



COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

COMMITTEE REPORT

HS-23-05

To: Chair and Members of the Social Services Committee
From: Mark Poste, Director of Housing
Date: Wednesday, May 10, 2023
Subject: Overview of the Housing Services Division

Background:

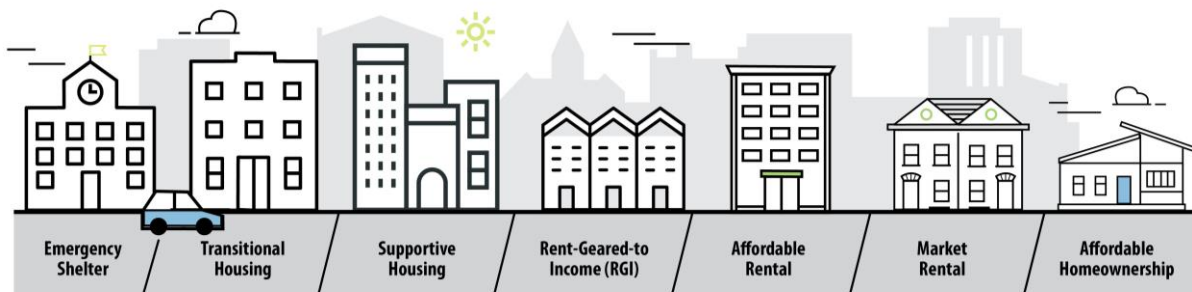
The County of Wellington is the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager for Housing Services designated by the Province of Ontario under the Housing Services Act, 2011(HSA). Under the HSA, the County is one of 47 designated Service Managers that deliver housing and homelessness services on behalf of the province of Ontario in the County of Wellington and the City of Guelph.

The Housing Services division is responsible for service system planning for the Housing and Homelessness systems. Planning activities include developing service system needs analysis and approaches to housing issues in our service area across the housing continuum from Homelessness, through emergency shelters, transitional and supportive housing systems, through social and affordable rental housing, to private market rental and ultimately homeownership.

The division works on an ongoing basis to explore opportunities within our community to prevent and respond to housing instability and experiences of homelessness. This work is undertaken collaboratively with a variety of local stakeholders including municipal partners; Indigenous organizations; health and human service organizations and operators in the homeless serving system.

This report, which is being shared for information, provides an overview of the Housing Services Division's roles and responsibilities as well as service delivery throughout our delivery area.

HOUSING CONTINUUM Guelph – Wellington



Housing and Homelessness Plan

To organize our community's approach to the need and demand in the housing and homelessness system in 2014, the division released its 10-year housing and homelessness plan called "A place to call Home." This document formed our community vision that "Everyone in Guelph and Wellington can find and maintain an appropriate, safe and affordable place to call home."

In 2015, the County followed up the Housing and Homelessness Plan with our community's first homelessness strategy, which detailed more concrete actions for our community's approach to ending homelessness. The division updated the 10-year plan in 2018, which included extensive community consultations with individuals with lived experiences, social service providers, health partners, indigenous partners, landlords, developers, and local municipalities.

The County's new Housing and Homelessness Plan was approved by County Council at the end of 2018 and leads much of the work of the Housing and Homelessness system locally. The division is responsible for communicating its progress against the goals and objectives in the housing and homelessness plan to the community on an annual basis. These reports are publicly released in June of every year on the County's website at www.wellington.ca/housing

The County's Housing and Homelessness Plan lays out 8 strategic objectives and 47 recommended actions that our community has prioritized to help address housing and homelessness needs within the system. These strategic objectives range from increasing affordable housing options, to promoting client-centred, coordinated access to the housing and homelessness system, offering a range of supportive housing options, to ending chronic homelessness.

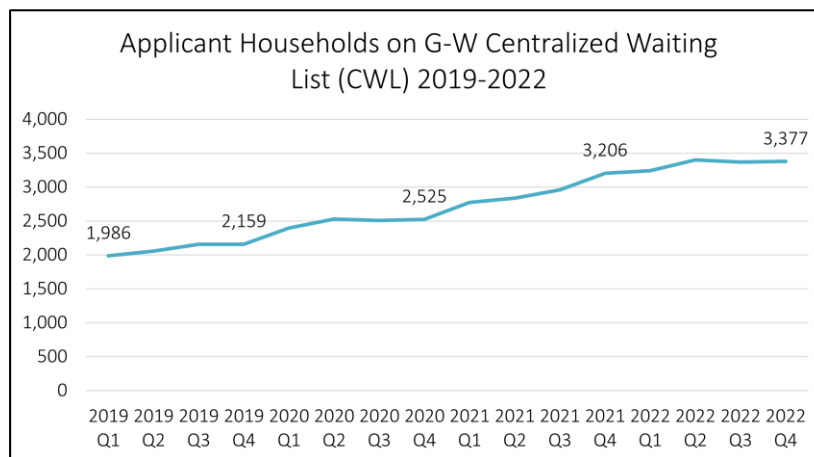
Housing Supply

The County directly owns and manages a large portfolio of social and affordable housing properties throughout our service area and is responsible of the oversight of dozens of local social and affordable housing providers. As of December 31, 2022, the division supported a portfolio of 3,124 units of social and affordable housing options.

The division supports another 488 households with funding to live more affordably, with many of these units also including a dedicated support structure to help make sure that they remain stably housed. In total, the division impacts the affordability and stability of over 3,600 households in our community's primary rental stock. With the community's total primary rental stock in Guelph-Wellington being approximately 8,500 rental units, the division is directly supporting over 42% of the primary rental stock that exists in Guelph-Wellington.

Housing Need

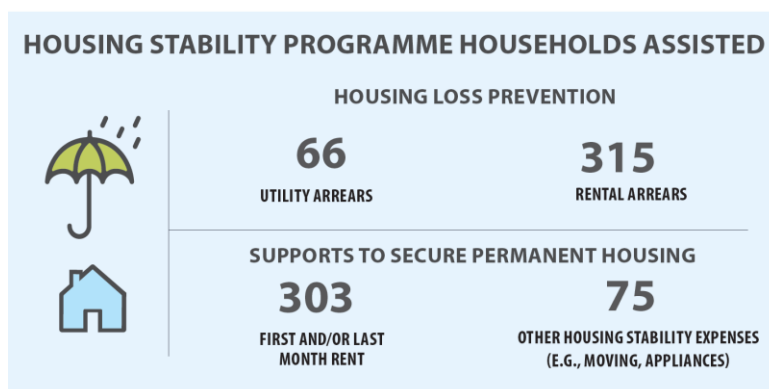
The need for social and affordable housing stock is growing as affordable rental options are getting harder and harder to find. The number of households waiting for social housing in Guelph-Wellington has risen from 1986 households at the start of 2019, to 3,377 households at the end 2022.



Housing Stability System

The need for affordable housing options in our community is leading to more members of our community struggling with their housing stability. Between evictions from the rental market, discharges from the justice system and the hospital system, as well as relationship breakdowns; numerous community members are experiencing housing instability every day. The Housing Services division's role in attempting to stabilize these households comes through three areas of focus, Preventing Experiences of Homelessness, Emergency Responses to Experiences of Homelessness and Transitions to and Retention of Housing Placements.

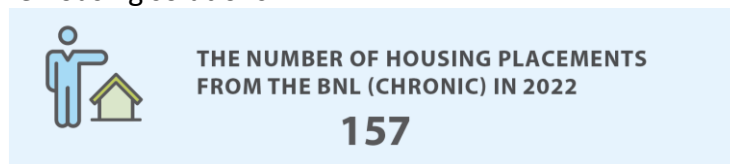
Preventing Experiences of Homelessness looks at addressing issues that can be destabilizing to households. If addressed early, supporting a household to address their rental arrears or utility arrears can be key to quickly stabilizing a household and keeping them housed. When these supports can't address the destabilizing issue, then the County's housing stability system will start to look at ways to support a household's transition into a new place to call home, with supports like assisting with first and last month's rent or other expenses to secure a new housing placement.



Emergency Responses to Experiences of Homelessness looks at addressing immediate experiences of homelessness. This is where the housing stability system supports emergency shelters, outreach workers to support those experiencing unsheltered homelessness, and diversion and rapid rehousing supports to find alternate housing solutions quickly to avoid experiences of long duration homelessness.



Transitions to and Retention of Housing Placements looks at finding permanent housing solutions for those that are newly experiencing homelessness or experiencing chronic homelessness. Depending on the needs of the individual or household, this can include solutions in market rental, social, affordable, transitional or supportive housing solutions.

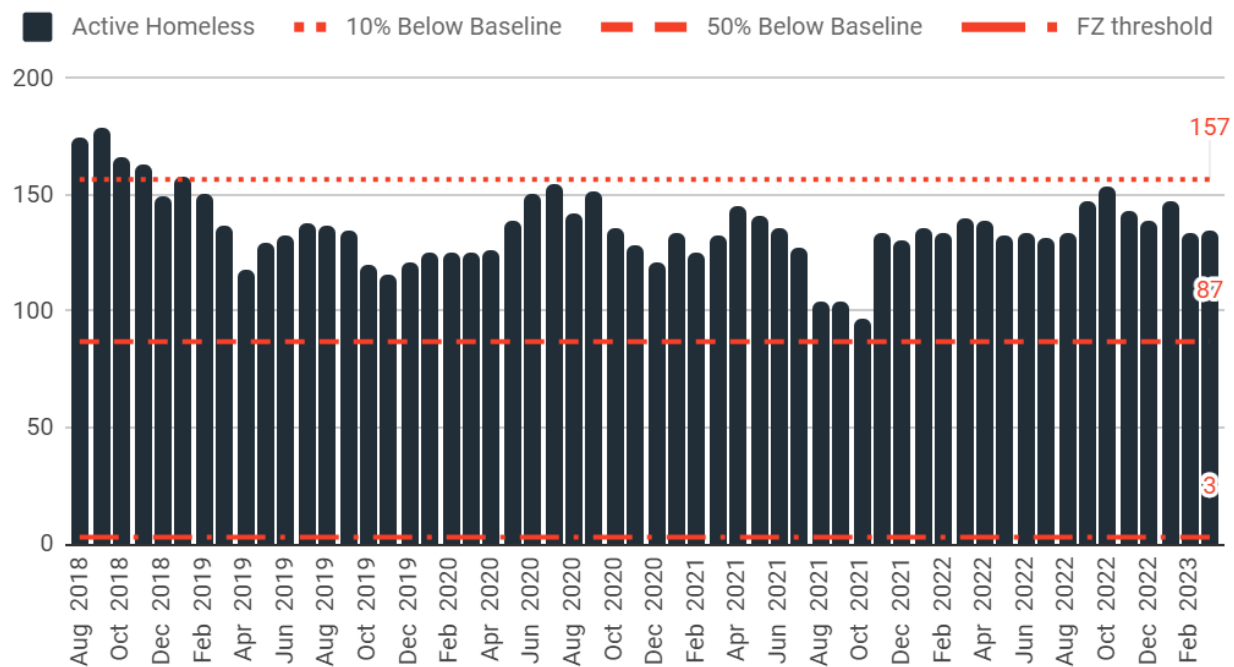


Ending Experiences of Homelessness in Guelph-Wellington

Our community is a member of the Built for Zero Canada campaign, which is an ambitious national change effort helping a core group of leading communities end chronic homelessness and veteran homelessness. Built for Zero Canada provides a structured, supportive and data-driven approach focused on optimizing local homeless systems, accelerating the adoption of proven practices and driving continuous improvement.

The County is the lead for the Guelph-Wellington Built for Zero-Canada Campaign and has received [national recognition](#) for system change work in the homelessness sector. Since setting our community's baseline for individuals experiencing homelessness in August 2018 at 172 individuals experiencing chronic homelessness, we are one of two Ontario communities to have actually reduced chronic homelessness. As of the end of March 2023, there were 134 individuals experiencing chronic homelessness in our community, which points to an overall reduction of just over 22% from our baseline.

In 2017, the County alongside community partners created a real time, up to date By-Name List of all people experiencing homelessness in our community, which has given us the ability to track each person's progress towards a housing placement. Together with County's extensive group of partner organizations, Guelph Wellington became the 4th community in Canada to establish a quality By-Name-List. The By Name List fluctuates each month helps the housing stability system to measure our progress on ending homeless in our community.



Housing Services Division Structure

The Housing Services division is structured into 7 teams that support the work across the housing continuum and support the programmes and infrastructure identified in this report.

Housing Policy team:

The Housing Policy team is responsible for supporting the Housing Services division and the goals and objectives of the Housing and Homelessness Plan, by researching best practices, supporting programme creation and implementation, and facilitating community knowledge mobilization around housing and homelessness matters across the housing continuum.

Housing Stability team:

The Housing Stability team is responsible for service delivery oversight of emergency shelters, transitional housing and supportive housing services, managing housing stability related agreements with contracted community organizations and the direct delivery of housing stability service programmes.

Applicant Services team:

The Applicant Services team is responsible for the oversight of the community's Centralized Waiting and the Review of Decisions System List for social housing units, which are both legislatively required under the Housing Services Act, 2011. The team is also responsible for applications for County and Guelph Non-Profit owned affordable housing units.

Housing Programmes team:

The Housing Programmes team is responsible for the administration and oversight of existing social and affordable housing building, rent supplements and federal and provincial funding towards the development of new housing across the housing continuum.

Community Property Services team:

The Community Property Services team is responsible for resident support, rent geared to income administration and property management services for the 1360 units of County-owned social and affordable housing stock.

Housing Maintenance team:

The Housing Maintenance team is responsible for the daily maintenance, preventive maintenance and capital asset planning of the 1360 units of County-owned social and affordable housing stock. This portfolio will soon also include the transitional housing units under development at 65 Delhi St in Guelph.

Additionally, Housing Services has management agreements with *Guelph Non-Profit Housing Corporation* and *Wellington Housing Corporation*. These are non-profit housing providers that administer 584 social and affordable housing units under a management agreement with the Housing Services division. These two housing corporations have separate governance structure based on their original creation under their original operating agreements that were created in the 80s and 90s.

Future Directions

The Housing Services division has a number of priorities in 2023 and beyond. The division continues to work towards the important objectives and recommended action identified in the Housing and Homelessness Plan, while beginning the process to develop the next 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan for 2025. This is an important process that will require engagement across the community, to develop a product that will guide our housing and homelessness efforts going forward.

Housing Services is looking to support the sustainability of existing social housing stock in the community through programme transformation. Many of our community's social housing providers are approaching the end of their original operational agreements developed in the 80s and the 90s. The Housing Services division is a leader in this work across the province and is developing a funding strategy that will ensure that providers thrive in our community by maintaining existing high quality and stable long term social housing for the community. This is an opportunity to shift these partnerships and develop a new long-term vision for these important community assets.

Finally, the division will continue to pursue funding from all levels of government to increase the supply and mix of affordable rental housing options across the continuum. The need for affordable housing options is growing with our community, and the division is dedicated to working with all levels of government to address the increasing gap for everyone to have a place to call home.

Recommendation:

That the report, Overview of the Housing Services Division, be received for information.

Respectfully submitted,



Mark Poste

Director of Housing