



## Committee Report

**HS-24-10**

**To:** Chair and Members of the Joint Social Services and Land Ambulance Committee  
**From:** Paul Skinner, Interim Director of Housing Services  
**Date:** Wednesday, October 09, 2024  
**Subject:** Social Housing Stock and the Centralized Waiting List

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### **Background:**

This report is being provided for the purpose of informing Committee and Council of the volume of applicants on the Wellington-Guelph Centralized Waiting List for social housing, the demand for existing social housing stock, and initiatives to support the expansion of housing options in Wellington-Guelph.

The County of Wellington is the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager for Social Services for the Wellington service area (Wellington County and the City of Guelph). Through its role as Service System Manager, the County directly owns and manages a large portfolio of social and affordable housing properties and is responsible for the oversight of 17 local not-for-profit and co-operative community housing providers.

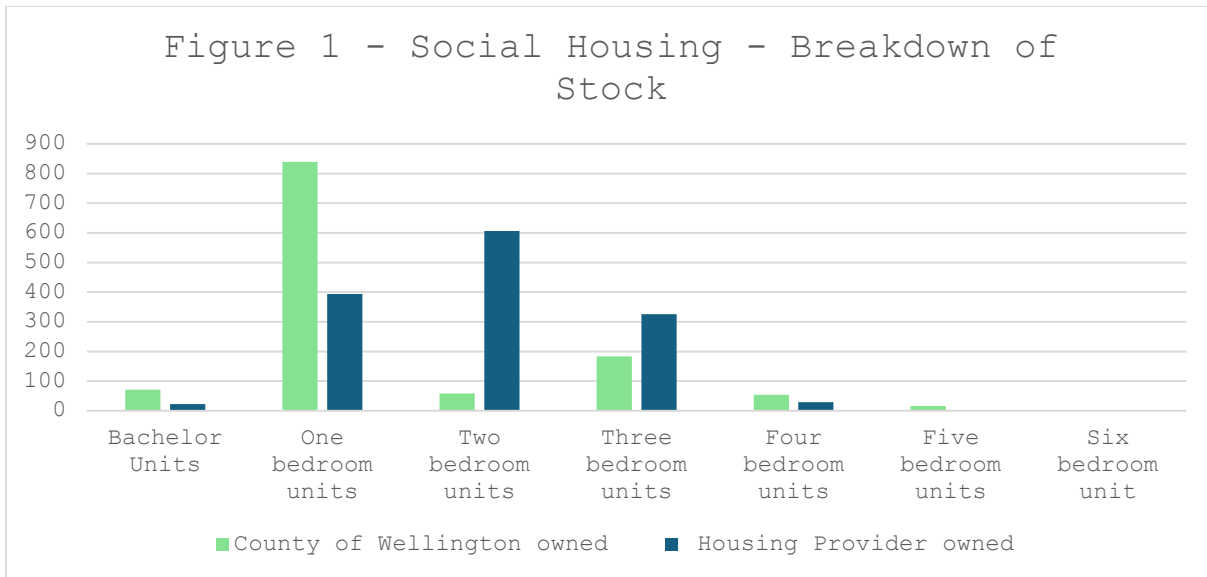
Under the Housing Services Act, 2011, the County is required to provide rental assistance to at least 2,342 households whose income falls below the Household Income Limits, often referred to as Service Levels. To meet these Service Level requirements, the County relies on legacy social housing stock and rent supplement partnerships with community agencies.

### **Social Housing Supply**

As of June 30, 2024, the Housing Services division provided monthly rental assistance to over 3,900 low-income households across Wellington-Guelph. Within these housing options there are over 2,300 dedicated social housing units owned and operated by the County of Wellington and not-for-profit and co-operative community housing providers. Specifically, 1,189 units of social housing are owned and operated by the County, while 1,112 units are provided by community housing providers administered through volunteer Board of Directors and governed by the Housing Services Act, 2011.

The distribution of social housing units by size can be found in Figure 1. For the purposes of this review, total units reported by bedroom type have included County-owned social housing units, housing provider rent-geared-to-income (RGI) units, and housing provider market-based affordable units. This is because housing providers do not permanently assign RGI status to specific unit types. They instead work towards a portfolio target as per their requirements under the Housing Services Act. As such, the bedroom sizes attributed to each portfolio can range over time as vacancies are filled with applicants from the Centralized Waiting List.

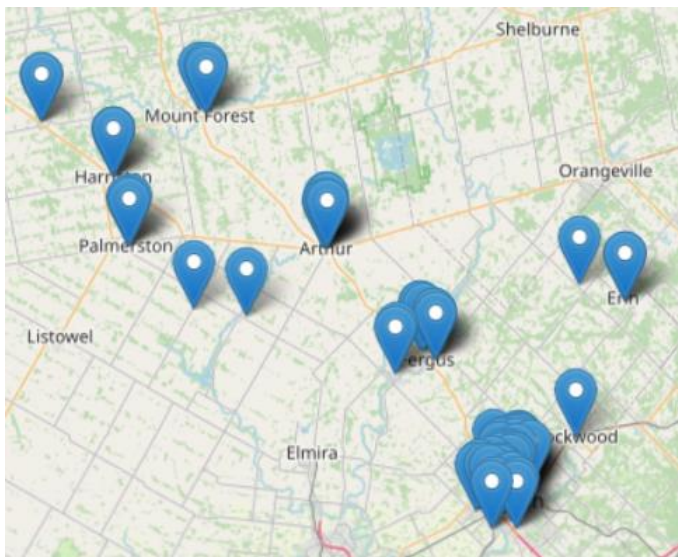
Figure 1 - Social Housing - Breakdown of Stock



The graph above shows the distribution of existing social housing amongst the County of Wellington and community housing providers in Wellington-Guelph. While the County’s directly owned and operated housing stock represents a significant number of one-bedroom units, community housing providers hold most two-bedroom units and a significant number of three-bedroom units. This highlights the key role community partners play in supporting the delivery of social housing and underscores the importance of maintaining these partnerships well into the future.

### Social Housing Locations

The maps below illustrate the locations of the social housing properties within the Wellington service delivery area. Housing Locations within the City of Guelph are shown separately, due to volume.



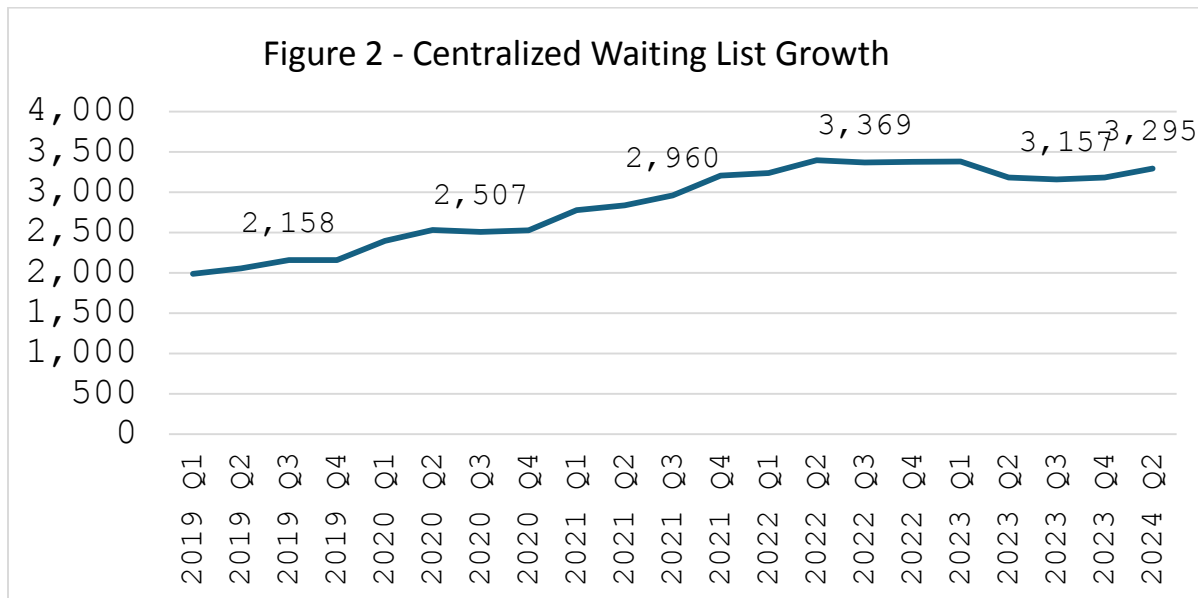
The County of Wellington has a broad range of social housing locations. The majority of existing social housing stock is located in the City of Guelph with approximately 2,085 social housing units. 516 units of social housing are located throughout the County’s member municipalities in communities as far north as Mount Forest, as far east as Erin, as far south as Rockwood, and as far west as Clifford.

## Centralized Waiting List

The Housing Services division manages the Wellington-Guelph Centralized Waiting List (CWL). The CWLs in each Service Manager area have been established in compliance with criteria set out in the Housing Services Act, 2011 for the purposes of allocating RGI, Rent Support and Special Needs housing units.

The historical growth of the CWL can be found in Figure 2. As of June 30, 2024, there are a total of 3,295 households on the CWL. The total number of applicant households fluctuates depending on the number of eligible applications as well as the number of cancelled or ineligible applications and the number housed. Since 2019, the total number of eligible households on the CWL waiting for subsidized housing continues to trend upwards.

Please note that it is possible for applicants on the CWL to be eligible for multiple unit types, depending on situational factors such as their willingness to share a bedroom. For purposes of this review, all applicants in each category have been included and the total number of households analyzed will be partially overstated.



## Special Priority Status

The Housing Services Act, 2011 gives priority access to social housing applicants whose personal safety, or whose family's safety is at risk because of abuse by an individual with whom they live or have lived with within the past three months. This special priority is to enable the applicant household to separate permanently from the abuser. Special Priority Status is also available to survivors of human trafficking that are either currently being trafficked or have exited trafficking within a period of three months or less. This status gives priority housing to individuals whose personal safety is at risk.

As of August 31, 2024, there are 137 households with eligible Special Priority Status on the CWL. In 2023, approximately 80 applicants were housed off the CWL with Special Priority Status, with an average wait time of up to one year, depending on situational factors such as family composition, location and unit selection. This represents a decrease from previous years, which would see an average minimum wait time of at least one year for Special Priority applicants.

## Local Priority

Local Priority categories give eligible households priority over those chronologically selected on the CWL, except households holding priority under the Special Priority Household Category, as prescribed by the Housing Services Act, 2011. The Local Priority categories established for the Wellington service area applicants to the CWL are Uninhabitable Housing, Family Reunification, Hospital Discharge, and the Wellington-Guelph Coordinated Entry System.

As of August 31, 2024, there are 53 households with eligible Local Priority status on the CWL. In 2023, approximately 65 applicants, or 30% of all applicants were housed with Local Priority.

## Chronological Applicants

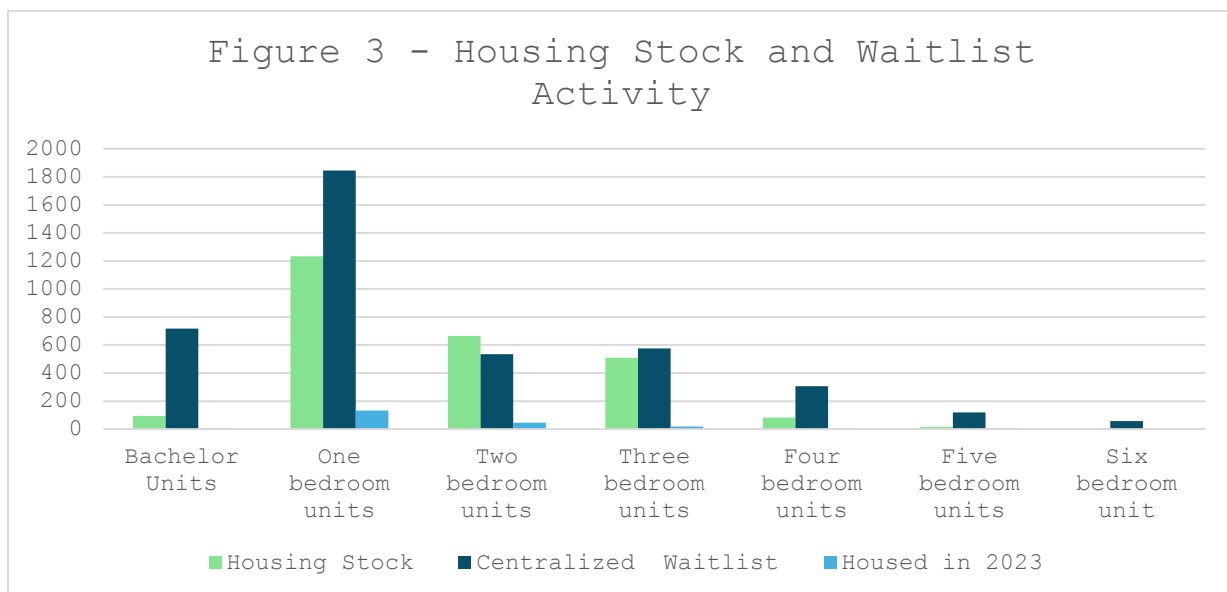
The remaining households on the CWL are considered chronological applicants. All CWL applicant households without a priority category are selected in chronological order based on the date their application was received. In 2023, only 31%, or 66 households were housed from the chronological waiting list.

## Seniors

Low-Income Seniors are a vulnerable group and can fall under any of the categories on the CWL. As of August 31, 2024, there were 691 eligible applications on the CWL from Seniors waiting for one or two-bedroom units. Within the existing social housing stock there are 214 units specifically mandated for Seniors within the City of Guelph, and 164 within the County of Wellington. It is important to highlight that some seniors opt for buildings in the social housing stock that don't have a senior's mandate, as these options may better align with their needs and preferred locations.

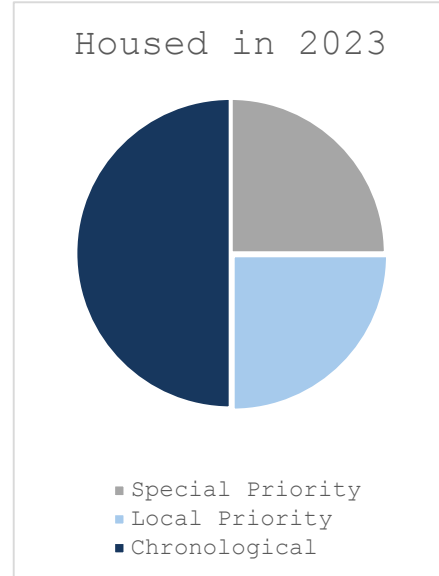
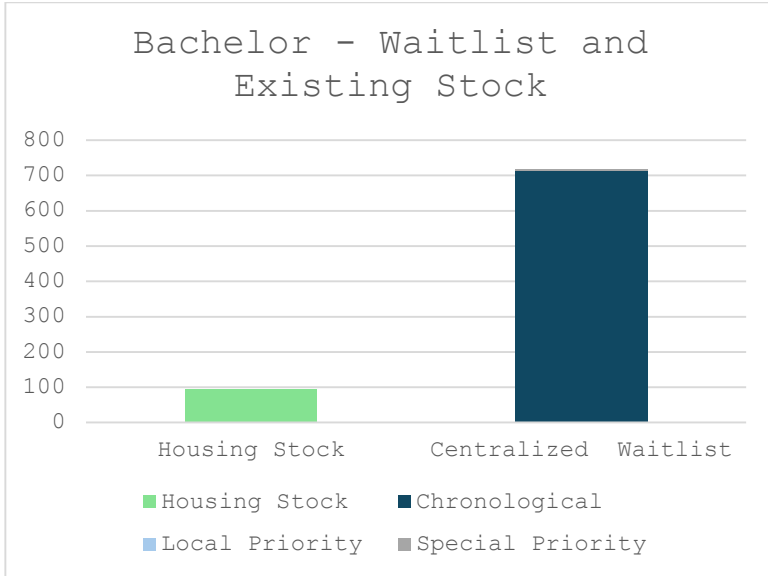
## Social Housing Stock and Waitlist Activity

Figure 3 displays the existing housing stock in the County of Wellington and City of Guelph in comparison to the number of households on the CWL that are eligible for this unit type. When comparing the existing housing stock to the number of households, it becomes apparent that there is a significant need for additional bachelor and one-bedroom units, as well as larger family units. A detailed breakdown of each unit type is included in the following pages.



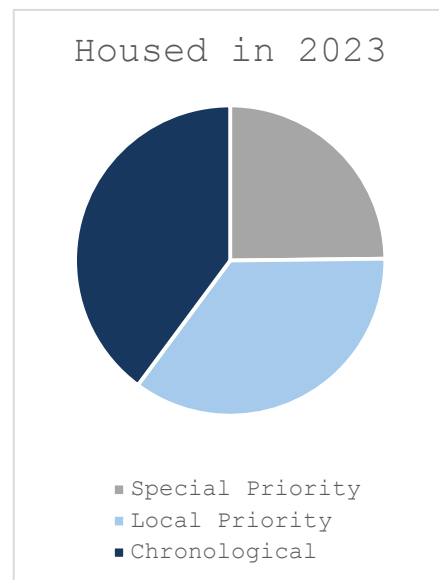
## Bachelor Units

There are currently 94 bachelor units in Wellington-Guelph’s social housing stock. As of August 31, 2024, there were 718 applicants waiting for a bachelor unit on the CWL, with 3 applicants designated eligible with Special Priority Status and 1 applicant with Local Priority Status. In 2023, 8 applicants were housed in a bachelor unit, 4 of which were households from the chronological waiting list, 2 with Special Priority Status, and 2 with Local Priority Status.



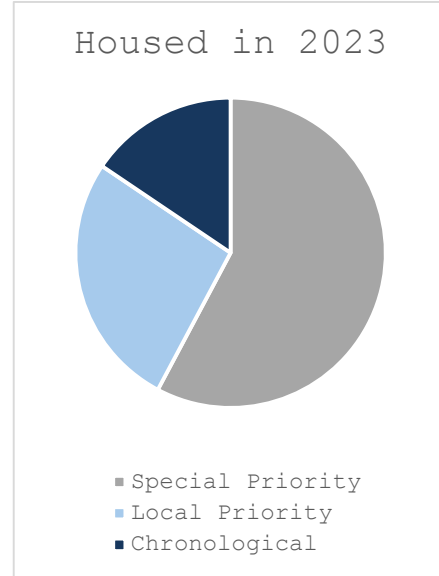
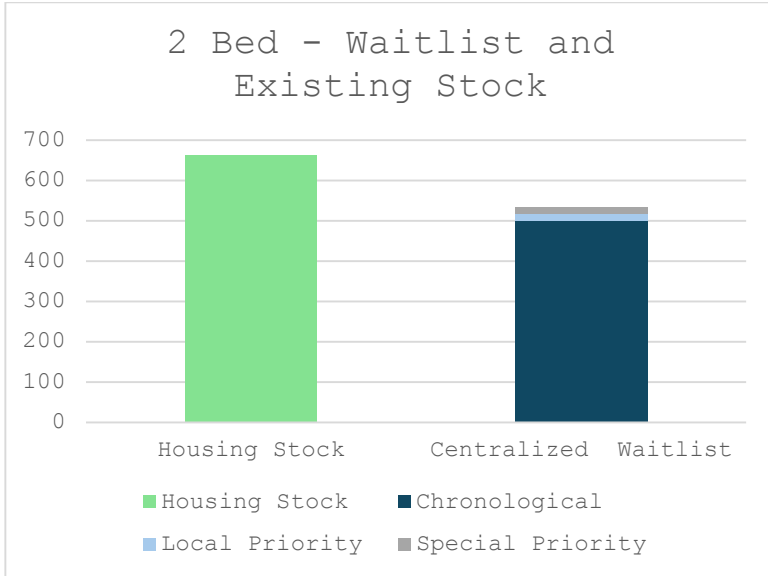
## One Bedroom Units

There are currently 1,234 one-bedroom units in Wellington-Guelph’s social housing stock. As of August 31, 2024, there were 1,846 applicants waiting for a one-bedroom unit on the CWL, with 22 applicants designated eligible with Special Priority Status and 23 applicants with Local Priority Status. In 2023, 133 applicants were housed in a one-bedroom unit, 53 of which were households from the chronological waiting list, 33 with Special Priority Status, and 47 with Local Priority Status.



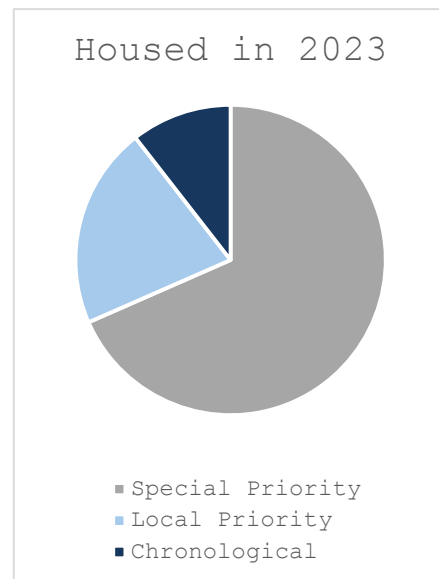
## Two Bedroom Units

There are currently 664 two-bedroom units in Wellington-Guelph’s social housing stock. As of August 31, 2024, there were 535 applicants waiting for a two-bedroom unit on the CWL, with 17 applicants designated eligible with Special Priority Status and 19 applicants with Local Priority Status. In 2023, 45 applicants were housed in a two-bedroom unit, 7 of which were households from the chronological waiting list, 26 with Special Priority Status, and 12 with Local Priority Status.



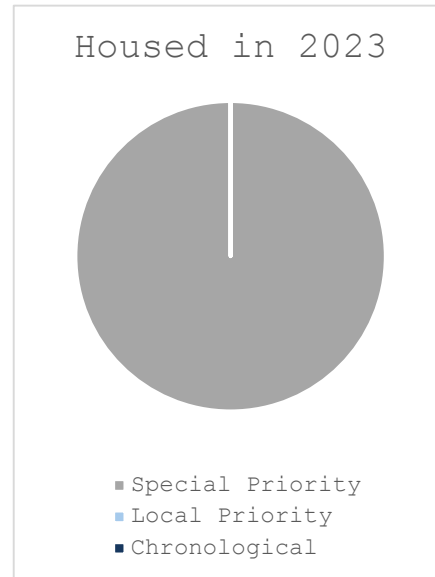
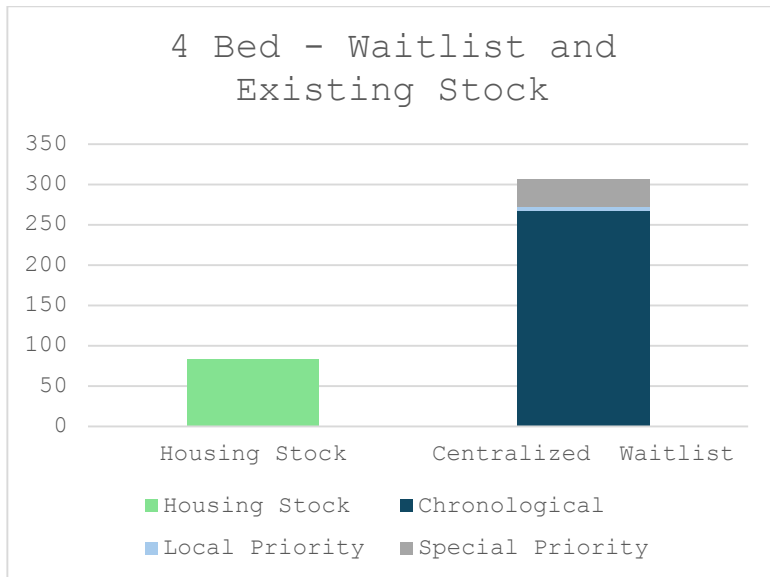
## Three Bedroom Units

There are currently 509 three-bedroom units in Wellington-Guelph’s social housing stock. As of August 31, 2024, there were 575 applicants waiting for a three-bedroom unit on the CWL, with 50 applicants designated eligible with Special Priority Status and 6 applicants with Local Priority Status. In 2023, 19 applicants were housed in a three-bedroom unit, 2 of which were households from the chronological waiting list, 13 with Special Priority Status, and 4 with Local Priority Status.



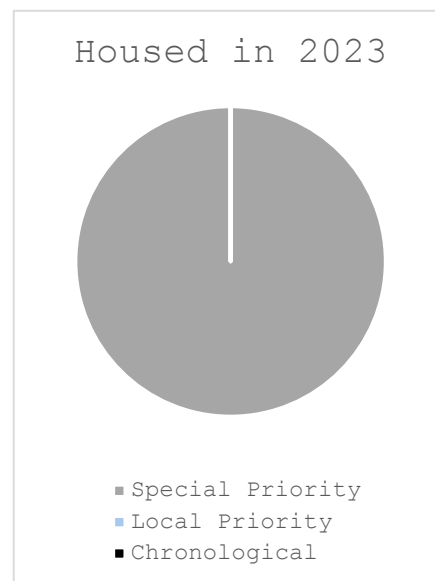
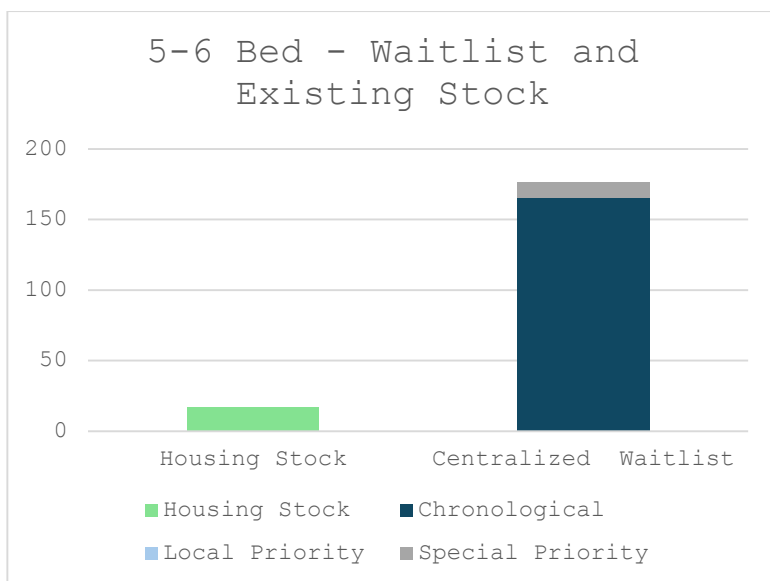
### Four Bedroom Units

There are currently 83 four-bedroom units in Wellington-Guelph’s social housing stock. As of August 31, 2024, there were 306 applicants waiting for a four-bedroom unit on the CWL, with 34 applicants designated eligible with Special Priority Status and 4 applicants with Local Priority Status. In 2023, 2 applicants were housed in a four-bedroom unit, all of which were households with Special Priority Status.



### Five and Six-Bedroom Units

There are currently 17 five and six-bedroom units in Wellington-Guelph’s social housing stock. As of August 31, 2024, there were 176 applicants waiting for a five or six-bedroom unit on the CWL, with 11 applicants designated eligible with Special Priority Status and 0 applicants with Local Priority Status. In 2023, 4 applicants were housed in a five or six-bedroom unit, all of which were households with Special Priority Status.



## **Community Partnerships**

Economic, social and health system pressures, along with rising rental costs and low vacancy rates all contributed to the ongoing housing crisis in 2023. Locally, this has resulted in increases to housing waitlists and extended wait times. This has also contributed to a low turnover rate within social housing stock, as residents are opting to remain in their unit paying market rent instead of paying a higher rental rate in the private market.

When looking to housing opportunities beyond the existing social housing stock, community partnerships play a key role. Housing Services provides funding to over 190 rent supplements in private market rentals, supports 681 units through government-funded affordable housing, and works with community partners to implement a variety of federal, provincial and municipally funded rent support programmes for over 620 households. These efforts, when combined with the existing social housing stock, allows Housing services to provide ongoing rental assistance to over 3,900 low-income households in Wellington-Guelph.

Continuing to recruit and build relationships with private market landlords and community agencies is imperative in maintaining rent support agreements and preserving the affordability of existing rental units. Without the ongoing support of these groups, the only way to expand the availability of housing stock in Wellington-Guelph is through new development.

## **Housing Development**

Since the Federal government stopped funding the development of traditional social housing in the mid-1990s, there have been a number of programmes and initiatives aimed at increasing the number of affordable housing units in communities, particularly through the Federal government's 2017 National Housing Strategy and Province of Ontario's 2019 Community Housing Renewal Strategy.

Since 2005, the Housing Services division has supported the development of 494 units of government-funded affordable housing. In 2023, a total of 105 new affordable housing units were completed, including 65 affordable units for seniors (Guelph), 8 supportive housing units for youth (Guelph) and 32 supportive housing units for adults (Guelph). An additional 32 units of supportive housing opened in summer 2024 (Guelph), with 40 transitional units still in the development phase (Guelph), with expected completion dates of late 2024 and early 2025.

Through collaborative work with upper-tier government and community partners, the County has been able to find success and make meaningful increases in the complement of affordable housing options available in our community.

## **Update:**

To further support the expansion of available housing stock, Housing Services staff are currently in development of an Expression of Interest to solicit proposals from non-profit and private sector parties wishing to create affordable rental housing within Wellington-Guelph. The intent of the Expression of Interest will be to identify existing affordable housing projects that are currently in pre-development, provide feedback, and identify funding mechanisms available to support these groups in developing successful affordable rental housing projects.



Housing Services staff are also in the planning stages of arranging the County's semi-annual Affordable Housing Development Workshop series for elected officials, housing provider staff, directors and community agencies in the local housing and homelessness sectors. In working with Tim Welch Consulting, the workshop will consist of a 5-part series that focuses on a detailed approach to key topics in development of new affordable housing, such as defining proponent goals, funding and financing, design and construction approaches, planning approvals and rent up.

**Strategic Action Plan:**

This report relates to the following objectives and priorities in the County's Strategic Action Plan:

- Tackling a Major Community Opportunity – Housing
- Making the Best Decisions for the Betterment of the Community

**Recommendation:**

That the Joint Social Services Land Ambulance Committee recommend to County Council that the report Social Housing Stock and the Centralized Waiting List be received for information.

Respectfully submitted,



Paul Skinner  
Interim Director of Housing Services