

# District of Parry Sound Housing and Homelessness Annual Report

2022-2023



❖ Housing Programs

❖ Parry Sound Housing Corporation

❖ Housing Stability and  
Ontario Works

❖ Esprit Place Family Resource  
Centre



[www.psdssab.org](http://www.psdssab.org)

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# A Message from the Chair of the Board

On behalf of the District of Parry Sound Social Services Administration Board, I am pleased to present our 2022-2023 Housing and Homelessness Annual Report.

After 2 years of pandemic restrictions, we wholeheartedly consider 2022 to be a year of transition as we move out of COVID protocol and back to a new normal. Over the last year, our dedicated housing staff have completed many repairs and upgrades to many units within our community housing portfolio, and as Service Manager, we were also able to provide funding for similar projects to other non-profit housing providers throughout the District, thanks to funding provided by the Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative (COCHI) and the Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI).

Collaboration and integration of services have been areas of focus this year and will continue to be our primary focus into 2023 and beyond. Early last year, our Ontario Works and Housing Stability teams were unified into one team under the division of Income Support & Stability, with the primary goal being to fully support human services integration, and a ‘no-wrong door’ approach. Last spring, that same team recruited a Community Relations Worker with many years of experience working at Esprit Place Family Resource Centre, our Violence Against Women (VAW) shelter. The collaboration of integrating a VAW lens into the Assertive Case Management style of the program has already begun to have a positive impact on the work we’ve been doing towards single window integrated service and a ‘no-wrong door’ approach to accessing our services.

Another collaborative initiative we are very pleased to be part of is our strengthened partnership with the West Parry Sound Health Centre on the collaborative Mental Health Hub to interconnect the hospital with community and social services. Through this initiative and our existing partnership with the West Parry Sound Health Centre, the DSSAB now has a mental health and addictions professional assigned specifically to support those accessing social services. This initiative is intended to actively break down the silos between mental health care and other programs and services to ensure that our community’s most vulnerable people have access to wrap-around supports and care.

Looking forward, all eyes are on the housing market and the need for new housing development in the District. According to the data, Parry Sound saw a population increase above the provincial average between 2016-2021. There is no arguing the fact that the demand is strong for all types of housing along the continuum. What is most concerning for us here at the DSSAB is the availability of affordable rental units. There is a disproportionately high number of single-family homes compared to purpose-built rentals in this area which signifies a need for affordably priced long-term rental units across the District, particularly within the Town of Parry Sound.

After years of being reactive due to restrictions, our Board is hopeful that 2023 will bring more opportunities for collaboration and innovation. We look forward to proactively embracing this new normal, despite its challenges, and working with municipalities and community partners to empower the people we serve to improve their quality of life.

**Rick Zanussi,  
Board Chair  
District of Parry Sound Social Services Administration Board**

**Objective 1: To provide Home Ownership and Ontario Renovates programs to assist homeowners in remaining in their homes. As well as supporting those looking to enter the homeowner market.**

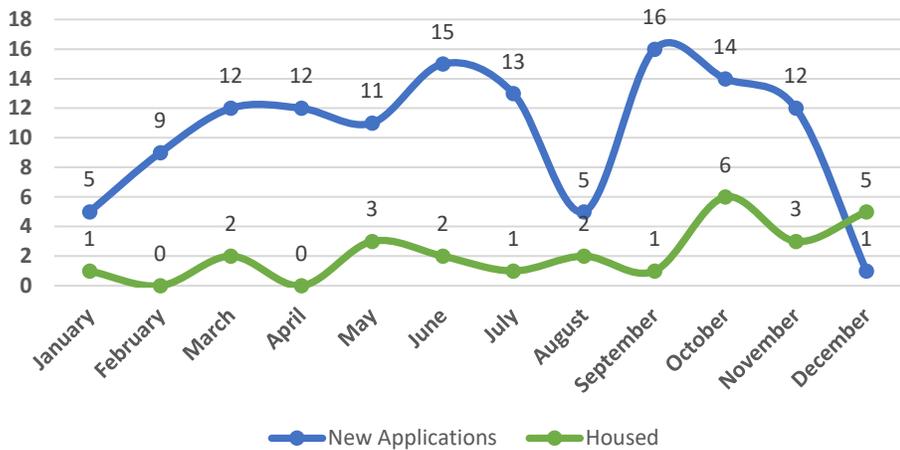
Our Housing Programs team recognizes the importance of affordable home ownership within the District of Parry Sound. However, in the context of extreme inflation and increased demand for housing outside major metropolitan areas, the current housing market is simply not accessible to people living on low and fixed incomes. We also have aging non-profit housing stock that needs repairs to ensure longevity and no loss of units. Due to these factors, we are currently focusing funding on necessary repairs to our non-profit housing portfolio, as well as pursuing landlord engagement and increased collaboration with the private development sector in the hopes of building more affordable homes and rental units throughout the District in the future.



# Housing Programs

In 2022 Housing Programs saw just over 50 households begin receipt of the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB), and we are currently waiting for an additional twenty applications to be approved by the ministry. COHB funding currently helps over 80 households to remain affordably housed in the District of Parry Sound and we are already preparing to submit more applications in the first half of 2023. The department has also successfully implemented simplified RGI as legislated by the *Housing Services Act*. The RGI calculation no longer focuses on ensuring that every household immediately report changes. Instead, most household income changes are only reported once a year at the annual review, creating significant reductions in the frequency of calculations. The purpose of these changes is to simplify the process so households can more easily understand how we calculate their rent and to provide stable rent amounts that change less frequently. Our goal is to make the process as simple as possible for current tenants and applicants. Our team completed ONPHA’s course “The Simplified World of RGI Administration,” to ensure we have the most up to date knowledge of the current legislation.

**New Applications vs. People Housed in 2022**



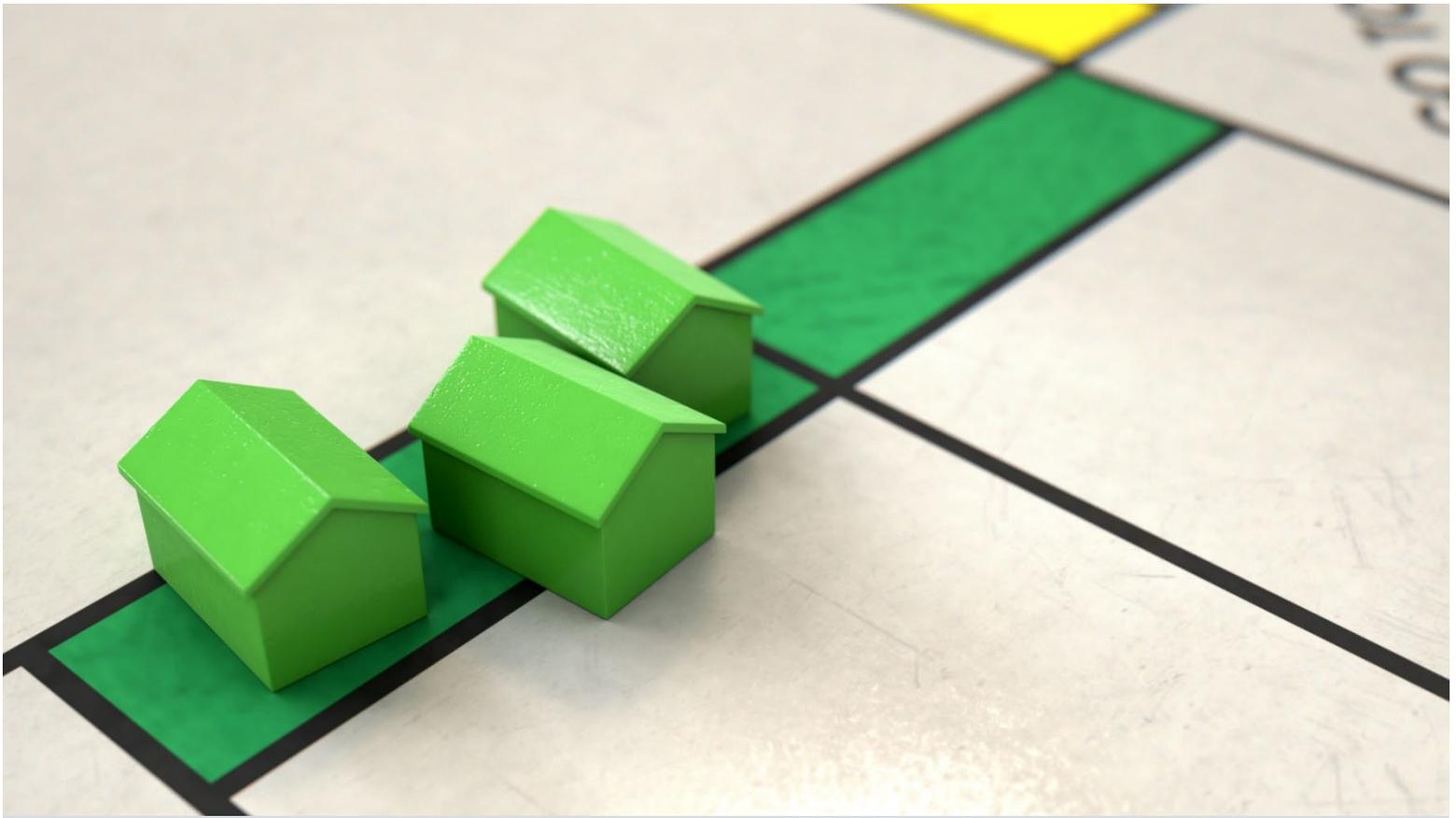
**In 2022 we received:**

- 125 New RGI Applications
  - 68 Cancelled RGI Applications
  - 26 People Housed
  - 6 SPP Applications
  - 3 SPP Housed
- \* SPP are special priority applicants fleeing domestic violence and/or human trafficking. They are given priority on the RGI housing waitlist.

We have seen a steady increase in demand for affordable housing within the District over the last 8 years. As a result, our waitlist trended upwards over that time period. However, we have been able to lower the total waitlist as we enter 2023 and hope to continue that trend throughout the year.

**Waitlist Unduplicated (2015-2023)**





## **Objective 2: To work with non-profit and private developers to increase market and affordable homes within the District.**

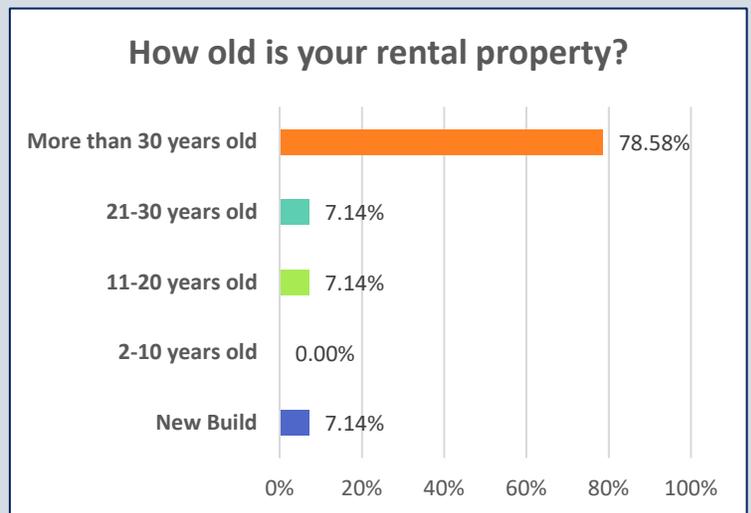
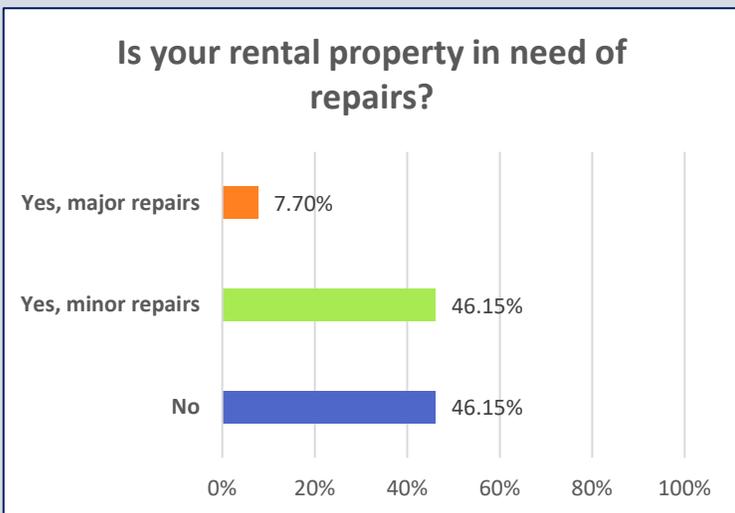
To help facilitate successful partnerships with local non-profit and private developers and landowners, our Housing Programs team created a survey based on current best practices in landlord engagement. The Parry Sound DSSAB Landlord Engagement survey was launched on November 1, 2022 and closed on December 15, 2022. Responses were collected anonymously through Survey Monkey and recruited through public posts on our social media pages, our website, and through cards with a survey link distributed throughout the community. Responses were collected from 14 landlords and helped us better understand the concerns of local landlords, as well as determining their interest in future collaboration with the Parry Sound DSSAB. This process allowed local landlords to provide feedback and opened lines of communication between our housing staff and potential housing providers in the District. We will continue to nurture and expand these relationships in the hopes of procuring additional units for our service users in the future. Maintaining successful, reciprocal, and respectful relationships with local landlords is a vital part of our housing strategy.

# Landlord Engagement Survey

We learned important details about our local landlords through our survey response analysis. Most significantly, nearly 80% of respondents indicate their property is more than 30 years old. This is important because it demonstrates aging housing stock within the private rental market. Funding streams such as the Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative (COCHI) and the Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI) were created with the understanding that much of Canada’s public housing stock is aging and in need of repair. These survey results indicate that the same problems exist within our private rental housing market, making retrofit and new development an important priority. Survey results also demonstrate that more than half of respondents have properties in need of repair. When asked what might make them more open to partnerships with the Parry Sound DSSAB, the top 3 answers were:

1. Funding to repair damages to the unit (58.33%)
2. Ability to select population of interest (i.e. veteran, single parent, individuals with disabilities, etc.) (50%)
3. Assistance with property improvements (41.67%)

Survey results indicate that local landlords are largely motivated by funding opportunities, especially those with long-term cost savings such as energy efficiency programs. Landlords also want to maintain a high degree of control over the type of tenant selected for their rental units. High demand for rental housing in the Town of Parry Sound puts pressure on the local rental market, driving up rent costs in the area and allowing landlords to be more selective of tenants. While the highest rents are seen in the Town of Parry Sound, we can see by comparing existing tenancies with newly available units that rents are rising significantly throughout the entire District. These results indicate a strong need for newer, more efficient, purpose-built rental housing that is designed to be higher density than the current model of single-detached dwellings.



# Parry Sound Housing Corporation Tenant and Maintenance Services

Our Tenant and Maintenance Services teams went through several exciting changes in 2022. The program went through a complete transformation with the hiring of two new Supervisors, as well as three Maintenance Facility Technicians, a Community Relations Worker on the East side of the District, and a contract for Tenant Services Case Support. The two programs work closely as a team to support our tenants. One highlight from 2022 was renovations of the common rooms in our buildings. These provided much needed improvements and the tenants now have nicer spaces to socialize.

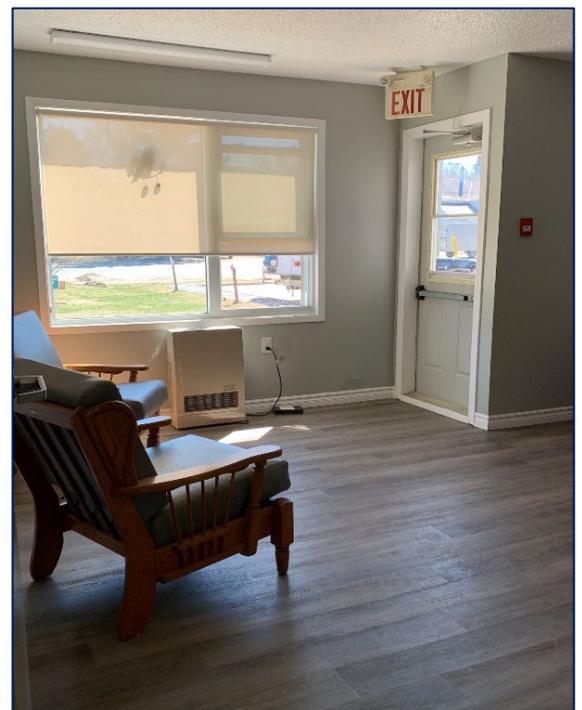
## Highlights

In 2022 our Tenant and Maintenance Services teams completed:

- 222 tenant home visits
- 140 negotiations/arbitrations
- 594 work orders
- 53 repayment agreements
- 62 move-ins and 28 move-outs



Tenants at our building in Burk's Falls meet for a daily coffee hour in their newly renovated common room.



**“I am very happy with my apartment it is bright and comfortable. All the tenants are friendly and helpful. The staff are very nice and easy to deal with... the building is kept clean and free of odors and any of the housing staff that I have dealt with are kind, helpful and understanding. It is really quiet here at night. I love it.”**

**- Tenant Feedback**

We have been able to complete several large repairs to our buildings in 2022-2023. One highlight was the window replacements for 20 units in Parry Sound. Our Maintenance teams also work hard to ensure quick response to work orders and after-hours calls so that our tenants are always safe and supported. We have also begun collecting tenant feedback which helps us to better understand what we do well and what we can improve. This has been very successful in improving our relationship and communication with our tenants, and therefore improving the level of support we can provide.

### **Challenges:**

COVID created significant backlogs in maintenance, building, and repairs projects so it is difficult to find contractors in a timely manner. At times we struggle to meet the legislated requirement to procure three quotes due to lack of choice and availability in the District. This high demand and low availability also put pressure on prices, which continue to rise steadily. We are consistently working to balance high quality repairs with affordable costs so that we can complete as many repairs as possible.



Funding from the Ontario-Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI) allowed Parry Sound Housing Corporation to replace the windows at our singles building in Parry Sound (20 units). COCHI and OPHI Year 4 funding also allowed us to install security system upgrades which improve the safety of 197 units throughout the District.



**Objective 3: To focus on building stronger relationships with our Indigenous communities and to utilize COCHI funding to support the sustainability of our Indigenous non-profit housing provider Georgian Bay Native Non-Profit Homes.**

The 2021 Census of Population also demonstrates that the District of Parry Sound has a large population of Indigenous peoples, who make up 7.2 percent of the total population of the District, compared to 2.9% of the population of Ontario and 5% of the population of Canada.\* There is therefore a great need for services created with, by and for the Indigenous peoples in the District of Parry Sound. COCHI Year 3 funding supported repairs to 13 units of Indigenous housing and COCHI Year 4 supported repairs to 6 units of Indigenous housing in the District of Parry Sound. We also maintain an ongoing partnership with the Parry Sound Friendship Centre, which helps with outreach and enumeration in the community.



\* Statistics Canada. (2022). *Focus on Geography Series, 2021 Census of Population, District of Parry Sound: Indigenous peoples.*

**A Note from the Director of Women's Services:**

In 2022 Esprit Place became a part of the DSSAB's Women's Services Programs. Women's Services strives to create coordinated and integrated single window access to immediate protection and quality support to all survivors of violence who identify as female and their dependent children. This may include safe emergency shelter, income and housing support, referrals for medical treatment and police interventions, social, psychological, and legal assistance, ongoing counselling and support, and support for children experiencing violence. To be successful, we are focusing on developing or re-establishing strong relationships with DSSAB programs and services as well as community partners throughout the region.

The needs of the clients we serve and barriers to accessing service have increased over the last few years and Esprit Place is committed to updating our programs and services to address those realities. Women's Services is working diligently to assist our clients in overcoming the following critical concerns:

- ❖ Public transportation within Parry Sound and between communities in the District of Parry Sound
- ❖ Availability of timely and appropriate addictions treatment
- ❖ Access to safe, affordable housing
- ❖ Employment opportunities
- ❖ A lack of domestic violence awareness and prevention initiatives
- ❖ Complex mental health and substance use issues



**271 CRISIS  
CALLS**

**872 HOURS  
OF DIRECT  
SERVICE**

**86  
INTAKES**

**2,119 WARM  
BED NIGHTS**

**TRANSITIONAL  
SUPPORT TO 24  
WOMEN**

**CHILDRENS  
VOICES:  
17 WOMEN  
24 CHILDREN**



## **Objective 4: To focus on creating additional transitional units within the District of Parry Sound to assist chronically homeless people.**

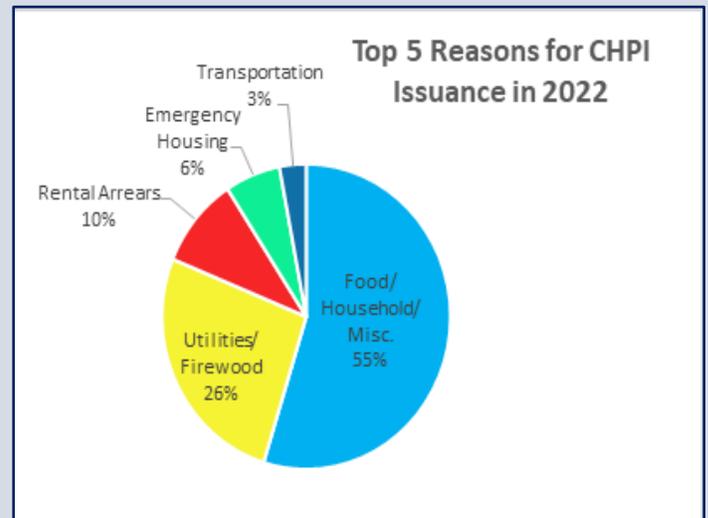
Our Hotel Pilot Project provided 25 transitional units to people experiencing homelessness in the District of Parry Sound (18 on the West side of the District and 7 on the East). That project came to an end on December 31, 2022, and our focus has been on making that transition as smooth as possible for service users. The Housing Stability team successfully helped everyone staying in the hotels into more stable housing by assisting with rental applications, searching for rental units, providing transportation to family and other support networks, and by applying for the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) and Short-Term Housing Allowances (STHA) to make local rental units more affordable. The Hotel Pilot Project highlighted the need for short-term and transitional housing in addition to long-term rental accommodations within the District. With the project ending, we are even more aware of the importance of building successful relationships with local landlords to help provide our clients with stable, affordable housing.

# Housing Stability

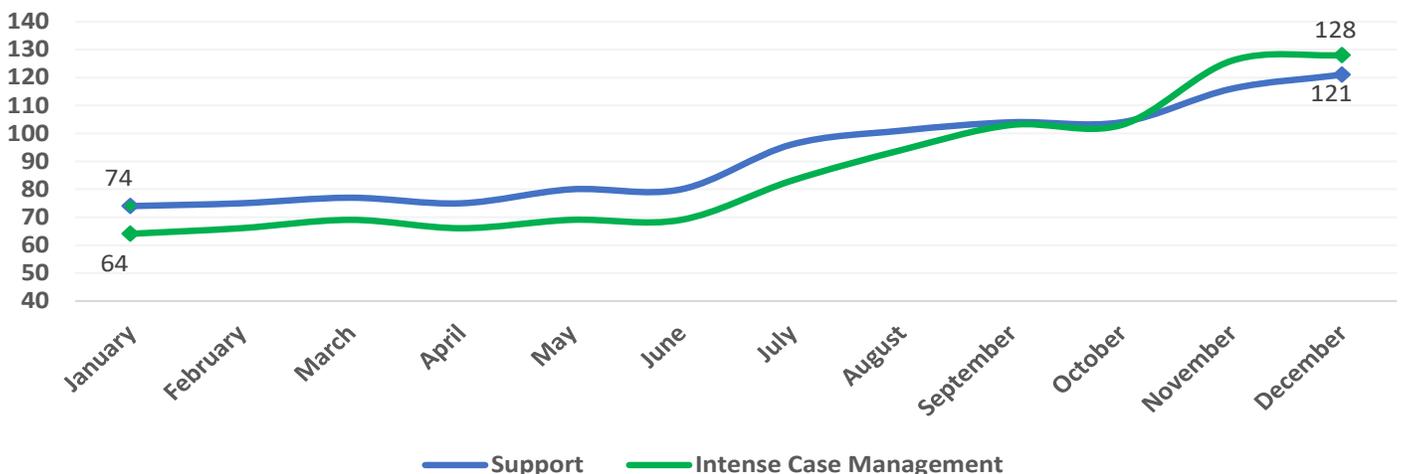
Our Housing Stability team continues to look for opportunities to increase our presence in the community and build relationships with community partners and service users through outreach. We work closely with Ontario Works staff and Housing Stability Community Relations Workers are currently spending one day a week at Esprit Place, providing additional support with transition out of the shelter and into permanent housing. We continue to research best practices in housing first and coordinated access and are consistently finding creative ways to implement these strategies in a rural and small-town context. Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) funding continues to be a vital resource in helping keep service users out of homelessness, but demand in the District continues to grow. Our team provided 146 Housing Allowances in 2022, as well as referrals for 84 people experiencing homelessness and 93 people at risk of homelessness. As shown in the chart below, in 2022 the number of support cases nearly doubled and intense case management more than doubled.

## Community Partnership Highlight!

The Almaguin Highlands Community Partner meeting was held in South River in December 2022. We shared information on the BNL with our partners and representatives from Outloud North Bay presented on their program supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ youth in North Bay and the Northeast of the District.



## Housing Stability Case Support 2022

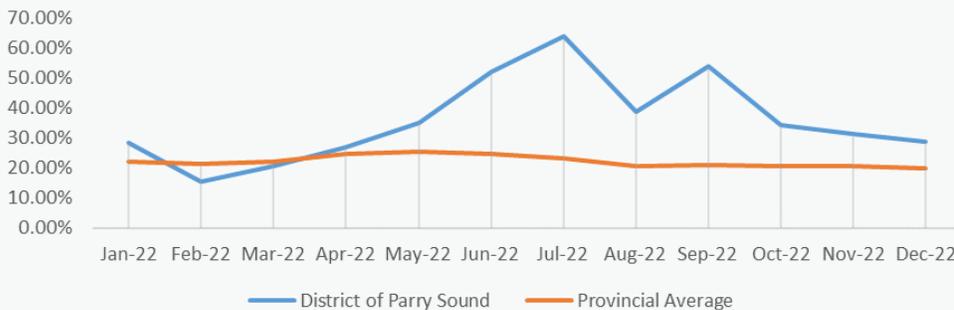


# Ontario Works

The Ontario Works caseload reached 578 at the end of December 2022 and we are supporting 38 ODSP participants in our Employment Assistance program. We have seen caseloads slowly increase towards pre-pandemic levels in 2022 but our Ontario Works teams were successful in finishing the year above the provincial targets for both percentage of closures, and percentage of caseload, exiting into employment. Seasonal work makes up a large proportion of the labour market in the District of Parry Sound, we therefore see improved employment outcomes in the summer months. The Ontario Works team continues to work closely with Housing Stability to ensure coordinated case support where possible. In the East side of the District, our Ontario Works department purchased a van so that staff can meet service users where they are rather than requiring them to find transportation to our office. This has been hugely successful for our service users as most are living in remote areas with no access to public transportation. Discussions have also begun with ODSP Northeast Region’s North Bay office and Ontario Works offices to discuss joint protocols and maintain a healthy partnership between offices.



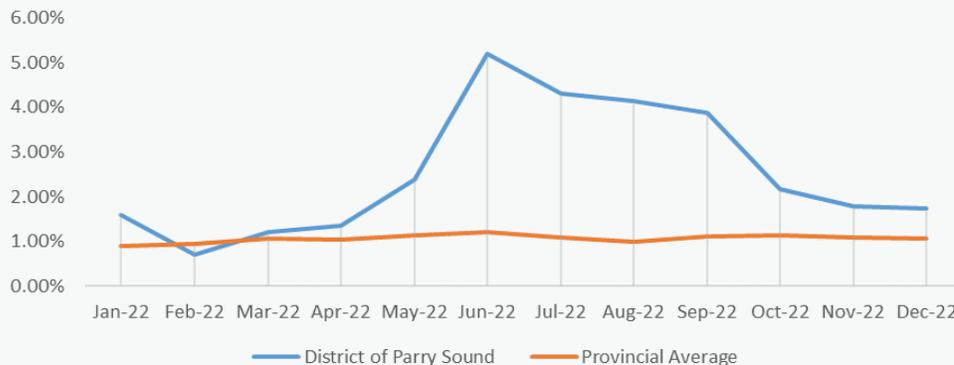
**% of Closures Exiting to Employment**



**Percent of Closures Exiting to Employment**

Target – 30.34%  
 Q1 Result – 27.85%  
 Q2 Result – 43.93%  
 Q3 Result – 52.11%  
 Q4 Result – 31.37%  
**2022 Result – 38.82%**

**% of Caseload Exiting to Employment**



**Percent of Caseload Exiting to Employment**

Target – 2.47%  
 Q1 Result - 1.53%  
 Q2 Result - 3.3%  
 Q3 Result - 4.12%  
 Q4 Result - 1.89%  
**2022 Result – 2.71%**



## **Objective 5: To continue to work toward development of innovative Housing First strategies to reduce homelessness.**

The District of Parry Sound saw our By-Name List (BNL) continue to grow in 2022 as outreach expanded and our staff, as well as the community at large, increased awareness of homelessness within our District. Our Housing Stability teams continue community outreach and regularly monitor reported encampments to offer supports to those who want them. We have also worked closely with many people on our BNL to assist them in achieving stable housing. Despite a lack of suitable rental housing within the district, our staff have worked hard to find stable, affordable housing options for people experiencing homelessness. As of December 2022, our Housing Stability team has housed 54% of individuals on the By-Name List.



## **Objective 6: To focus on the development and maintenance of relationships with community partners and services across the District.**

Through the IMPACT (Inter-Agency Mobilization of Partners Achieving Collaboration Table) Parry Sound Community Mobilization Project we at the Parry Sound DSSAB have been able to use case conferencing to help high-acuity individuals and families get the supports they need. The IMPACT program team meets bi-weekly and allows us to plan effective interventions and supports through communication and collaboration with the following agencies: Ontario Provincial Police, Children's Aid Society of Nipissing and Parry Sound, The Friends Parry Sound, Parry Sound High School, First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, West Parry Sound Health Centre, Canadian Mental Health Association, Parry Sound District Geriatric Emergency Management, Parry Sound District EMS Paramedics, and the Town of Parry Sound Fire Department.

Our Housing Stability team maintains a strong ongoing partnership with Ontario Works and both programs have begun monthly and semi-monthly check-ins with municipal offices across the District. This has helped us to increase understanding of what our programs do and what supports we can provide to people living in each of the 22 municipalities within the District of Parry Sound.

We know that food security and access to medical supports are important concerns for many of our tenants and we work with community partners such as Harvest Share, the Salvation Army and Ontario Community Paramedicine to help provide support to our housing buildings and to the community at large. These community partners also help us with outreach and enumeration as they are active throughout the community and often help provide a link between our services and potential service users.



Giving  
Hope  
Today



## Moving Forward...

2022 was a year of transition as we moved out of COVID protocols and into our new “normal.” The year brought with it many challenges as our District dealt with the fallout of the pandemic, inflation, and the resulting mental health crisis. However, we have been excited to see our teams back out in the community, supporting people in their homes, and completing outreach in new ways. It feels like coming home after a long period of isolation from the people we serve. This reconnection offers a spark of hope and a reminder of why our communities work better together.

## 2023 Partnership Highlight!

We are excited to have begun a partnership with the West Parry Sound Health Centre’s Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic for the year 2023. The purpose of this partnership is to identify those who access PSDSSAB programs and services, who would benefit from mental health and/or addiction supports and use our partnership with the NPLC to provide linkages to these services. The PSDSSAB has provided funding in full to support a full-time dedicated Mental Health and Addictions Social Worker to work within the District of Parry Sound. The program is off to a great start with 177 client contacts in the period of January through March 2023.

## The Need for New Development

The 2021 Census of the District of Parry Sound shows significant population growth in comparison to historical averages. Between 2011 and 2016 the population of the District of Parry Sound increased by only 1.6% but between 2016 and 2021 the population of the District increased by 9.5%. In comparison, population growth was only 5.8% in Ontario and 5.2% in Canada.\* This indicates recent population growth in our region that significantly exceeds both provincial and national averages. The pressures placed by this growth on our organization, as well as the regional housing market, have been significant. There is therefore a pressing need for more purpose-built, affordable rental housing throughout the District. It is our goal in the coming years to shift our focus from repairs to new development to create more affordable units.

\* Statistics Canada. (2022). *Focus on Geography Series, 2021 Census of Population, District of Parry Sound: Population and Dwelling Counts*



## Appendix A: Annual Reporting Template Reporting on the Progress of the Plan

Objectives	Outcomes	Measures	Targets	Annual Progress/ Achievements
To focus on creating additional transitional units within the district to assist chronically homeless people.	Increase transitional housing including supports.	Number of transitional units created per year.	Increase by one unit per year.	Our “Hotel Pilot Project” provided 25 transitional units (18 West, 7 East) for all of 2022, ending on December 31. Our Housing Stability team is working with our LHC to create new transitional units this year.
To work with non-profit and private sector developers to increase market and affordable homes within the District.	To improve access to housing for people across all levels of the housing spectrum.	Number of market and affordable homes created per year.	Create 10 affordable units per year.	The NOAH project was completed last year and provided 25 affordable and 25 market units. We completed a landlord engagement survey in 2022 in the hopes of building better partnerships with the local private sector.
To focus on building stronger relationships with our Indigenous Communities. To utilize COCHI funding to support the sustainability of our Indigenous non-profit housing provider.	Working toward a Memorandum of Agreement to increase partnerships, coordinated access to services with culturally based services with Indigenous Partners.	Number of Indigenous rent-gear-to-income units supported by COCHI.	Repair five units through COCHI.	Due to the age of our local housing stock, COCHI Year 4 funding has been allocated to non-profit housing providers for repairs that preserve and expand the lifespan of their portfolio to ensure no loss of units. COCHI Year 4 provided security system upgrades and repairs to 6 Indigenous housing units.
To provide Home Ownership and Ontario Renovates programs to assist homeowners in remaining in their homes & supporting those looking to enter the homeowner market.	To assist with the excessive cost of purchasing a home & the costs associated with aging housing stock.	Number of households supported through Home Ownership & Ontario Renovates programs.	Complete two Home Ownership agreements & eight Ontario Renovates projects over five years.	Housing stock in the District of Parry Sound tends to be more than 30 years old and in need of repairs. OPHI Year 4 has been allocated to non-profit housing providers to support necessary repairs to 64 units. Repairs focused heavily on health and safety, including improvements to security and fire prevention systems.
To continue to work toward development of innovative Housing First strategies to reduce homelessness.	To continue rapid rehousing & providing the supports necessary to achieve long-term housing stability.	CHPI statistics including number of people housed.	Successful interventions as determined by the number of people housed.	Our Housing Stability team successfully housed 92 people from the BNL in 2022. We also maintain several community partnerships to provide coordinated case management and mental health referrals in order to help maintain successful tenancies.
To focus on the development and maintenance of relationships with community partners and services across the District.	To continue to build and maintain coordination and communication networks to further support clients.	Ongoing commitment to participating in networks.	Continuing active participation in community networks.	We continue to attend the Inter-Agency Mobilization of Partners Achieving Collaboration Table (IMPACT) on a bi-weekly basis. We also maintain ongoing collaboration with community groups such as Harvest Share, the Salvation Army, Community Paramedicine and the Parry Sound Friendship Centre.