The Corporation of the City of Stratford  
Social Services Sub-committee  
Open Session  
AGENDA

Date:  Wednesday, April 11, 2018
Time:  4:30 P.M.
Location:  Council Chamber, City Hall
Sub-committee Present:  Councillor Henderson - Chair Presiding, Councillor Vassilakos - Vice Chair, Councillor Bunting, Councillor Clifford, Councillor Ritsma
Staff Present:  Carole Desmeules - Director of Social Services, Kim McElroy - Manager of Ontario Works, Jodi Akins - Council Clerk Secretary, Eden Grodzinski - Interim Manager of Housing, Alex Burgess - Supervisor of Social Services

1.  Call to Order

The Chair to call the Meeting to Order.

2.  Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and the General Nature Thereof

The Municipal Conflict of Interest Act requires any member of Council declaring a pecuniary interest and the general nature thereof, where the interest of a member of Council has not been disclosed by reason of the member’s absence from the meeting, to disclose the interest at the first open meeting attended by the member of Council and otherwise comply with the Act.

Name, Item and General Nature of Pecuniary Interest
3. Delegations
None scheduled.

4. Report of the Interim Manager of Housing

4.1 Local Programs and Initiatives to Prevent and Address Homelessness in Stratford, Perth County (SOC18-002) 4 - 12

Motion by ________________

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled “Local Programs and Initiatives to Prevent and Address Homelessness in Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys” be received for information.

5. Report of the Director of Social Services

5.1 Application for GreenON Social Housing Grant (SOC18-001) 13 - 15

Motion by ________________

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled “Application for GreenON Social Housing Grant” be received as information.

6. Report of the Supervisor of Social Services

6.1 An Update on Ontario Works Caseload and Targets - 2017 (SOC18-003) 16 - 18

Motion by ________________

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled “An update on Ontario Works Caseload and Targets – 2017” be received for information.

7. Advisory Committee/Outside Board Minutes

There are no Advisory Committee/Outside Board minutes to be provided to Subcommittee at this time.

8. Next Sub-committee Meeting

The next Social Services Sub-committee meeting is May 16, 2018 at 4:30 p.m. in the Council Chamber, City Hall.

9. Adjournment

Meeting Start Time:
Meeting End Time:

Motion by ________________
Sub-committee Decision: THAT the Social Services Sub-committee meeting adjourn.
Title: Local Programs and Initiatives to Prevent and Address Homelessness in Stratford, Perth County, and the town of St. Marys

Objective: To provide the Social Services Sub-committee with a response to the issues which were brought forward by the delegation of Mr. Barry Wick at the Social Services Sub-Committee meeting on February 14, 2018.

Background: On February 14, 2018 a delegation attended the Social Services Sub-Committee. Mr. Barry Wick presented on the need for a Homeless Resource Center. The Sub-Committee requested that Staff prepare a report to address the following issues:

- Number of “hidden homeless” and whether that number is accurate;
- On-site resource to meet individual needs (resource staff and shelter beds in one facility);
- The need for longer-term solutions;
- Lack of communication;
- Data on number of emergency shelter nights used and beds available;
- Housing programs and initiatives available;
- Difficulty of accessing information (not sure where to find it, too may separate places to contact, hard to contact with no phone or internet);
- Not enough local housing stock;
- Wait list – number of people on it and length of time people are waiting;
- Landlord/tenant issues (resources available to assist);
- Report from Police on how often they are called to remove sleeping people from private property and any concerns they have identified;
- The number of people who can’t access shelter because they have gone beyond the 14 days of emergency shelter.
Analysis: Number of Homeless in Stratford, Perth County and St. Marys

According to the Canadian Observatory of Homelessness (2012), homelessness refers to:

"...the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household’s financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination...Homelessness describes a range of housing and shelter circumstances, with people being without any shelter at one end, and being insecurely housed at the other. That is, homelessness encompasses a range of physical living situations, organized here in a typology that includes
1) Unsheltered, or absolutely homeless and living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation;
2) Emergency Sheltered, including those staying in overnight shelters for people who are homeless, as well as shelters for those impacted by family violence;
3) Provisionally Accommodated, referring to those whose accommodation is temporary or lacks security of tenure, and finally,
4) At Risk of Homelessness, referring to people who are not homeless, but whose current economic and/ or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards.
It should be noted that for many people homelessness is not a static state but rather a fluid experience, where one’s shelter circumstances and options may shift and change quite dramatically and with frequency.”¹

Locally, individuals/families experiencing homelessness are rarely found sleeping on the streets. They tend to stay “hidden” from the public eye – couch surfing a friend’s apartment, hiding in an abandoned barn, or staying in emergency shelter accommodations.

To better understand the state of homelessness in Stratford, Perth County and St. Marys, the City of Stratford and the community Alliance to Prevent Homelessness and Enhance Housing Solutions (the Alliance) piloted a two-day Point in Time (PiT) count of persons experiencing homelessness in April 2017. A total of 72 individuals were identified as experiencing homelessness during the enumeration period. For additional details, please refer to Report SOC17-11.

Plans are currently underway for another community PiT in the spring of 2018.

The City of Stratford Police reported that in 2017 they received 10 calls regarding individuals sleeping on private property. Five of these calls involved the same individual,

with whom the Police made efforts to intervene and provide referrals to available community supports. The other five calls involved individuals who were intoxicated and had fallen asleep on someone else’s property. These individuals were identified as having residences elsewhere and were moved along by the officers. In summary, the Police do not frequently encounter individuals who are experiencing homelessness. Both, the City of Stratford Police and Huron Perth OPP, are well aware of the emergency accommodation services offered by the City of Stratford Social Services Department, and will make referrals if need be.

**Emergency Shelter Accommodations**

Emergency Shelter Accommodations are currently available to residents of Stratford, Perth County and St. Marys as follows. Youth (ages 16-24) are housed at Shelterlink and can accommodate up to 14 youth. Women and their children who are victims of domestic violence are sheltered at Optimism Place, with 13 spaces. Men and families (not experiencing domestic violence) are accommodated at local motels. In addition, the City owns and operates five transitional units throughout the county - a one bedroom unit, a bachelor unit and a three bedroom house. These emergency housing options are intended to provide temporary accommodation to individuals who are experiencing homelessness, as well as basic needs, referrals to community supports, and assistance securing permanent housing. Individuals are supported by the City’s outreach workers or the staff of Shelterlink and Optimism Place.

Access to Emergency Housing Services is provided by Social Services Department, Ontario Works case workers, on weekdays from 8:30 am – 4:30 pm, and by Shelterlink after-hours. Printed cards with the telephone numbers of the Emergency Housing Services have been distributed to local community partners throughout Perth County, including the Police and Huron Perth OPP, and are available at the Social Services Department. Information is also available to residents through 211 and the Huron-Perth Helpline and Crisis Response team.

As illustrated in the table below, 460 individuals/families were assisted in 2017 – up 22% from 2015. The average number of nights that each household utilized emergency housing declined by 1.6 nights between 2015 and 2017. In 2017, 13% of clients stayed the maximum length of stay of 14 days. However, extensions were provided on a case-by-case basis, according individual needs and cold weather alerts.

It is important to note that these numbers do not include Optimism Place, which is funded directly by the Provincial government. Furthermore, these numbers are totals, not unique clients, meaning that some of the households may have utilized emergency housing services multiple times.
Table 1: Emergency Housing Service Statistics, 2015-2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>% Change (2015-17)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of nights</strong></td>
<td>2340</td>
<td>1637</td>
<td>2122</td>
<td>-9%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of households</strong></td>
<td>378</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>22%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Average nights per household</strong></td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>-26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average cost per night ($)</strong></td>
<td>85</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>2%</td>
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</table>

**Cost of Operating an Emergency Shelter**

According to research conducted by Michael Shapcott of the Wellesley Institute in 2007, the average monthly costs of housing people while they are homeless are $1,932 for a shelter bed, in comparison to the average monthly cost of rent supplements of $701, or social housing of $200 (2007). In other words, the cost of operating an emergency shelter is about ten times as much as operating a social housing unit.²

This expense does not include the cost to the individual; namely, the impact on their physical and mental health. Research demonstrates that the use of shelters may contribute to poor health conditions due to sleep deprivation, the spread of infectious disease, limited space for storing personal goods and limited ability to take care of personal hygiene. A study of male shelter users in Toronto revealed that their mortality rate was two to eight times higher than the general population.³

Emergency shelters have long been considered to be a “Band-Aid” approach to addressing homelessness, as they do not solve the root causes. Iain deJong of OrgCode Consulting, the lead researcher and author of the City’s 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan does not recommend that the City pursue the establishment of an emergency shelter.

Furthermore, funding from upper levels of government does not support the establishment and operation of new emergency shelter beds. Current funding is focused on Housing First initiatives, which have shown to have superior client outcomes and are highly cost-effective. The national At Home/Chez Soi (2009-13) study found that for every $10 spent on Housing First interventions for chronically homeless individuals, over $21.72 in savings

related to health care, social supports, and involvement in the criminal justice system was realized.4

**Adopting a Housing First Approach to Address Chronic Homelessness**

Housing First is a best practice for addressing homelessness that was first popularized by Dr. Sam Tsemberis and Pathways to Housing in New York City in the 1990s. It involves providing individuals with complex conditions who have experienced chronic or episodic homelessness with immediate access to subsidized rental housing, coupled together with intensive case management services. Housing First is based on the belief that housing is a fundamental need, and that people should not have to prove that they are “housing ready” by first participating in treatment, being stabilized on medications and/or sober before obtaining somewhere to live. In a Housing First approach, homeless individuals are placed directly into permanent housing units, limiting the need for emergency shelter accommodations.

In 2017, funding allocations were granted to 21 out of the 47 Service Managers across the Province. The City of Stratford Social Services Department was one of the 21 Service Managers selected to receiving funding and to participate in the new Province’s Housing First initiative called Home For Good.

**Home For Good - Perth County** is a highly collaborative Housing First intervention aimed at supporting individuals and families experiencing homelessness in Stratford, Perth County and St. Marys. The partnership, between the City of Stratford’s Social Services Department, Optimism Place, Stratford/Perth Shelterlink, Community Mental Health Association (CMHA) Huron Perth, Choices for Change and John Howard Society of London and District, will provide housing, with intensive wraparound supports services to the following provincial priority populations:

- Youth 16-24 years of age;
- Adults transitioning from institutions (namely correctional facilities);
- Families with dependent children who face multiple barriers to housing stability; and
- Individuals experiencing chronic homelessness (including those who self-identify as Indigenous).

The focus will be on providing individuals and families with safe and suitable housing of their choice, in the community of their choice, with the appropriate level of support and services based on each individual’s unique needs. The Program is expected to serve 52 households when fully operational. For additional details, please refer to Report SOC17-019.

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Other Homelessness and Housing Stability Initiatives

The Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) is a fund provided to the Service Manager by the Ministry of Housing. The CHPI program offers assistance for matters such as rental arrears, utility arrears, last month’s rent, and emergency shelter accommodation. The City’s ongoing efforts to address homelessness and housing stability include several programs that have been funded in part by CHPI, for instance: two Outreach Workers, three transitional housing units, the PIT (homeless enumeration) counts, and various financial supports and services that help residents maintain their housing. In October 2017, a revised CHPI guideline was implemented at the City, with a focus on greater flexibility and increased supports for both social assistance recipients and those who do not receive social assistance. The new guideline has received positive feedback from both staff and individuals accessing the program.

Under the Community Homelessness Prevention initiative the newly added Social Services Outreach Worker and Intensive Community Outreach Coordinator positions provide invaluable supports to individuals who are actively homeless, precariously housed or facing potential eviction. These Outreach Workers assist participants with a wide variety of issues and tasks, such as basic life skills, searching for permanent housing, conflict resolution with neighbours, de-cluttering units, etc. For additional details see Report SOC17-015.

Starting in the spring of 2018, the Salvation Army will be launching a Housing Help and Voluntary Trusteeship Program. This project is co-funded in partnership by the Social Services Department, with funds from CHPI, Ontario Works – Employment Supports, and with funding received from the Federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS). This program offers both drop-in and scheduled support services for individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness. Participants are able to access a Resource Centre, equipped with computers, a telephone and fax machine, and free internet access. Group workshops will also be offered on topics related to tenant rights and responsibilities, financial literacy and money management. For additional information, see Report SOC17-009.

Waiting List for Subsidized Housing

The Housing Services Division operates the Perth and Stratford Housing Corporation (PSHC), as well as a number of other programs and services to support access to safe, affordable, and appropriate housing located throughout Perth County. More specifically, the PSHC consists of 663 units throughout the county, varying size and type, ranging from bachelor to 5-bedroom units, which are rented to low-to-moderate income families on a rent-g geared-to-income (RGI) basis.

The Housing Services Division also administers the Coordinated Access Waitlist to all public and social rent-g geared-to-income units by managing what is commonly known of as “the waitlist.” As such, Housing staff assess applicant eligibility for RGI housing and ensure
households are selected off the waitlist by providers according to legislated requirements under the Housing Services Act.

Support and oversight is also provided to the social housing providers (non-profits and co-op providers of 415 permanent RGI and 21 rent supplements) in relation to their requirements under the Housing Services Act, particularly as it pertains to the selection of tenants from the Coordinated Access Waitlist and to the calculation of monthly RGI charges.

The Housing Services Division also administers a range of rent supplement and housing allowance programs wherein subsidies are paid either on behalf of the tenant to the private landlord or to the tenants themselves to help offset the cost of shelter (rent, and in some cases also utilities). Participants in these subsidy programs must all qualify for RGI housing, with some subsidy programs being specifically allocated for targeted populations.

For example, in 2016, the City of Stratford Social Services Department was successful in their application to be granted funding under the Survivors of Domestic Violence Portable Housing Benefit (SDV-PHB). This additional funding has provided rent supplement assistance to approximately 20 households to date. This program is delivered in partnership with Optimism Place (women's shelter) and Emily Murphy Centre (second stage housing provider). The rent supplements have allowed individuals and families access to housing that otherwise may have been unaffordable, and allowed them the freedom and flexibility to locate throughout the county in the community of their choice. For additional details, see Report SOC16-019.

At present, over 200 households are supported by these various rent supplement and housing allowance programs. All funds to support such subsidies currently come from the provincial government, although individual municipalities are increasingly encouraged to consider supplementing such subsidy programs with local funding in order to provide increased access to affordable housing and to foster housing stability according to the unique needs of their communities.

As of December 31, 2017, there were a total of 352 eligible households on the housing waitlist. Of these 352 households, 62 (17.6%) were identified as “urgent” status,5 and 13 (3.7%) were identified as “special priority” status.6

Between January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2017, 130 households were housed with an average wait time of 7.0 months. The average wait time for “special priority” households was 4.3 months. The average wait time for “urgent” status households was 5.3 months.

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5 Urgent status refers to a locally defined status. The Service Manager is not obligated to apply this status to any particular category. Locally, the designation of urgent status is being used to address homelessness.

6 Special priority status is assigned to victims of domestic violence.
Wait times vary by unit type, with wait times for 1 bedroom units at 8.8 months, 2 bedroom units at 5.9 months, and 3+ bedroom units at 5.1 months.

**Landlord-Tenant Issues**

In addition to the Housing Help and Voluntary Trusteeship Program described above, any resident experiencing rental housing issues or challenges can also contact the local, provincially funded, Huron Perth Legal Clinic for free advice, advocacy, and representation on matters pertaining to the Residential Tenancies Act and the Landlord and Tenant Board tribunal process.

**Community Awareness and Information Sharing**

In December 2013, the Social Services Department released the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan, which was developed in consultation with community members and providers. Staff established the Alliance to Prevent Homelessness and Enhance Housing Solutions, which is comprised of various stakeholder groups, to provide strategic guidance and advice with respect to the implementation of the recommendations in the plan. The Alliance meets quarterly, and a working group to assist with the homelessness enumeration meets more frequently.

Each year, the Social Services Department releases an Annual Report which documents progress and achievements in relation to the goals and targets in the 10-Year Plan. The 2017 Annual Report will be released to the public in July, 2018.

The Social Services Department is currently working on producing a 5-Year Update Plan to the 10-Year Plan for submission to the Ministry of Housing in 2019, as per the requirements of the Housing Services Act. The planning process will involve consultations with community stakeholders.

**Financial Impact:** There is no financial impact as this report is intended to provide an update on homelessness programs and housing stability initiatives, in response to questions raised at the Social Services Sub-Committee meeting on February 14, 2018.

**Staff Recommendation:** THAT the report titled “Local Programs and Initiatives to Prevent and Address Homelessness in Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys” be received for information.
Alex Burgess, Social Services Supervisor

Eden Grodzinski, Interim Manager of Housing

Carole Desmeules, Director of Social Services,
CEO, Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation

Rob Horne, Chief Administrative Officer
MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: April 11, 2018
To: Social Services Sub-committee
From: Carole Desmeules, Director, Social Services, CEO, Perth and Stratford Housing Corporation
Report#: SOC18-001
Attachments: None

Title: Application for GreenON Social Housing Grant

Objective: To provide the Social Services Sub-committee with information about a proposal for funding through the GreenON Social Housing program.

Background: In mid-February, the Social Services Department received notification that the Housing Services Corporation (HSC) had established a $25 million fund called the GreenON Social Housing program to support retrofits in social housing apartment buildings with less than 100 units. The objectives of the program are to:

- Reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) pollution in social housing buildings;
- Increase comfort and quality of life for Ontario’s low-income and vulnerable tenants;
- Decrease operating costs for social housing providers through energy savings resulting from the retrofit activities; and
- Increase the sustainability of the existing social housing stock.

To be considered for funding, Service Managers were required to submit a Business Case to the HSC by March 28, 2018.

Analysis: Given the timing of this funding call, coupled with our understanding of the current building conditions of the local social housing providers and the capacity to deliver the program within the expected timeframe, the Housing Services Division put forth a Business Case to upgrade the windows and patio doors of Woodland Towers 1 and Towers 2 (96 units).

Woodland Towers, operated by Spruce Lodge Non-Profit Housing, provides affordable housing for seniors and adults with disabilities who live on fixed incomes. The buildings were established in 1985 and 1990, at a time when little attention was paid to energy
efficient design. Both of the buildings are non-combustible concrete structures, clad with exterior brick. Tower 1 is 7 floors and Tower 2 is 5 floors. The windows and patio doors are original to the buildings, meaning that they are 33 and 28 years old respectively. The windows are a commercial style, single pane, aluminum framed product, with sliders. The patio doors are made of steel construction and have a poor air seal and a raised threshold, making the apartment balconies inaccessible for tenants. The windows and patio doors, while still operable and functional, are not energy efficient.

The last building condition audit of the Woodland Towers was completed in 2007, and the last energy audit was done in 2010. This energy audit clearly identified the high electrical demand period as October through May, given the electric baseboard heating and the inefficient windows.

The tenants often express concerns with the patio doors because they do not seal properly, and with the windows due to drafts. The tenants also require accessible patio doors to their balconies (i.e., wider doors to accommodate mobility devices, with an accessible threshold). When complaints about drafty windows have been followed up by the building management, the finding is that the windows are functioning as they were designed, but that they are not an efficient design in comparison to present day standards (i.e. lowE and argon thermal pane glass and energy efficient frames).

Spruce Lodge has extremely limited funds to make capital improvements. The provider’s capital reserves are projected to expire by 2020 for Tower 1 and by 2025 for Tower 2. The windows and patio doors are not on the capital reserve list for replacement during this time period.

The total amount of funding being requested from HSC is $1,444,590.

**Financial Impact:** There is no financial impact as this report is intended to provide information. The project will only proceed if the capital grant is received from HSC.

**Staff Recommendation:** THAT the report titled “Application for GreenON Social Housing Grant” be received as information.

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Carole Desmeules, Director, Social Services,
CEO, Perth and Stratford Housing Corporation
Rob Horne, Chief Administrative Officer
MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: April 11, 2018
To: Social Services Sub-committee
From: Alex Burgess, Social Services Supervisor
Carole Desmeules, Director of Social Services
and CEO of Perth and Stratford Housing Corporation
Report#: SOC18-003
Attachments: None

Title: An Update on Ontario Works Caseload and Targets - 2017

Objective: To provide an update on the Ontario Works caseload as well as the progress towards targets set forth in the 2017 Service Plan with the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

Background: Every two years Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) are required to submit an Ontario Works Service Plan to the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS). The Service Plan is intended to provide an overview of programs and services available to individuals receiving Ontario Works and focuses on improving local outcomes for people who rely on social assistance. The Service Plan also outlines targets that each Service manager sets with the Ministry with regards to the local caseload. The three targets that were focused on in the 2017-2018 Service Plan were as follows:
1) Percentage of the caseload with employment earnings;
2) Average monthly earnings;
3) Percentage of the cases closing that are exiting to employment
Please see Report SOC17-013 for further information on the Service Plan.

Analysis: Ontario Works Performance Reports are used each month to track and measure the targets set with MCSS to ensure that we are exceeding our targets and providing the best services possible to our clients throughout Perth County. With regards to the local office, we have exceeded our targets this year as well as met our legislative requirement with regards to average business days from the date of application to the date of a decision made by an Ontario Works caseworker. For 7 out of 12 months in 2017, we were below the 4 day window, and averaged 3.83 days from application to decision for the entirety of 2017. This exceeded the provincial average of 4.75 days from application until a
decision is made. Our caseload size averaged 658 throughout the year, with our largest caseload size being 676 in September, 2017 and our lowest being 624 in January, 2017.

**Percentage of Caseload with Employment Earnings**
Throughout 2017, we averaged 18.8% of our Ontario Works caseload reporting employment earnings each month. This number is up slightly from 2016, where we had 18.03% of the caseload reporting earnings. Our highest percentage, by month, for the year was 22.44% in January, 2017 and our lowest was 16.13% in May, 2017.

**Average Monthly Earnings**
Over the course of 2017, participants on our caseload averaged $764 dollars per month in employment earnings. This amount was an increase of $26 from our 2016 numbers. Our highest average month was October, 2017, where participants averaged $932. It should be noted that for a single to earn too much to qualify for Ontario Works, their earnings as of the rate change in October, 2017 would have to exceed $1643.00.

**Exits to Employment**
The percentage of cases closing which were exiting to employment each month in 2017 averaged 20%, representing 1.76% of the total caseload size. Our highest rate of exits to employment occurred in October, 2017 whereby 33% of the files that closed were due to employment. This number falls very close in line with our 2016 averages of 19.71% of files closing due to employment, representing an average of 1.85% of the total caseload size.

In summary, the caseload size grew throughout the year and the targets set forth in the Service Plan were exceeded on a regular basis. Of the three targets, the only category whereby we did not exceed the provincial average was the Average Monthly Earnings. Otherwise, we exceeded the provincial average with regards to average business days to a decision, percentage of caseload with employment earnings and percentage of exits to employment.

**Financial Impact:** There is no financial impact at this time as this report is for informational purposes only and Ontario Works is now funded 100% at the provincial level.

**Staff Recommendation:** THAT the report titled “An update on Ontario Works Caseload and Targets – 2017” be received for information.

Alex Burgess, Social Services Supervisor
Carole Desmeules, Director of Social Services,
CEO, Perth and Stratford Housing Corporation

Rob Horne, Chief Administrative Officer