



Name, Item and General Nature of Pecuniary Interest

-

### 3. Delegations

None scheduled.

### 4. Report of the Manager of Housing

#### 4.1 Britannia Street Affordable Housing – Phase 2 (SOC19-015)

4 - 5

Motion by \_\_\_\_\_

**Staff Recommendation:** THAT Stratford City Council supports the Housing Division recommendation to undertake planning for Phase 2 of the Britannia Street Affordable Housing development in 2020.

#### 4.2 Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy (SOC19-016)

6 - 8

Motion by \_\_\_\_\_

**Staff Recommendation:** THAT Council support the Social Services Department's proposal to become a Designated Community under Reaching Home: Canada's National Housing Strategy;

**AND THAT** any financial implications be approved during the budget process.

### 5. Report of the Manager of Ontario Works

#### 5.1 City of Stratford Ontario Works Service Plan, 2019-2020 (SOC19-017)

9 - 41

Motion by \_\_\_\_\_

**Staff Recommendation:** THAT City of Stratford CMSM Ontario Works Service Plan, 2019-2020 be received for information.

#### 5.2 Introducing MyBenefits (SOC19-018)

42 - 44

Motion by \_\_\_\_\_

**Staff Recommendation:** THAT the report titled "Introducing MyBenefits" be received for information.

### 6. Next Sub-committee Meeting

The next Social Services Sub-committee meeting is Tuesday, October 15, 2019 at 4:30 p.m. in the Council Chamber, City Hall.

### 7. Adjournment

Meeting Start Time:

Meeting End Time:

Motion by \_\_\_\_\_

**Sub-committee Decision: THAT the Social Services Sub-committee meeting adjourn.**

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## MANAGEMENT REPORT

**Date:** September 10, 2019  
**To:** Social Services Sub-committee  
**From:** Eden Grodzinski, Manager of Housing  
 Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services  
**Report#:** SOC19-015  
**Attachments:** None

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**Title:** Britannia Street Affordable Housing – Phase 2

**Objectives:** To provide Council with an update on the plan for Phase 2

**Background:** On April 24, 2017, City Council approved a proposed plan to build 55 new affordable rental housing units on a hectare of City-owned land adjacent to Britannia Street, at the former Fairgrounds property (Report #ITS17-017). The development was to be undertaken in two phases – 35 units in Phase 1, and 20 units in Phase 2.

Council awarded the architectural services contract to SRM Architects on September 11, 2017 (Report# COU17-051) and the construction contract to PM Contracting Ltd on July 26, 2018 (Report# COU18-057). Construction on Phase 1 building began in September 2018, and residents will be moving into units this fall. With the completion of Phase 1, planning for Phase 2 will begin.

**Analysis:** The development of Phase 1 of the Britannia Street Affordable Housing project was a major undertaking for the City of Stratford's Housing Division. Furthermore, it was accomplished within existing staff resources. The Housing Division is proposing to spend the next year managing and operating the new 35 unit building, before embarking on the development of Phase 2.

The focus for 2020 will be on reviewing the feasibility of the project and undertake planning of the following activities:

- determining financing
- confirming project management roles and resources
- collaborating with Infrastructure and Development Services
- finalizing the architectural drawings and plans

- obtaining necessary planning approvals
- and preparing the architectural and construction tenders

In addition, consideration will be given to developing a robust marketing plan for Phase 2. The Housing Division is planning to collaborate with Invest Stratford in this regard, as local employers are reporting a high need for attainable housing units.

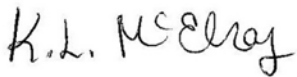
**Financial Impact:** The capital and operating budgets for Phase 2 will be determined in 2020.

**Staff Recommendation: THAT Stratford City Council supports the Housing Division recommendation to undertake planning for Phase 2 of the Britannia Street Affordable Housing development in 2020.**




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Eden Grodzinski, Manager of Housing




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Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services




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Joan Thomson, Acting Chief Administrative Officer



## MANAGEMENT REPORT

**Date:** September 10, 2019  
**To:** Social Services Sub-Committee  
**From:** Eden Grodzinski, Manager of Housing  
 Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services  
**Report#:** SOC19-016  
**Attachments:** None

**Title:** Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy

**Objectives:** To inform the Social Services Sub-Committee of the City of Stratford Social Services Department's short-listed application to become a Designated Community under Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy.

**Background:** As part of the National Housing Strategy, the Government of Canada is expanding the number of Designated Communities under Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy. At present, there are 58 Designated Communities across Canada. These communities receive ongoing, multi-year funding from Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) to support projects aimed at reducing chronic homelessness by 50% by 2027-28.

In March 2019, the Social Services Department submitted a Concept Paper to ESDC expressing our interest in becoming a Designated Community. The City of Stratford was notified in July 2019 that we are one of 16 communities in Canada that has been shortlisted for further consideration. The next phase in the application process is to complete a formal proposal due September 20, 2019. Up to six (6) new communities will be selected.

**Analysis:** The following is a summary of the mandatory requirements for Reaching Home Designated Communities:

- **Community Entity (CE):** The City of Stratford Social Services Department is applying to become the Community Entity for Stratford, St. Marys and Perth County, and as such, will be responsible for entering into a funding agreement with ESDC should we be selected as a Designated Community. Community

Entities have significant reporting requirements related to community planning, disbursement of project funds, and reporting results and outcomes.

- **Community Advisory Boards (CAB):** The Community Entity is responsible for forming a Community Advisory Board (CAB) comprised of community members who have in-depth knowledge and expertise of homelessness. The CAB is responsible for developing a community plan, and for recommending to the Community Entity agencies/projects to be funded based on local priorities identified in the community plan. It is recommended that the Terms of Reference for the *Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys Alliance to Prevent Homelessness and Enhance Housing Solutions* (the Alliance) be modified to include the mandate and responsibilities of the CAB.
- **Community Plan:** The CAB is responsible for endorsing a community plan, which outlines how the community will coordinate its response to prevent and reduce homelessness locally. The Housing Division is currently in the process of updating the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan, a requirement of the *Housing Services Act, 2011*. The 10-Year Plan Update includes a number of strategic objectives with respect to ending homelessness, which can also form the basis of the federal community plan requirements.
- **Coordinated Access (CA):** All Designated Communities are required to have a Coordinated Access system in place by March 31, 2022. The Social Services Department is already working towards implementing a Coordinated Access System, in accordance with best practices for ending homelessness.
- **Mandatory Community-Level Outcomes:** Designated Communities must adopt an outcomes-based approach and need to work to achieve the following outcomes:
  - Chronic homelessness in the community is reduced by 50% by 2027-28
  - Homelessness is reduced overall and for specific populations, including Indigenous Peoples
  - New inflows into homelessness are reduced; and
  - Returns to homelessness are reduced.

The Social Services Department will also be monitoring and tracking these outcomes as part of the annual reporting requirements for the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan and Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) funding.

**Financial Impact:** The amount of federal funding available for new Designated Communities has not been provided at this time. However, there will be a cost-matching requirement for the funding. Communities must leverage \$1 from other partners for every \$1 provided by Reaching Home. In the application, communities must show the amount of funding that they will leverage from other sources in order to

meet this requirement. This can include provincial and municipal funding as well as in-kind contributions from community partners.

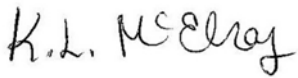
**Staff Recommendation: THAT Council support the Social Services Department's proposal to become a Designated Community under Reaching Home: Canada's National Housing Strategy;**

**AND THAT any financial implications be approved during the budget process.**



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Eden Grodzinski, Manager of Housing



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Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services



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Joan Thomson, Acting Chief Administrative Officer



## MANAGEMENT REPORT

**Date:** September 10, 2019  
**To:** Social Services Sub-committee  
**From:** Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works  
 Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services  
**Report#:** SOC19-017  
**Attachments:** City of Stratford CMSM Ontario Works Service Plan, 2019-2020

**Title:** City of Stratford Ontario Works Service Plan, 2019-2020

**Objective:** To provide information and an update on the City of Stratford's Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) Ontario Works Service Plan for 2019-2020.

**Background:** CMSM's across Ontario are required to negotiate and submit an Ontario Works Service Plan with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) every two years. The Service Plan outlines the local labour market, local office practices, and provides an overview of the programs and services available to those in receipt of Ontario Works (OW) at the local office. The Service Plan highlights Ministry targets, how to achieve those targets and how to improve outcomes for individuals in receipt of Ontario Works locally.

**Analysis:** The OW Service Plan is written based on the prescribed guidelines and template provided by MCCSS. The plan encompasses four primary sections:

- 1) Ministry Priorities – How the local office will meet the prescribed Ministry Priorities over the course of 2019-2020.
- 2) Environmental Scan – An overall look at our service delivery, local labour market trends, socio-economic factors, regional and local demographic trends and key community partnerships.
- 3) Strategies and Outcomes – This section highlights our overall service strategy, the targets set forth by the Ministry, action steps to meet these targets and how we will address service gaps that have been identified through our environmental scan.
- 4) Program Management – This section focuses on the delivery of the local Ontario Works program, highlighting the key functions and program management activities that are offered, such as our intake process, eligibility verification process and an overview of learning supports offered to staff.

In conclusion, the plan provides us with an overview of the local market, local programming available and an operational plan by which this office will operate through the 2019-2020 cycle.

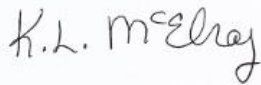
**Financial Impact:** Not Applicable.

**Staff Recommendation:** THAT City of Stratford CMSM Ontario Works Service Plan, 2019-2020 be received for information.



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Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works



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Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services



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Joan Thomson, Acting Chief Administrative Officer



# **CITY OF STRATFORD**

## **CONSOLIDATED MUNICIPAL SERVICE MANAGER**

### **Ontario Works Service Plan 2019-2020**

Respectfully Submitted by:

Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services  
Alex Burgess, Supervisor of Ontario Works

# City of Stratford - Ontario Works Service Plan 2019-2020

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## City of Stratford - Ontario Works Service Plan 2019-2020

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### **ONTARIO WORKS VISION AND MANDATE**

#### **City of Stratford**

The City of Stratford Ontario Works Division has a vision and a service mandate that builds upon the vision and mandate for the Ontario Works program established by the Province.

#### **Vision**

The Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) is dedicated to a client-centered approach to service delivery and committed to program integrity, quality and excellence, which leads to sustainable employment and financial independence for residents of Stratford, St. Marys and Perth County.

#### **Mandate**

To improve employment outcomes for Ontario Works participants by increasing options that lead to sustainable employment and increased financial independence.

#### **Province of Ontario**

#### **Vision**

To improve employment outcomes for Ontario Works participants' by increasing individual employability with the goal of sustainable employment and increased financial independence.

#### **Mandate**

To provide employment assistance and financial assistance to people in financial need. The Ontario Works program:

- Recognizes individual responsibility and promotes self-reliance through employment;
- Provides financial assistance to those most in need while they meet obligations to become and stay employed;
- Effectively serves people needing assistance; and
- Is accountable to the taxpayers of Ontario.

# City of Stratford - Ontario Works Service Plan 2019-2020

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## **MINISTRY PRIORITIES FOR 2019-2020**

As the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager for Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys, the City of Stratford Social Services Department plans to address the Ministry priorities for the 2019-2020 business cycle in the following ways:

### **1. Improving Employment Outcomes**

#### **Improvements to Service Design and Delivery of Employment Supports**

The Stratford CMSM is committed to developing service design and the delivery of employment supports based on best practice approaches. Management participates in two Southwest round tables, Business and Technology Working Group (BPT) and South West Region Employment Round Table (SWERT), as well as various local committees to ensure that local practice is current, efficient, and participant-focused. Monthly reviews of both COGNOS and Social Assistance Performance Operations reports will allow for the assessment of current trends and the adjustment of practices as required. An example of this was the implementation of a Long-Term Recipient caseload. By analyzing various reports we were able to establish that approximately 17% of our current caseload had been in receipt of social assistance for over 60 months. This is an area we decided to address in our service delivery as a pilot project for 2019 (see page 6 for more information).

#### **Enhanced Coordination and Communication Between Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) Delivery Offices**

The Stratford CMSM continues to focus on having a strong relationship with our local ODSP office. We implemented the following strategies to improve coordinated and participant-centered service delivery and these strategies will continue for 2019-2020:

- Dedicated OW Caseworkers and intake staff who specialize in transferring cases from OW to ODSP;
- Specialized OW Caseworker for ODSP-participating adult cases;
- Case conferencing with participants who require a higher degree of wraparound support within the community;
- On-going bi-monthly teleconferences with the ODSP manager to ensure that South West Region joint procedures and protocols are being followed, and reflect best practices; and
- Semi-annual joint training for OW and ODSP staff to strengthen partnerships and explore best practice options (in conjunction with Huron County Ontario Works).

## City of Stratford - Ontario Works Service Plan 2019-2020

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### **Enhanced Coordination and Communication with Employment Ontario Service Delivery Offices**

The Stratford CMSM developed strong partnerships with the two local Employment Ontario providers, Conestoga College and Partners in Employment.

Ontario Works Caseworkers continued their quarterly meetings with Conestoga College. This created opportunities to tweak processes, review referrals, and case conference on difficult cases and scenarios.

Our North Perth Caseworker is based at the Partners in Employment office in Listowel. Due to this co-location, participants could be warm transferred to their Employment Ontario worker once an outcome plan was completed.

Employment Ontario and Ontario Works management meet on various community steering committees together to provide input on local labour market issues such as Skills Advanced Ontario and Partners in Resource and Planning (PREP).

## **2. Leverage Local Economic Development**

### **Activities and Approaches**

The Connect2Skills program was initiated through a Skills Advance Ontario Application by the Four County Labour Market Planning Board in 2017 and was designed to skills-match unemployed persons into the manufacturing industry. This was a collaborative workforce development initiative for the manufacturing sector in the City of Stratford, County of Perth, and the Town of St. Marys. Partners included local economic development offices, Conestoga College, Employment Ontario, and local manufacturers.

As of January 2019, of the 45 Ontario Works recipients who began in the Connect2Skills program:

- 31 completed the in-class training
- 19 completed the placement portion of the program and graduated successfully
- 15 are currently employed
- 8 exited the system because their earnings are in excess of entitlement

In 2019, the Supervisor of Ontario Works joined the local Newcomers Settlement Huron-Perth Committee. This committee is designed to address issues newcomers face when locating to Stratford, Perth County and St. Marys, including employment and training.

The Stratford CMSM participates in the Partners in Resources for Employment Committee on a quarterly basis. The mandate of this committee is to identify employment opportunities, labour market trends, new training initiatives, and current gaps within local employment/training sectors.

## City of Stratford - Ontario Works Service Plan 2019-2020

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### 3. Develop and Maintain Local Community Service Partnerships

The Stratford CMSM established a number of specialized caseloads in order to strengthen support for Ontario Works recipients who were identified as particularly vulnerable and required extra supports. They include the following:

- i. **Long-Term Recipient Caseload:** This Caseworker took a holistic approach to any benefit units that have more than 60 months of Ontario Works assistance. Intensive case management allowed for the Caseworker to work collaboratively with the participant to identify barriers and move them along the employment spectrum or onto another income source. The objective of this pilot project was to reduce the overall length of time on assistance. We are using the CRS 100 report to analyze our success with this project.
- ii. **Homelessness Caseload:** In early 2017, the Stratford CMSM created a Caseworker position to provide intensive case management to participants who are experiencing homelessness or are precariously housed. This Caseworker worked closely with the City of Stratford Housing Division as well as multiple community partners including:

- Canadian Mental Health Association
- Choices for Change: Alcohol, Drug and Gambling Centre
- John Howard Society of London and District
- Family Services of Perth-Huron

The goal was to rapidly re-house participants who were experiencing homelessness or to use a wraparound approach to prevent eviction for those who were precariously housed. In this approach, a variety of agencies worked together to provide multiple services and assist the participant in finding and maintaining stable, permanent housing.

- iii. A **dedicated Caseworker** continued to work with women fleeing domestic violence. This Caseworker worked closely with Optimism Place, the local stage-one women's shelter, as well as with the Housing Division.

The Stratford CMSM also partnered with other local services in order to provide specialized supports to OW recipients including:

- iv. Contracting the services of a psychologist to complete cognitive and mental health assessments for our participants. Participants who identified as having cognitive disabilities or believed that mental health was a barrier to their

## City of Stratford - Ontario Works Service Plan 2019-2020

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employment were scheduled for an assessment. The assessment identified next-steps for the Caseworker and the participant in regards to Outcome Planning. Examples of this include employment that involves routine tasks, counselling, and literacy supports.

- v. The Childcare Subsidy Intake Worker for Social Services was co-located with the Ontario Works Caseworkers. This allowed for a seamless approach when a participant needed to apply for childcare subsidy or required a therapeutic referral. The Ontario Works Caseworker warm transferred the participant to the Childcare Subsidy Intake Worker to ensure that an application was completed when needed.

### 4. Strengthen Program Accountability

In accordance with the 2019 Ontario Works Service Delivery Priorities this service plan prioritizes the following pillars for service delivery:

- i. **Improving Employment Outcomes:** Employment will be the focus of service delivery. Employment duties will be aligned to ensure that the Ministry employment targets are achieved.
- ii. **Enhancing Accountability for Achieving Outcomes:** Reports will be reviewed monthly in order to measure employment outcomes. Service delivery will be modified based on analyses of these reports. For example, if we are not meeting targets we will evaluate the option of moving from a “super-worker” model in which the Caseworker completes both income and employment related duties to a model in which there are specialized workers for employment and financial aspects of a file.
- iii. **Amending Service Contracts (in-year) related to Employment Targets:** The Stratford CMSM will continuously review data to identify labour market trends and ensure that employment targets are manageable.
- iv. **Strengthening Fiscal Accountability:** The budget submission will be based on a clear rationale to ensure that delivery costs reflect program delivery and program spending.

## **SECTION 1: ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN**

### **Service Delivery**

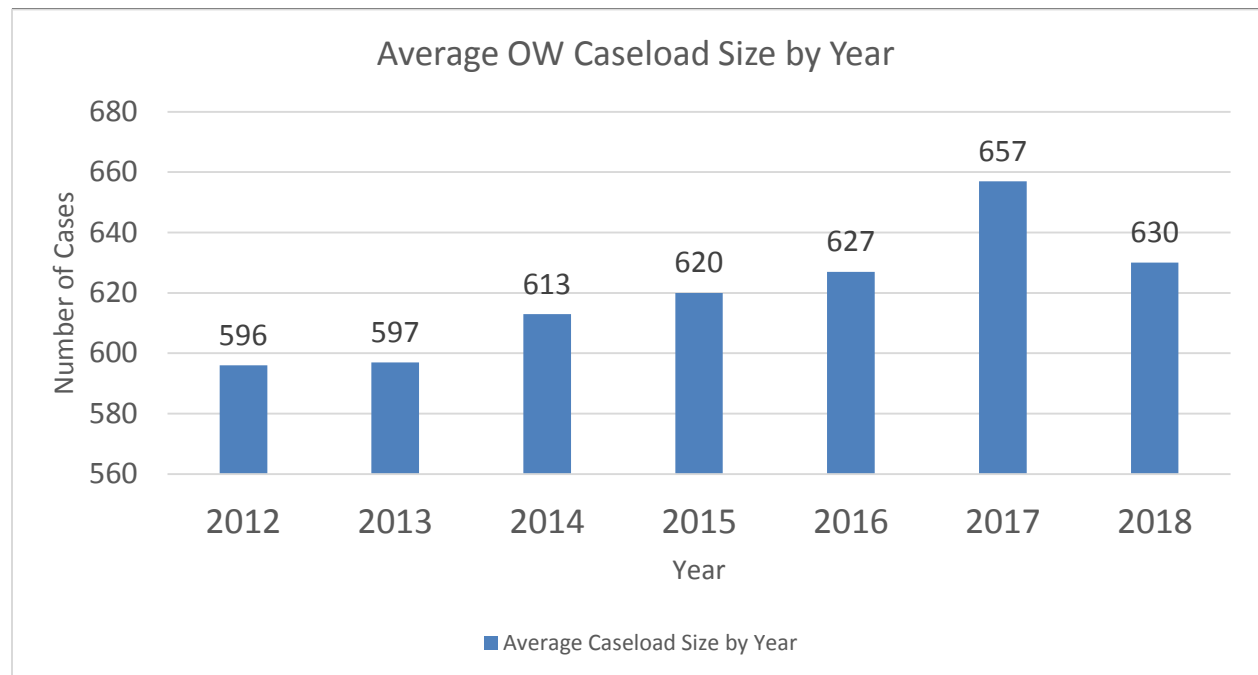
Although local service delivery continued to be improved over the 2018-2019 business cycle, the employment outcomes for recipients of Ontario Works in the first four months of 2019 were well below the sustained actuals of 2018. Based on SAMS Performance

## City of Stratford - Ontario Works Service Plan 2019-2020

Report information, COGNOS reports, local labour market trends, and discussions with community partners, possible explanations for this decline in successful employment outcomes for participants are discussed below.

### Caseload Description

The chart below illustrates the Stratford CMSM's Ontario Works caseload. Overall, the caseload has remained fairly consistent over the last five years. It is anticipated there will be a 3% increase annually over 2019 and 2020 due to factors such as the skills gap (i.e. the skills employers require versus the level of skill many of our participants have), the continued increase in part-time employment versus full-time employment, and the amount of participants experiencing multiple barriers to employment related to the social determinants of health<sup>1</sup>.



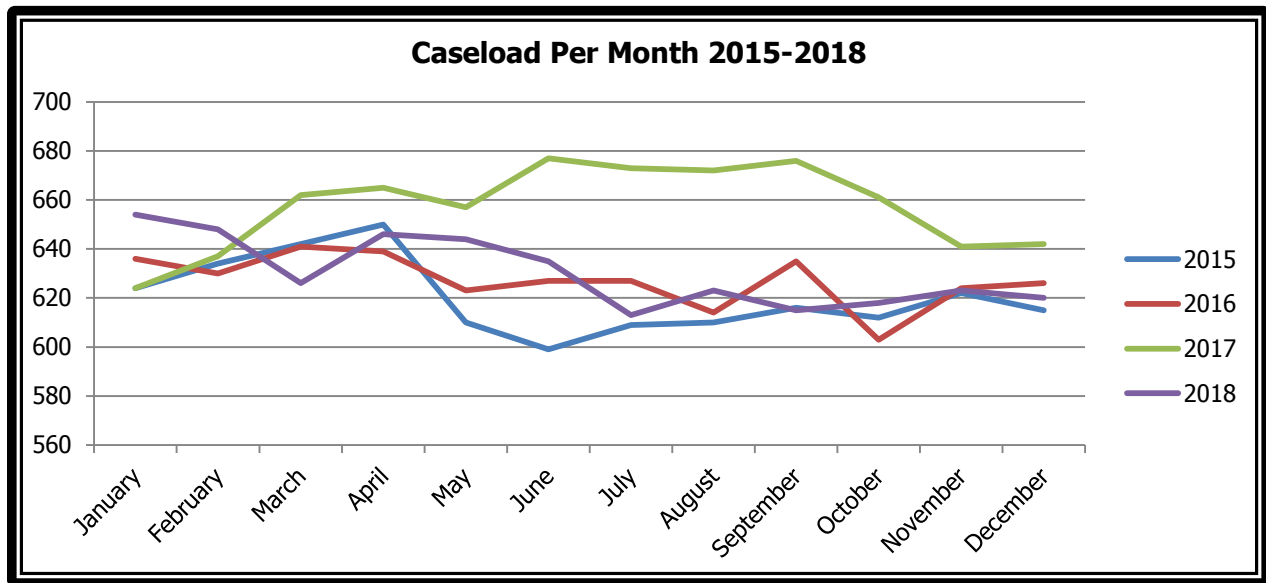
\*Note: Year 2012 average is from April to December 2012.

The average caseload for the 2018 year dropped from an average of 657 to 630 in 2018.

<sup>1</sup> Social Assistance Operations Performance Reports, December 2018

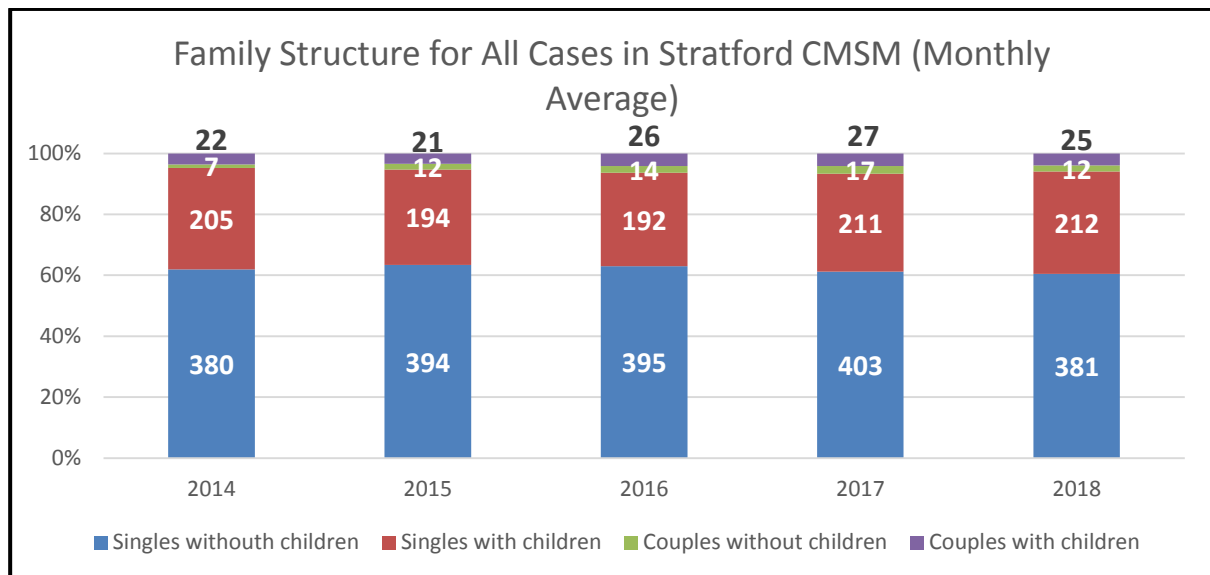
## City of Stratford - Ontario Works Service Plan 2019-2020

The chart below reflects the previous four years of caseload by month. This data suggests there is no pattern to predict consistent spikes in caseload.



2

The chart below shows that singles without children (60.5%) continue to make up the majority of our caseload. This poses significant challenges in finding affordable housing options for single-income participants. When planning service delivery for this two-year cycle we will continue to keep this group front and centre.

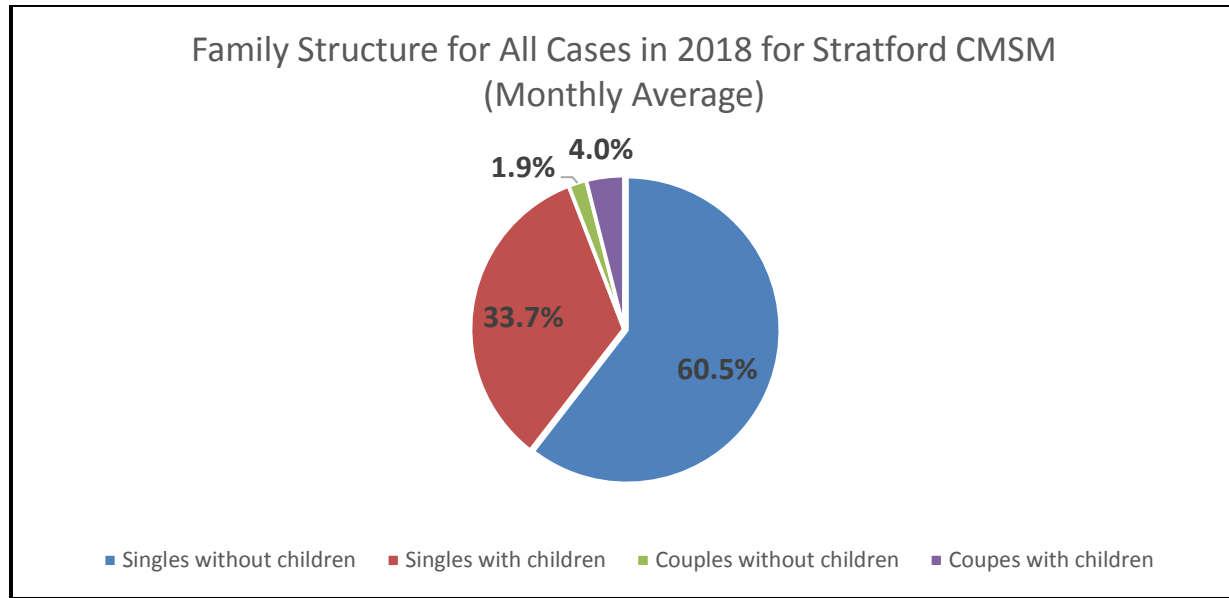


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<sup>2</sup> OW Caseload at a Glance, 2018

<sup>3</sup> OW Caseload at a Glance, 2018

## City of Stratford - Ontario Works Service Plan 2019-2020



### *Gaps in Services That Assist Clients to Prepare for, Find and Maintain Employment*

Intensive case management for participants who present with multiple barriers is the best approach to move them along the employability spectrum. There are currently three Caseworkers who carry a reduced caseload (Addictions, Homelessness, and Long-Term Recipients). However, many participants with other barriers would also benefit from being part of a specialized caseload. The Stratford CMSM is working towards reducing caseload ratios in order to make intensive case management more feasible for other identified specializations (e.g. youth, sole-support parents, and mental health specialized caseloads).

### **Local Labour Market and Economic Development**

#### Unemployment Rate

In March 2019, the unemployment rate for Stratford-Bruce Peninsula was 6.9%<sup>4</sup>, its highest rate since March 2017 when it was 6.8%. In the first four months of 2019, the unemployment rate was also considerably higher in comparison to 2018 over the same time period (5.73% vs. 4.55%).<sup>5</sup> Local economic development information suggests this higher rate can be partially attributed to the slower start to seasonal employment in the hospitality/tourism and agriculture sectors due to extended winter weather conditions. It may also reflect layoffs in the County. This slow-down is expected to correct itself in the coming months as warmer weather increases tourism and agriculture activities.

<sup>4</sup> The Stratford-Bruce Peninsula Unemployment rate cannot be separated or drilled down further to reflect Stratford or Perth County only.

<sup>5</sup> 2018, Statistics Canada

## City of Stratford - Ontario Works Service Plan 2019-2020

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### Layoffs at Local Factories

In 2019, there were layoffs at three factories in Perth County, all of which were large employers. Two layoffs occurred in Stratford and a third in Mitchell. The companies were Hendrickson Spring, Cooper Standard, and Schaeffler Automotive. While fewer employees at Hendrickson Spring were in receipt of social assistance, Ontario Works participants often receive employment at Cooper Standard and Schaeffler.

### Out-of-County Workers

The demand for workers in the manufacturing sector is significant for Stratford and Perth County employers. A new company, Blue Branch, brought in workers from across the country (mainly from the East Coast) to fill these positions. This is an ongoing trend. Other local employers have bussed in workers from other regions to support their employment needs. As a result, lower-skilled local workers have struggled to find and maintain employment, increasing competitiveness in the local labour market. This competitiveness has increased the need for programs such as Connect2Skills as a way to reduce the growing skills gap in our workforce and better address the expectations of local employers.

### **Access to Housing**

Out-of-County workers also require a place to live while employed in Perth County, which has resulted in an increased strain on an already tight housing market, particularly in Stratford. An overall lack of housing stock has severely decreased both the affordability and availability of housing for individuals living on a lower and/or fixed income. Vacancy rates for the area indicate a 0% vacancy rate for bachelor and 1.5% for 1 bedroom units.<sup>6</sup>

### **Caseload Exits to ODSP**

File transfers to ODSP are at a higher rate than previous years and may be impacting employment targets as Caseworkers assist participants with multiple barriers in obtaining ODSP. There is a high deferral rate for medical reasons with some caseloads seeing greater than 50% deferrals. In the first four months of 2019, our caseload transferred 33 files to ODSP, representing approximately 5% of the overall Ontario Works caseload. During the same time in 2018, 18 files were transferred to ODSP. This increase supports the implementation of a Long-Term Recipient Caseload to address a higher barrier caseload with multiple needs that may prevent participants from finding and maintaining employment. In particular, the Homelessness Caseworker, who carries

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<sup>6</sup> CMHC Rental Market Survey; Ontario — Rental Market Statistics Summary by Metropolitan Areas, Census Agglomerations and Cities

## City of Stratford - Ontario Works Service Plan 2019-2020

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a caseload of 50-60 participants, is seeing quite complex cases.

### Local Opioid Use

The Huron-Perth District Health Unit has documented a significant increase in opioid use within the region.<sup>7</sup> The use of fentanyl amongst recipients of Ontario Works continues to be of concern. We estimate that approximately 25% of our caseload struggles with addictions, a portion of which do not disclose this or receive treatment. This can lead to further challenges in achieving and maintaining successful employment. The medical deferral rate is rising as the caseload continues to face increased barriers to employment, requiring enhanced responses to our participants' needs; including intensive case management by our specialized caseloads.

### Cyber Incident at the City of Stratford

Due to a cyber incident that occurred at the City of Stratford on April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019, access to SAMS locally has been restricted. We currently operate as a satellite office in Huron County. However, this has severely impacted the ability of Caseworkers to ensure proper exits are being documented and followed up on. We continue to provide excellent overall customer service, although our priority has been to ensure all participants are receiving accurate payments at the expense of some follow-up processes. We have mitigated this challenge by developing strategies to ensure our data is accurate and our exits to employment are being captured correctly, so that participants are aware of all of the benefits that may be available to them.

### Performance Reports Data

Despite these challenges to service delivery, there is no clear trend emerging with regards to meeting employment targets. Overall, 2018 appears to be a statistical anomaly. Please see the chart below for averages on all 4 outcomes dating back to 2015:

<b>Year</b>	<b>% of Terms to Employment</b>	<b>% of caseload exiting</b>	<b>Avg. Monthly Earnings</b>	<b>Caseload % w/ Earnings</b>
2015	14.77%	1.14%	\$757.00	13.48%
2016	21.45%	1.9%	\$736.00	18.03%
2017	22.01%	1.83%	\$764.00	18.81%
2018	31.35%	2.51%	\$905.00	17.87%

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<sup>7</sup> Perth District Health Unit, December 11, 2018: "Local Community Group Reports Rise in Opioid-related Overdoses and Deaths"

## City of Stratford - Ontario Works Service Plan 2019-2020

### Proposed 2019 Baseline Targets

Based on our analysis, we are proposing that employment outcome targets be set to 21.63% for Target 3, a 20% increase from the Provincial median, and 1.55% for Target 4, a 3% increase from the Provincial median. We aim to exceed the Provincial median while balancing this against local labour market conditions. After discussion with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, it was indicated that we could not project below 2018 actuals, but did not need to increase these outcomes by 3%. The targets set by MCCSS are prescribed in Section 2: Linking Strategies to Outcome Measures.

### Employment Outcomes – City of Stratford CMSM

Measure	2019 Baseline	2018 CMSM Average	2018 Provincial Average
Average Employment Earnings	Not using	\$902.70	\$867.85
% of Caseloads with Employment Earnings	Not using	17.9%	12.4%
% of Terminations Exiting to Employment	21%	31.1%	18.0%
% of Caseload Exiting to Employment	1.50%	2.51%	1.5%

### Future Socioeconomic Factors That may Influence Employment and Employability

The Stratford CMSM continues to support the Skills Advanced Ontario Program Connect2Skills as a program that has successfully addressed the education and skills required in acquiring available manufacturing jobs in Perth County.

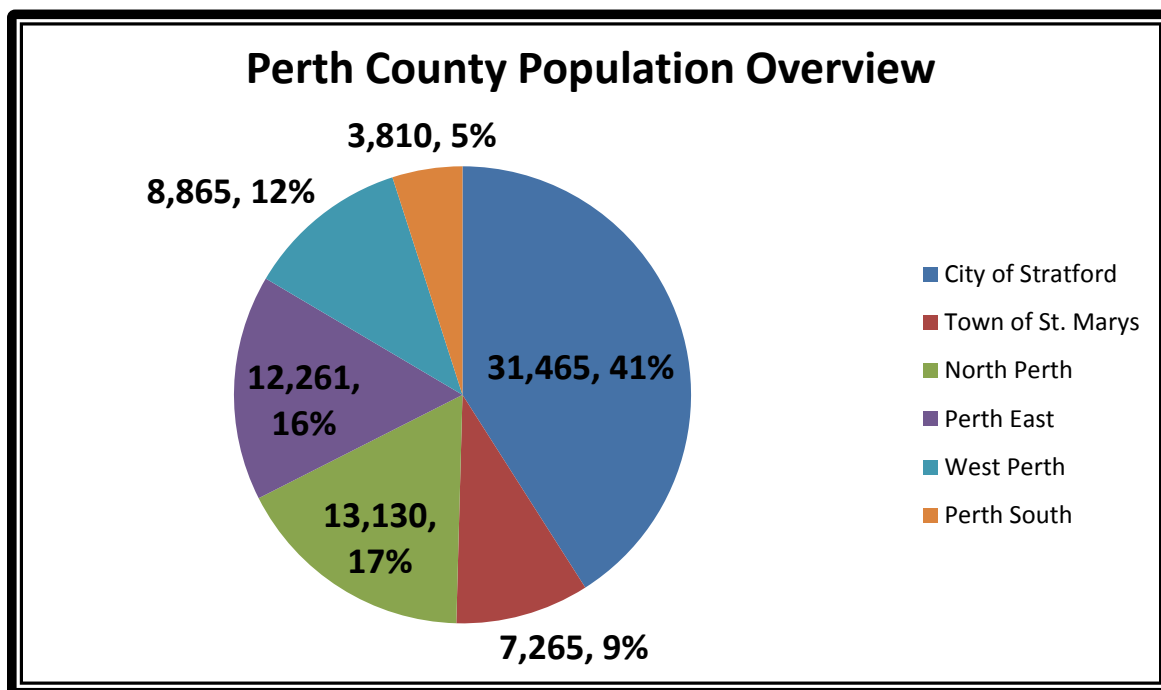
The City of Stratford and the County of Perth have each received a commitment of \$1,449,345 in provincial funding through the Ministry of Transportation's Community Transportation Grant Program to establish new public transit for a pilot period of five years. With this commitment, the City of Stratford, together with Perth County, its member municipalities, and the Town of St. Marys, will create an inter-regional transit service connecting London, St. Marys, Stratford, and Kitchener. Service between Listowel and Kitchener is also planned. A separate but related Perth County commitment will create a transit system to link the communities of Stratford, St. Marys,

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Mitchell, Sebringville, Monkton, Atwood, Milverton, Listowel and Millbank. A bus carrier will be selected through a competitive process and the new transportation services are expected to launch in the spring of 2019. It is anticipated that this service will increase employability for our rural participants by addressing transportation barriers that currently exist in our communities.

### Regional and Local Demographic Trends

According to 2015-2016 Taxfiler – Migration Estimates, Perth County attracted 2,947 people through in-migration and lost 2,744 people due to out-migration between 2015 and 2016. This is a net-migration increase of 203 people. Of the 2,947 in-migrants, 2,607 were intraprovincial, 148 were interprovincial, and 192 were international migrants. Of the 2,744 out-migrants, 2,415 were intraprovincial, 268 were interprovincial, and 56 were international migrants. The 25-44 age cohort saw the greatest net loss of 1,003 people during that time period, while the greatest increase of in-migrants of 1,014 people came from the same age cohort.



According to 2016 Statistics Canada Census data, Perth County's population was 76,796, which constitutes a 2.2% population increase since 2011. The largest

## City of Stratford - Ontario Works Service Plan 2019-2020

population centre in Perth County is the city of Stratford, which accounts for 41% of the total population.<sup>8</sup>

### Labour Force Participation Rates (Census 2016)

Census data also showed that Perth County had a higher participation rate and employment rate than the Province of Ontario as a whole.<sup>9</sup> The average unemployment rate for Perth County was 4.0% compared to 7.4% for Ontario.

	<b>Perth County</b>	<b>Ontario</b>
Participation rate	69.8%	64.7%
Employment rate	67.0%	59.9%
Unemployment rate	4.0%	7.4%

### Labour Force by Population Perth County (Census 2016)

<b>Occupation</b>	<b># Employed</b>	<b>% of Workforce</b>
Sales and Service	8,515	20.0%
Trades, Transport and Equipment Operators	7,710	18.1%
Business, Finance and Administration	5,285	12.4%
Management Occupations	5,030	11.8%
Manufacturing and Utilities	4,910	11.5%
Education, Law, Social, Government & Community	3,600	8.5%
Health Occupations	2,535	6.0%
Natural Resources , Agriculture & Related Occupations	2,080	4.9%
Natural and Applied Sciences	1,680	4.0%

<sup>8</sup> Canada NHS, 2016 for Perth County Census Division

<sup>9</sup> Canada NHS, 2016 for Perth County Census Division

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Art, Culture, Recreation and Sport	1,165	2.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>42,515</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Census 2011

The chart below outlines Perth County's top 10 occupations within the labour force, with Sales and Service ranking the highest.<sup>10</sup> However, this category has seen a 1.1% decrease over the past 5 years, whereas Business, Finance and Administration, Management Occupations, and Health Occupations have seen increases. It should also be noted that the percentage of workers within the Manufacturing and Utilities occupations decreased almost 2 percent. This may indicate a shift in the types of occupations within Perth County.

<b>Occupation</b>	<b># Employed</b>	<b>% of Workforce</b>
Sales and Service	8,840	21.1%
Trades, Transport and Equipment Operators	7,620	18.2%
Business, Finance and Administration	5,600	13.4%
Management Occupations	5,130	12.2%
Manufacturing and Utilities	4,065	9.7%
Education, Law, Social, Government & Community	3,460	8.5%
Health Occupations	2,805	6.7%
Natural Resources , Agriculture & Related Occupations	1,660	4.0%
Natural and Applied Sciences	1,525	3.6%
Art, Culture, Recreation and Sport	1,075	2.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>41,880</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>10</sup> Canada NHS, 2016 for Perth County Census Division

## City of Stratford - Ontario Works Service Plan 2019-2020

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### Community Partnerships

It is of utmost importance that the Stratford CMSM collaborates and has strong partnerships at every level of the organization. Recognizing that, we are investing significant time networking locally, regionally, and provincially. Some of the steering groups and committees we participate in include:

- Partners in Resource for Employment in Perth
- Skills Advanced Ontario
- South West Employment Round Table
- Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA)
- South West Region Business and Technology Working Group
- South West Region Strategic Management Group

We continue to work closely with Economic Development (Invest Stratford) to look at our local labour market situation and affordable housing options. These partnerships allow us to stay abreast of current issues that impact our service delivery and enable us to implement best practices to improve participant services in a timely manner. By working with our community partners, we are able to improve employment outcomes for our participants. For example, case conferencing with our Employment Ontario providers, referrals to counselling services and the Community Legal Clinic have helped to mitigate complex situations for our participants.

The Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) and the Homemakers Program are both administered by the Stratford CMSM. Risk of housing loss has become more prevalent which presents challenges for participants when finding and maintaining employment. Maintaining a strong link with the CHPI program allows Caseworkers to access financial resources to prevent eviction and/or re-house a participant. Similarly, the Homemakers Program, which provides in-home, light cleaning services, helps participants maintain their residence so they can concentrate on improving their employment outcomes.

As we move forward with the human service integration model, we continue to look for partnerships that can help coordinate services in order to better serve our mutual participants. The chart below outlines our key community partners and the services they offer.

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## Key Community Partners and Services



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### **SECTION 2: STRATEGIES AND OUTCOMES**

#### **Service Strategy**

Ontario Works Caseworkers have caseloads between 80 and 100, with the exception of two intensive caseloads; the Housing Stability and Homelessness Caseworker and the Long-Term Recipient Caseworker. These specialized caseworkers have reduced caseloads of approximately 30-60. Maintaining caseloads in this range are imperative to ensuring participants are supported in their move to self-sufficiency. This allows for Caseworkers to meet more frequently with participants and provide one-on-one service that meets their needs and moves them towards the goals identified in their outcome plan. Intensive case management supports help address the barriers that participants are facing with a more supportive and client-centered approach. The Housing Stability and Homelessness Caseworker helps participants in Ontario Works with securing stable, affordable housing; a crucial first step in ensuring that they are able to begin the journey towards employment. The Long-Term Recipient caseload helps identify barriers for individuals who have been on assistance for an extended period of time in order to better understand the issues they are facing. These individuals may be identified as having permanent barriers to employment and, therefore, require a referral to ODSP, or they may be able to move towards sustainable employment with increased supports. The attention these caseloads are able to offer participants helps provide more appropriate and situation-specific services.

Generalized caseloads focus on moving individuals towards self-sufficiency by using motivational interviewing and partnering with community agencies to provide wraparound supports to employable individuals. Through employment-focused outcome planning, the Ontario Works participant and caseworker can work together on a plan to increase employability. Outcome Plans are designed to be tailored to each participant's unique needs. The primary goal is employment and this one-on-one service helps people find and keep jobs. With the completion of the MCCSS assessment, the caseworker can identify what supports are required and assist the participant in deciding what employment path to commence. This may take the form of caseworker support in an independent job search or making an appropriate referral to a partnering community agency. In many cases, the participant may be referred to multiple partnering agencies to increase their employability. If participants do not have their Grade 12, a referral to Basic Education can be made in conjunction with a referral to Employment Ontario to help with job search techniques.

We also work closely with partnering agencies to support individuals with barriers to housing stability, access to childcare or transportation. By taking this approach, participants are connected to resources that can help support them once they transition

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off of Ontario Works. Coordinating services and supports helps participants build resiliency thereby reducing the likelihood of a return to Ontario Works. Once participants have achieved employment, caseworkers provide ongoing support to help them achieve financial independence. According to Social Assistance Operational Reports, approximately 20% of individuals on the overall caseload are working each month, but are not earning enough to move off of social assistance. In these cases, caseworkers help participants modify their outcome plan to accommodate their employment while also encouraging them to pursue additional options. This could include increasing their hours through a second job, continuing the job search for higher paid employment, volunteering to gain new work experience, or starting a training program (Basic Education) that could increase their skills to make them more employable. These strategies and measures may eventually lead to financial independence.

As part of our holistic approach to employment outcomes, the Stratford CMSM works in partnership and collaboration with a number of agencies and services (outlined on page 18).

### **Linking Strategies to Outcome Measures**

#### *Percentage of Terminations Exiting to Employment*

We forecast our target for 2019 at 31.97%, which was our average for 2018 as per the Social Assistance Operations Performance Report with a 2% increase. We will weight this target at 600 points. We have evaluated the trends in our local economy as noted in Section 1 and have concerns regarding the targets prescribed by the Ministry. Due to an increase in our unemployment rate, as well as several other factors, we will closely be monitoring our outcome measures as we are trending downward from our 2018 averages. Using the strategies identified below, we will be continually evaluating the protocols in place but achieving these targets will be quite difficult due to the trends identified in our local economy.

Strategies being used with respect to this target include:

- Ensuring Caseworkers capture appropriate exit reasons in SAMS;
- Ongoing case conference and follow-up with Employment Ontario providers on mutual participants and general employment outcomes;
- Promoting employment-related benefits and services to assist and inform participants about moving toward self-sufficiency (Earnings Exemptions, Extended Employment Health Benefit, Child Care Subsidy referrals) in both written and verbal formats; and

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- Maintaining contact with participants to ensure they inform us when employment is attained and are aware of the supports available.

### Percentage of Caseload Exiting to Employment

We forecast our target for 2019 at 2.56%, which was our average for 2018 as per the Social Assistance Operations Performance Report with a 2% increase. We will weight this target at 400 points. We have evaluated the trends in our local economy as noted in Section 1 and have concerns regarding the targets prescribed by the Ministry. Due to an increase in our unemployment rate, as well as several other factors, we will closely be monitoring our outcome measures as we are trending downward from our 2018 averages. Using the strategies identified below, we will be continually evaluating the protocols in place but achieving these targets will be quite difficult due to the trends identified in our local economy.

Strategies being used with respect to this target are the same as the previous outcome as well as:

- Ongoing discussions with local Economic Development professionals regarding labour market conditions and available employment;
- Ongoing participation in community groups which inform and support employment related activities in the community; and
- Ongoing evaluation of employment programs and initiatives to ensure the programs adequately meet the requirements of the community and support moving Ontario Works participants to self-sufficiency.

### **Action Steps and Resources**

In order to successfully implement the above strategies, it is important that our caseload ratios remain consistent. This will allow staff to effectively serve those needing assistance. It is also important for staff to have strong working relationships with partnering agencies, as well as participants, in order to ensure that outcome targets are being met and data is captured accurately.

In order to achieve improved employment outcomes for Ontario Works participants it is crucial that staff keep up to date with best practices and training in the employment field. Training will focus on a holistic approach to participant circumstances, and focus on strengthening and empowering individuals as they move towards employment and off of Ontario Works. We previously completed training sessions such as Motivational Interviewing, Trauma Informed Care, Mental Health First Aid, and Housing-Based Case Management. We prioritize professional development by encouraging staff to submit training requests for programs that pertain to their work, such as Solution-Focused

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Coaching and Understanding Addictions. Using this approach, we ensure that training is relevant to the day-to-day activities of staff.

The Stratford CMSM continues to work in conjunction with local community partners, while actively seeking and embracing partnerships or services that can positively increase participant outcomes. We have developed a Voluntary Trusteeship and Housing Help program with the Salvation Army, which is in its second year, and continue to work alongside partnering agencies in the Skills Advance Ontario program, which has seen great success.

### **Stakeholder Linkages**

The City of Stratford takes a holistic approach to case planning for participants who are “job ready” and who are not “job ready” when applying for assistance. Building trusting, quality relationships with participants are vital to ensuring that outcome planning is completed adequately, and meets the needs of each individual participant. By completing accurate, detailed outcome planning, we can address barriers that participants are facing and help move them along the employment spectrum. These quality relationships with participants link directly to our community partners and stakeholders, by ensuring that our referrals to their programs are appropriate and supported by evidence. It is of the utmost importance for the Stratford CMSM to maintain and strengthen quality relationships with our community partners in order to best serve participants and leverage funding that exists across the community.

To enhance strong linkages between Stratford CMSM and community partners, staff members participate in various local committees related to the effect of poverty on individuals. These include food security, housing and homelessness, mental health and addictions, and employment and training. Having a voice at these tables helps build strong partnerships, identify service gaps, and implement new programming and services that can enhance participants’ lives. Some of these agencies include Choices for Change, ODSP, the United Way, our local Community Legal Clinic and Employment Ontario providers.

Strong communication with partnering agencies is also key to ensuring participants are following through with referrals being made. Proactive measures like booking the appointment with the referral agency during the outcome planning process, or doing monthly follow-ups to confirm participant participation, are important strategies to confirm the delivery partner is helping achieve employment outcomes for participants. In many cases, partner agencies maintain open lines of communication, and situations that arise can be addressed quickly and effectively.

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This is also being done inter-departmentally as the City of Stratford Social Services Department moves towards a Human Service Integration model. As we continue integrating Ontario Works, Childcare, and Housing, we are streamlining our services, building stronger partnerships inter-departmentally, and reducing duplication of services.

### **Addressing Service Gaps**

Two major gaps identified at this time are the following: 1) the lack of services to address and support participants with multiple barriers to employment; and 2) supporting those facing housing stability issues. These gaps are not mutually exclusive. We continue to work with local health and addictions agencies as well as EO providers to identify barriers and support our participants in an efficient and client-centred manner. We contract with a local psychologist who conducts cognitive and psychological assessments, outlining the barriers participants are facing and providing employment recommendations. These reports help guide next steps in employment planning. Our Housing Stability and Homelessness Caseworker continues to work with individuals experiencing housing stability concerns and works with our outreach team to address these issues. Through intensive case management, we are working towards rapidly re-housing these individuals to begin moving them towards employment and self-sufficiency.

### **Increased Employability Strategies**

Our focus is on improving employment readiness for participants. To do this, we partner closely with our Adult Learning Centres, Employment Ontario providers, and programs such as Skills Advance Ontario. We use multiple providers in the community, as well as techniques such as motivational interviewing, to ensure we are providing participants with the appropriate level of service to match their needs. Taking a holistic approach to case planning, and involving community partners, helps create a wraparound support team better able to meet the needs of participants moving towards employment. The integration of Child Care, Housing, and Ontario Works has helped reduce duplication and allowed for more comprehensive supports to be put in place, in a more effective manner. Our intensive case management caseloads also address acute barriers and help support those with complex needs in a more focused and service-driven manner.

We continue to case conference and have open dialogue with local providers to ensure we are addressing these issues and identifying programs and supports that will help individuals become more self-reliant. This includes ongoing support for an individual beginning employment. This step is crucial as it can mean the difference between a participant maintaining employment or losing it. This includes ongoing check-ins if

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participants do not submit their income reporting cards, follow-ups regarding programs such as the Extended Employment Health Benefit and ongoing contact with Employment Ontario. Should an individual lose employment, we are able to reconnect with EO and the participant, address barriers that resulted in their employment loss, and work on a case plan to move them back into employment as quickly as possible.

### **Monitoring Service Strategies**

Progress on the two outcome targets (percentage of terminations exiting to employment and percentage of caseload exiting to employment), is monitored using ongoing strategies that are pro-active and grounded in statistics. This includes regular reviews of the Social Assistance Operations Performance Reports, as well as the CRS 120 and CRS 420. Further to this, the Supervisor completes ongoing case reviews and monitors COGNOS reports to ensure employment benefits, employment activities and exits to employment are being accurately managed and captured. Outcome plans are also reviewed for accuracy and relevance to employment outcomes to ensure targeted outcomes are being met. Ensuring data is accurate by monitoring what is available, and comparing against other reports, also helps guide planning and resourcing. This ensures we are using local employment programs effectively and leveraging existing community relationships with key stakeholders.

## **SECTION 3: PROGRAM MANAGEMENT**

### **Service Delivery**

The Stratford CMSM Service Delivery model focuses on addressing individual needs to improve employment outcomes by increasing individual employability and moving towards self-sufficiency. To ensure we are achieving our outcome targets, it is important that our caseload ratios remain consistent. This allows staff to effectively serve the people needing assistance. It is also important for staff to have strong working relationships with partnering agencies, as well as participants, in order to ensure that outcome targets are being met and data captured accurately. To support this, we continue to follow up with participants who exit Ontario Works to ensure their exit reason is captured appropriately, and communicate with partnering agencies that may be able to provide more information regarding their circumstances, if we cannot reach the participant directly.

We continually evaluate caseloads and caseload statistics to ensure that specialized caseloads are meeting the needs of the participants they were intended to serve. Although current ratios do not allow for more specialized caseloads, many participants would benefit from this type of service. We continue to identify priority populations and

## City of Stratford - Ontario Works Service Plan 2019-2020

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ensure specialized caseloads meet the needs of the individuals requiring the most support to move towards financial independence and self-sufficiency.

We have reviewed processes to ensure alignment with Ministry priorities moving forward. We continue to focus on improvements to our service delivery model and the delivery of employment supports by examining best practices, training staff to help move participants toward sustainable employment and increased financial independence, while remaining accountable to the taxpayers of Ontario. We continue to coordinate with our local ODSP office to ensure business protocols are in place that support shared case management when possible. We are continuing to focus on strengthening our support for our ODSP-participating caseload and take part in monthly teleconferences with the ODSP manager and Huron County Ontario Works, where discussion on this topic is ongoing. We are also reinstituting joint meetings between Huron Perth ODSP, Stratford OW and Huron OW to explore best practices and strengthen relationships. We continue to work closely with our Employment Ontario providers and have ongoing strategies in place including; monthly reports submitted regarding progress, quarterly in-person case conferences, and a Caseworker operating out of our EO provider in Listowel.

We continue to sit on committees that include local economic development partners and participate in the Connect2Skills program. Our specialized caseloads continue to focus on supporting Ontario Works participants such as long-term recipients and those facing housing stability issues across several service sectors, such as healthcare, developmental services and housing.

### **Analysis of Resources**

Presently, the Stratford CMSM has a two-member management team (Manager and Supervisor) 1 ERO, 1 EVP, 1 LSS, 1 Support Clerk and 1 Outreach Worker, 2 financial staff, 4 Intake Clerks, and 9 Ontario Works Caseworkers. All but our North Perth Caseworker, who is based in Listowel, operate out of our main office in Stratford but have the ability to travel as needed. Our caseloads average between 80 and 100, with our intensive caseloads operating between 30 and 60, based on need. The Social Services Intake Clerks are responsible for the front desk area, including walk-ins, telephone calls and completing initial Ontario Works applications.

With this current staff complement, we are able to meet the needs of our participants and provide specialized supports to those who require it. An increase in caseload numbers, or caseload ratios, could negatively impact the service being provided to participants who face these barriers and impact their ability to move towards self-sufficiency.

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### **Key Program Management Activities**

#### *Intake*

We currently have four intake staff whose duties include completing Ontario Works applications. They gather as much data as possible during intake in order to streamline the eligibility process when they meet with a Caseworker. Intake can be completed in person, over the phone, or online. We completed 648 applications in 2018, averaging 54 per month. Of these applications, 102 were completed online. We continue to work towards integration at the front desk, and have a Public Housing Office Clerk who acts in a receptionist role and assists with the front desk. We also have aligned and consolidated positions within the corporation into a singular title, Intake Clerk, as we move towards greater integration and support for participants accessing Housing, Child Care subsidy, and Ontario Works. The ongoing integration has seen increased contacts and phone calls at the Intake Clerk level and we are striving to continue increasing capacity and enhancing our service delivery at this position.

#### *Emergency Assistance*

The Stratford CMSM continues to have a Caseworker specialized in Housing Stability and Homelessness, and works very closely with internal Outreach workers, Housing Division staff and a local Housing First program, the Supported Housing of Perth Program (SHOPP). They do not have set intake appointments but are available to see participants on an as-needed basis and shorten their wait time before an intake appointment. We continue to evaluate the provision of emergency assistance to participants who may not need to receive ongoing Ontario Works benefits but who meet the legislative requirements. These situations are reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

#### *Eligibility Determination and Review*

Eligibility determination is made during the initial intake interview with a Caseworker. At this time, the Stratford CMSM continues with the 'Super-worker' model where the participant has one Caseworker who monitors their ongoing financial eligibility, and manages their outcome plan to meet legislative requirements. We currently have specialized workers in the following areas to increase service delivery for these populations: Long-Term Recipients, Victims of Domestic Violence, Addiction Service Initiative (until July 31, 2019), Under 18 and LEAP, ODSP-participating adults, and those experiencing homelessness or who are precariously housed. We also have placed a Caseworker in North Perth 4 days a week to better serve the broader geographic area.

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The Eligibility Review Officer (ERO) works in a proactive manner to mediate complaints before they escalate. The ERO completes thorough investigations when they are identified and confirms the validity of all complaints received by our office, or through the provincial hotline. This position has regular contact with external agencies and ensures investigations are thorough and complete. Recommendations are made and reviewed with the management team prior to any final decisions that impact ongoing eligibility.

We abide by the Province's policies with respect to the portability of overpayment processes. Every terminated case with an overpayment is reviewed by the ERO to ensure the overpayment assessment is accurate and noted accordingly in SAMS. We continue to refer unpaid overpayments to UpLevel and pursue all unpaid overpayments after an individual has exited Ontario Works.

### Family Support

We continue to mandate family support functions across staff, with the Ontario Works Supervisor taking the lead on all issues related to past arrears, FRO assignments and disputes over amounts owing. Caseworkers continue to support their participants in pursuit of spousal and child support and refer to the Family Law Information Clinic for support in this matter.

### Participation Management

Caseworkers schedule and complete between 6 and 12 outcome plan appointments per week and are not to have more than 20% of their outcome plans overdue at any given time. All employment related benefits are thoroughly explained when the Rights and Responsibilities is signed, as well as during Outcome Plan appointments. As discussed earlier, referrals to community partners are of the utmost importance to ensure that participants have wraparound supports, are meeting their requirements, and are working towards increasing their employability. Child care options are thoroughly explained and up-front childcare is offered when this barrier to employment is identified. Licensed and unlicensed options are explored, and both therapeutic referrals and fee-subsidy are explained for all participants moving towards employment. We work very closely with the Early Years and Child Care Division to ensure we are supporting mutual participants in the most appropriate manner and sharing information to better assist when possible.

### Program Delivery

The Stratford CMSM regularly reviews legislative requirements, directives, and standards to ensure we are meeting these measures. Participation in groups such as Business and Process Technology Working Group add an extra layer of accountability as

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we regularly meet with our counterparts and Ministry representatives to identify issues or legislative questions that are affecting us locally, or across West Region 1.

Modernization is a primary focus of our office and we continue to align ourselves with the modernization program and messaging being put forth by the Province. The majority of staff access SLACK and are encouraged to use this as an ongoing tool. Staff are expected to review the SA Extranet on a daily basis to ensure they are up to date on all communications. We constantly evaluate the effectiveness of our program and review our data outputs to ensure we are in line with expectations that are set forth.

We continually evaluate our program and policies to ensure they meet and exceed the program standards set forth by MCCSS.

Some examples include:

- Ongoing case reviews – both SAMS and physical files
- Ongoing review of specific directives at team meetings
- Ask-outs to other municipalities on interpretation of complex cases
- Ongoing review of processes in place to ensure they meet legislative requirements.

### Eligibility Verification Process (EVP)

We have 1 EVP worker, who is also supported by the ERO position to ensure we are adequately meeting our target of 90%. We have identified efficiencies to help streamline the EVP process, including file assignment, preparation, and clerical supports. This ensures that the EVP worker has enough time to review and complete file audits. We pride ourselves on thorough file audits that are completed in a timely manner. After the first cycle, we had an 89% completion rate and have been evaluating our process locally to ensure we exceed 90% moving forward. We currently review the EVP performance reports, but also meet locally throughout the EVP life cycle to ensure we are on target and identify any barriers to completion. Individuals who miss more than two EVP appointments are suspended until they attend and complete their appointment. Information is expected within a set timeframe and these expectations are clearly communicated to participants, as are the consequences of not submitting this information on time.

### **Overview of Learning Supports**

The Stratford CMSM continues its commitment to providing staff with relevant training opportunities that can enhance service delivery and avoid burnout, allowing staff to better serve participant needs. We have attended information days for the SAIL

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Program and are anticipating its roll-out amongst other CMSMs in the province. Some professional development training opportunities provided to staff include:

- Core legislative training for new hires
- OMSSA Zone 1 training
- Community guest speakers at staff meetings (e.g. YMCA Settlement Services, QUILL Learning Network)
- Motivational Interviewing
- Trauma Informed Care
- Joint process training with Huron Ontario Works and ODSP
- Solution-Focused Coaching
- Rent Smart Ontario Train-the-Trainer
- Housing-Based Case Management and Housing First Principles
- Mindfulness and Workplace Stress
- OMSSA Webinars

We also encourage staff to submit requests for specific training that will enhance their abilities and encourage positive personal growth. Once they have completed a training session, they are asked to present the information they learned to their peers to share knowledge and best practices.

### **Strategy to Deliver French Language Services**

We do not see a large French speaking population in Perth County but we do have one Caseworker fluent in French and print off applications in French when required. We are actively engaged with the YMCA Settlement Services to assist any newcomers to the area, including those who may move from French-speaking regions.

### **Business Practices**

We are constantly reviewing business practices locally, and have instituted several policies that align us with the Provincial standards including Exception Based Income Reporting, Discretionary Benefits, Records Retention and Verification Standards. We implement processes as they are needed to address ongoing issues and ensure we look at best practices from across the Province when implementing processes. We participate in the Business and Process Technology working group (BPT) as well as the South West Employment Round Table (SWERT) which allows us to share best practices amongst CMSMs in the West Region 1, and implement effective, proven strategies that are working in other communities.

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We have also implemented two local processes which focus on the health and wellbeing of both staff and participants; a Zero Tolerance Policy for behaviour in our office and the Community Visit and Safe Work Protocol which focuses on best practices when completing home and community visits.

### **SUMMARY:**

Management and staff of the City of Stratford Ontario Works Division are committed to providing quality, holistic services to all Ontario Works participants.

The Ontario Works Division will continue to work with community partners to identify gaps and find solutions through the enhancement of existing services or the development of new programming.

The Stratford CMSM will also continue to support and work diligently with the Province on any forthcoming projects or mandates. The City of Stratford Ontario Works Service Plan has been prepared in accordance with the Ministry Guidelines, Ontario Works Policy Directives, and Memorandums. The 2019-2020 Service Plan is respectfully submitted to the South West Regional Office of the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services for approval.

## City of Stratford - Ontario Works Service Plan 2019-2020

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## MANAGEMENT REPORT

**Date:** September 10, 2019  
**To:** Social Services Sub-committee  
**From:** Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works  
Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services  
**Report#:** SOC19-018  
**Attachments:** None

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**Title:** Introducing MyBenefits

**Objective:** To provide an overview of MyBenefits, a new online service being implemented by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) for Social Assistance recipients.

**Background:** MyBenefits is an online service being offered to Social Assistance recipients that has been piloted throughout the province from July, 2018 until March, 2019. The service is now being offered province-wide with the City of Stratford anticipated to begin usage of this tool in November, 2019. The service is available to residents of Ontario who are active Social Assistance recipients. MyBenefits will allow clients to see the status of all future payments and to report changes through their desktop, tablet or cell phone on a 24/7 basis.

**Analysis:** The City of Stratford Ontario Works Division has been in contact with MCCSS with regards to enrollment for MyBenefits. Currently, we are expected to begin usage of this tool locally in November, 2019. Based on the best practices of municipalities that we have spoken with, we will be utilizing a phased roll-out for clients accessing the portal to ensure a seamless transition that allows both staff and clients to become familiar with this new service.

MyBenefits gives people more choice and flexibility in how they receive, manage, and report information to the Ministry without replacing existing service channels (e.g. in office, over the phone). MyBenefits works on all of the latest major browsers (Chrome, Safari, Internet Explorer, Firefox, Edge), and on any device (e.g. desktop, tablet, or cell phone).

With MyBenefits, recipients can:

- Check payment history and view the breakdown and status of each payment
- Report earned income against an existing employer on file in SAMS and track the status of earned income submissions
- Report address changes
- View profile information (e.g. phone number, email, household members)
- View letters<sup>1</sup>

Our initial plan for roll-out is to begin with those who are currently employed and reporting earnings. This will simplify their process for reporting earnings, reduce paperwork and in turn administrative time spent on confirming these amounts. Recipients can now also report earnings via the Interactive Voice Response (IVR), allowing them a more modern and streamlined approach as opposed to the current Income Reporting Card that must be submitted monthly. With these two new approaches to reporting income, recipient's will no longer have to mail in their Income Reporting Card or attend the local office to drop this paperwork off, saving them both travel time and reducing administrative time spent inputting these amounts. If the information being submitted is incorrect, a caseworker can inform the recipient as to why, ensuring there is accountability and accuracy in the information being submitted.

Once the initial roll-out is complete, MyBenefits will be advertised and promoted to all recipients of Ontario Works locally to ensure they have a more comprehensive, up-to-date method verifying the payments they are receiving, reporting their earnings, changes to their information and viewing communications sent from the local office.

MyBenefits can be accessed at [MyBenefits](#)


**Financial Impact:** There is no financial impact.

**Staff Recommendation:** **THAT the report titled "Introducing MyBenefits" be received for information.**




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Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works




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Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services

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<sup>1</sup> "Introducing the ministry's newest online service: MyBenefits! (now in pilot)"; MCCSS. April 4, 2019

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Joan Thomson".

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Joan Thomson, Acting Chief Administrative Officer