SAFE AND WELL OXFORD

Community Safety & Well-Being Plan

Contents

Reintroducing the Safe & Well Plan

One County, One Plan

In Ontario, every municipality that provides police services is required by law to have a Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Plan. This requirement is set out in the *Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019*, which states that municipalities must prepare, adopt, publish, and implement a CSWB Plan. Plans are required to identify local risks to safety and well-being and set out strategies to address them through partnership among many sectors, such as health, social services, education, housing, and police.

Rather than each municipality in Oxford County developing and implementing its own CSWB plan, all eight municipalities passed resolutions in 2021 for Oxford County to lead a single plan on their behalf. Since then, work has been ongoing to implement Safe and Well Oxford and much has been learned about success. Having one plan has proven to be an efficient use of resources and has strengthened coordination, consistency, and shared accountability across the region.

CSWB plans function differently. Because no single organization "owns" community safety and well-being, CSWB plans are implemented collectively. The model is anchored in collective responsibility: municipalities, frontline service providers, public sector entities, and residents all play a role in creating a community where everyone feels safe, supported, and included. The model provides a clear framework for strengthening safety and well-being across Oxford County through shared action, prevention-focused approaches, and long-term efforts to address underlying challenges. They help partners align existing work, identify gaps, coordinate responses, and determine where collective solutions or joint advocacy are needed. In this way, CSWB plans complement individual organizational strategic plans. They provide a common model for partners to work together on shared challenges that no one organization can solve alone.

The Review and Update

Under the *Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019*, all Ontario municipalities must review and, if needed, update their CSWB Plan every four years. In keeping with this requirement, Oxford County initiated the updating of Safe & Well Oxford Communities in Spring 2025. Beyond the legislative requirement, the purpose of updating the Plan was to assess whether it still reflected community needs, priorities, and realities. Key objectives included:

- Checking whether the original priority risk areas (i.e., mental health, affordable housing, substance misuse and addictions, equity, diversity, and inclusion, and gender-based violence) remain relevant as community needs evolve.

- Identifying new areas of focus to address emerging community safety and well-being challenges, informed by meaningful engagement with area municipalities, community partners, and residents, including people with lived and living experience.

- Exploring how collaboration and coordination can be strengthened to improve community outcomes.

Through the update, Oxford County aimed to ensure the next version of Safe & Well Oxford Communities is locally grounded, responsive, and aligned with the experiences and priorities of community members and partners today.

Public Consultation and Community Input

Safety and well-being are highly personal concepts, and the lived experience of Oxford County residents is central to an effective plan. A variety of consultation techniques were deployed to ensure that the people of Oxford County - whether they guide its direction, deliver services, or access supports - could see their experiences and perspectives reflected.

Oxford County worked with area municipalities, the OPP, and community partners to design an engagement strategy tailored to its rural–urban mix. Partners identified key stakeholders and appropriate engagement settings. The County also consulted frontline service providers to ensure safe, accessible participation, especially for people with lived experience in areas such as mental health, housing, substance use, DEI, and gender-based violence. Building on this foundation, a range of research and engagement activities were undertaken to gather insight from municipal leaders, service providers, and residents with diverse backgrounds and experiences. Further details are included in Appendix B.

The New Safe & Well Oxford Plan

The updated Safe & Well Oxford Plan provides a practical foundation for improving the experiences of residents across Oxford County. It meets the requirements of the *Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019* and is streamlined to focus on the outcomes that matter most to the community. The Plan reflects meaningful engagement with people who have lived and living experience related to priority risk areas and is grounded in the realities, strengths, and challenges of Oxford's rural and urban communities. It brings together cross-sector perspectives to provide a picture of resident needs and how partners can further collaborate to meet them.

Guiding Principles

The 2021 Safe & Well Oxford Communities Plan included ten guiding principles to support Oxford County, area municipalities, community partners, and residents in advancing a collective vision of "communities where individuals and families feel safe, supported and included and where they can access what they need, when they need it to live fully" (Oxford County, 2024).

These principles are:

1. Builds on the remarkable and diverse range of assets, programs, and strengths found across Oxford's municipalities.

2. Leverages and complements all existing system-wide strategies and action plans that are in place to address risks to community safety and well-being.

3. Promotes broad and wide-ranging multi-sector and multi-disciplinary collaboration and coordination of strategies, services, information, and resource sharing for collective impact.

4. Engages and mobilizes individuals, families, service providers, government, associations, and organizations to come together and share, learn and strategize to optimize community safety and well-being.

5. Reflects the voices and experiences of the people we serve, such as youth, families, seniors, and vulnerable populations and provides solutions that are relevant and sensitive to the lived experiences of a diverse range of individuals and groups.

6. Prioritizes social development and risk prevention and mitigation strategies, with a focus on causes. By proactively implementing evidence-based situational measures, policies, or programs to reduce priority risks to community safety and well-being, we can improve outcomes and reduce crime, victimization, and harm.

7. Is culturally responsive, guided by the diverse voices, experiences, backgrounds, and needs of the many people we serve.

8. Is inclusive and holistic, recognizing the critical importance of the social determinants of health and inequities in building a safe and well community. The main determinants include race/racism, gender, ability, income, and social status, education and literacy, employment and job security, childhood experiences, housing, food security, social supports, and coping skills, access to health services, social safety net, and early childhood development.

9. Incorporates a place-based approach, allowing us to allocate resources and attention to specific groups or geographic areas within Oxford County where there is a greater need. For example, focusing on a particular neighbourhood or age group, such as youth or seniors.

10. Is owned by each community member and acknowledges that each person has a role in bringing the plan to life and making our communities safe and healthier places to live, play and work" (Oxford County, 2024).

These principles continue to resonate for Oxford County's community safety and well-being planning. Based on learnings from the implementation of the original Safe & Well Oxford Communities Plan, one additional principle was added:

11. Strengthens transparency through shared measurement and standardized reporting, clear roles, and continuous communication on progress toward community safety and well-being goals.

Success Enablers

To promote and maximize success in achieving the goals of this plan, the following factors will help ensure the Plan is implemented effectively and achieves its intended outcomes.

Success Enabler	Description
Sustainable Funding	Reliable and predictable funding is secured to support both initiative delivery and the collection of data needed to measure impact. Funding is clearly linked to community safety and well-being priorities.
Dedicated Staff & Internal Capacity	Designated staff have the time, resources, and authority to support the advancement of community safety and well-being goals.
Clear Roles & Responsibilities	Governance structures clearly define roles and responsibilities. They promote transparency and trust among partners.
Cross-Sector Collaboration	Partners across sectors work together to address root causes of community safety and well-being risk. Collaboration aligns activities and resources, reduces duplication, and strengthens community outcomes.
Integration with Municipal Operations & Existing Strategies	Community safety and well-being goals are embedded into municipal strategies, planning, budgeting, and service delivery.
Local Relevance & Community Voice	The plan reflects the strengths, needs, and lived experiences of diverse local communities. It adapts to changing community needs through ongoing engagement, data collection, and feedback incorporation.
Champions & Continuous Communication	Visible champions within government and the community promote the plan, increase awareness of community safety and well-being efforts, and foster engagement with collective goals. Two-way communication builds trust and keeps partners and residents connected to results.
Action-Oriented & Evidence-Informed Implementation	The plan focuses on practical, preventive actions supported by local evidence and data-driven analysis. Resources are targeted to maximize outcomes, improve long-term community safety and well-being, and reduce costs through proactive risk prevention.
Continuous Learning & Adaptation	The CSWB plan evolves alongside the community. Data is used to regularly assess progress, refine strategies, and ensure that priorities remain relevant and effective in addressing emerging risks.

Safe & Well Oxford Plan at a Glance

The updated Safe & Well Oxford Plan includes six priority risk areas and goals, as well as seventeen supporting initiatives.

Priority Risk Area	Goal
Mental Health and Well-Being	Improve mental health and well-being across all stages of life by strengthening early intervention, system coordination, and community capacity to promote resilience and recovery.
Housing for All	To ensure alignment and avoid duplication, support the implementation of Oxford County's Housing for All: Housing and Homelessness Plan 2024–2033, Homelessness Response Strategy, and Master Housing Strategy, rather than creating separate housing goals or initiatives.
People and Belonging	Build on ongoing efforts to ensure Oxford County is a community where everyone, regardless of age, geography, background, or identity, can live with dignity, belonging, and equitable opportunity.
Substance Use and Addictions	Reduce substance-related harms and improve pathways to prevention, treatment, and recovery through coordinated community responses and expanded access to supports.
Gender Based Violence	Prevent gender-based violence and strengthen safety and recovery.
Affordability and Economic Stability	Support residents of all ages and stages of life living on limited or fixed incomes in meeting basic needs.

Priority Risk | Mental Health and Well-Being

Residents and service providers reported growing mental health needs in Oxford County, with the biggest gaps in rural communities due to limited services, travel distances, and reliance on few providers. Priority groups[1] face added barriers from stigma, discrimination, and a lack of culturally safe care. Service providers highlighted challenges with early identification, mental health literacy, and navigating a fragmented system, especially for children, caregivers, and older adults.

Partners described challenges in clear and consistent pathways to support across sectors, including schools, healthcare, police, emergency services, and community agencies—issues intensified in rural areas by transportation and privacy concerns. Mental health challenges were also linked to housing, income insecurity, substance use, discrimination, and social isolation, underscoring the need for more coordinated, trauma-informed, culturally responsive services.

Goal: Improve mental health and well-being across all stages of life by strengthening early intervention, system coordination, and community capacity to promote resilience and recovery.

Initiatives & Intended Outcomes:

- **Initiative**: Further strengthen coordination among community organizations (e.g., primary care, childcare, schools) by building on existing cross-sector partnerships to improve referral and communication processes that connect residents, particularly children, youth, and older adults, to mental health supports before crisis.

    - **Intended Outcome:** Proportion of residents accessing community-based mental health supports before crisis increases, while emergency mental health visits decrease annually.

- **Initiative**: Promote mental wellness through community-based education and mental health literacy initiatives that reduce stigma, build resilience at both the community and family level, and encourage help-seeking among all age groups.

    - **Intended Outcome:** Increased community awareness and comfort discussing mental health.

- **Initiative**: Support the Homelessness and Addiction Recovery Treatment (HART) Hub/Wellness Centre to build a more coordinated, system-wide approach that reduces service duplication, strengthens integration across partners, expands harm-reduction supports and enhances the overall impact of mental health and addiction supports.

    - **Intended Outcome:** Residents access the right supports for recovery and long-term stability more easily.

---

[1] Priority groups refer to Indigenous peoples, racialized populations, newcomers, 2SLGBTIA+ individuals, people with disabilities, older adults (i.e., people who are 65+), and youth.

- **Initiative**: Support a trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and consistent approach by coordinating shared training and knowledge exchange among relevant educators, service providers, police, and first responders, with attention to the unique experiences of residents from priority groups.
    - **Intended Outcome:** More clients report a positive experience accessing mental health supports annually.
- **Initiative**: Improve equitable access to mental health supports for residents in rural and smaller municipalities by addressing geographic and service availability barriers through collaborative community and system planning.
    - **Intended Outcome:** Access to mental health and well-being supports improves across Oxford County, with greater availability and utilization in rural and smaller municipalities.

Priority Risk | Housing for All

The availability of affordable housing is one of the most pressing concerns in Oxford County. People described having difficulty finding reasonably priced rentals in both urban and rural areas, and a growing sense that affordable housing is becoming out of reach for many. Homelessness is visible in towns like Woodstock but often hidden in rural communities, where people rely on unsafe or temporary arrangements.

Priority groups—including Indigenous peoples, youth, women fleeing violence, people with disabilities, newcomers, racialized communities, and 2SLGBTQIA+ residents—face additional barriers such as complex eligibility processes, documentation requirements, and safety-related mobility challenges.

Service providers noted that housing instability impacts nearly every aspect of life, strongly linking it to mental health, substance use, safety, income insecurity, discrimination, and access to services.

Oxford County has a Housing and Homelessness Plan, Homelessness Response Strategy, and Master Housing Strategy that outline the actions, partnerships, and system improvements needed to improve housing affordability, strengthen homelessness prevention, and expand housing options.

Goal: Support the implementation of Oxford County's Housing for All: Housing and Homelessness Plan 2024–2033, Homelessness Response Strategy, and Master Housing Strategy, rather than creating separate housing goals or initiatives.

Intended Outcomes:
- Reduce homelessness through prevention.
- Improve housing stability through enhanced collaboration.
- Maintain and improve the existing housing portfolio.
- Increase affordable and rental options.

Priority Risk | People and Belonging

A strong sense of belonging is vital to community well-being, but experiences vary across Oxford County by age, identity, culture, ability, and location. Rural residents often have strong neighbour networks but fewer gathering places and transportation options, contributing to isolation. In urban areas like Woodstock, isolation is also experienced but more often tied to weaker social networks.

Priority groups reported discrimination, exclusion, language and cultural barriers, and accessibility issues that limit participation. Youth and older adults also noted increased isolation due to reduced gathering spaces and programming since COVID-19.

Oxford's mix of urban, small-town, and rural settings creates both strengths and challenges. Strengthening belonging requires reducing discrimination, removing access barriers, creating culturally safe spaces, and expanding opportunities for meaningful connection.

Goal: Build on ongoing efforts to ensure Oxford County is a community where everyone, regardless of age, geography, background, or identity, can live with dignity, belonging, and equitable opportunity.

Initiatives & Intended Outcomes:

- **Initiative**: Advance accessibility and age-friendly communities by working with municipalities, service providers, and community groups to identify priority barriers, enhance transportation and mobility options, and improve the design and promotion of local programs, spaces, and services for residents of priority groups.
  - **Intended Outcome:** Identify and reduce barriers that limit community participation for priority populations.

- **Initiative**: Create more opportunities for residents of all ages and backgrounds to connect, reduce loneliness, and build a stronger sense of belonging through community-building events, neighbourhood activities, and relationship-centred programs.
  - **Intended Outcome(s):**
    - Residents across all ages, backgrounds, and identities report a stronger sense of belonging, safety, and inclusion in their communities.
    - Increased engagement with rural and smaller communities and priority groups strengthens trust, representation, and co-design in community initiatives.

- **Initiative**: Strengthen inclusion and belonging through education, dialogue, engagement opportunities, and events that build empathy, challenge discrimination (e.g., geographic, cultural, language, age), and promote respect for diversity across all communities.
  - **Intended Outcome:** More residents feel welcomed, respected, and connected to one another.

- **Initiative**: Champion and operationalize inclusivity by coordinating shared training and leadership development initiatives that support the building of diverse and culturally competent workforces across sectors.

    - **Intended Outcome:** Residents report a stronger sense of belonging, safety, and inclusion in their workplaces.

- **Initiative**: Expand child and youth access to prosocial activities and cultural programming across different parts of the County.

    - **Intended Outcome:** Children and youth have more opportunities to develop skills, build positive relationships, and explore their interests.

Priority Risk | Substance Use and Addictions

Substance use continues to impact individuals, families, and communities across Oxford County, with growing complexity in the needs of those seeking support. Community partners stressed the importance of timely assessment, harm-reduction supports, and accessible long-term treatment, noting that residents often face long wait times, limited withdrawal or recovery options, and the need to travel outside the County—challenges felt most by youth, older adults, marginalized groups, and rural residents with transportation barriers.

Racialized residents and people experiencing homelessness reported stigma, discrimination, and culturally mismatched services that discourage help-seeking. Service providers highlighted the strong links between substance use, trauma, poverty, mental health, housing instability, and systemic inequities.

Oxford's mix of urban, small-town, and rural communities shapes how and when people can seek help. Improving early intervention, harm reduction, trauma-informed care, and culturally responsive services is essential to reducing harms and supporting long-term recovery.

Goal: Reduce substance-related harms and improve pathways to prevention, treatment, and recovery through coordinated community responses and expanded access to supports.

Initiatives & Intended Outcomes:

- **Initiative**: Continue to deepen coordination among County programs and community organizations (e.g., the HART Hub/Wellness Centre, social service providers, health partners) to increase the alignment of prevention, harm reduction, and treatment efforts and support increased access and timely supports for priority groups.

    - **Intended Outcome(s):**

        - Residents have improved access to prevention, harm reduction, and treatment services within their communities.

- Deaths, hospitalizations, and emergency response interventions from overdoses decrease annually.

- **Initiative**: Promote community-based prevention and education initiatives that reduce stigma, build resilience, and encourage healthy coping strategies, with a focus on early prevention among children and youth.
  - o **Intended Outcome:** Residents have increased knowledge and tools to understand and reduce stigma related to substance use and addiction.

Priority Risk | Gender Based Violence

Gender-based violence is a significant safety concern across Oxford County. Survivors described difficulty accessing timely, trauma-informed support, especially in rural areas where transportation, confidentiality issues, and limited services create major barriers.

Police, shelters, and community agencies are seeing rising demand for crisis response, safety planning, and counselling, but limited capacity means survivors may be turned away or must travel outside the County. Pathways to assistance can also feel unclear, with inconsistent responses depending on where survivors first seek help.

Gender-based violence is closely linked to housing instability, income insecurity, mental health, and social isolation. Community partners emphasized the need for stronger coordination, earlier intervention, clearer pathways, and more culturally appropriate, survivor-centred supports.

Goal: Prevent gender-based violence and strengthen safety and recovery supports.

Initiatives & Intended Outcomes:
- **Initiative:** Promote early intervention and education initiatives that increase awareness of healthy relationships, consent, and gender equity among youth, workplaces, and community organizations.
  - o **Intended Outcome:** Residents demonstrate increased understanding of healthy relationships and are more able to prevent, identify, and seek help for gender-based violence.
- **Initiative:** Improve access to safe, trauma-informed, and culturally appropriate services by supporting outreach, shelter capacity, and survivor-centred programming for rural, Indigenous, newcomer, racialized and 2SLGBTQIA+ residents.
  - o **Intended Outcome:** Survivors experience improved safety, support, and healing through timely, trauma-informed, and culturally appropriate services across Oxford County.

Priority Risk | Affordability and Economic Stability

Affordability and economic stability strongly shape residents' well-being in Oxford County. Rising costs for food, housing, transportation, and childcare disproportionately impact people with low or fixed incomes and priority groups. Transportation barriers, limited internet or technology access, and literacy or language challenges further restrict access to jobs, training, benefits, and financial supports.

Service providers noted that financial strain limits community participation and reduces opportunities for social and economic mobility. Rural residents often face fewer job options, longer travel distances, and limited childcare and support programs. For many families, food insecurity, unstable employment, and rising living costs create chronic stress that negatively impacts physical and mental health.

Goal: Support residents of all ages and stages of life living on limited or fixed incomes in meeting basic needs.

Initiatives & Intended Outcomes:

- **Initiative:** Enhance food security through more strategic collaboration among municipalities, food networks, and community organizations to improve access to affordable and nutritious food options across the County.

  - **Intended Outcome:** Food insecurity decreases as more residents can access reliable, nutritious, and affordable food options.

- **Initiative:** Help residents build skills, reduce barriers to finding work, and connect to steady, good-paying jobs through continued collaboration between local schools, training programs, job agencies, and other community partners.

  - **Intended Outcome:** Increased employment stability as more residents gain access to training and upskilling opportunities.

- **Initiative:** Make it easier for people with low or fixed incomes, such as older adults and people with disabilities, to access financial help, services, and social supports by enhancing outreach, sharing clear information, and coordinating local supports.

  - **Intended Outcome:** Residents facing economic vulnerability access supports more easily, helping reduce unmet needs and improve stability in daily living.

Implementation: How We Will Move this Plan Forward

This Plan will be implemented through a collaborative, cross-sector approach that builds on the strengths and resources already present in Oxford County. Because community safety and well-being challenges span multiple sectors, no single organization can address them alone. Safe & Well Oxford relies on partners working together to understand residents' needs, identify service gaps, better align existing resources, and determine where advocacy for additional funding or system-level support is required. The following describes how partners will coordinate efforts, share information, and address gaps to improve community safety and well-being.

A Collaborative Structure to Support Implementation

Implementation will be supported by two primary coordination structures:

1. Action Coalitions – Addressing Specific Community Safety and Well-Being Priorities

Action Coalition Role

Action Coalitions are working groups that advance Safe & Well Oxford's goals within each priority risk area. They bring together partners who work directly with residents to focus on practical, achievable actions. Rather than replacing existing programs or creating new operational demands, Action Coalitions help partners coordinate, prioritize, and strengthen work already underway, making the best use of available resources.

There will be one Action Coalition for each priority risk area, with the possibility of combining if relevant. The role of each Action Coalition is to:

- Identify the most pressing needs within their area of focus based on their expertise, local data, and community insights.

- Establish practical, collaborative strategies to address these needs. For example, improving referral pathways, aligning programs, sharing data, or testing new or proven approaches.

- Determine the people, resources, or supports required to move initiatives into action.

- Coordinate with the Advisory Committee when initiatives require cross-Coalition alignment or broader policy or funding support.

- Encourage organizations and networks to align their work with Action Coalition priorities and collaborate with other Action Coalitions when issues overlap, or joint action is needed.

- Engage residents and people with lived and living experience through flexible, person-centred approaches to identify issues, design solutions, and assess progress.

- Collect and share data to understand community needs, measure progress, and learn what works. Adapt approaches based on results and feedback.

- Share frontline insights on emerging community safety and well-being trends, pressures, and gaps to help the Advisory Committee understand where system-level action or advocacy may be required.

- Provide regular updates on progress, achievements, challenges, and lessons learned to the Advisory Committee and other partners.

Action Coalition Membership

Action Coalitions will be established or re-established for each priority risk area. Members will represent key parts of the system connected to that issue, bring firsthand knowledge of local needs, and be action-oriented partners with the credibility and influence to support collaboration within their organizations and networks.

2. Advisory Committee – Strengthening System-Level Alignment

Advisory Committee Role

Under the *Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019*, every municipality in Ontario must establish an Advisory Committee to support the implementation of its CSWB Plan. Oxford's Advisory Committee will serve as the central coordination table for Safe & Well Oxford, linking cross-sector leaders to strengthen alignment across the County. The Advisory Committee will not direct the operations of partner organizations. Instead, its purpose is to connect efforts across the County, support shared understanding, and help partners coordinate, align, and adapt their work to improve community safety and well-being.

The role of the Advisory Committee is to:

- Promote the goals of Safe & Well Oxford within their organizations and across Oxford County.

- Strengthen coordinated responses and problem-solving to remove barriers to community safety and well-being.

- Drive coordination and shared learning across Action Coalitions, helping community safety and well-being partners avoid duplication, identify opportunities to work together, and maximize existing resources.

- Identify cross-sector challenges affecting community safety and well-being and elevate issues that require joint action or system-level solutions.

- Highlight community safety and well-being gaps that require advocacy or policy support, helping partners speak with a unified voice where appropriate.

- Model and promote the meaningful engagement of people with lived and living experience, ensuring their perspectives inform decisions and solution development.

- Review shared key performance indicators and updates from Action Coalitions to understand what is working, where challenges remain, and where adjustments may be needed.

Advisory Committee Membership

Oxford's Advisory Committee must include representatives from key sectors that shape community safety and well-being, including:

- Ontario Health or a local health organization.
- The education sector (e.g., a school board).
- A community or social service organization.
- A service provider for children or youth.
- A provider of custodial services for children or youth.
- A representative from Oxford County or one of its area municipalities.
- A representative from a police service board or Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) detachment.
- A chief of police or their delegate.
- Any additional members required by the Province.

A single individual may represent multiple sectors as noted above. If not already included through these mandated categories, the Safe & Well Oxford Communities Advisory Committee will also include:

- The Lead from each Action Coalition.
- One representative from each of Oxford County's area municipalities.
- A designated staff member from Oxford County.
- The Lead of the Oxford Situation Table.
- The Lead of the Oxford Femicide Prevention Table.

A designated Oxford County staff member will coordinate the implementation of Safe & Well Oxford. This role will support the Action Coalitions, Advisory Committee, and other community safety and well-being partners in tracking and communicating progress, sharing information, and maintaining momentum behind shared goals.

Tracking Progress and Sharing Information

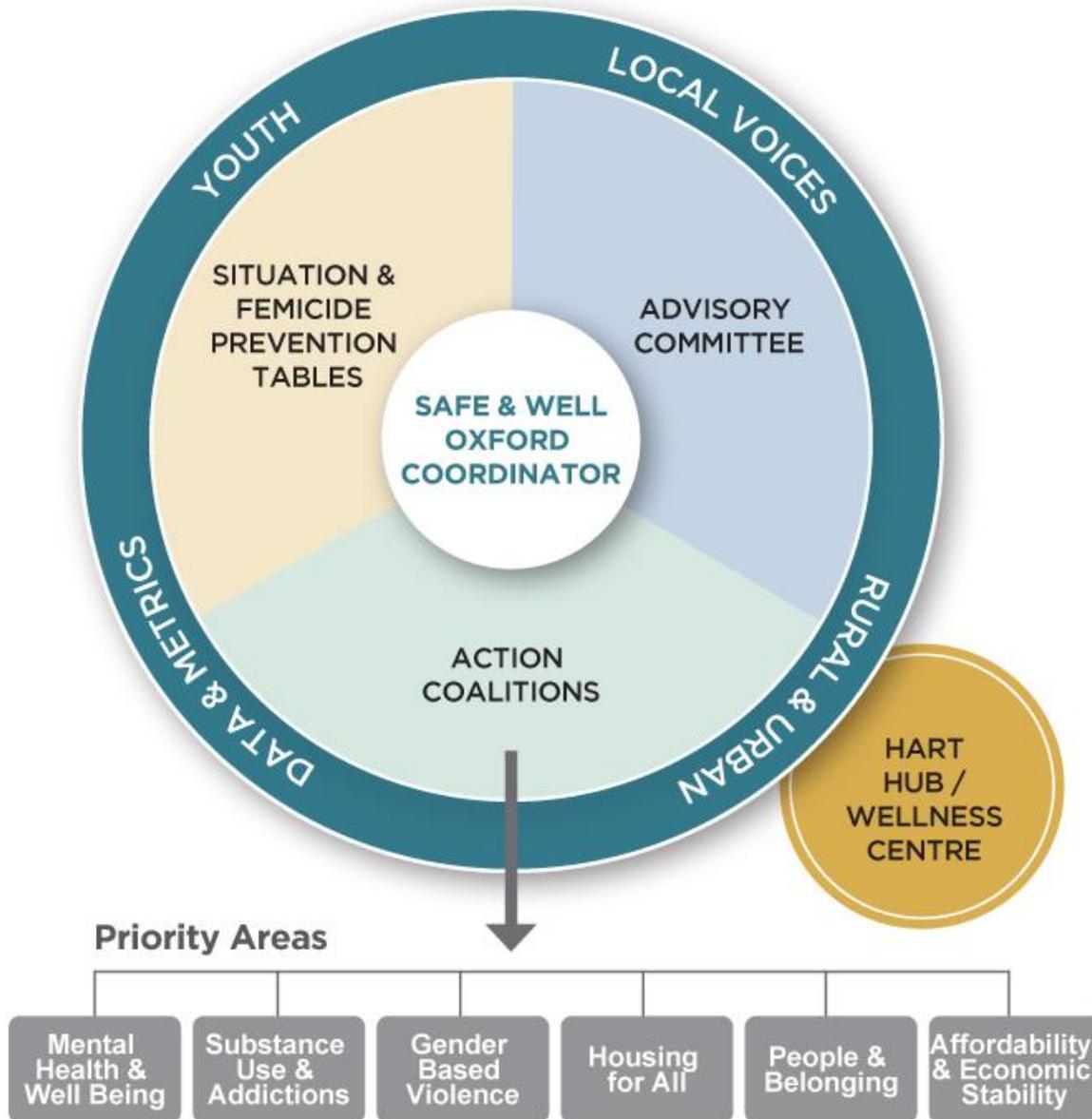To understand whether this Plan is making a difference, partners will:

- Use shared indicators to monitor community safety and well-being trends and outcomes.
- Ensure two-way communication between Action Coalitions and the Advisory Committee so both groups understand what is working, what needs attention, and where more support may be required.
- Talk with people who have lived and living experience to understand how well strategies are working in practice and where improvements are needed.
- Share information across sectors to support evidence-informed decisions.
- Provide public updates on progress each year.

Monitoring will focus on community trends and collective progress, not on evaluating individual organizations.

Moving Forward Together

This Plan provides a shared framework for continuing to work together to strengthen community safety and well-being across Oxford County. Its value comes from partners sharing what they see, coordinating to address service gaps and make the best use of existing resources, and taking collective action to improve outcomes for residents. By maintaining strong relationships, aligning activities where it makes sense, and focusing on practical, locally responsive actions, Oxford County, area municipalities, and community partners can continue building communities where people feel safe, supported, included, and able to access what they need to live fully.

Safe and Well Oxford Governance Model

Circular governance diagram with **SAFE & WELL OXFORD COORDINATOR** at the center. Outer ring segments: YOUTH, LOCAL VOICES, RURAL & URBAN, DATA & METRICS. Inner segments: SITUATION & FEMICIDE PREVENTION TABLES, ADVISORY COMMITTEE, ACTION COALITIONS. Adjacent circle: HART HUB / WELLNESS CENTRE.

Priority Areas

Mental Health & Well Being	Substance Use & Addictions	Gender Based Violence	Housing for All	People & Belonging	Affordability & Economic Stability

Shared Commitments
What underlying values have shaped this plan?

- Evidence Informed
- Collaborative
- Inclusive
- Practical & Scalable
- Leverage Existing Efforts

Success Enablers
What will facilitate success for our Plan?

- Sustainable Funding
- Dedicated Staff & Internal Capacity
- Clear Roles & Responsibilities
- Champions & Continuous Communication
- Local Relevance & Community Voice
- Cross Sector Collaboration
- Continuous Learning & Adaptation
- Action-Oriented & Evidence-Informed Implemetation
- Integration with Municipal Operations & Existing Strategies

Appendices

Appendix A | The Community Safety and Well-Being Model

The CSWB model provides communities a common, structured way to work together on complex social issues that no single organization can solve alone. The model focuses on strengthening what already exists by improving coordination, aligning efforts, and reducing duplication among partners. The CSWB model also helps partners identify gaps in local services and determine the best ways to address them, including where stronger coordination or additional funding, capacity, and advocacy may be needed.

At its core, the CSWB model helps communities shift from reacting to problems after they happen to preventing them before they occur. It outlines four levels where communities can take action:

- **Incident Response**: Immediate actions taken when urgent or unsafe situations occur.

- **Risk Intervention**: Supports and coordinated actions offered just before harm happens, when a situation is escalating.

- **Prevention**: Early efforts to identify risks and put supports in place so problems do not worsen.

- **Social Development**: Long-term, cross-sector work to address the root causes of community safety and well-being challenges, such as poverty, homelessness, substance use, and social isolation.

By organizing work across these four levels, the CSWB model helps communities think beyond emergency response and toward long-term, system-wide change. The model encourages partners to share information, coordinate supports, and focus on upstream solutions that make communities safer, healthier, and more connected.

Appendix B | Engagement Details

The update of Safe & Well Oxford Communities was informed by diverse voices from across Oxford County. The process included:

- **A Council & Chief Administrative Officer Survey**: Input from municipal leaders on local priorities and emerging community safety and well-being risks.

- **A Community Organization Survey**: Feedback from health, human service, and other frontline organizations on community needs and opportunities for further collaboration.

- **A Principal Survey**: Perspectives from school leaders on youth safety, belonging, and well-being.

- **The Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) Survey**: Quality-of-life data from 1,630 residents collected through a survey promoted broadly by mail and in-person at community partner locations.

- **Municipal Clerk & Indigenous Community Member Interviews**: Local perspectives on Safe & Well implementation and community needs.

- **Community Organization Focus Groups**: Conversations with local leaders about community safety and well-being strengths, service gaps, and opportunities to enhance resident safety and well-being.

- **Children's Services Planning Table Focus Group**: Input from service providers supporting children and families.

- **DEI Action Coalition Focus Group**: Perspectives on safety, inclusion, and barriers affecting equity-deserving groups.

- **Library Engagement Boards**: Community feedback on what helps residents feel safe, supported, and included.

- **Focus Groups with People with Lived and Living Experience**:
    - Youth (with the Fusion Youth Centre).
    - Survivors of gender-based violence (with Domestic Abuse Services Oxford).
    - Unhoused residents (with Operation Sharing).
    - Newcomers and diverse residents (with Community Employment Services).

In total, more than 30 community partners and service providers - representing over 120 people - participated in the insight-gathering process, in addition to the 1,630 residents who completed the CIW survey. The insights gathered through this engagement directly shaped the priority risk areas, goals, initiatives, and implementation approach for the updated Plan.

Area Municipal Partners

Representatives included Municipal Clerks, Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs), and Councillors from

- The City of Woodstock
- The Town of Ingersoll
- The Town of Tillsonburg
- The Township of Blandford-Blenheim
- The Township of East Zorra-Tavistock
- The Township of Norwich
- The Township of South-West Oxford
- The Township of Zorra

Community Safety and Well-Being Partners

Representatives included individuals and members from:

- Canadian Mental Health Association – Thames Valley Addiction and Mental Health Services
- Children's Aid Society of Oxford County
- Community Employment Services – Oxford County
- Crime Stoppers Oxford
- Dayspring Pregnancy & Family Support Centre
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Coalition
- Domestic Abuse Response Team (DART)
- Domestic Abuse Services Oxford (DASO)
- Fusion Centre
- HART Hub/Wellness Centre
- Indwell
- Ingamo Homes
- Operation Sharing
- Oxford Community Health Centre
- Oxford County (e.g., Human Services, Children's Services)
- Oxford County Library
- Oxford Housing Action Collaborative
- Oxford Mental Health and Addictions Action Coalition (OMHAAC)
- Oxford OPP
- Safe & Well Oxford Steering Committee
- Southwestern Public Health
- Thames Valley District School Board
- United Way Oxford
- Wellkin Child & Youth Mental Wellness
- Woodstock Hospital
- Woodstock Police Service
- YMCA of Southwestern Ontario

Appendix C | Priority Risk Areas – Additional Details

Included below is a selection of additional data and insights drawn from primary research and a review of local data. These insights are intended to provide additional context on priority risk areas and do not represent an exhaustive list of all findings.

Priority Risk: Mental Health and Well-Being

Supporting Data Snapshot:

- Southwestern Public Health reported that, among youth, 35.2% of those needing mental health services reported difficulty accessing them, most often due to wait times. (Mental Health Report - October 2024)

- According to Southwestern Public Health, 15.3% of residents consulted a mental health professional in 2019/20, but urban residents (19.2%) had higher access than rural residents (11.0%). (Mental Health Report - October 2024)

- Southwestern Public Health reported that emergency department visits for intentional self-harm peaked in 2021 at 220 per 100,000, above the provincial rate of 145.1. Females aged 10–19 had the highest rates. Intentional self-harm hospitalizations also peaked in 2021 at 142.3 per 100,000, double the provincial average (67.2). (Mental Health Report - October 2024)

- According to Southwestern Public Health, local suicide rates fell from 21.4 per 100,000 in 2018 to 12.9 in 2022, narrowing the gap with Ontario (11.7). However, the 5-year average suicide rate among males (25.2) was four times higher than females (6.2) (Mental Health Report - October 2024)

- According to the Woodstock Hospital, 65.8% of Oxford County residents report their mental health as very good or excellent, which is below the Ontario average (70.4%) and the Canadian average (71.1%). (Woodstock Hospital - Strat Plan)

- United Way Oxford reported that the average wait time for mental health case management in Oxford County is 110 days. In that time, mental illness can significantly worsen. (2023-24 United Way Community Impact Report)

- In a survey of community safety and well-being partners, 100% of respondents indicated that mental health is an important priority risk area, with 73% rating it as very important and 27% rating it as somewhat important. (StrategyCorp's Oxford County Community Organization Leadership & Staff Survey).

- In a survey of school principals, mental health was identified as the most significant challenge affecting students' safety and well-being, with 92% of principals identifying it among their top concerns. (StrategyCorp's Oxford County CSWB Update: Principal Survey)

- Of those experiencing homelessness in January 2025, 66% had a diagnosed mental illness and 88% reported mental health concerns, confirming the scale of mental-health need in the housing system. ([Homelessness Response Strategy 2025](#))

Engagement Feedback:

- *"We really need to strengthen our **outreach**… people newly housed need to be **connected to** [mental health] **counselling** and other supports… otherwise we see **high return rates** [to homelessness]."*

- *"Other community safety and well-being plans we've helped municipalities develop actually have a priority area related to older adults, recognizing growing isolation, loneliness, mental health challenges, [and] complex needs."*

Priority Risk: Housing for All

Supporting Data Snapshot:

- Oxford's rent-geared-to-income waitlist remains static at ~1,600 households, while rents in urban centres have risen 6–7% annually over the past decade, leaving 80% of average market rents unaffordable. ([Homelessness Response Strategy 2025](#))

- The monthly cost of shelter beds ($1,932) exceeds that of rent supplements ($701) or social housing ($200), demonstrating both economic and social gains from expanding permanent housing options. ([Homelessness Response Strategy 2025](#))

- As of January 2025, in the By-Name List, 166 people were known to be experiencing active homelessness. Indigenous people made up 11% of individuals on the By-Name List, even though they represent only 2.3% of Oxford County's total population. This shows a significant overrepresentation among people experiencing homelessness.[2] Also, 8% of the people on the list were youth. This is hard to compare with Census data because the Census uses a different definition of who is considered a youth. These findings highlight the disproportionate impacts on priority populations. ([Homelessness Response Strategy 2025](#))

- United Way Oxford has reported that housing vacancy rates are less than 3% in Oxford County. 30-40% of all renters are paying more for their housing than they can afford. Many in deep poverty are paying over 50% of their income on housing. ([2022-2023 United Way Community Impact Report](#))

- In Oxford County, 46% of people experiencing homelessness were temporarily sheltered (e.g., motels, couch-surfing, or transitional housing), while 21% were staying in emergency shelters and 32% were unsheltered, indicating a significant proportion with no stable or formal shelter options. ([Oxford County Homelessness Survey – Snapshot Results (2020)](#))

---

[22] As of 2023 Census data.

- In the same survey, 71% of people experiencing homelessness surveyed in Oxford County met the definition of chronic homelessness, meaning they had been homeless for at least six months over the past year, underscoring the significant prevalence of long-term and persistent homelessness in the region. (Oxford County Homelessness Survey – Snapshot Results (2020))

- When surveyed, community organization leaders and staff in Oxford County identified affordable housing as a top concern, with 80% rating it as very important and 20% rating it as somewhat important. (StrategyCorp's Oxford County Community Organization Leadership & Staff Survey)

- Supports to help keep individuals housed if they are at risk of losing housing were identified as missing by 45% of respondents in a recent survey of local community organization leadership. (StrategyCorp's Oxford County Community Organization Leadership & Staff Survey)

- In a recent survey, satisfaction with housing that meets the needs of diverse populations was found to be low amongst community partners. Only 19% reported being satisfied, while most provided neutral or negative ratings, including 19% somewhat dissatisfied, 31% dissatisfied, and 13% very dissatisfied. (StrategyCorp's Oxford County Community Organization Leadership & Staff Survey)

- Half of principals in a recent survey (50%) identified family instability or housing insecurity as a challenge affecting student safety and well-being in their schools. (StrategyCorp's Oxford County CSWB Update: Principal Survey)

Engagement Feedback:

- *"The shelter is not housing — we need actual housing."*

- *"All of these issues are interconnected… when we're talking about gender-based violence, we're talking about the social determinants of health. We're talking about housing stability."*

- *"Someone that needs to come from one county to another for safety reasons… can't apply for housing within that county. That's really tough for folks."*

Priority Risk: People and Belonging

Supporting Data Snapshot:

- Most Oxford County residents report being satisfied with their life overall. County-wide, 62.4% of residents indicate satisfaction with life in general. Satisfaction is most pronounced in the townships (70.9%), followed by Tillsonburg (64.1%) and Ingersoll (61.4%), while Woodstock reports a lower share of satisfied residents (55.0%). (2025 Canadian Index of Wellbeing)

- Oxford County residents report a moderate sense of community belonging, with 41.2% reporting a strong sense of belonging county-wide. Strong belonging is most pronounced in the townships (46.5%) and Ingersoll (46.0%), followed by Tillsonburg (45.7%), while

Woodstock reports a notably lower share of residents with strong belonging (33.5%) (2025 Canadian Index of Wellbeing)

- Satisfaction with personal relationships is high across Oxford County. County-wide, 61.5% of residents report being satisfied with their personal relationships, with higher levels in Tillsonburg (65.7%) and the townships (63.6%), followed by Ingersoll (62.8%), and lower satisfaction in Woodstock (57.9%). (2025 Canadian Index of Wellbeing)

- County-wide, 28.0% of residents agree that they "often feel isolated from others in the community," while 18.3% feel neutral and 53.8% disagree. Woodstock reports the highest agreement at 34.2%, compared with 26.9% in Tillsonburg, 24.6% in Ingersoll, and 22.3% in the Townships. (2025 Canadian Index of Wellbeing)

- While 94% of respondents identified supports for an aging population as important, with equal shares rating them very and somewhat important, 55% also reported that services to help seniors age in place are missing in the County. (StrategyCorp's Oxford County Community Organization Leadership & Staff Survey)

- Peer, parent, and social supports or youth activities were identified as missing by 41% of respondents in a recent survey. (StrategyCorp's Oxford County Community Organization Leadership & Staff Survey)

- Half of respondents (50%) indicated that services or supports to address social disconnection and isolation are missing in the County. (StrategyCorp's Oxford County Community Organization Leadership & Staff Survey)

- Initiatives and programs that combat racism and discrimination were identified as missing by 59% of respondents in a recent survey. (StrategyCorp's Oxford County Community Organization Leadership & Staff Survey)

- Supports to improve accessibility for individuals were identified as missing by 59% of respondents in a recent survey. (StrategyCorp's Oxford County Community Organization Leadership & Staff Survey)

- Bullying, harassment, or discrimination was identified as a challenge by 42% of principals recently surveyed. (StrategyCorp's Oxford County CSWB Update: Principal Survey)

Engagement Feedback:

- *"There are still areas and buildings where accessibility is very much needed... those concerns are brought up time and time again."*

- *"There's not one place where all of that [diversity, equity, and inclusion-related issues] intersect to paint one picture... the same gaps keep coming up."*

- *"There's nothing that makes the connection to senior independence, well-being, community level care... access to long-term care is incredibly limited... there's a very large at-risk group."*

Priority Risk: Substance Use and Addictions

Supporting Data Snapshot:

- 69% of people experiencing homelessness in Jan 2025 reported a substance use concern, showing addictions are a central driver of housing instability. ([Homelessness Response Strategy 2025](#))

- According to CMHA Thames Valley Addiction and Mental Health Services, 57% of clients receiving addiction support reported emotional/mental health as a presenting issue in 2022-2023. ([CMHA 2022-2023 Plan](#))

- CMHA Thames Valley recently reported a 16% increase in total visits and unique clients served from the previous fiscal year. ([CMHA 2023-24 Plan](#))

- Over 9,000 naloxone kits were distributed in 2023, the highest ever recorded for the region ([Adult Substance Use & Harms in the SWPH Region](#))

- According to Southwestern Public Health, the rate of deaths due to opioid toxicity increased dramatically between 2014 and 2017. The rate remained on an upward trajectory until 2022, with steep increases observed both locally and provincially during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021, where rates reached all-time highs. ([Adult Substance Use & Harms in the SWPH Region](#))

- Substance use and addictions was identified as an important priority area by community organization leaders and staff in Oxford County, with 73% rating this area as very important and 27% rating it as somewhat important. (StrategyCorp's Oxford County Community Organization Leadership & Staff Survey)

- Substance use, including alcohol, vaping, cannabis, and drugs, were identified as a top concern by 33% of principals recently surveyed. (StrategyCorp's Oxford County CSWB Update: Principal Survey)

Engagement Feedback:

- *"We are… looking at getting our first treatment centre here… I have nowhere in Oxford County to even turn to."*

- *"When I started here, we were still under a treatment-first approach, which is completely useless. It's like a 6% success rate across the world. It's not gonna help anybody."*

- *"We need to be on site… making sure people are connected to counselling and other supports… otherwise they didn't treat their addiction properly, they didn't get themselves connected… leading to returnees."*

Priority Risk: Gender-Based Violence

Supporting Data Snapshot:

- 9% of those experiencing homelessness in Oxford County reported domestic violence, linking housing insecurity directly with gender-based violence risk factors. ([Homelessness Response Strategy 2025](#))

- Across Oxford County, police responded to more than 1,500 domestic disputes between April 1, 2023 and March 31, 2024. The OPP recorded 807 incidents, and Woodstock Police Services recorded 726. In total, 351 of these incidents resulted in charges being laid. ([DART - Community Snapshot](#))

- Between April 1, 2022 and March 31, 2023, Ingamo Homes and DASO supported 140 women and children in shelter, helped 270 women develop safety plans, and provided services to 7 Indigenous women, while 73 women seeking safety were turned away due to capacity limits. ([DART - Community Snapshot](#))

- In 2024, 117 women were turned away from service from DASO due to issues of capacity. ([Final DASO Annual Report 2024-2025](#))

- Feedback from community organization leaders and staff in Oxford County indicates strong concern about gender-based violence. 60% of respondents rated it as very important and 27% as somewhat important, resulting in 87% identifying it as an important priority risk area. (StrategyCorp's Oxford County Community Organization Leadership & Staff Survey)

- Training for providers to better support survivors of gender-based violence was identified as missing by 41% of respondents in a recent survey. (StrategyCorp's Oxford County Community Organization Leadership & Staff Survey)

Engagement Feedback:

- *"For a very, very long time [youth] have had so many needs that we haven't been able to meet... our sexual violence supports expanded, but it's temporary."*

- *"I would really want to be a voice for the lack of specialized trauma-informed care for gender-based violence... Oxford County is particularly under-resourced."*

- *"There's a gap in services as it relates to folks who perpetrate violence... there's a gap in having skilled, qualified people to really work with them... this is where so much prevention work could be done."*

- *"Programming that is available before it hits the criminal threshold... proactive work addressing needs around violence would be very helpful."*

Priority Risk: Affordability and Economic Stability

Supporting Data Snapshot:

- In 2023, 25.9% of households in Oxford, Elgin, and St. Thomas were food insecure[3], a record high. ([SWPH - Board of Health Meeting - June 26](#))

- In 2022, 58.6% of food-insecure households in Ontario depended on employment income. (SWPH Household Food Insecurity: A Primer for Municipalities)

- Food affordability reports show high housing costs directly reduce resources for food, exacerbating household vulnerability. In 2020-2021, the number of households affected hit a new record high with 19.2% of households experiencing food insecurity. ([SWPH – Board of Health Meeting - June 26, 2025](#))

- According to United Way Oxford, 10% of Oxford County residents are living on a low income, more than 12,000 people. ([2023-24 United Way Community Impact Report](#))

- The average wait time for geared-to-income housing is more than 5 years. ([2023-24 United Way Community Impact Report](#))

- United Way Oxford recently reported that demand for food programs in Oxford County increased 60%. ([2022-2023 United Way Community Impact Report](#))

- Food insecurity was identified as a significant issue by local organizations, with 60% of surveyed community organization leaders and staff in Oxford County rating it very important and 33% somewhat important. (StrategyCorp's Oxford County Community Organization Leadership & Staff Survey)

- Reducing poverty was a high priority among recent survey respondents, with 73% rating it very important and 27% somewhat important, indicating unanimous agreement that this is a key area of concern. (StrategyCorp's Oxford County Community Organization Leadership & Staff Survey)

- Services or supports for individuals experiencing poverty and food insecurity were identified as missing by 45% of community partner respondents in a recent survey. (StrategyCorp's Oxford County Community Organization Leadership & Staff Survey)

Engagement Feedback:

- *"The impact of poverty on individuals' lives is a huge risk and should be a bucket on its own."*

- *"The food insecurity comes from people not having the financial means to provide for… the general necessities of life."*

- *"Food insecurity and poverty is definitely really a big one… more and more people are using local food banks."*

---

[3] Inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints.

- *"Especially with the impact of tariffs and everything… and the global uncertainty in terms of cost of living… thinking about this bucket more broadly makes sense."*

- *"The unemployment part is very much prominent… retention is also prominent… people are trying their best, but these issues continue."*

Appendix C | References

Canadian Mental Health Association. (2023, September). *Annual Report 2022-2023*. Retrieved from https://cmhatv.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CMHA-2023AR_TVAMHS-FINAL-digital-1.pdf

Canadian Mental Health Association. (2025, September). *Annual Report 2024/2025*. Retrieved from https://cmhatv.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/CMHA-Thames-Valley_AnnualReport-2025_Web.pdf

Domestic Abuse Resource Team Oxford. (n.d.). *Community Snapshot*. Retrieved from https://dartoxford.ca/community-snapshot/

Domestic Abuse Services Oxford. (2025, July). *Annual Report 2024-2025*. Retrieved from https://daso.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/DASO-Annual-Report-2024-2025-FINAL.pdf

Government of Ontario. (2019). *Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019, S.O. 2019, c. 1, Sched. 1.* Retrieved from https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/19c01

Oxford County. (2025, April). *Oxford County Homelessness Response Strategy*. Retrieved from https://pub-oxfordcounty.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=12030

Oxford Housing Action Collaborative. (2021, August). *Oxford County Homelessness Survey Results Infographic*. Retrieved from https://endhomelessnessoxford.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/SPCO3881_Homeless_Infographic3Brent.pdf

Safe and Well Oxford. (2024, July). *Safe and Well Oxford Plan*. Retrieved from https://safewelloxford.ca/media/4gub052k/safe-and-well-oxford-plan-20240715.pdf

Santos J. Southwestern Public Health. (2024). *Adult substance use & harms in the SWPH region: opioids*. Retrieved from https://www.swpublichealth.ca/media/4i1fpx1u/adult-substance-use-opioids-in-swph-october-2024.pdf

Southwestern Public Health. (2024, October). *Mental health report*. Retrieved from https://www.swpublichealth.ca/media/13bc5xfs/rep_mental-health-report-oct-2024-final.pdf

Southwestern Public Health. (2025, May). *Household Food Insecurity: A Primer for Municipalities*.

Southwestern Public Health. (2025, June 26). *Board of Health Meeting Agenda*. Retrieved from https://www.swpublichealth.ca/media/a4jpv13d/pkg-boh-meeting-june-open-session-20250626.pdf StrategyCorp. (2025, September). *Oxford County Community Organization Leadership & Staff Survey*.

StrategyCorp. (2024, September). *Oxford County Community Organization Leadership & Staff Survey*.

StrategyCorp. (2025, October). *Oxford County CSWB Update: Principal Survey*.

United Way Oxford. (2025, May). *2022-2023 Community Impact Report*. Retrieved from https://unitedwayoxford.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/2022-2023-UW-Community-Impact-Report_v06_SCREEN-1.pdf

United Way Oxford. (2025, May). *2023-2024 Community Impact Report*. Retrieved from
https://unitedwayoxford.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/2023-2024-UW-Community-Impact-Report_v06_SCREEN.pdf

Woodstock Hospital. (2025). *Centered On You, Strategic Plan 2025-2028*. Retrieved from
https://www.woodstockhospital.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Strategic-Plan-2025-2028-resized.pdf