supportive housing out of this location.

Capacity Support for Community Housing Providers

- Implemented the Housing Services Act, 2011 changes to support providers at end of mortgage/agreement through the negotiation of new service agreements.
- Re-introduced community housing provider training and networking to support a strong and collaborative community housing sector.



- Support the transitional Board of Directors of the Cobourg Non-Profit Housing Corporation to achieve viability of the corporation.

Propel Sustainable Growth

Community Housing Master Plan/NCHC Asset Management Plan

- Adopted the Community Housing Master Plan and incorporated the NCHC Asset Management Plan into the County Asset Management Plan.

Elgin Park Redevelopment

- Worked with the Major Capital Project Team to support the completed construction of phase 1 of Elgin Park, ensuring funding reporting requirements are met throughout the development.
- Supported tenant relocation throughout the construction period, to allow for the demolition of Phase 2.
- Implemented waitlist and application processes for the new units in Phase One, including modified units and market. Support occupancy and move in to Phase One upon completion of construction.

473 Ontario Street

- Completed procurement for pre-design consultants, including Architecture and Engineering and Construction Manager.
- Completed Indigenous Cultural Competency Training for all project partners and key staff participating in the construction project.
- Continued to identify and implement governance
- Work with project partners to identify and secure construction financing for the completion of the project.

Acquisition of 123 King Street East, Colborne, Ontario

- Acquired 123 King Street East to preserve 22 units of affordable housing in Cramahe.
- Worked with the NCHC to support the completion of necessary repairs and renovations to ensure compliance to building code and health and safety considerations.

Support to the NCHC and implementation of the Purchased Services Agreement

- Continue to develop and implement internal processes to support the full implementation of the purchased services agreement between Northumberland County and the NCHC, including further cross-departmental education and training sessions.
- Continue providing training opportunities for key County staff supporting the NCHC to ensure services provided support housing retention framework.



Champion a Vibrant Future

Housing System Advocacy

- Co-chair the Housing Services Strategic Committee and co-chair of the Municipal Support of Rental Development Technical Table – drafted the A Home For Everyone: How we get there together advocacy paper.
- Participate in local, regional and provincial advocacy and networking tables to support system change and improvement to support housing system improvements.
- Supported the drafting of responses to Provincial policy changes including Development Charges and the Provincial Policy Statement.
- Delegated to provincial Ministers at AMO and ROMA on land acquisition initiatives and policy changes to support the NCHC's growth strategy.

2024 to 2026 Service Objectives & Initiatives

Innovate for Service Excellence

Long-term Capacity Planning

- In collaboration with the Customer Services Unit, work to continue realignment of tasks to increase frontline capacity and align with current roles and responsibilities of all staff.
- With finance undertake a review of administrative costs to manage housing units in preparation for supporting the ongoing expansion of units.
- Review of Housing Services and NCHC File Management and Records Management Processes
- Consideration of file location and storage options for expanding caseloads because of a growing waitlist, new housing developments, expansion of rent supplement programming and the introduction of market rental housing.
- Continue working towards achieving TOMRMS compliance across all housing and NCHC electronic and hard-copy files.
- Expand use of the NCHC electronic drive, across departments, to more effectively manage NCHC business.

Effective Case Management and Collaboration

- Continue to work toward the long-term goal of recommending minimum standards for case management through both policy and referral reviews.
- Identify efficiencies and consistent practices to ensure a clear standard of service for all individuals in receipt of services from Housing Services.
- Implementation of a File Audit Function



- Implementation of a file audit function focusing on accountability, training, review of service gaps and identification of areas of improvement.

Renewal of the 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan

- Lead the renewal of the 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan in 2024 as legislatively required.

Ignite Economic Opportunity

Work toward housing affordability across the low- and moderate-income households

- Consider the development of rental support programs for households with low and moderate incomes to increase access to affordable housing stock.
- Continue building housing with a range of affordability and work to support households who need the level of affordability offered can access it.
- Work with the NCHC to develop rental prices for market rent that consider the overall rental market and development viability.

Foster a Thriving Community

Implementation of the Northumberland County Affordable Housing Strategy

- Re-engage the Affordable Housing Strategy Implementation Working Group to create/expand municipal support for the creation of affordable and attainable housing.
- Working with the NCHC and other development partners, develop growth targets for the Affordable Housing Strategy, including developing a financing strategy.
- Continue the implementation, and review the effectiveness, of incentive programs to support the creation of affordable rental housing stock in Northumberland County.
- Work toward the creation of an affordable housing leadership table that supports the creation of affordable housing units and increasing affordability in our community.
- Consider options to create a pilot project that will support increasing the affordability for low- and moderate-income households more easily access the existing rental market.
- Work with the Department of Economic Development, Planning and Strategic Initiatives to continue supporting affordable and attainable housing strategic priorities.
- Continue working on land acquisition strategies to support the expansion of community housing, affordable and attainable housing throughout Northumberland.



- Identify potential ‘shovel-ready’ ‘funding-ready’ community housing projects, and source financing for the fulfillment of these projects.

Affordable Housing Generation

- Continue supporting affordable housing generation through active development projects including Elgin Park Redevelopment and 473 Ontario Street.
- Support private and non-profit development projects through Affordable Rental Housing Incentive programs.
- Continue to explore creative options to grow and expand rent subsidy programs to increase affordability in the private sector.
- Continue to monitor and strive toward affordable housing targets.

Expand Rent Supplement Programming

- Assess the current rent supplement programming and processes to identify opportunities for improvement and expanding the program.
- Consider landlord engagement and education opportunities to support the creation of additional affordable housing units (both new and through rent supplement).

Support Equitable Access to Housing and Programs

- Explore opportunities to implement and expand referral programs with Nogojiwanong Friends Centre to support the introduction of culturally competent urban Indigenous programming within the community housing system.
- Building on current relationship building initiatives, work with Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services and the Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre to develop culturally appropriate tools and processes to support Indigenous tenants maintain housing.
- Continue to educate and raise awareness within the broader community housing sector and seek opportunities to provide training and education on practices related to accessibility, inclusivity, cultural appropriateness, diversity and equity.
- Continue to work on improving processes and practices to ensure that prospective tenants and current tenants have access to strong case management services and have needed supports to have a successful tenancy across the community housing sector.

Implementation of National Housing Strategy Programs

- Continue implementation of programs including Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative, Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative and the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit.
- Explore opportunities to enhance program design and structure to ensure effective cost management and increased program outcomes.

Supportive Housing Growth



- Explore partnership opportunities to increase supportive housing stock in Northumberland, recognizing that supportive housing is a provincial responsibility.
- Work to increasing partnership opportunities for agencies providing housing stability supports and landlords with reasonable market rent availability.

Propel Sustainable Growth

Community Housing Asset Management

- Utilize the AssetPlanner system to support decision making, prioritization of resources, funding allocations and in assessing capital priorities of the community housing assets.
- Explore financing and funding options to implement the Community Housing Master Plan.
- Consider opportunities to expand and develop programs and plans for the long-term management of the non-profit and co-operative housing provider budgets, specifically mortgage savings.

Housing Reserve Forecast and Planning

- Work with the Finance Department to develop a strategy for the long-term management of the Housing Reserves that includes considerations for the long-term ability to support:
 - Pre-construction financing of affordable housing projects
 - Implementation of the Affordable Housing Strategy
 - Required studies, analyses, and contracted services to support County and Housing Services visions.

Support implementation of the Northumberland County Purchased Services Agreement

- Continue to develop and implement internal processes to support the full implementation of the purchased services agreement between Northumberland County and the NCHC, including further cross-departmental education and training sessions.
- Continue providing training opportunities for key County staff supporting the NCHC to ensure services provided support housing retention framework.
- Negotiate a new Purchased Services Agreement with the NCHC in 2024, including considerations of service level standards for the NCHC.

Champion a Vibrant Future

Housing System Advocacy



- Continue advocacy to upper levels of government for adequate funding shares of housing growth needs in Northumberland.

Building Local Awareness

- Work towards increasing public awareness of housing policies, funding, and roles of all levels of government in supporting housing initiatives.
- Broaden community awareness of programs, funding and incentives available to support the development of affordable housing and rental housing.

Long Term Plan & Strategic Objectives

Innovate for Service Excellence

Ten Year Housing and Homelessness Plan

- Develop new, and nurture existing, partnerships and relationships to better support the availability of supportive resources to tenants and clients engaged with community housing in the County.
- Through community partnerships, work to meet the changing needs of the community and align with objectives, outcomes and targets of the plan.

Long-term Sustainability of Northumberland County Housing Corporation and Housing Services

- Business continuity planning has occurred and both the NCHC and Housing Services are well positioned to respond to changing provincial and federal policy, legislation and funding.
- Policies are developed and reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure housing retention frameworks are implemented. Processes are developed to support the NCHC Purchased Services Agreement by Housing Services and support departments.

Ignite Economic Opportunity

Housing Affordability

- The housing market can meet the affordability needs of households across the income spectrum.

Foster a Thriving Community

Northumberland County Affordable Housing Strategy



- Affordable rental stock in Northumberland County is increased. All Northumberland residents, particularly low- and moderate-income households, can access safe, affordable, and adequate housing in their community.
- Collaborate with Member Municipalities to encourage private development of affordable housing, while raising awareness around the scope of planning and the role municipalities play in encouraging the creation of new affordable housing.
- Creation of a Table that brings together leaders throughout the County to plan for long-term opportunities to create new affordable housing stock and increasing the affordability of existing stock reflecting various needs throughout the County.

Indigenous Engagement

- Indigenous people living in Northumberland County have access to safe, culturally competent, and relevant mainstream and Indigenous-specific supports.
- Community and Social Services staff and external partner agencies are trained in Indigenous Cultural Competency Training and are providing culturally competent services.

Implementation of Housing Retention Based Community Housing

- Community housing in Northumberland County is administered, delivered and supported using a housing retention model ensuring that prospective tenants and current tenants have access to strong case management services and have needed supports to have a successful tenancy.
- When tenants are evicted from the community housing, they have been provided with adequate case management and support ahead of the eviction, they have been given the option to relate to other homelessness prevention services.

Propel Sustainable Growth

Community Housing Master Plan

- Northumberland County is well positioned to respond to changing needs arising from the end of operating agreements and rent supplement funding, while maintaining service level standards.
- Through this Master Plan, revitalization opportunities to expand the social and affordable rental housing stock throughout Northumberland will be explored alongside the consideration of long-term viability of the portfolio.
- Community housing in Northumberland County is safe, affordable and adequate to meet the evolving needs of community members.
- Strengthen and build relationships with external housing providers to ensure strong accountability and planning is maintained. Strive towards positive landlord-tenant relationships that are mutually beneficial while moving towards an eviction prevention delivery of community housing.



Northumberland County Housing Corporation Asset Management Plan

- Ensure responsible long-term capital planning of community housing units and buildings operated by the NCHC.
- NCHC's portfolio matches the long-term needs of the County and is growing alongside the changing and expanding need of the community.

Community Housing Growth, Regeneration, and Intensification

- The number of Rent Supplement units is increased throughout the County.
- Elgin Park Redevelopment is constructed and reaches full occupancy.
- 473 Ontario Street is developed with project partners and reaches full occupancy.
- Continue to build relationships with former federal housing providers and explore opportunities to collaborate.
- A landbank is developed to support the ongoing and future development of additional community housing and market rental units across the County.
- Potential community housing projects and 'shovel-ready' 'funding-ready' affordable housing projects are identified, and financing is sourced for the fulfillment of these projects.

County Support to the Northumberland County Housing Corporation

- The NCHC is governed by a strategic and skills-based Board of Directors that provides direction in line with the Shareholder Direction and governing documents.
- The Purchased Services Agreement is successfully managed and implemented by County staff.
- The NCHC's Strategic Plan is implemented and the NCHC is seen as a best-practice leader in community housing development.

Housing Reserve Forecast and Planning

- Strategy in place for the long-term management of the Housing Reserves that includes:
 - Pre-construction financing of affordable housing projects
 - Implementation of the Affordable Housing Strategy
 - Ability to complete required studies, analyses, and contracted services to support County and Housing Services visions.
- Reinvestment strategies into the Reserve Account are established and actioned on an ongoing/long-term basis.

Champion a Vibrant Future

Housing System Advocacy



- Northumberland County supports and engages in advocacy efforts toward systems improvement.
- Northumberland County is seen as a leader in housing development and innovation in the Province.

Building Local Awareness

- Public has a general awareness of housing policies, funding, and roles of all levels of government in supporting housing initiatives.
- There is sufficient awareness of programs, funding and incentives available to support the development of affordable housing and rental housing.

2024 to 2026 Business Plan & Budget

Ontario Works & Customer Service Unit

Through a team of caseworkers and support staff, Ontario Works division provides high-level strategic oversight for the provision of social assistance to Ontario Works recipients and conducts planning and service outcome evaluation for multiple aspects of the Ontario Works program related to case management, file integrity and local business practices. The Ontario Works team also provides discretionary benefit coverage to support ODSP recipients in maintaining community accommodations and supporting other personal needs not covered under the mandatory ODSP program. In addition, the Ontario Works division provides Action Planning and case management to support activities that lead to independence and employment for Non-Disabled Adult (NDA) members of the ODSP benefit unit. The services are delivered with a client centered approach, and a focus on stability supports that will lead referral readiness to employment supports. Person-Centred Supports as a part of case management will help address barriers to employment through various services and community referrals that will encourage individuals to gain self-sufficiency by addressing urgent needs, such as health, legal, social supports, family support and human services.

The Customer Service Unit provides program support for both internal and external customers and clients. This unit is responsible for the modernization and integration of client access to social services programs. Key components of this unit are a focus on front end customer services and back-end services such as financial reporting, collections, records retention, and accounting processes. This unit assists in ensuring compliance with performance and legislative standards and supports service divisions in the delivery of programs and reporting.



Prior Year Accomplishments

Innovate for Service Excellence

The following projects have supported the Ontario Works and Customer Service Unit divisions in meeting the needs of residents, while maintaining the integrity of the program requirements and ensuring we are prepared for future changes:

- Launch of paperless communications with Ontario Works recipients using existing infrastructure developed by MCCSS in March 2023
 - Moved to digital submission through an online portal for dental and vision providers reducing reliance on the local office to send replacement authorization statements.
 - Promotion and use of MyBenefits client portal for messages, attachments, letter, and payment remittance stubs; reducing our reliance on email.
 - Reduction in printing costs for monthly statements and letters by 50% with a monthly savings of approximately \$900; saving reinvested into costs for online portal for service providers and costs for moving to Electronic Document Management (EDM) in 2024.
 - Staff time savings of at least 3 hours monthly spent on folding, stuffing, and mailing documents.
- Launch of a digital fax solution that allows for staff to fax from any location using a computer and internet connection.
- Building on a Lean Yellow Belt project from 2022, formalized development of document retention standards for Ontario Works documents in preparation for EDM and in alignment with Freedom of Information standards.
- Launched review of Customer Service Unit staffing model, starting with an analysis of workflow between divisions and within the team.
- Streamlined payment issuance for Social Assistance and Non-Social Assistance Recipients using the Social Assistance Management System (SAMS) for monthly benefits under the Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) funding:
 - Reducing reliance on Finance for data entry and monthly reconciliation
 - Ensures timeliness and accuracy of payments to support those at risk of homelessness.



Foster a Thriving Community

The following projects and initiatives have supported the Ontario Works and Customer Service Unit divisions in connecting and coordinating accessible services and supports for residents to foster a livable, healthy, and inclusive community:

- Continue to engage with the province on the implementation of the Employment Services Transformation, with the launch of EST in four additional catchment areas in 2023.
- Continued engagement with the Service System Manager (SSM) with EST with in-person engagement sessions held with both the SSM and service providers.
- Centralized ODSP Non-Disabled Adult (NDA) caseload with two caseworkers to allow for intensive case management supports to be offered to individuals and families on their pathway towards independence.
- Increased caseworker staffing compliment with the addition of a caseworker managing the youth under 21 Ontario Works caseload, with a focus on youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
- Increased engagement with the regional ODSP office, including hosting an ODSP caseworker in office once a month to provide in-person services for ODSP recipients.
- Relunched information sharing opportunities with our Community Agencies through in-person and virtual information sessions between front-line staff.
- Relunched the Supportive Approaches through Innovative Learning (SAIL) professional development series with all department staff:
 - All staff participated in 3 modules held between April and December 2023 focusing on person-centred approaches to interactions.
 - Formed staff-led Working Group to support onboarding plans for new hires and normalizing concepts within the department.
 - Tailored Ministry-provided training materials for local use with updated videos to ground learning.
- Collaborated with the Community Services Manager to review opportunities for consistent case management approaches for both Ontario Works and Community Services Division
 - Reviewed opportunities for joint-training initiatives for staff and community agencies.
 - Built a Working Group with department staff to support launch of Winter Warming Hub for 2023/2024 season.



2024 to 2026 Service Objectives & Initiatives

Innovate for Service Excellence

The following projects will support the Ontario Works and Customer Service Unit divisions in meeting the needs of residents, while maintaining the integrity of the program requirements and ensuring we are prepared for future changes:

- Formally launching Electronic Document Management utilizing the 2021 approved draw on reserves for the startup costs and savings realized through moving to paperless communications for the ongoing maintenance costs.
- Leverage the use of the Social Assistance Management System (SAMS) for payment issuances and case management activities for both Social Assistance and Non-Social Assistance Recipients, streamlining the financial reporting for use of various discretionary funding streams.
- Explore opportunities for digital service delivery based on client choice to support opportunities to engage with clients more frequently to support goals towards independence and self-sufficiency.
- Complete review of Customer Service Unit staffing model, including recommendation for improved and streamlined processes and further centralization of administrative functions across the department.
- Work collaboratively with other department resources to maintain appropriate data sources that will support future programming and operational needs, using metrics and evidence-based planning.
- Continue to modernize and improve customer service through an enhanced client experience from first point of contact.

Foster a Thriving Community

The following projects and initiatives will support the Ontario Works and Customer Service Unit divisions in connecting and coordinating accessible services and supports for residents to foster a livable, healthy, and inclusive community:

- Develop and implement the 2024 Ontario Works Service Plan, that includes a focus on:



- Developing an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy that ensures equity in service planning and delivery to reduce systemic barriers within the community.
 - Identifying risks associated with achievement of Ministry established outcomes relating to employment readiness and protection of privacy/confidentiality.
 - Development of a logic model that links services delivered to performance outcomes.
 - Identifying learning and development strategies to train staff and achieve program objectives.
- Continue to engage and provide feedback to Employment Services Transformation (EST) with province-wide implementation anticipated by the end of 2025.
- Formally launch the intensive Ontario Works Youth Caseworker position with coordinated support associated with education, health, and housing, while continuing to enhance services to reduce the impact of homelessness on youth in Northumberland County.
- Continue collaboration with Community Services division to build on case management approaches and the delivery of stability supports to those most in need while responding to emerging issues or trends within the community through enhanced capacity of existing staffing models.
- Build on the 2023 re-launch of the Supportive Approaches through Innovative Learning (SAIL) program, by utilizing the internal working group to embed training in onboarding plans and further learning and development opportunities.
- Support Learning and Development opportunities for department staff and community agencies focusing on:
 - Case-Management from a Trauma-Conscious lens
 - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in service delivery
 - Coaching for successful outcomes
 - Motivational Interviewing techniques and skills
 - Working with an intergenerational client-base



Long Term Plan & Strategic Objectives

Innovate for Service Excellence

The continued viability of the Ontario Works program is dependent on Ministry plans and objectives. Locally, continued monitoring and planning to ensure quality customer service and realization of full provincial funding is completed.

In addition, the Ontario Works division & Customer Service Unit will continue to:

- Build internal capacity through learning and sharing opportunities across the division and department.
- Review and discuss client-centred case management models in a collaborative environment.
- Find efficiencies utilizing Lean approaches to examine internal processes to meet targets and outcomes.
- Continue to review our staffing model to ensure focus on high impact client facing services while fully utilizing the talent and skills of our workforce.
- Build capacity within the Ontario Works program management, outcome achievement and funding enhancement opportunity through a review of the leadership structure and model.
- Build on the Corporate People Plan to support staff in learning and development opportunities, leveraging staff talent and skill sets, while ensuring continuity in service delivery.

Foster a Thriving Community

Through collaboration with other divisions within the department and the greater community, a continued focus on supporting improved outcomes for clients through person-centred supports, the Ontario Works division and Customer Service Unit will:

- Advocate for modernization and streamlining of Ontario Works legislation and program.
- Advocate for Ontario Works rate increases that align with rising costs of living to support stability and outcomes of vulnerable populations.
- Continue to support with all changes through the Employment Services Transformation, Centralized Intake, and other activities relating to the delivery of



Ontario Works through participation in Ministry-led engagement sessions and providing regular feedback through our Program Supervisor.

- Follow-up with all changes through the Social Assistance Path Forward (formally the Social Assistance Renewal Plan).
- Continued implementation of digital solutions to streamline delivery to clients.
- Enhance and expand services throughout the community, specifically through use of Community Service Locations.
- Build partnerships and utilization of EarlyON Centres and resources.
- Review opportunities surrounding the continued operation of the trusteeship program.
- Build greater connections for clients who are experiencing homelessness to community programs; and
- Optimize the Social Services facilities and service locations to be more inviting and client-centred, including safety, technology, and infrastructure improvements.