



Following is a summary of work that the County has taken or will take to support the objectives of the 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan for Guelph-Wellington - A Place to Call Home

Our vision is that everyone in Guelph-Wellington can find and maintain an appropriate, safe and affordable place to call home.

Supporting Housing Affordability

OBJECTIVE #1

To help low-income households close the gap between their income and housing expenses

ACTION 1: Seek additional funding from upper levels of government to expand rent support programmes

KEY MESSAGE

Additional funding for rent supports is needed to reduce wait list numbers and improve affordability.

- Low income households continue to face significant barriers to finding and maintaining an appropriate, safe and affordable place to call home. Income supports in the form of rent subsidies/supplements are a critical factor contributing to improved affordability, housing stability and to ending homelessness in Guelph-Wellington.
- Our community has low vacancy rates that continue to drive increases in rental prices and make it increasingly difficult for everyone, especially those households in lower income brackets, to find an affordable place to live.
- Rent support programmes like the **Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB)** are tremendously beneficial, however, the current funding does not meet the depth of need for our community.

The County has been allocated \$616,900 in COHB funding for the 2022-2023 programme year. Due to the tremendous need in our community there has been rapid uptake of the COHB rent support programme and we expect to exhaust our funding early in 2022.



ACTION 2: Engage upper levels of government to extend existing rent support funding past current expiry dates

KEY MESSAGE

Stable, long-term rent support programmes are essential to housing stability for low-income households.

- The expiration of provincially funded rent support programmes is a major concern as the households they assist will face the risk of homelessness as funding expires.
- Locally, rent supports delivered under **Strong Communities Rent Supplement** programme (in existence for 17 years), as well as rent support programmes created under the **Investment in Affordable Housing** and its extension programme are all set to expire in 2023 and 2024.

When we lose funding for Strong Communities Rent Supplement, Investment in Affordable Housing and its extension programmes, 250+ households will be at risk of homelessness.

ACTION 3: Leverage funding from upper levels of government to increase homeownership opportunities for moderate-income households (i.e. 40th-60th income percentile)

KEY MESSAGE

Increasing opportunities for moderate income households to participate in affordable homeownership and rental opportunities is essential to creating thriving communities.

- Opportunities for funding for moderate-income households through the County's Homeownership programme enable us to improve housing affordability across the housing continuum.

Since 2007, 125 households have participated in the County of Wellington's down payment assistance programme for first time homeowners. The funding used to support this programme is provided through the **Ontario Housing Priorities Initiative** (OPHI), whose funding is shared, and therefore in direct competition, with new County affordable rental projects.



Building Strong Partnerships between Health and Housing

OBJECTIVE #3

To offer a comprehensive range of supportive housing options for residents with complex needs due to aging, disabilities, mental health issues and addictions

ACTION 4: Continue to support Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA), Association of Municipalities Ontario (AMO) and others in their advocacy efforts to upper levels of government regarding the need for a range of supportive housing options, including permanent units that offer 24/7 on-site supports (advocate for partnerships with health in upper levels of government)

KEY MESSAGE

Long-term dedicated joint health and housing dollars are needed to sustainably deliver housing with appropriate/or equitable and accessible supports

- To adequately deliver housing with supports, whether through supported housing or supportive housing models, requires leadership from both local health and housing partners.
- Existing relationships with the Ontario Health Team and community partners enables the County of Wellington to deliver scattered site supportive housing in Guelph-Wellington.
- Additional funding is needed to develop purpose built supportive housing to provide the support needed to stably house our most vulnerable.
- We continue to engage with stakeholders in our community to promote the development of permanent supportive housing. We know that not one agency or one level of government alone can resolve such a complex issue, but together we can find permanent housing solutions for people experiencing homelessness in our community.

In 2017, the County of Wellington made an unsuccessful **Home for Good** application for supportive housing in Guelph, and in 2021 were again unsuccessful in securing dedicated funding through the Ministry of Health's **Back To Home** programme. Without more funding opportunities like these, we are limited in our ability to respond to our community's supportive housing needs.



Ending Chronic Homelessness

OBJECTIVE #5

To End Chronic Homelessness

ACTION 5: Continue to advocate for increased funding through the renewed Homelessness Partnering Strategy, Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy to strengthen our local response to chronic homelessness.

KEY MESSAGE

Additional and increased funding is required to support continued transformation of the homeless serving system (Housing First approach) and to meet operational commitments needed to sustain capital investments in transitional and permanent supportive housing.

- County of Wellington is the community lead on the Built for Zero-Canada Campaign, a national change effort with a goal of ending homelessness. This partnership is a meaningful nationally structured, supportive and data-driven effort that improves our local homeless system.
- The provincial **Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI)** funds make up a majority of our community's funding to support those at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Ongoing funding increases are needed to support a shift towards Housing First efforts and ending homelessness.
- During the Pandemic, the provincial **Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF)** in its various phases provided our community financial supports needed to begin to change the focus of our homeless serving system. The SSRF investment has allowed our community to work toward homeless serving system transformation and invest heavily in capital commitments in transitional and supportive housing opportunities. Additional funding is needed to meet operational commitments and support the sustainability of these programmes into the future.
- Traditionally the County was underfunded for a community of its size, through the federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) programme. Under the new **Reaching Home** programme (HPS legacy programme) our allocation has increased, and although we are receiving additional funding more funding is needed to drive homeless serving system change.

Alongside housing stability and emergency shelter services, homelessness funds have been directed towards diversion work and Acute Intervention Program for tenants in social housing. We have strong community leadership and have received national recognition for our work in the homelessness sector, but more funding is needed to meet our goal of ending chronic homelessness by 2023.



Creating New Housing Stock

OBJECTIVE #4

To increase the supply and mix of affordable housing options for low- to moderate income households

ACTION 6: Continue to support OMSSA, AMO and other advocacy efforts to upper levels for more funding to support the development of new permanent affordable rental housing units

KEY MESSAGE

Increased and sustained funding from upper levels of government that is dedicated to the development of new affordable housing units is necessary to improve the local supply of affordable housing options.

- Without long-term and predictable capital funding, we are limited in our ability to meet housing needs. We need increased funding to create more social, supportive and affordable homes in our community.
- The federal government, through the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), has begun sizable investments into the creation of new housing stock across Canada, however, much of this funding is based on low cost loans which are difficult to navigate for smaller non-profits and co-ops. Creating easier and more timely access to CMHC funding streams, along with larger grant programme for the non-profit sector, would increase participation and affordable housing starts.
- When Provincially or Federally owned land becomes available, municipalities should be given first right to obtain the property. Since the property was purchased and developed by taxpayers, it is felt that the land should be donated to local municipalities and not sold.

Funding allocated through **Ontario Priorities Housing Initiatives**, a capital-funding programme launched through the province's Community Housing Renewal Strategy, has been earmarked to be tendered for the development of affordable housing in Guelph-Wellington. However, with limited funding available over the last ten years, large scale affordable housing expansion has been difficult to achieve.



KEY MESSAGE

Promote a Mix of Housing and Missing Middle Housing

- In the Association of Municipalities Ontario paper “fixing the Housing Affordability Crisis” it states that AMO believes in fostering complete communities with a diverse range and mix of housing options, densities and tenures. There is a lack of what is known as ‘missing middle’ housing which refers to a missing range of middle density housing options. This is housing that can adapt to different lifestyles such as intergenerational living, new families and seniors aging in place. This could include row houses, semi-detached homes, townhouses, etc, which are targeted to providing housing affordability to middle income earners.

In November 2019, the County of Wellington released its first Attainable Housing Strategy. The purpose of this strategy is to increase the supply of housing considered to be attainable, with particular focus on providing housing for employees in small rural communities and thereby supporting local employers and economies.



Preserving Existing Housing Stock

OBJECTIVE #7

To support the sustainability of the existing social and affordable housing stock

ACTION 7: Develop a funding strategy between local provincial reformed housing providers and the County of Wellington to ensure that the providers thrive in our community by maintaining existing and developing new high quality and stable long term social and affordable housing

KEY MESSAGE

Stable, long-term social and affordable housing is essential to housing stability for low-income households.

- Future regulatory changes brought on through the Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act (2020) will have a major impact on provincially reformed housing providers who have reached the end of their mortgages.
- Changes to the provincially-mandated funding formula under the Housing Services Act (2011) represent a major concern as the funding commitments required to ensure the financial viability of these organizations are still in development at the provincial level and may not be released before housing providers reach their end of mortgages.
- Locally, all of the provincially reformed housing provider partners will reach the end of their mortgage between in 2023 and 2031, representing over 1300 social housing units at risk.

The County has successfully negotiated long-term funding agreements with four housing providers representing over 100 units that have reached the end of their federal operating agreement, and will actively work with provincially reformed housing providers to ensure they have the means to provide long-term, quality housing to their residents for years to come.



ACTION 7: Continue to leverage funding from upper levels of government to address safety and structural repairs, climate change, environmental sustainability, and accessibility needs.

KEY MESSAGE

Additional capital investments are needed to help Municipalities and housing providers to regenerate their housing stock so it will exist for future generations.

- Maintaining and repairing our local supply of social and affordable housing buildings, now approaching 25-50 years old, is key to social housing sustainability.
- Funding from the **Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative** (COCHI) programme has been earmarked towards repairing existing social housing stock.
- With much of the existing social housing stock in our area and across Ontario aging, the need for capital investment programmes like the **Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative** is critical.

The County has been allocated \$631,676 in Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative funding for 2022-23. This funding is slated to grow over time, but our community received \$4,729,360 in funding applications for this funding stream in 2021. More funding like COCHI is needed in our community as housing stock ages, energy costs escalate and demand increases.

KEY MESSAGE

Additional investments are needed to help non-profit and co-op housing providers play an active role in helping our community reach our community's Green House Gas emissions goals.

- With no federal or provincial investments to capital programmes dedicated to the reduction of GHG emissions in our existing social and affordable housing stock, our housing stock is falling behind the rest of our community.

Dedicated funding to help housing providers participate in the reduction of GHG emissions would help reduce operating costs, create healthier environments, and allow them to focus their limited capital reserves on asset management priorities.



Providing Culturally Appropriate Housing Options

OBJECTIVE #8

To foster access to culturally appropriate housing and homelessness services for Indigenous peoples

ACTION 8: Coordinate work with Indigenous partners and community to develop and support access to culturally safe and appropriate housing and homelessness services for Indigenous peoples in our community.

KEY MESSAGE

More work with Indigenous partners and community members is needed to understand the diverse housing needs of Indigenous people in our community and to develop a range of culturally safe and appropriate housing and homelessness services.

- In partnership with Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre (SOAHAC), the County is piloting the new role of a Housing Outreach Worker in order to better meet the housing needs of Indigenous peoples in our community.
- The County worked closely with SOAHAC for the Guelph-Wellington 2021 Everyone Counts Point in time Count to develop an intentional outreach strategy to ensure a culturally safe environment in which Indigenous peoples experiencing homelessness could participate.

Trust is a major barrier for those in our community with Indigenous ancestry that are looking to access health and housing services. This barrier limits participation and creates service gaps for our community members to fall through. We need to continue to expand our partnerships and relationships with Indigenous partners so that we can ensure that people feel safe while accessing services.



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