

2024-25

DISTRICT OF PARRY SOUND ANNUAL HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS PLAN REPORT



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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 2024-2025 Housing and Homelessness Annual Report.

As Chair of the Board, I've witnessed the ongoing challenges our community faces in accessing housing that is safe, affordable, and suited to their needs. Despite these obstacles, I'm heartened by the meaningful progress we've made—and this report highlights the growing momentum toward lasting, impactful change.

Working alongside municipal leaders, non-profit organizations, and provincial agencies, we're focused on creating housing solutions that truly reflect the unique needs of our rural communities. From affordable rental units for seniors and low-income families, to transitional housing for individuals with complex needs, to safe spaces for women and children in crisis, and emergency supports for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness—our goal remains clear: to ensure everyone in our District has a safe, stable place to call home.

This is not a short-term effort. It is part of a long-term vision grounded in compassion, equity, and sustainability. Our teams continue to find ways to get out into the community and engage with residents and those experiencing challenges. They continue to explore innovative solutions tailored to rural realities. Our approach is supported by data, shaped by local voices, and informed by the belief that housing is the foundation upon which people build their lives.

As we move forward, engagement is essential. Whether you are a resident, a community leader, a housing provider, or someone who cares deeply about our collective well-being, your support will be invaluable to this effort.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to creating a stronger, more inclusive future for everyone in our District.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rick Zanussi', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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

Housing Programs

Housing Programs is committed to building and maintaining strong relationships with local non-profit and affordable housing providers. We also collaborate closely with community organizations such as Community Living and Community Mental Health Association to support their clients through housing funding initiatives, this collaboration is essential to developing sustainable, effective solutions to housing challenges. By working together, we can better respond to the diverse and evolving needs of our communities.

In 2024, four housing providers successfully completed projects funded through the Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative (COCHI) and the Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI). These projects addressed a range of interior and exterior repairs, including the installation of new windows, replacement of shingles and siding, repairs to walkways and retaining walls, and bathroom upgrades. We look forward to continuing this important work in 2025–2026, with new repair projects under these funding programs.

In addition to supporting various funding initiatives, we continue to collect and analyze data to better understand the housing needs across the District of Parry Sound. A key tool in this effort is the Centralized Wait List (CWL) for rent-geared-to-income (RGI) housing. This list tracks unduplicated applicants who are seeking affordable housing options, offering critical insight into both demand and service gaps. The CWL for rent-geared-to-income (RGI) housing in the District of Parry Sound continues to reflect a high level of housing need. The data shows ongoing pressure on rent-geared-to-income housing supply, with new applications consistently outpacing the number of households successfully housed.

2023-2024 comparison:

- A **decline in new applications** from 101 in 2023 to 81 in 2024.
- **Increased cancellations** from 104 in 2023 to 131 in 2024.
- Despite the increase in households housed (from 18 to 21), the **overall supply remains insufficient** relative to demand.
- The number of SPP applicants housed dropped from 5 in 2023 to 2 in 2024.

Overall, the data reinforces the critical need for expanding affordable housing options in the district and continuing to improve the efficiency and responsiveness of the housing access system.

YEAR-END RECAP

26

New households received portable housing benefits (COHB)

12

Households received rent supplement

3

Ontario Renovates accessibility grants provided

10

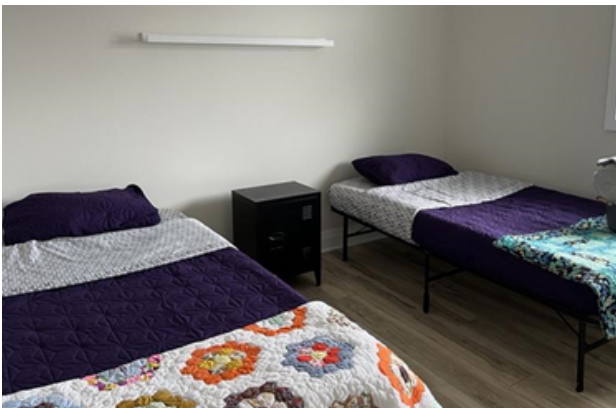
Ontario Renovates loans discharged with fulfilled terms

Esprit Place Family Resource Centre



During the majority of 2024, Esprit Place Family Resource Centre was closed for a major renovation project. During the closure we continued to provide support to women and children fleeing violence or at risk of violence. This included Outreach and Crisis support, as well as some community programming with other agencies. We worked closely with Interval House and Chrysalis in Muskoka to make sure women fleeing violence were able to seek relief within a shelter that was not too far from the District of Parry Sound.

While the shelter was closed, we opened two Transitional Housing Units in the Town of Parry Sound. We were able to house three different families during that time. One family is still occupying one of the units and the other two have secured permanent housing. We worked closely with other DSSAB Programs to support our families with counselling, finances, and housing support during our closure. Going forward a Violence Against Women (VAW) Transitional housing unit will remain part of the program.



In conclusion, as we continue to face an ongoing housing crisis and inflation, we strive to maintain strong connections within our agency and with community partners, to create innovative solutions to help the women in our community to break the cycle of gender-based violence. Staying on top of the changing needs within our district requires commitment, knowledge, communication and reliance on our staff and community partners for every client to succeed.

1627

Hours of direct service
(shelter and counselling) in 2024.



Income Support and Stability

With the goal of furthering our integration and to enhance the client journey and supports as we entered Employment Services Transformation in 2024, we have merged our Ontario Works Case Worker and Housing Stability Program Community Relations Worker roles into a new enhanced position, called [Integrated System Navigators \(ISN\)](#). The ISN will provide outreach, navigation and coordination for any person centered supports along the client's journey through the social services continuum, from homelessness to employment or from Ontario Works (OW) through to Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and beyond. The goal is that the client will only have to tell their story once and we will be able to continue providing supports for clients as they exit OW, or are granted ODSP, to enhance life and housing stabilization. Building on the merging of positions, the program continues to take a proactive approach to case management when identifying individuals at risk or experiencing homelessness. Staff in the Parry Sound office, and South River office meet bi-weekly where they discuss cases that need additional wrap around supports, and together they work as a larger team to support the success of obtaining safe, affordable and secure housing.

In 2024, Income Support and Stability put a focus on Community Outreach. Outreach is a vital tool for connecting people to services, resources and opportunities they either may not access or know how to access. It helps build trust, and extends support beyond traditional settings, meeting individuals where they are at physically, emotionally and socially. Staff attended local events to promote the supports and services the program could offer. They were also creative with working at locations to provide various access points to support. You could find them and continue to find them in our local Municipal Offices, Food Banks, Employment Offices, Community Meals, or Libraries.

Outreach continues to be a high value action in our program because it is about seeing the unseen, hearing the unheard, and extending a hand of support before being asked for one.

Housing & Homelessness Resources

[Transitional units - What has this looked like for housing and supports for clients?](#)

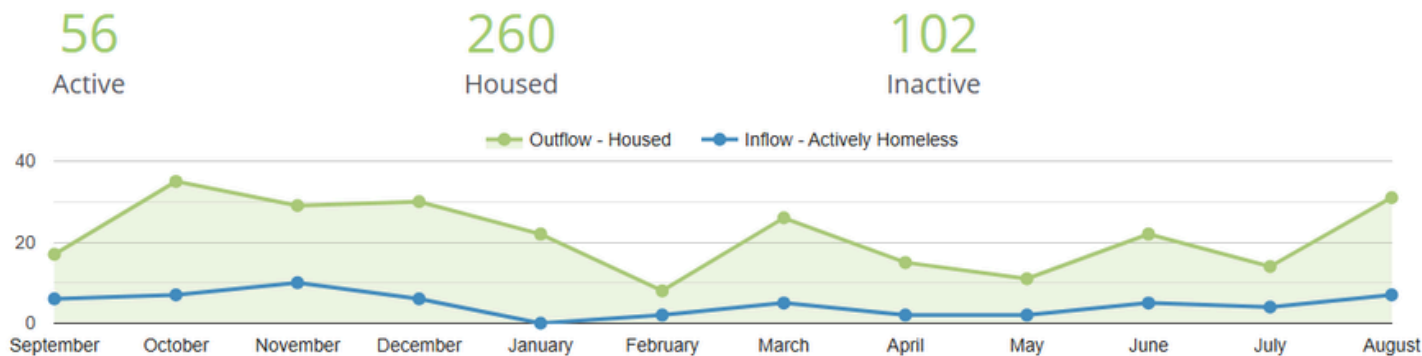
Income Support and Stability entered into an agreement with the Parry Sound Housing Corporation and rented four units in South River for Transitional units. The mission is to enable vulnerable individuals to improve their quality of life through individualized support by providing affordable safe housing for individuals and dependents for a period of six months, by meeting goals based on their personal strengths and motivation for change. The program offers nurturing, non-judgmental, support and connects the participants to community supports. The experience has enhanced our Income Support and Stability team's confidence in case management and fostered stronger partnerships with community organizations

[Encampment Tracking](#)

In response to the need for a more effective management of homeless encampments in our district, our organization has developed and implemented a new approach for tracking within our own internal system called FIIT. This method aims to track the homeless population in conjunction with our By Name List. This new tracking system will enhance our ability to provide targeted support and resources to those in need. The benefits will have real time updates and data integration with our collaborative platform that can be viewed by anyone in the agency with access to our program.

By-Name List

The By-Name List (BNL) is a real time list of all known people who are experiencing homelessness in our community that are willing to participate in being on the list and connecting with our agency for ongoing support to maintain affordable and sustainable housing. The individuals who are connected to this program are provided Intense Case Management support with the foundations of Coordinated Access. From September 1st, 2021 - December 31st, 2024, the Income Support and Stability team supported 260 individuals to become housed in our community. The work to become housed is done by the individual. The success of being housed belongs to them—we, as ISNs, are simply fortunate to support and witness it.



Income Support and Stability - PARTNERSHIPS

HOME MAKERS PROGRAM

We have entered into a new service agreement with Alejandra Recreation Therapy Service to provide Homemakers supports to eligible clients. This program will help address some gaps in the system to allow seniors and low-income individuals to stay in their homes longer with some basic supports such as meal prep, light housekeeping or grocery shopping.

COMMUNITY COUNSELLING OF NIPISSING

To address the growing waitlist for our clients in the South River office that require mental health support, psychological assessments, assistance applying for ODSP, CCNIP has increased the numbers of days per month they can assist our clients. This has been a successful initiative for our clients.

PARRY SOUND DISTRICT EMS COMMUNITY PARAMEDICINE

A partnership was formed between the Community Paramedicine (CP) program to improve quality of health and access to health care supports. Our ISN's can complete a referral form to the CP program and working together they will connect with the client to assess needs and help navigate health care concerns. The partnership between the ISN and Paramedics is fluid and communicative.

MOBILE CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM (MCRT)

This program is designed to help police and health partners collaborate with service providers. The program has a police officer and mental health worker respond to a person in crisis. Income Support and Stability staff have built strong relationships with this team and have referred many people to this service and in turn received referrals from the MCRT Team.

ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE EMERGENCY STAY

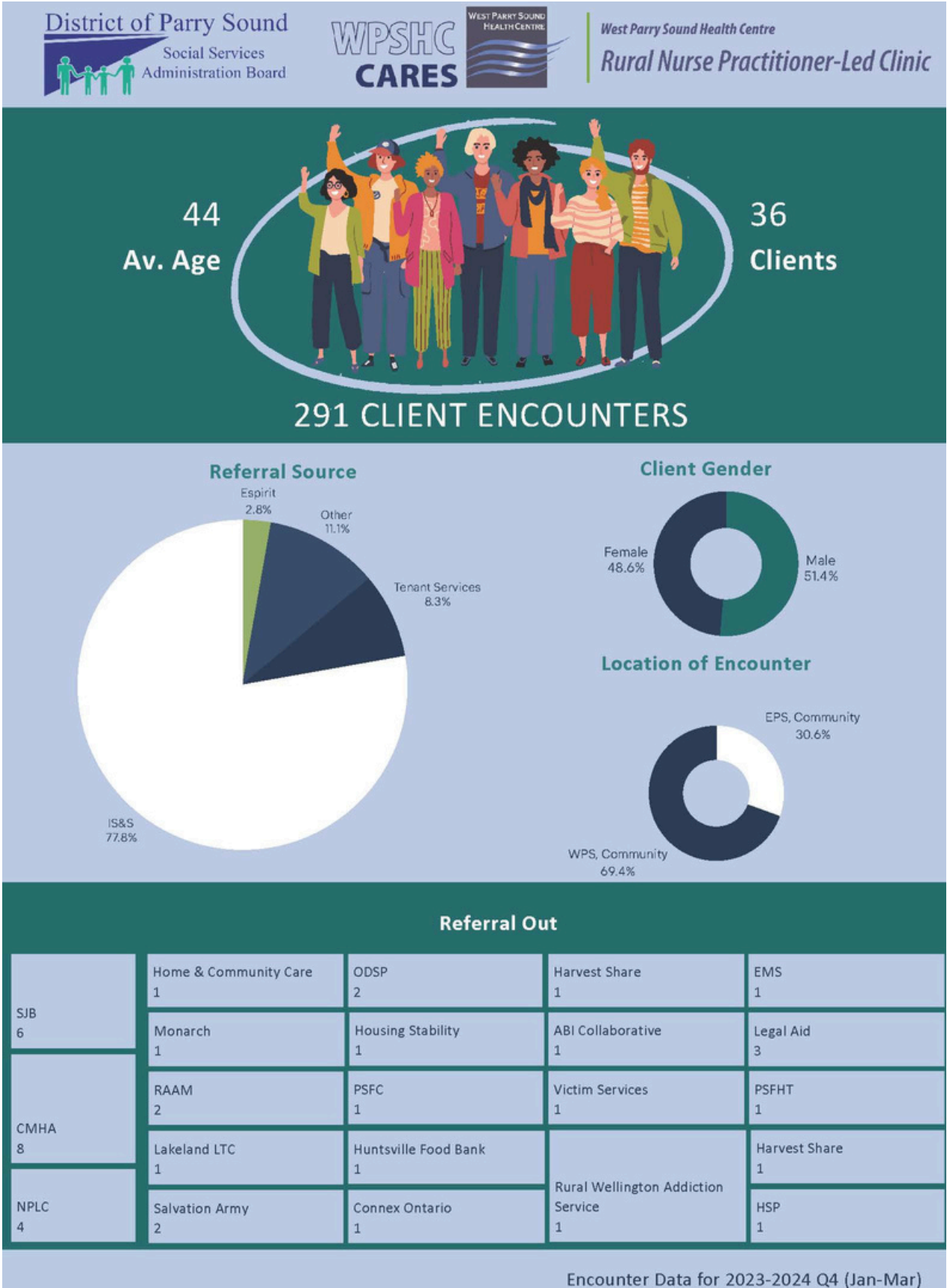
This partnership is critical in ensuring that those in immediate need have access to temporary, safe shelter during a vulnerable time. Officers can assist individuals after hours with a hotel stay and connect the person to the DSSAB the following day for supports. This is only successful because of the support provided by local hotel owners.

ELIZABETH FRY SOCIETY OF SIMCOE/ MUSKOKA

To continue to support our Under 18 Ontario Works participants, we renewed our service agreement with the Elizabeth Fry Society of Simcoe Muskoka to provide trustee support to those participants, as required by the Ontario Works Act.

WEST PARRY SOUND HEALTH CENTRE

The West Parry Sound Health Centre has dedicated a Mental Health and Addictions Social Worker to the DSSAB. This individual has a work space at the DSSAB and supports ISN’s with navigating complex cases who would benefit from mental health and/or addiction supports. The benefit from this partnership for DSSAB clients is they will have improved quality of health and access to health care support.



Tenant Services



We are excited to share that a collaboration with Housing Programs has resulted in a Community Relations Worker (CRW) now permanently placed within the Tenant Services Program. This important step strengthens our commitment to supporting families across the district. This role is integral to the effective management of family unit tenancies across East and West Parry Sound. Responsibilities include overseeing tenant offerings, leasing, move-ins, and move-outs, seasonal newsletters, as well as providing ongoing support to promote successful and stable tenancies. We're enhancing our focus on tenant engagement by expanding educational opportunities and providing support for both tenants and landlords. These efforts aim to more effectively serve residents in both Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) and Affordable Housing programs.

Tenant educational sessions have continued to receive positive feedback, offering helpful and engaging content for residents. A highlight of the year was our district-wide summer BBQ events. These gatherings were attended by tenants from LHC and Non-Profit housing. Thanks to the local Fire Department, kids got to cool off with a fun sprinkler shower, which was a big hit! We have also begun a series of chair yoga sessions at one of our seniors' buildings, which will help promote mobility and healthy movement in seniors.

Another milestone this year was the successful launch of the YARDI Tenant Portal, which went live in the fall. Tenants are actively using the platform to communicate with Tenant Services staff, submit maintenance requests, and pay rent—all in one convenient place.

Challenges

One of the ongoing challenges has been supporting aging tenants, particularly those with limited access to family or friends. We're seeing a growing prevalence of confusion and dementia among residents, yet there are limited resources readily available to meet their needs. In addition, a significant number of our housing units are in serious disrepair, requiring extensive maintenance that, in many cases, has meant displacing tenants temporarily. This has been a financial strain and has placed added pressure on our capacity to deliver consistent housing support.

Maintenance and Capital Projects

In 2024, we continued to focus on long-term strategic planning to meet the growing housing needs within our district while also addressing the ongoing challenge of homelessness. With guidance from our Building Condition Assessments, we have ensured that capital planning remains a priority. In 2025, several major capital projects are underway, including a full siding replacement on one of our apartment buildings, roof and window replacements on one of our office buildings, and a critical repair to the retaining wall and parking area at one of our senior buildings. These improvements are part of our broader plan to maintain and modernize our existing housing stock.

We have prioritized one-bedroom units throughout 2024 due to sustained demand identified through the Centralized Wait List. A structured turnover timeline is now in place, allowing us to bring these units online more efficiently and better serve applicants in need of smaller spaces.

The implementation of our Asbestos Management Plan will be formalized in 2025, with several remediation projects already completed and scheduled throughout 2024. Ensuring the safety and well-being of our tenants remains a top priority, and this work reflects our ongoing commitment to health and compliance standards.

The Maintenance team worked very hard in 2024 in modernizing processes such as Inspections, and Procurement. When working with the tenants during the inspection process, we find this provides an excellent opportunity to further develop connections. Our hope is to assist the tenants in sustaining their tenancy.



Parry Sound Window Replacement Project

In partnership with the Income Stability and Support Services (IS&S) program, we have actively increased the number of transitional units within the district. The 4 newly renovated units in South River have been designated specifically for the Transitional Housing Program, with occupancy prioritizing individuals experiencing chronic homelessness. There are also 3 other dedicated transitional units throughout the district. Through this partnership, we have provided the stepping stones (physical space), that will help people stabilize and transition toward permanent housing. By fostering collaborative relationships like this, we are increasing the diversity of our housing stock and creating opportunities for the many residents in need of our services.

MOVING FORWARD



2025-26

As we look toward 2025-26, Housing First remains at the core of our homelessness reduction strategy, expanding access to permanent housing options that are integrated with wraparound supports such as mental health services, addiction recovery resources, and case management. These partnerships are helping chronically homeless individuals and families regain independence and housing stability. We continue to build and strengthen our connections with local service providers, coordinate support systems and respond proactively to housing crises. Through collaboration, funding and innovation, we are working together to ensure everyone has access to safe, stable, and affordable housing.

Appendix A: Annual Reporting Template

Reporting on the progress of the Plan

Objectives	Outcomes	Measures	Targets	Annual Progress
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.	The four transitional units in South River continue to be fully utilized by our Income Support and Stability team. Clients are housed for up to six months while working with Income Support Navigators to secure sustainable, long-term housing. A VAW unit will remain with Esprit moving forward.
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.	There were no increases to the number of housing units in 2024. However, Housing Programs continued to work closely with non-profit housing providers to access funding aimed at repairing and preserving existing housing stock.
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-gearred-to-income units supported by COCHI.	Repair 5 units through COCHI.	COCHI funding was provided to GBNNPHI to repair entrance enclosures and replace windows in two buildings. This investment helps maintain the structural integrity and overall condition of the properties, ensuring they remain safe, energy-efficient, and in good repair for current and future residents.

Objectives	Outcomes	Measures	Targets	Annual Progress
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 2 Home Ownership agreements & 8 Ontario Renovates projects over 5 years.	Housing Programs provided funding to three households in 2024 through the Ontario Renovates program specifically for accessibility-related renovations. There was no funding allocated for non-accessibility home repairs during this period. However, the program aims to expand to include support for general home repairs, helping more households maintain safe and stable housing.
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.	By-Name List (BNL) is a key tool used in Housing First to reduce homelessness effectively and strategically. To date, Income Support and Stability have housed 260 individuals.
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.	Continued active participation in community networks.	Each housing department strives to maintain and strengthen relationships with both internal and external partners to best meet the needs of clients and tenants accessing supports through our agency. Every partnership is unique and plays a vital role in delivering vital wraparound supports tailored to those we serve. We continue to collaborate with local Non-Profit housing providers, WPSHC, Salvation Army, YMCA Employment Centre, Harvest Share, among many others.