

# infocus

## Social and Community Services

The County of Simcoe Social and Community Services Division encompasses Children and Community Services, Ontario Works and Social Housing Departments. Essential social services are provided to the region through an integrated model of service delivery. Additionally, some non-mandated initiatives provide support to local networks and organizations that aim to alleviate poverty in Simcoe County.

### Children and Community Services

The Children and Community Services Department delivers programs and services to support licensed child care and families across the region.

Children and Community Services is committed to providing and promoting quality licensed child care that enhances opportunities for early childhood development while providing families with informed, affordable access to programs.

A second primary area of focus is homelessness prevention and poverty

reduction. Through community partnerships and service provider contracts, the County of Simcoe achieves more seamless and integrated service for individuals, youth and families being impacted by poverty and/or homelessness.

The Local Immigration Partnership supports improved outcomes for newcomers living in Simcoe County by working with community partners across multiple sectors to co-ordinate supports and improve understanding of immigrant needs.

### Child Care Fee Subsidy

The Children and Community Services Department provides Fee Subsidy Assistance to eligible families within Simcoe County.

In order to qualify, parents/guardians must be working, attending school, be in need of developmental programming for a child with Special Needs, or have a therapeutic referral based on a parent/guardian's need.

County staff work closely with child care service providers holding "Purchase of Service"

agreements with the County of Simcoe allowing families in receipt of child care subsidy to access these licensed spaces.

A standardized income test, based on each applicant's Notice of Assessment from Canada Revenue Agency, is used to determine the eligibility of those applying for subsidized child care.

Child Care Representatives provide information to parents about child care programs and also complete quality assurance inspections to ensure Municipal requirements are being met.



## Child Care Quality:

Supportive relationships  
for learning

The County of Simcoe supports, develops, and implements system-wide initiatives focused on enhancing licensed child care quality.

County staff support operators in developing improvement goals and related strategies that align with Ontario's Pedagogy for early learning, Ministry legislation, County policy, and locally developed Child Care Quality Best Practice Guidelines.

Initiatives supported by County staff in licensed child care programs include facilitation of communities of practice, in-program modelling and mentoring, and facilitating critical dialogues to support a continuum of quality improvement practices.



Child-Care System Statistics*	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of Full-Time Equivalent Staff	927	942	1044	1165
Number of Contracted Child Care Programs	179	180	192	192
Number of Children in Receipt of Fee Subsidy	4181	1998	3905	4605
Number of Families in Receipt of fee Subsidy	2861	1759	2605	3176
Child Care Centre** Licensed Capacity in Simcoe County	15,690	15,035	15,388	10,008

\*(as of December 31, 2018)

\*\*in Centres with POS agreement with County of Simcoe Source: OCCMS R047

## Child Care Capacity Building

The County of Simcoe works closely with licensed child care operators and community partners to identify learning priorities, collaborate on learning plans to fulfill the communities' learning priorities and to support educators' Continuous Professional Learning requirements set out by the Ontario College of Early Childhood Educators (OCECE).

The County of Simcoe provides funding to support professional learning plans and sustainable capacity building strategies, for educators working in the licensed child care system and for broader system partners.

The County continues to work with its

community partners and local colleges to address challenges related to recruitment and retention of Registered Early Childhood Educators.

Child Care Capacity Funding supported 78 learning and networking experiences with more than 1,800 participants in 2018.



## Wage Enhancement Funding Grant/ Home Child Care Enhancement Grant

Through a process funded by the Ministry of Education and managed by the County of Simcoe, all licensed child care operators are eligible to apply for wage enhancement funding, regardless of auspice, participation in municipal quality initiatives, or current purchase of service status.

Wage enhancement supports Licensed Child Care staff with an increase of up to \$2 per hour, plus 17.5% benefits. In addition, the Home Child Care Enhancement Grant will support an increase of up to \$20 per day for home child care providers contracted by licensed agencies.

## Special Needs Resource Services

Special Needs Resource Services provide families with a wide range of supports to help children with special needs develop to their fullest potential.

Children and Community Services administers funding and manages contracts with four transfer payment agencies that provide early intervention resource services throughout Simcoe County for children aged 0-6 years.

This includes supports from Resource Consultants, Preschool Speech and

Language Services, Blind/Low Vision Program and Occupational and Physiotherapy Services.

Services support children in Simcoe County identified with special needs and those who may be at risk of experiencing barriers to development. Special Needs Resource Funding also provides enhanced funding for child-care centres to support quality inclusion of children with special needs.

During 2018, Special Needs Resource Services served 3,207 children.

## Housing First

The County of Simcoe works within the context of existing financial resources, related policy, and close collaboration with community service providers, to ensure the local system of homelessness prevention continues to build on a Housing First perspective, becoming continuously more integrated and robust, furthering a vision of excellent client service and positive, related outcomes.

In 2018, the Simcoe County Regionalized Housing First Program assisted 116 vulnerable, high acuity households. Over time, we believe that homelessness can be meaningfully addressed through continued partnerships, learning from those with lived experience, right system design, and implementation of best and/or promising practices.

## Housing Retention Program

The Housing Retention Program provides low income households with emergency financial assistance to assist with energy arrears, rental arrears, mortgage arrears and last month's rent

to ensure that they are able to remain housed.

Housing Resource Centre Services are provided in Alliston, Barrie, Collingwood, Midland and Orillia.

## Housing with Related Supports

The Domiciliary program provides permanent housing for vulnerable individuals who are economically disadvantaged and have significant health problems that require support for activities of daily living.

There are nine contracted domiciliary services providers located throughout Simcoe County, and 276 persons were supported

through this program in 2018.

The Rapid Re-Housing program supports housing stability by providing time limited rent supplements/subsidies and support services to individuals and families who are in, or at risk of entering an emergency shelter. In 2018, 64 persons were assisted through rapid re-housing.

## Community Data Program

The Community Data Program (CDP) is a national initiative that facilitates cost-effective access to Statistics Canada and other sources of data products at the community level, allowing service delivery agencies to understand local social and economic

trends, and to better understand needs of the community.

The CDP builds local consortia in communities across Canada, and the County of Simcoe is the lead for the local consortium, which is comprised of community partners.

## Emergency Homeless Shelters

The County of Simcoe provides funding for emergency homeless shelter beds including access to basic needs.

Emergency homeless shelters provide lodging, food, and personal needs to individuals

experiencing homelessness. Shelter services are intended to be on a short-term basis by individuals in crisis, needing temporary housing and support.

Residents of an emergency shelter may or may not be

recipients of social assistance and may be eligible to receive such benefits as basic needs allowance, drug card and other support services while residing in the shelter.

There are five emergency shelters in Simcoe County.

There is also a community based Emergency Shelter System in place for areas of the County that do not have a homeless shelter.

In 2018, 33,471 bed nights were provided through emergency shelter program.

## Local Immigration Partnership

The Simcoe County Local Immigration Partnership is funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

This initiative supports improved planning and coordination of services across multiple sectors, collaborating with community stakeholders who form a Partnership Council.

In 2012, the Partnership launched a Community Settlement Strategy providing an action plan to improve outcomes for immigrants living in Simcoe County.



[www.immigration.simcoe.ca](http://www.immigration.simcoe.ca)

A progress report was published in June 2016 to provide an update to the community on the implementation recommendations.

Over the past several years, the County has also received provincial funding which has supported development of an immigration website,

development of employer supports, including online information, community-engagement sessions, a pilot project with libraries to develop welcoming hubs, an immigrant entrepreneurship networking initiative, and a project with post-secondary institutions to attract and retain international students.

## Social and Community Investment Funding

The County of Simcoe provides Social and Community Investment Funding to help local organizations develop community-based initiatives that address poverty and homelessness.

It is recognized that a continuum of supports is an ideal approach for a combination of crisis intervention and preventative measures when addressing poverty and homelessness.

SCIF funding is awarded through an annual call for proposals process.





## Ontario Works

### Ontario Works Case Management

- The Ontario Works program helps applicants in temporary financial need find sustainable employment and achieve self-reliance through the provision of effective, integrated employment services and financial assistance.
- Emergency Assistance enables the immediate provision of financial assistance (basic needs, shelter and benefits) to applicants in a crisis or emergency situation (Fire, Flood, Tornado etc.)
- Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP) is a program for parents between the ages of 16 and 25. This program assists the participant build employability and parenting skills while completing their high school diploma.

### Emergency Social Services

The activation of Emergency Social Services (ESS) is imperative to meet urgent human needs in the event of a large scale disaster.

The Social and Community Services Division has designed and tested an emergency services response structure that provides five emergency social services that are considered essential in the operation of a Reception and Evacuation Centre:

- Registration and Inquiry
- Emergency Food
- Personal Needs
- Lodging
- Emergency Clothing

### Integrated Services Unit

The ISU is the first point of contact for individuals applying for social assistance or child care fee subsidy. The ISU also provides information about community resources and programs for residents who may not be eligible for social assistance. These services may include the housing retention program, adult dental/denture/eyeglass programs and a range of community referrals.



### Employment Services

Ontario Works employment assistance activities are designed to assist participants in obtaining skills that support progress towards sustainable employment. All applicants and participants are provided with access to the supports they need to achieve these goals.

Some of the activities are:

- Employment Supports
- Basic Education and Training
- Community Placement
- Employment and Self Employment Placement
- Learning, Earning and Parenting
- Pre-employment training

## Ontario Works Caseload - 2012-2018

YEAR	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Mth Avg
2012	7,749	7,887	8,033	7,924	7,924	7,830	7,634	7,649	7,507	7,392	7,516	7,463	7,710
2013	7,660	7,672	7,685	7,775	7,775	7,591	7,359	7,286	7,254	7,177	7,205	7,314	7,480
2014	7,520	7,522	7,606	7,687	7,687	7,609	7,432	7,309	7,182	7,032	7,059	7,166	7,405
2015	7,216	7,221	7,353	7,461	7,461	7,400	7,364	7,371	7,290	7,151	7,007	7,041	7,278
2016	6,910	6,902	6,946	6,859	6,859	6,639	6,425	6,232	6,264	5,993	5,923	5,954	6,483
2017	5,942	5,909	5,967	5,874	5,815	5,678	5,547	5,488	5,415	5,316	5,454	5,471	5,656
2018	5,553	5,614	5,615	5,625	5,649	5,552	5,383	5,382	5,359	5,263	5,338	5,418	5,479
2017 v2018	-6.55%	-4.99%	-5.90%	-4.24%	-2.85%	-2.22%	-2.96%	-1.93%	-1.03%	-1.00%	-2.13%	-0.97%	
2018 mth +/-	1.50%	1.10%	0.02%	0.18%	0.43%	-1.72%	-3.04%	-0.02%	-0.43%	-1.79%	1.43%	1.50%	-0.07%

## Quality Assurance

The Quality Assurance staff ensures the integrity of the Ontario Works Program is preserved through adhering to Legislation and Provincial Guidelines.

Staff conduct internal reviews for client appeals, represent the County of Simcoe at Social Benefits Tribunal Hearings and provide staff training. Quality Assurance also reviews and responds to overpayment inquiries, monitors and tracks all assignments such as CPP, WSIB, EI and processes reimbursements.

## Special and Investigative Services Unit

The Special and Investigative Services Unit is divided into family support and eligibility review functions provided by Family Support Workers (FSWs) and Eligibility Review Officers (EROs). Both the EROs and FSWs are also available internally as a resource for Ontario Works staff.

The role of the Family Support Worker

is to assist participants in arranging child and/or spousal support provisions.

Pursuit of child support is voluntary, however, child support payments are exempt as income from Ontario Works assistance. Family Support Workers assist participants to arrange child support provisions which improve the financial well-being of dependent children in

alignment with the provincial Poverty Reduction Strategy.

An Eligibility Review Officer's (ERO) role is to ensure the amount of assistance being issued to a participant is accurate. Under the Ontario Works Act, an ERO has the authority to conduct an investigation if there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a fraud may have occurred.

## Social Housing

As the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager, the County of Simcoe is responsible for administration and planning of the County's social housing system. The social housing department is comprised of two business functions that encompass administration of the social housing programs and the direct delivery of social housing.

### Direct Delivery

#### Simcoe County Housing Corporation

The County of Simcoe is the direct owner and manager of the Simcoe County Housing Corporation (SCHC), which provides affordable housing to seniors, families and individuals.

The majority of units are rent-geared-to-income, which therefore means tenants pay rent at approximately 30 per cent of their gross household income.

Management of the Simcoe County Housing Corporation includes office administration, applicant and tenant co-ordination, property management, rent supplement agreements, daily and preventative maintenance and capital

asset management.

Simcoe County Housing Corporation currently owns 1,316 social housing units, 79 affordable housing units, and funds approximately 130 rent supplement units with private and not-for-profit landlords.

Construction is being completed on a re-development project in Collingwood, for 147 new units (30 replacement rent-geared-to-income units and 117 affordable units), and on a new development in Wasaga Beach for 99 new affordable housing units. Construction has started on a 40-unit affordable housing rural development in Tay Township.



## Administration

Social Housing administers a diverse range of affordable housing programs designed to provide affordable, safe, and secure housing for the residents of Simcoe County.

### Non-Profit, Co-operative, Federal and Urban Native Housing Programs

The County of Simcoe is responsible for funding, administration and ensuring legislative compliance for local non-profit, co-operative, federal and urban native housing programs including the Simcoe County Housing Corporation.

There are approximately 4,000 social housing units that receive ongoing operating funding. Non-profit housing is owned and managed by local non-profit housing groups. Co-operative housing is owned and managed directly by its members. Typically, 60% of non-profit and co-operative residents pay rent based on income and 40% pay market rents.

The federal housing units in Simcoe County are administered through transferred operating agreements and the County is responsible for ensuring compliance. This includes non-profit housing and Urban Native Housing Programs are housing units specifically for individuals with Aboriginal Status.

### Centralized Rent-Geared- To-Income Waitlist

The County is responsible for the administration of the centralized waitlist for approximately 3,000 rent-geared-to-income units in the County.

First priority is given to applicants where a member of the household has experienced abuse from someone they are currently living with. All other applicants are offered housing in chronological order.

As of December 31, 2018 there were 3,907 households on the waitlist.

### Affordable Housing and New Initiatives

The County of Simcoe continues to take advantage of funding and strategic opportunities to enhance our programs and address local needs across the housing continuum:

- From 2004 – 2014, \$71.6 million federal-provincial-County funding was used to create approximately 1,300 units of affordable housing across new rental development, secondary suites, affordable homeownership, and rent supplements/housing allowances, as well as maintaining affordable housing through Ontario Renovates.
- County Council approved Our Community 10-Year Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy in January 2014. This strategy sets clear targets and priority actions that will assist the County of Simcoe and its municipal and city partners in ensuring adequate, affordable, and appropriate housing for all residents. Included in the strategy is a target to increase the supply of affordable housing by 2,685 units over the next 10 years.
- As of December 31, 2018, 1,288 new units had been created through rent supplements, new rental development, secondary suites, and home ownership programs.

#### Federal-Provincial Funding:

- The County is in the final year of the 2014 – 2020 under federal-provincial funding. During this period, \$24.7 million will support approximately 600 affordable housing units through rent supplements/housing allowances, new rental development, homeownership, and Ontario Renovates.
- In 2017, the County was approved for \$4.5 million in capital funds under the provincial Home For Good Program. This funding will help create 37 new units of supportive housing for people who have experienced chronic homelessness. This will consist of two projects, one in Barrie and one in Orillia. The Barrie motel conversion project is now open. The Orillia project is underway.
- New federal-provincial funding programs were introduced in 2019. In Simcoe County, three-year funding will be targeted to repairs in Indigenous units and in the wider Social Housing system, as well as targeted to the creation of affordable housing units through new rental development, secondary suites and urgent home repairs.
- Under the Anti-Human Trafficking Program, five new units are being created which will be supported with rent supplements.

#### Other Initiatives:

- The County has also supported the development of affordable housing and the sustainability of current social housing through the following initiatives:
- Strong Communities Rent Supplement Program (funded by Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, administered by the County) provides a monthly rent subsidy to bridge the gap for approximately 90 low-income households. This program will end in 2023.
- The County funded the creation of 79 new affordable rental units for seniors attached to the County's social housing buildings in Bradford and Barrie.
- An annual budget of \$200,000 has been established to provide forgivable loans and grants to offset Development Charges for developers of affordable housing created without federal-provincial funding. In 2015, a non-profit organization was supported by this funding to create 21 units of affordable housing in Penetanguishene. Affordable housing created by Habitat for Humanity is also supported through this funding every year.
- A capital repair loan process for social housing providers started in 2015 to meet the needs of mandated housing providers that face urgent life safety repair pressures in their buildings. This program is intended to work in conjunction with any future capital repair funding programs that may be initiated by other levels of government, as well as with the social housing providers that may be able to leverage their own assets.
- The County started two new municipally funded programs during 2016-17, a rent subsidy program and secondary suite programs. Both programs are customized to suit the unique Simcoe County context.