

HPS Community Plan 2007-2009 Simcoe County

May 2010

Demographic & Socio-Economic Trends

- From 1986 to 2001, the population of Simcoe County increased by 138,280 persons or by 58.2% (compared to provincial growth rate of 25.4%).
- Fastest growing areas in the County were Wasaga Beach (142.4%), Barrie (114.2%) and Innisfil (86.9%) – these three municipalities accounted for over half of the growth in the County population between 1986 and 2001.
- Barrie and Wasaga Beach were the fastest growing communities in Canada with increasing demands on social services and supports.
- More southern municipalities generally have a greater proportion of younger persons. Bradford West Gwillimbury, Barrie and Essa have over 40% of their population between the ages of 20 and 44 years.
- Simcoe County had unemployment rate of 5.2% (lower than provincial rate of 6.1%) which in part is a result of close proximity to Toronto and the commuter population.
- Collingwood lost over 1200 well paying industry jobs in previous 5 years.
- Retail employment in Collingwood is mainly seasonal and many only offer minimum wage.
- Major commercial development forecasted in Barrie expected to create hundreds of jobs, however the majority will only offer minimum wage.
- Forecasted the Go Train service would result in commuter population boom.

Trends in Homelessness and the Risk of Homelessness

At-Risk:

- By second quarter of 2006, the Housing Resource Centre served 1,556 households at risk of homelessness, of which 775 were at imminent risk.
- 61% or 469 households were able to remain housed as a result of interventions from Housing Support Workers (HSWs).
- Main factors affecting this population – increases to utility costs, housing costs and cost of living.

Hidden Homeless:

- While data very difficult to collect, the estimate at the end of 2005 was 1,173 hidden homeless individuals.

Street Population:

- By the second quarter of 2006, HSWs served 598 households living on the street, of which 570 were assisted with temporary accommodations and 99 were able to find permanent housing.
- Main factors adding to difficulties in finding permanent accommodation for chronic homeless – landlords discriminating against people requiring social assistance; growing gaps between housing costs and income; inability to pay initial costs (e.g. first and last months rent); and shortage of affordable housing.

Trends in Homelessness and the Risk of Homelessness

Short-term or Crisis Sheltered:

- According to County of Simcoe there were 160 emergency shelter beds for episodically sheltered people – 73 for abused women and children; 38 for homeless men; 27 for homeless women; 9 for youth; 20 for Aboriginal persons; 5 for persons with mental illness.
- Main factors contributing to need for emergency and transitional housing – family break-up; domestic violence; loss of employment; mental illness; eviction; release of parolees from institutions; unexpected disasters (e.g. fires and floods); and other unforeseen situations.
- Predominant issue in Simcoe County is lack of affordable housing.

Supportive Housed:

- In 2001, 17.6% of population in the County of Simcoe was living with a disability.
- 135 individuals with 10 contracted domiciliary care service providers with the County .
- Besides these hostels, there are very few supportive housing units with physical disability supports.
- At the time, there were no domiciliary hostels geared specifically for seniors.
- Main factor contributing to difficulty of persons with disabilities finding affordable housing is low income levels. Large portion reported incomes of less than \$20,000/year in 2000 which is reflective of social assistance rates.

Community Assets Analysis

Physical/Shelter Assets:

- Many housing facilities considered stable due to government support and private donations, but without government funding many would be in jeopardy of closing.
- A major issue facing shelters is physical space constraints which is limiting ability to meet the need of clients.
- 106 beds in sheltering facilities is not sufficient as shelters were turning away an average of 5-10 individuals/night.
- Out of the Cold aims to fill the gap, however, because it is solely operated by volunteers some churches are not always staffed properly.
- Outreach areas to the north and south are struggling with lack of shelters. Collingwood, Orillia, Midland and Alliston/Bradford do not have emergency shelters yet the need is there.

Supports and Services:

- Many supports and services require funding from various levels of government as fundraising efforts not sufficient to cover operational costs.
- Need for larger facilities to provide core services to clients – especially true for David Busby Street Centre.
- Lack of core funding is jeopardizing many community assets.

HPS Priorities for Simcoe County

- There is a significant lack of funding for current Housing Support Workers to provide full time support to clients in all 6 communities: Barrie, Midland, Orillia, Collingwood, Alliston and Bradford. Simcoe County has two of the fastest growing communities in Canada in its catchment area, yet there are not enough Housing Support Workers to accommodate the growth rate.
- There is a significant lack of funding for transitional housing in Collingwood, Alliston and Midland.
- There are increasing issues of youth homelessness in Simcoe County. Orillia has the highest rate of teen pregnancy in the County of Simcoe. There is a lack of affordable housing and emergency shelters for youth in the County of Simcoe.
- There is a need to have Community development with a coordinated response to a homeless strategy within the 6 communities, of Simcoe County.

Additional Issues Identified for Simcoe County

- Affordable housing and high cost of living are not on par with the low average family income.
- Lack of non-restricted emergency shelters.
- Lack of stable core funding for housing services.
- Capping rent for fixed income seniors who live in social housing or rent-geared-to-income programs.
- Need for counseling services for youth.
- Need larger shelter for youth aged 16-24.
- Due to inability of CAS to respond tactically in all emergency situations, there is an increased need for emergency shelters and group homes for individuals aged 12-16.
- Need to expand Grocery Assistance Program (GAP) in Barrie.
- Need to increase beds at men's shelter (Salvation Army).
- Need for Identification clinics.
- Need for affordable and clean drop-in centre capable of meeting needs.
- Need for funds such as the rent bank and utility bank to help with initial hook-ups, past dues and moving costs.
- Lack of mental health workers and medication funding at the shelter and drop-in centre to help the increasing number of individuals suffering from mental health issues.
- Need for increased core funding for shelters.
- Need funding (Urban Aboriginal Funding stream) for the only Aboriginal shelter in Simcoe County which is located in Barrie.

HPS Funded Organizations

Organizations supported during Transition Year (April 1 – December 31, 2007):

- SUN Housing
- Home Horizon
- SCATEH

Organizations supported from January 1, 2008 to present:

- SCATEH
- CONTACT – South Simcoe (youth & housing projects)
- Simcoe County Services – Barrie Housing
- Georgian Triangle Housing Resource Centre – Orillia
- Home Horizon
- Community Link North Simcoe (youth & housing projects)
- Georgian Triangle Housing Resource Centre – Collingwood
- David Busby Street Centre
- Shelter Now
- Elizabeth Fry Society