

4. Appointments:

- 10:00 a.m. – DART – Oxford, Amy Maddess and Joanna Piatkowski: Domestic Abuse Services Oxford (25 mins)
 - Amy Maddess and Joanne Piatkowski addressed committee in relation to intimate partner violence within the County. They presented the following requests to the Steering Committee in relation to the Safe and Well Oxford Community Safety and Well-being Plan:
 - Requested that the following recommendations from the County of Renfrew be incorporated into the Safe and Well Oxford community Safety and Well-being Plan:
 - #8: Require that all justice system participants who work with IPV survivors and perpetrators are trained and engage in a trauma-informed approach to interacting and dealing with survivors and perpetrators;
 - #29: Provide professional education and training for justice system personnel on IPV related issues, which should include:
 - a. Annual refresher courses,
 - b. Risk assessment training with the most up-to-date research on tools and risk factors,
 - c. Trauma-informed practices, including an understanding of why survivors may recant or may not cooperate with criminal investigations, best practices for managing this reality, and investigation and prosecution of perpetrators,
 - d. Crisis management training,
 - e. The availability and use of weapons prohibition orders in IPV cases,
 - f. Meaningful screening of sureties,
 - g. Greater use of court-ordered language ensuring alleged and convicted offenders will not reside in homes that have firearms,
 - h. Indicators of IPV including coercive control, and awareness of risk factors for lethality (including destruction of property, especially by fire, harm to pets, strangulation, criminal harassment, stalking, sexual violence, and threatening police),
 - i. Unique rural factors,
 - j. Firearm risks, including the links between firearm ownership and IPV,

- k. Opportunities for communities, friends, and families to play a role in the prevention and reporting of IPV.
- #30: Provide specialized and enhanced training of police officers with a goal of developing an IPV specialist in each police detachment.
 - #3: Engage in meaningful consultation with IPV stakeholders and experts in the field, to determine the mandate and responsibilities of the IPV Commission, which may include evaluating the effectiveness of existing IPV programs and strategies, including the adequacy of existing funding;
 - #10: Encourage that intimate partner violence be integrated into every municipality's community safety and well-being plan;
 - #18: Recognize that the implementation of the recommendations, including the need for adequate and stable funding for all organizations providing IPV support services, will require a significant financial investment and commit to provide such funding.
 - #19: Create an emergency fund, such as the "She C.A.N. Fund", in honour of Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk and Nathalie Warmerdam to support women living with IPV who are taking steps to seek safety. This fund should include the following:
 - a. Easy, low-barrier access for IPV survivors seeking to improve their safety,
 - b. Referral to the fund through IPV service providers,
 - c. Small grants of up to \$7000,
 - d. It should have no impact on Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Plan payments,
 - e. Consideration for the needs of rural and geographically remote survivors of IPV, Culleton, Kuzyk & Warmerdam Inquest,
 - f. Funding to be provided on an annualized basis, with adequacy assessed and considered after the first three years,
 - g. Inject a significant one-time investment into IPV related support services.
 - #20: Realign the approach to public funding provided to IPV service providers with a view to removing unnecessary reporting obligations with a focus on service. Draw on best practices in Canada and internationally, and adopt and implement improved, adequate, stable, and recurring funding that incorporates the following:
 - a. Recognition that, in remote and rural areas, funding cannot be the per-capita equivalent to funding in urban settings as this does not take into account rural realities, including that:

- i. IPV is more prominent in rural areas,
 - ii. Economies of scale for urban settings supporting larger numbers of survivors,
 - iii. The need to travel to access and provide services where telephone and internet coverage is not available,
 - iv. The lack of public transit,
 - v. The cost of transportation for survivors and service providers.
- b. Consideration of the remoteness quotient used to calculate funding in other social services, such as education and policing,
 - c. Enhanced funding for IPV service providers, including shelters, sexual assault support centres, victim services, and counselling services, considering urban and rural realities,
 - d. Designated funding for transportation for those receiving IPV-related support services where public transportation is inadequate or unavailable, such as in Renfrew County,
 - e. Funding to ensure mental health supports for IPV service providers, as well as timely access to trauma supports immediately following a traumatic event,
 - f. Funding for services provided to survivors that allows for the hiring and retention of skilled and experienced staff so that they are not required to rely on volunteers and fundraisers,
 - g. Funding for mobile tracking system alarms and other security supports for survivors of intimate partner violence,
 - h. Funding for counselling for intimate partner violence,
 - i. Funding for services dedicated to perpetrators of intimate partner violence.
- Intimate partner violence has been declared an epidemic in the City of Woodstock and the County of Oxford.
 - Require that all justice system participants who work with intimate partner violence survivors and perpetrators be trained and engaged in a trauma-informed approach to interacting and dealing with survivors and perpetrators. It is also suggested that a review of existing training take place first.
 - Require that a trained individual (trained in gender-based violence) engage with families before charges are laid against an individual. The goal would be to provide the family with resources to minimize risk – similar model in Halton Region; police contract.
 - Financial support for organizations and survivors to cover transportation

costs, temporary hotel stays, groceries, etc. while individuals are trying to leave the situation. Funding is also required to hire additional staff support and outreach support. Office space is required in other areas of the County – not just within the City of Woodstock. It was discussed that a mobile unit may be appropriate. Discussion took place regarding the possibility of using Oxford County libraries – with library staff there already during regular open hours, only one additional support staff would be needed.

- The annual cost of one support worker is estimated at \$70,000 to \$100,000.
- Additional transitional units are required. Current shelter units are consistently full.
- More public education and awareness are needed to help people spot the signs of intimate partner violence.
- It is recommended that a third-party review committee be established (Renfrew recommendation #85). The committee would review actions within one year of implementation and report back to DART and the Safe and Well Oxford Steering Committee.
- It is recommended that Gender Based Violence be added as a fifth pillar within the Safe and Well Oxford Plan.
- Current DART goals may be summarized as follows:
 - Engagement with youth (public education and awareness);
 - Enduring support organization are collectively mindful of risk tools available;
 - Reviewing current brand and terms of reference.
- It is recommended that a sexual assault center for Oxford be established. A submission was made to Ministry of Community and Social Services months ago. Seeking endorsement of this submission by the Safe and Well Oxford Steering Committee.
- Brant County has 4 to 5 full-time support staff for individuals experiencing intimate partner violence – the base funding for this comes from Ontario Health West. Most sexual assault centers have a crisis line – Oxford County does not.
- More investment in prevention and education is needed.
- 10:35 a.m. – Kelly Baker, Executive Director and Christina Neilsen – Youth Wellness Hub (25 mins)

Executive Director, Kelly Baker, on behalf of Brightside Youth Hub address the Safe and Well Oxford Steering Committee to update them on their current initiatives as follows:

- The province has announced funding for Youth Wellness Hubs within

Ontario, with eight new centres already approved – Oxford is on their list. Centres will provide rapid access for youth to mental health supports aged 12 to 25.

- Evidence based interventions are provided at each centre which integrate mental health, substance use and primary care for youth in a youth friendly space. The goal is to reduce transitions and waitlists for youth requiring support.
- Centers are being created with youth and families in mind. Chatham Youth Hub was shown to the committee as an example. More youth advocates are needed.
- Currently Brightside Youth Hub is using in-kind space from CMHA Oxford in Woodstock. Activities and games room is available, snacks and drinks are also available. The space is a welcoming and casual environment. Welkin is working with them as a community partner. The space is open on Wednesdays from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Photos were shown to the committee of the existing space. Private therapy rooms are also available.
- More support is needed – the Youth Hub in Woodstock is not currently offering crisis support; substance use and primary care support at this point. No housing supports are available. In-person and virtual counselling is available.
- They are working hard to share information about the Youth Hub in Woodstock. They have been attending local events and festival and making games and information at their community booth.
- All stakeholders are encouraged to follow Brightside Youth Hub on social media to share information about the space, supports and events. Game time, crafting and drop-in time takes place every week. Pizza is provided every Wednesday as well.
- The Youth Hub has been in operation for a year now and use and attendance at the facility is increasing. Numbers would be higher if they had space and resources to be open more than one afternoon each week. Youth are primarily coming in for skills and well-being supports.
- Some of the Youth Hub's current challenges are as follows:
 - More funding is needed;
 - Dedicated and more long-term location/space is needed. The Committee was asked to keep them in mind if anyone hears of any space that become available so that they can explore it. They are desperate to find a space. There is some concern that provincial funding will come and they will not have a space to use the capital investment. The location needs to be safe and accessible;
 - Limited commitment/capacity of service providers;

- Limited communication with local schools;
- Challenging to get into schools to provide them with information in relation to the supports that are available – more functional relationships with local schools is needed.
- Ultimately, the goal is to have multiple hubs throughout the County. They need to have one running well before they can open more spaces. Transportation is a factor and there are some options available for youth that live outside of Woodstock (i.e., taxi).
- Current priority is to find a permanent space for the Youth Hub, and extend the hours of operation to provide more wrap around service for attendees and continue to grow partnerships within the community.
- Food insecurity among youth is a concern. Finding that youth are using marijuana, vaping and cigarettes. Many youth come to the space and don't know what they are coming in for – they being to talk to staff and then supports are identified through these conversations. Some youth are coming in specifically for therapy sessions.
- In the future, micro hubs in Norwich and Tillsonburg, utilizing library and community centre space may be a possibility.
- 11:05 a.m. – Shawn Shapton, Executive Director – Operation Sharing (25 mins)
 - Executive Director Shawn Shapton, on behalf of Operation Sharing, address the Safe and Well Oxford Steering Committee in relation to the current goals, objectives and challenges of Operation Sharing as follows:
 - Operation Sharing assists those experiencing food and shelter insecurity within Oxford. They provide for up to 32 guests each night, they provide meals and day space for the homeless community several days a week.
 - He advised that he community that they serve are sick, struggling and have little to no hope. He wants to move forward to help change that locally.
 - He commented on the loss of Zachary last week at only 19 years of age.
 - Operation Sharing provides for Oxford County residents. There is a procedure in place to return individuals to communities that support them if they are not local. They operate as a harm reduction supply facility – they do not hand out drugs freely and willingly.
 - The Sharing Table works with Operation Sharing, and is a volunteer-run program that provides home cooked meals, take out and dine-in is available. The Sharing Table welcomes many that are on a thin line. Many seniors volunteer their time at the Sharing Table. They also rely on donations and community partners to provide home-

cooked meals for guests.

- Annual expenses are up 41%.
- Food for Friends allows individuals to grocery shop for food and personal care items – gift cards are provided to clients. There is an income qualifying formula to determine eligibility and proof that they are Oxford County residents is also required. This service helps to take the stress off families that are on the thin line. Last week 493 rolls of toilet paper were handed out. They hope to expand into Tillsonburg.
- In August, 24 new families were welcomed. It costs \$2,000 a month to keep Food for Friends stocked.
- Operation Sharing is in support of a 24/7 shelter model locally and they have been working with the County to increase the available space. Over 50-55 guests are welcomed each day. Most are suffering from significant mental health and addiction issues.
- Increased violence and security concerns were discussed. Guests have become very sick. Funding is not currently available for the necessary security. The day space is currently closed until funding can be secured. Guests are begging for them to re-open.
- The Inn (emergency shelter) has capacity for 32 beds a night. They are working to increase this space to add another 20-25 beds. This is a co-ed facility. The shelter is full every night. This space provides a bed, two meals, shower facilities and mental health and addiction support. The space provides guests with a place to gather and feel safe. The mobile outreach bus from Oxford County Community Centre comes twice a month.
- Ages of guests vary from 25-30. They are maximum capacity permanently. In June they welcomed 14 new guests, in July they welcomed 11 and in August they welcomed 9 new members. Not all members stay – some become inactive.
- Operation sharing is hoping to expand into Tillsonburg – there is estimated to be 5-55 individuals experiencing homelessness in Tillsonburg. They have reached out to Thames Valley Family Health Team to work together. The Mill has provided a snack and meal to those experiencing homelessness and food insecurity.
- Main challenges are a lack of funding and resources. A plan for Oxford County specifically is needed to identify roles of each partner and funding required. Each community within the County needs to be evaluated to determine local need.

**Randy Peltz Left at 11:37 a.m.*

5. Next Steps:

- a. Draft Letter to all Oxford Municipalities re: Changes to the Safe and Well Oxford Plan to include goals and objectives in relation to Intimate Partner Violence (attached)
 - i. Letter to all area municipalities will be finalized based on the presentation heard today and brought back to the committee at next meeting for review and endorsement.
- b. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Action Coalition – update
 - i. First meeting will take place on Monday evening. There was difficulty finding a date that worked for all committee members. This will be discussed at the first meeting on Monday evening.
- c. Proposed Safe and Well Oxford Summit (November, 2023)
 - i. Proposed summit is intended to focus consistent communication and messaging to all stakeholders, area municipalities about the role of the Safe and Well Oxford Steering Committee and progress made to date.
 - ii. It is intended that this update will be given to all community stakeholders. There has been a lot of change on local councils over the past year. It is noted that many community groups are doing the same preventative work that are also doing the crisis work. It is hoped that Safe and Well Oxford will connect community partners to understand who is doing what and how they can best support each other.
 - iii. A location within the City of Woodstock has been secured for early November for the summit to take place. It is intended that this will be a half day session.
- d. Future Invitations/Requests for Presentations from Stakeholders
 - i. This item will be considered further by the Committee following the November Safe and Well Oxford summit.

6. For Information:

- a. Email circulation to Oxford County Municipalities (attached)
- b. Ontario News: Affordable Housing Project in Kitchener

7. **Next Meeting Date:**

Monday, October 16th, 2023 at 10:00 a.m. Oxford County Administration Building.

8. **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 12:03 p.m.