

# 2019 Annual Report

## A PLACE TO CALL HOME



**A 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan for Guelph-Wellington**

# MESSAGE FROM THE WARDEN

On behalf of Council, I am pleased to present the County of Wellington's 2019 Annual Report on the 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan (HHP). This comprehensive report demonstrates the collective progress our community has made towards achieving our HHP goals. We are proud of the accomplishments made this year to address needs across the housing continuum, and we will continue to work to towards everyone in Guelph-Wellington finding and maintaining an appropriate, safe and affordable place to call home.



Sincerely,  
**Kelly Linton, Warden**, County of Wellington



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## 2019 Housing and Homelessness Highlights:

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### Built for Zero – Canada (BFZ-C)

As a participating Campaign community, Guelph-Wellington has made notable progress this year towards ending chronic homelessness. In May, we were recognized by the national Built for Zero Campaign as a community that had reduced chronic homelessness by 24%, further, by October we reached a 28% reduction. These reductions reflect the hard work, innovation, and unrelenting commitment of County staff and our community partners towards ending homelessness.

### Affordable Housing Development

The County of Wellington supports ongoing investments in the development of affordable housing. We have contributed \$893,000 to the community's affordable housing reserve, leveraged funding for the construction of affordable units in Mount Forest and the City of Guelph, and have actively engaged non-profit and private sector parties to foster the development of affordable rental housing proposals for future funding opportunities.

### Strengthening Partnership to Improve Tenant Supports

The County of Wellington has strong partnerships with external agencies to ensure that we are able to offer a comprehensive range of housing with supports for residents with complex needs due to aging, disabilities, mental health issues and addictions.

Partnerships with Traverse Independence, Stonehenge Therapeutic Community, Victorian Order of Nurses, Waterloo Wellington Dufferin (VON), Guelph-Wellington Seniors Association, Guelph Independent Living, and the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) have permitted tenants to live affordably, while accessing the supports they need to maintain independence.

### Housing Providers Role in the Delivery of Affordable Housing in our Community

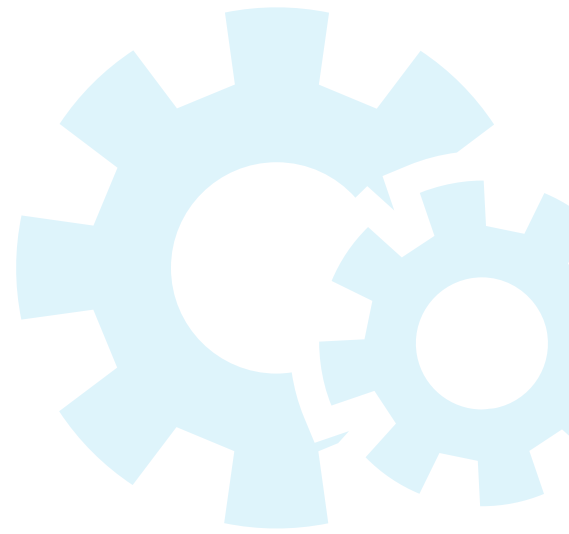
Non-profit and co-op housing providers have a huge role to play in the delivery of affordable housing in Guelph-Wellington. In 2019, the County leveraged public contributions to

## MESSAGE FROM THE WARDEN

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preserve existing stock, established agreements to protect affordable units, and provided training to increase housing provider capacity.

Investments we make towards supporting our community housing providers directly contribute to protecting housing affordability in our Guelph-Wellington.



### TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS ASSISTED IN 2019

(by housing type)



**2547**

**RENT GEARED TO  
INCOME (RGI)**



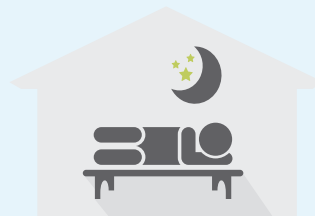
**311**

**AFFORDABLE**



**140**

**RENT SUPPORT**



**2625**

**SHELTER STAYS**



**29**

**SPP PORTABLE  
HOUSING BENEFIT**

# Year 5 Report | BACKGROUND

In close consultation with the community, the County of Wellington (The County) developed the 10-Year (2014-2024) Housing and Homelessness Plan (HHP) entitled "A Place to Call Home."

As the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) for Guelph-Wellington, the County of Wellington ('the County') has an important leadership role related to system planning, coordination of services, and the development of partnerships in the area of housing and homelessness. Accomplishing the goals of the HHP requires the support of all stakeholders within the housing and homelessness system.

In 2014, the County developed the 10-Year (2014-2024) Housing and Homelessness Plan (HHP) entitled "A Place to Call Home." This process brought the community together with a common vision that "Everyone in Guelph-Wellington can find and maintain an appropriate, safe and affordable place to call home."

In 2018, the County undertook an update of the HHP, as per the Housing Services Act, 2011, which requires that Service Managers review their 10-year plans at least once every five years. The County of Wellington 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan - Five Year Update reflects refined objectives that align with the new provincial policy directions and emerging community needs.

## Summary

This Annual Report represents the fifth and final annual report for our initial Housing and Homelessness Plan, developed in 2014. As we reflect on the past 5 years, collaboration, innovation, partnerships, and strong leadership

have driven progress in reducing homelessness and addressing housing needs in our community.

Strong community partnerships and municipal investments have been vital to many of these initiatives, and have been further reinforced through federal and provincial funding.

The 2019 Annual Report is not an exhaustive account of all housing and homelessness actions that have taken place over the past year, but this

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

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report highlights progress made on the targets and goals of the 10-Year (2014-2024) Housing and Homelessness Plan (HHP) entitled "A Place to Call Home".

The 2020 Annual Report will begin a new reporting phase and reflect progress on the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan – Five Year Update.

# Progress:

## HHP GOALS AND ACTIONS TAKEN

The following represents actions taken by the County of Wellington and community partners to meet the goals of the 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan.

### GOAL 1

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

- ✓ The County delivered rent supplements to 268 households through various programmes.
- ✓ The County supported 29 households to access the Portable Housing Benefit for survivors of domestic violence.
- ✓ Through Alectra Utilities Low-Income Energy Assistance Programme (LEAP), the County provided 620 low-income households with \$255,718 in grants towards hydro arrears, and assisted 389 households with deposit waivers.
- ✓ The County applied alternate Average Market Rent (AMR) to broaden affordable housing options within the Rent Supplement programme.
- ✓ The City of Guelph offers an affordable bus pass and has a Fee Assistance in Recreation (FAIR) programme for adults and seniors needing financial assistance to access recreation programmes offered by the City.

### DID YOU KNOW?

#### The County reduced housing costs by providing:

- 268 Rent Supplements
- 389 Hydro Deposit Waivers
- 620 Grants for Hydro
- 140 Housing Allowances

## GOAL 2

### To provide a range of supports to assist people at risk of homelessness to remain housed

- ✓ The County provided assistance to 922 households through several internal housing stability programmes to assist with shelter related expenses in order to prevent evictions or stabilize their housing situation.
- ✓ The County provides funding to the Salvation Army, Community Resource Centre and the Welcome In Drop In Centre for community housing stability programmes that assisted an additional 305 additional households maintain their housing.
- ✓ The County continues to be an active partner in the Wellington County Rural Youth Homelessness Committee and Rural Emphasis campaign to raise awareness of rural youth homelessness.
- ✓ The County hosted a private market Landlord Session to share information on cannabis and smoke free policies, the Landlord and Tenant Board, and the Ontario Standard Lease.
- ✓ The County has strengthened internal eviction prevention procedures to prevent eviction and stabilize housing for tenants.
- ✓ Wyndham House increased housing stability outreach team capacity to provide ongoing support to tenants (housing searches, eviction prevention, property maintenance and repair, etc.) and property owners (advocate for units, providing funding to repair damages, etc.).
- ✓ Ontario Works and Housing Services continue to strengthen coordination of services and supports to ensure housing stability for dual clients.



## GOAL 3

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

- ✓ Community Support Workers stabilized housing for approximately 113 vulnerable tenants in rent-geared-to-income and affordable housing in Guelph-Wellington.
- ✓ Community Health Assessment Programme through Emergency Medical Services (CHAP-EMS) delivered drop-in community-based health promotion programme for seniors in 4 County buildings; 990 seniors participated.
- ✓ In partnership with the LHIN and Stonehenge Therapeutic Community, the County increased delivery of scatter-site supportive housing from 6 to 26.
- ✓ Analyzing current support needs and tracking onsite incidents, the County has enhanced staff resources, improved staff mobility and agency involvement to strengthen on site supports and services for tenants.
- ✓ The County has expanded our head lease partnership with Traverse Independent, to improve quality of life for individuals with acquired brain injuries and disabilities.

### Our Community Needs More Supportive Housing

The County of Wellington continues 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 address such a complex issue, but together we can find permanent housing solutions for people experiencing homelessness in our community.



## GOAL 4

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

- ✓ The County allocated over \$3M in Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI) funding to create new Affordable Housing stock in the County and the City of Guelph.
- ✓ The County contributes \$500,000, in base funding, annually to an affordable housing reserve, as well as the net proceeds from the operations of our 131 affordable housing units. Net proceeds from the operation of our affordable units totaled over \$393,000 in 2019, resulting in a total contribution of \$893,000 towards future affordable housing development.
- ✓ This year, the City of Guelph Council approved a \$170,000 increase to the City's total Affordable Housing Reserve Fund (the 'Reserve Fund') contribution to \$500,000.
- ✓ The County increased funding for the Ontario Renovates programme and the Homeownership programme, improving affordability for first time homebuyers and homeowners.
- ✓ The County worked with the Guelph-Wellington Poverty Task Force (PTF) to establish the Guelph & Wellington Housing and Homelessness Alliance to improve information sharing and advocacy in Guelph-Wellington.
- ✓ The County provided a 25-year forgivable loan to Guelph Independent Living to add two affordable housing units for adults with physical disabilities.
- ✓ The County is at the table with other community partners on the Affordable Housing Leadership Activation Group to work toward a local response to affordable housing needs in Guelph-Wellington.
- ✓ The City and the County provided support to the St. Joseph's Housing Corporation for an affordable housing project as part of their application to the National Housing Co-Investment Fund.
- ✓ The City of Guelph continues to have permissive regulations supporting the creation of accessory apartments within existing dwelling units provided minimum building and zoning requirements are met.
- ✓ The City of Guelph continues to use the condominium conversion policies of its Official Plan to prohibit condominium conversion during times of low vacancy rates





## GOAL 5

### To reduce the length of time and number of people that experience homelessness

- ✓ Through the Built For Zero Canada Campaign, the County was the 3rd community in Canada to reach the initial "reduced chronic homelessness" milestone and the 1st mid-sized community to reach the below baseline milestone, which was sustained to year end.
- ✓ In October 2019, the County reported 28% reduction in the number of individuals that are chronically homeless on the By-Name-List.
- ✓ In partnership with Wyndham House and the Drop In, the community piloted a Diversion and Rapid Rehousing Pilot for youth and adults to shift from emergency response to a housing focused model focused on prevention.
- ✓ The County continues to provide funding to Women in Crisis Rural Women's Support Programme to assist women dealing with situations of domestic violence.
- ✓ Through BFZ-C our communities set and achieved the goal of reducing chronic homelessness by 10% and to remain under 157 on our BNL and in June 2019 set and achieved a further reduction of 10% (135) on the BNL.
- ✓ In the City of Guelph, the Mayor's Task Force on Homelessness and Community Safety was established in January 2019 with a focus on re-opening a Supported Recovery Room, funding a Welcoming Streets Outreach Worker, re-starting an Addiction Court Support Worker programme and developing permanent supportive housing to house chronically homeless individuals with complex needs.

## GOAL 6

### To promote practices that make the housing and homelessness system more accessible and welcoming

- ✓ Ontario Works, Housing and Children's Early Years reception staff continue to cross train to improve access and services for households in Guelph-Wellington.
- ✓ The County started testing for an online housing application, which will improve intake, applicant management and communication with applicant households.
- ✓ The Welcome In Drop In Centre in partnership with the County of Wellington, piloted a 24/7 Warming Centre to better understand the support needs of individuals not accessing shelter (e.g. sleeping rough, couch surfing).
- ✓ The County launched RideWell a public transit service, which uses a rideshare model, improving transportation for service access across the County and into the City of Guelph.

## GOAL 7

### To preserve the existing social and affordable rental housing stock

- ✓ In 2019, the County allocated approximately \$4.1 million in capital projects and retrofits, and \$6.5 million for maintenance and upkeep to preserve our existing County owned and operated social and affordable rental stock.
- ✓ The County continues to support housing providers' planning initiatives towards major capital retrofit projects to improve and preserve the quality of our social housing.
- ✓ The County successfully established agreement with local social housing providers reaching the end of their current operating agreements, preserving 35 units of rent geared to income housing.
- ✓ The County allocated additional investment of \$180,000 in Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative (COCHI) funding towards repairs for existing community housing stock.

## GOAL 8

### To seize opportunities to turn research knowledge into action

- ✓ Use of Real Time Data in the homelessness sector has led to the following interventions:

#### Homelessness Prevention

- Addition of 2 Diversion and Rapid Rehousing staff
- Exceptions to last month rent and rental arrears funding

#### Improved support for Active Homeless

- Increased Housing First staff from 1 to 4
- Shifting existing resources to meet current community needs

#### Greater understanding of system outflow and community needs

- Creation of new supportive housing partnerships
- Need for increased housing supply (Supportive and Affordable)
- ✓ Improvements to the process for maintaining households on the Centralized Waiting List (CWL) and prioritization means more households experiencing homelessness can access housing.

## GOAL 8

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- ✓ 22 Housing Services staff held Institute of Housing Management (IHM) membership, resulting in improved property maintenance and administration, strategic and financial planning, tenant management/support, and human relations.
- ✓ Housing Services staff participated in construction management training to ensure effective application of new building initiatives and regulations in support of development modernization.
- ✓ Participating in the BFZ-C campaign has supported a collective response to ending homelessness, moving from a silo approach to one of collaboration and a no wrong door approach.
- ✓ The BFZ-C away team engages in ongoing Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles, which ignites creative, innovative and bold solutions to ending homelessness.
- ✓ The City's of Guelph released the Affordable Housing Monitoring Report 2017/2018 was released on June 14, 2019.
- ✓ Housing Services supported research led by Economic Development to address the shortage of attainable housing for the County's workforce and to establish strategies appropriate for all low and moderate-income households across the County.



## PRIORITIES/NEXT STEPS FOR 2020



### LOOKING FORWARD

In 2020, the County will use the 10-Year (2014-2024) Housing and Homelessness Plan (HHP) entitled "A Place to Call Home." – Five Year Update as a framework for integrated local planning to address housing affordability, coordination of homelessness and related support services and homelessness prevention. We look forward to further strengthening partnerships and collaboration between the province, municipalities, Indigenous communities and organizations, housing providers and other stakeholders to meet our housing and homelessness goals.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Warden Kelly Linton, the County of Wellington Council, and Social Services Committee both past and present, for their ongoing support for housing in our community.

We would also like to thank our community partners for their commitment and support to address housing and homelessness issues, as well as Housing Services staff who support our tenants to find, maintain, and retain safe and affordable housing, in addition to supporting efforts to end chronic homelessness.

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to thank Harry Blinkhorn for his 35 years of service in affordable housing delivery in Guelph-Wellington. Harry's compassion, knowledge and leadership has been integral to our growth and development, and his dedication and commitment has supported the provision of quality affordable and social housing for over three decades. Housing Services thanks Harry for being such a valuable member of the Housing Services team and wishes him the best in retirement.

### **Communication:**

The County of Wellington will distribute this annual report to the community through presentations at local community tables, through posting on the County's website and sharing directly with participating stakeholders. This report will also be sent to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing as part of the County's commitment to report annually on our progress toward goals and targets established by the community on the 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan.

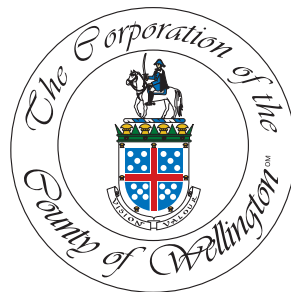
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