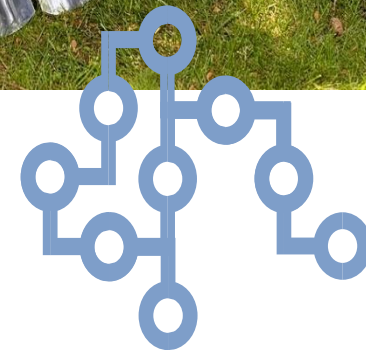
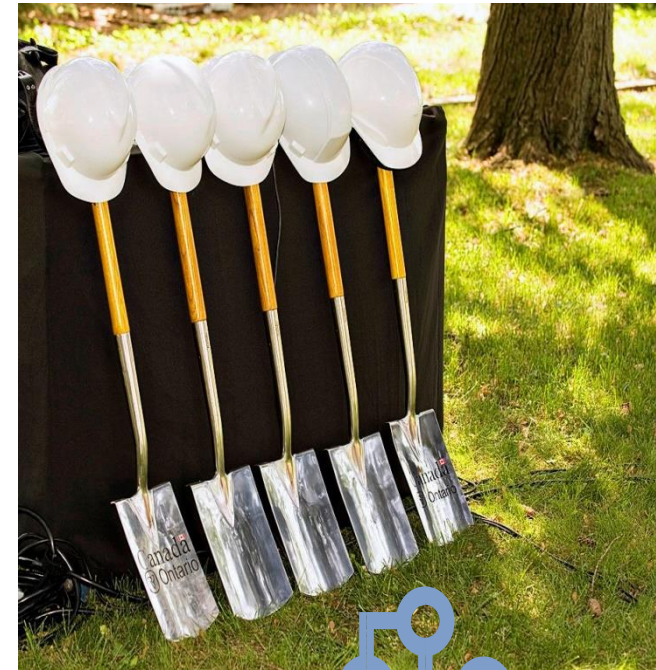


ST. THOMAS AND ELGIN HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS PLAN

TAKING STOCK WORKING TOGETHER

2018 Progress Report



Introduction


The City of St. Thomas, in its role as the Service Manager for St. Thomas and Elgin County, is responsible for Delivering social and community services throughout the City and the County. These services are delivered by St. Thomas – Elgin Social Services Department. As part of its mandate, the Department administers and/or delivers a range of housing and homelessness programs including existing social housing, new affordable housing, rent supplements, housing allowances, home repair assistance, homeownership down-payment assistance, funding for emergency shelters and transitional housing, and other homelessness prevention programs including the Housing Links for People (HeLP) program. The City also owns and manages 530 units of public housing.

The Social Services Department works in collaboration with the County of Elgin and area municipalities, with existing private sector and not-for-profit housing providers, with support services agencies, and with many individuals and organizations in the community to help meet the housing and homelessness prevention needs in support of residents of St. Thomas and Elgin County.

In the past, the Department has undertaken numerous reports and studies about community housing and homeless needs and has worked with organizations to implement many of the key initiatives from those studies.

As required in the *Housing Services Act*, City of St. Thomas Council approved a 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan for St. Thomas and Elgin County in December 2013. The Plan was implemented on January 1, 2014. Service Managers are required in the *Act* to report annually to the public by June 30 on progress in achieving the recommendations in their Plans during the preceding year.

This is the 2018 Progress Report for St. Thomas/Elgin County.



Service Managers are required to report annually to the public on progress in achieving the recommendations in their 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plans.

Vision

St. Thomas and Elgin County recognize the importance of having affordable, adequate and appropriate housing for its residents. In co-operation with not-for-profit and private-sector partners in the community, and with support from federal and provincial levels of governments, St. Thomas and Elgin County will work towards meeting the housing and support needs of the community, with the elimination of long term homelessness as a key goal.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1	STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2	STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3	STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4
Increase housing supply options to meet projected needs.	Provide supports to keep people in the sustainable housing they currently have.	Enhance the current service system to prevent homelessness, and when homeless “rapidly” move people into stable housing.	Pursue community partnerships and broaden community awareness while advocating to senior levels of government to ensure stable housing and poverty reduction for all residents.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1

Increase housing supply options to meet projected need

Seven recommendations with actions, targets, measures, and the detailed 2018 progress report are attached.

Progress in 2018

New Affordable Rental Housing

During 2018 three new affordable housing projects were occupied. These include 10 apartment units at 33 Elysian St. and 11 apartment units at 49 Myrtle St. in St. Thomas, and a 10 unit building at 10 Wellington in Aylmer.

Another affordable housing project is currently under construction at 50 Locust St. in St. Thomas. This project will have 9 affordable units, 6 of which will be fully accessible and is scheduled for occupancy in July.

Current Regeneration of City-owned Housing

Construction began on the new Social Services Centre building at 230 Talbot Street, which is to be occupied in October of 2019. 28 units of housing are being constructed on the second and third floors of the building. 4 of the units are 2 bedrooms and the remainder are 1 bedroom. 4 of the 1 bedroom units are fully modified. 14 units are rent-geared-to-income (RGI) and replace 14 the City-owned RGI units which were sold. The other 14 units are new affordable housing units.

Future Regeneration of City-owned Housing

The City has received \$2.6 million from the Province towards the construction of an 88 space childcare centre on the City-owned site at 230 Talbot Street. Additional affordable housing units are planned for two or three floors above the centre. This project will require the sale of some City-owned family units for which there is a substantially lesser demand.

Assistance to Community Groups

During 2018 the City has provided technical assistance and support to a community group in Port Stanley which is working towards the development of affordable housing.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1

Progress in 2018 (continued)

Rent Supplements

Rental subsidies provided under two Provincially-funded programs (Investment in Affordable Housing and Social Infrastructure Fund) enable individuals and families to find housing appropriate to their needs in the private rental market which they could not otherwise afford. Subsidies are modest, averaging about \$170 per month. An average of 62 households per month were served by this program in 2018

Portable Housing Benefits

The City of St. Thomas approved the creation and funding of a Portable Housing Benefit (PHB) rental subsidy program together with the policies for administering the program. An additional 100 rental subsidies are to be delivered in the form of PHBs. Allocation of these benefits began in September of 2018. They are being offered first to those already on the waiting list for rent-geared-to-income housing. As of Dec. 31, 2018, 30 had been put in place and the average monthly benefit has been \$304.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1

Progress in 2018 (continued)

Affordable Housing Study

In June 2018 City Council received and reviewed the St. Thomas – Elgin Long-term Affordable & Social Housing Strategy. The report contained 42 recommendations for the City of St. Thomas and another 12 for the County of Elgin and lower-tier municipalities. The purpose of the strategy is to examine various options for increasing affordable housing supply to meet current and projected demand. Implementation of the recommendations in the Strategy is underway by City staff; a number of Council reports for further action will be forthcoming in 2019.

Recommendations for Council

City Staff from the Planning Department and the Social Services Department have been working together on recommendations for Council to consider on:

- Potential financial incentives for the development of affordable housing (e.g., reduced development charges, reduced property taxes, etc.)
- changes to the existing rooming house bylaw
- amendments to the existing Standards of Care for residential care homes in St. Thomas and possible licensing requirements
- updates to the Municipal Housing Facilities By-law

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2

Provide supports to keep people in the sustainable housing they currently have

Seven recommendations with actions, targets, measures, and the detailed 2018 progress report are attached.

Homelessness Prevention

\$421,349 in HeLP funding was allocated to assist low-income households with homelessness prevention supports. The funds were spent as follows:

- 44% for utility arrears
 - (317 households)
- 18% for last month's rent
 - (127 households)
- 14% for furniture
 - (138 households)
- 14% for rent arrears
 - (89 households)
- 6% for moving costs
 - (71 households)

Progress in 2018

Home Repair Program

\$50,000 from the IAH Home Repair Program helped six homeowners and one multi-residential landlord pay for new roofs (5), electrical upgrades (2) furnace replacement (1) and accessibility modifications (1).

Enhancing Tenant Capacity

Community-wide use of SPDAT assessment tool is increasing. The SPDAT has been an effective means to design individualized skills development programs for tenants and prospective tenants to increase their prospect of having successful tenancies.

Eviction Prevention

City Housing staff have continued working pro-actively with tenants to help them to avoid eviction. City Staff also participate in Situation Table emergency interventions which can prevent homelessness, or rescue individuals from homelessness

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3

Enhance the current service system to prevent homelessness, and when homeless, “rapidly” move people into stable housing

Five recommendations with actions, targets, measures, and the detailed 2018 progress report are attached.

Youth Homelessness Protocol

104 youth accessed services through the Youth Homelessness Protocol in 2018:

55% of these youth were 16-18

58% of those who applied for service had experienced a family breakdown. No other factor leading to homelessness exceeded 8% of those served.

53% were stably housed through the Protocol

YWCA was the primary case manager for 94% of cases

Progress in 2018

Inn Out of the Cold

119 homeless individuals stayed overnight at Inn Out of the Cold for a total of 2825 bed nights from Nov/18 to Apr/19.

Average stay over the season by all residents was 24 nights. 27% were women. 65% of the women and 48% of the men stayed between 1-5 nights in total. 6 women and 20 men stayed just 1 night.

The Inn also provided evening meals for all of its guests and supplies such as clothing, toilet paper, shoes, diapers, and baby items as needed.

Client-centred supportive housing

\$680,267 in CHPI funding helped agencies provide client-centred supported housing as follows:

YWCA Residence (17 beds)

Harmony House (3 beds)

Horizon House (3 new beds)

Fairwinds (3 beds)

Unity House (3 new beds)

Second Story (6 beds)

Fresh Start (10 beds)

CMHA residential care home program (avg. 60 beds)

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3

Progress in 2018 (continued)

Co-ordinated Access—Part 1

CMHA Elgin continued to operate a weekly housing drop-in centre which served as an “intake” point for many individuals who were homeless or at immediate risk of homelessness. 141 individuals were provided assistance in accessing services as well as short and long term housing.

Co-ordinated Access—Part 2

Late in 2018 the Housing and Homelessness Action Group established a committee to work on the design and implementation of a fully co-ordinated access system which would serve not only the homeless but applicants for transitional/ supportive housing, social housing, affordable housing (as defined under MMAH program guidelines) and private rental housing. Work on this ambitious project began in early 2019 and is ongoing.

Residential Care Homes

84 individuals in three residential care homes benefitted from CHPI-funded bed subsidies tied to the home’s requirement to meet detailed City standards. Five other residential care homes in the community opened their doors to assist when the 26 residents of one of the subsidized care home providers were displaced for several months by an internal flood

Women’s Homelessness

The YWCA received funding from the Status of Women Canada to address the issue of women’s homelessness and has initiated a program of community meetings to develop and implement a strategy to better serve the specific needs of homeless girls and women.

Safe Beds

CMHA Elgin and the YWCA operated a total of 9 “safe beds” serving as temporary emergency shelter for individuals applying for transitional and/or supportive housing services from them, and moved individuals from those beds into appropriate housing when it became available.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3

Progress in 2018 (continued)

Homeless Enumeration

During the last week of April in 2018, 96 representatives from 28 local organizations participated in St. Thomas-Elgin's first enumeration of homeless persons, conducting a survey asking 15 questions of each person who was determined to be homeless.

The enumeration identified 159 homeless persons, including 33 dependent children. A report following from the enumeration provided detailed information to the community of the scope of the problem of homelessness, and the nature of the homeless population.

Following up from Homeless Enumeration

The consultant involved in designing and facilitating the enumeration process provided a number of recommendations for consideration by the community regarding how we could use available resources more effectively to address homelessness. These recommendations are presently informing work being done to update the community's 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4

Pursue community partnerships and broaden community awareness while advocating to senior levels of government to ensure stable housing and poverty reduction for all residents

Thirteen recommendations with actions, targets, measures, and the detailed 2018 progress report are attached.

Progress in 2018

The Social Services Director is a member of the Elgin Sub Region Integration Table (SRIT) of the Southwest LHIN. Elgin SRIT's two priorities are: 1. To enable patients to access the appropriate level of care to meet their care needs along the spectrum of home and community care, supportive housing, assisted living, hospital, and long-term care, and 2. To enable providers and patients to better understand how to access mental health and addictions services.

City staff have continued their ongoing involvement in Ministry of Housing consultation sessions regarding changes being made under the Ministry's Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy. In addition, City membership in OMSSA and City Staff's active participation in OMSSA discussions at various levels has contributed to OMSSA's lobbying efforts with MMAH

The Poverty Roundtable for St. Thomas/Elgin has continued to develop in its capacity and strategy in advocating for poverty reduction and related policy changes by all who administer or come in contact with those in poverty. Work has begun on a media strategy to further these efforts.