

# Oxford County Shelter Plan



*Vibrant communities where residents have access to affordable, suitable and stable housing and a good quality of life.*

# Preamble

The County of Oxford in its role as the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager, is responsible for the delivery of community and social services throughout the Municipality. As part of its mandate, Human Services administers and delivers a variety of shelter programs including; social housing, new affordable housing, rent and bridge supplement programs, housing allowances, funding for emergency shelters, domiciliary housing and other homelessness prevention programs. The County of Oxford has been responsible for the facilitation and stewardship of these shelter responsibilities since the year 2000.

Social Service delivery throughout the Province of Ontario is a complicated maze of rules and authorities. Oxford County has implemented transformational change resulting in a new service delivery model. The basis of this new model centres on the integration of all services provided throughout the department. Integration can be defined as the combining and coordinating of separate parts or elements into a unified whole. In its simplest form integration means one client, one file, one client service worker.

Client assessment is viewed through the Quality of Life Indicator lens, these indicators being:

- Income • Education
- Health • Transportation
- Employment • Safety/legal
- Shelter

We recognize that shelter is a basic quality of life. It provides the foundation for success in all other areas.

The accompanying needs assessment demonstrates our commitment to the shelter portfolio. We understand our role in developing policy and services that address the shelter continuum.

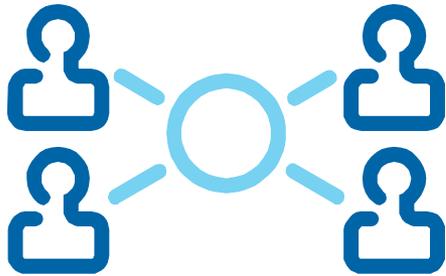
The 10 year Shelter plan aligns with the Oxford County Strategic Plan and its strategic directions to be a County that:

- Works together
- That is well connected
- Thinks ahead and wisely shapes the future
- Informs and engages
- Performs and delivers results
- Is an employer of choice

This plan is a living document produced to ensure the County of Oxford is growing stronger together towards: “Vibrant communities where residents have access to affordable, appropriate and stable housing and a good quality of life.”

# Acknowledgements

Thank you to all of our community partners for participating in the various aspects of this plan including interviews, consultations, surveys, and plan development.



*Thank you to the over 400 people that participated in surveys, interviews and consultations.*

*Your feedback helped develop the strategies in this plan.*

Canadian Mental Health Association – Oxford  
Cheshire Homes  
Christian Horizons  
Community Living Tillsonburg  
Domestic Abuse Services Oxford  
GreenSaver  
Habitat Oxford Middlesex Elgin  
Homestead Christian Care  
Ingamo Homes  
Ingersoll Support Services Inc.  
Ontario Disability Support Services – Oxford  
Operation Sharing  
Salvation Army (Oxford)  
Social Planning Council – Oxford  
South West Community Care Access Centre  
South West Local Health Integrated Network  
Tillsonburg & District Real Estate Board  
United Way Oxford  
Woodstock & Area Community Health Centre  
Woodstock District Developmental Services  
Woodstock Ingersoll & District Real Estate Board

Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing  
Ontario Municipal Social Services Association  
Oxford County:  
    Community & Strategic Planning  
    Information Services  
    Public Health & Emergency Services  
Municipalities of:  
    Blandford-Blenheim  
    East Zorra-Tavistock  
    Norwich  
    South-West Oxford  
    Tillsonburg  
    Woodstock  
    Zorra

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# Human Services Integration



*Oxford County Human Services helps clients with all aspects of their quality of life, starting shelter.*

*Integration can be defined as the combining and coordinating of separate parts or elements into a unified whole.*

Oxford County Human Services are integrated. The Department adheres to a one client, one file, one client service worker approach.

Client assessment is based on a Quality of Life model. This ensures a holistic approach addressing:

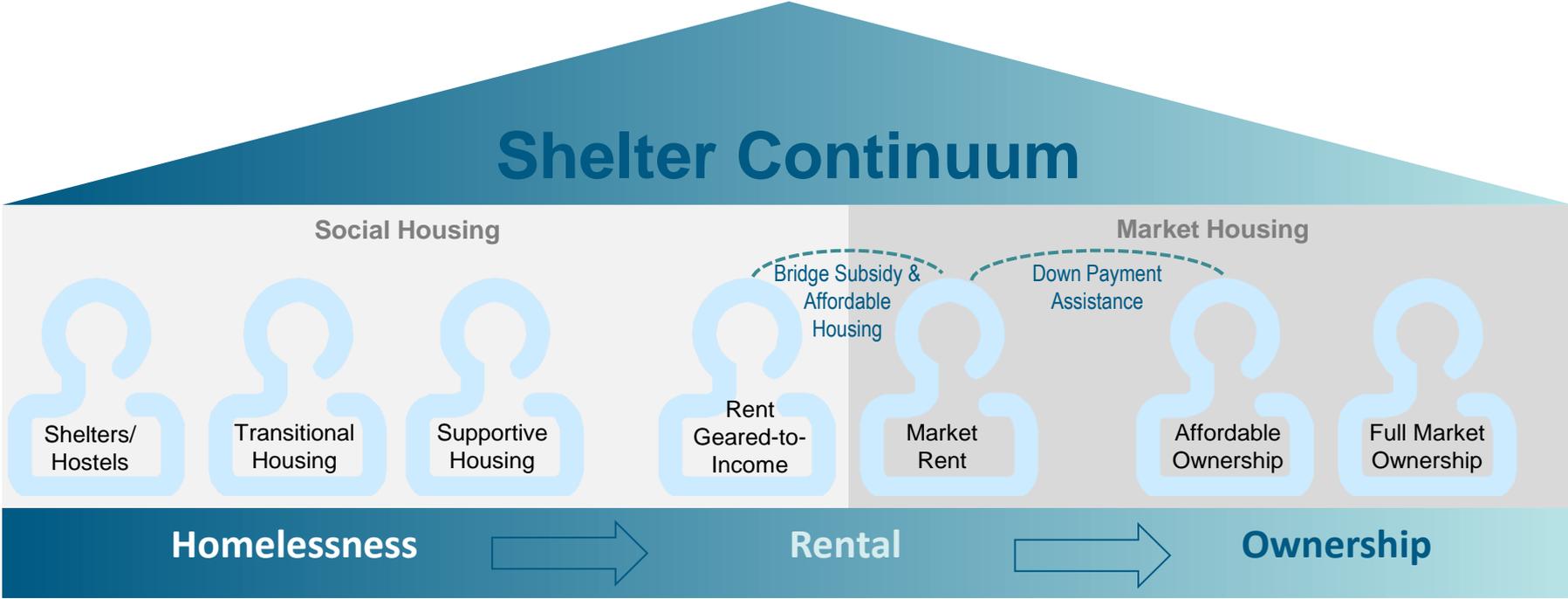
- Income
- Education
- Health
- Transportation
- Employment
- Safety/legal
- Shelter

Recognition that shelter is integral to quality of life.

Human Service delivery in Oxford County relies on the strength of community partnerships and local solutions.

# Shelter Continuum

In Oxford, the word **Shelter** is used in place of **Housing**.  
Shelter is more inclusive, recognizing that people are at various stages on the continuum.



Government and local organizations support households in moving along continuum.

# About the plan

In the Housing Service Act (2011) every Housing Services Manager in Ontario is required to prepare a local 10 year Housing and Homelessness Plan. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing requested these plans be completed by January 2014.

The purpose of this plan is to develop a long-term vision to address housing needs of residents along the shelter continuum.

As the Service Manager for Oxford County, Human Services has developed this 10 year Shelter Plan.

This plan was developed by completing:

- A needs assessment of current and future housing (see Oxford County Shelter Plan: Needs Assessment report).
- Identifying a vision for Human Services - Shelter.
- Actions to achieve the vision and how progress will be measured.

This work was completed through consultation with clients, community partners and agencies. Thank you to everyone that participated in this process ([see acknowledgements](#)).



***A one size fits all approach is non-existent in something so varied as shelter.***

*A mosaic of shelter exists and it is the role of all service providers and stakeholders to find a blend that suits the needs of the individual. Together service providers and stakeholders can achieve the vision of Vibrant communities where residents have access to affordable, suitable and stable housing and a good quality of life.*



**Further Reading:**  
[Housing Services Act, 2011](#)

# This plan aligns with and is supported by...

## ...Oxford County's Strategic Plan

### A County that works together

- Enhance quality of life for all of our citizens by:
  - Continuation of the Human Services Integration service delivery model adapting programs and services to evolving community needs and recognizing shelter as the number one priority when supporting individuals with their quality of life.
  - Ensuring adequate supply of housing options and assist households along the shelter continuum.

### A County that thinks ahead and wisely shapes the future

- Influence federal and provincial policy with implications for the County by:
  - Advocating for financial fairness for rural and small urban communities.
  - Advocating for human services, shelter and resources.
- Implement development policies and community planning guidelines that:
  - Strategically grow our community providing housing options for a broad spectrum of needs.
  - Actively promote the responsible use of land, including building housing through infilling and building conversion.
- Apply social financial and environmental sustainability lenses to significant decisions by assessing options in regard to:
  - Potential impacts to the vulnerable populations including the homeless, near homeless and low-income households
  - Life cycle costs including tax and reserve levels and implications for the continued maintenance of Oxford County owned units as well as monitoring non-profit housing capital reserves.

### A County that informs and engages

- Better harness the power of the community through conversation and dialogue about shelter needs in our community. Over 400 Oxford County households provided feedback through surveys. Further opportunities for comments will be made utilizing Speak-up Oxford.
- Better inform the public about county programs, services and activities, increase communication with partners and the public.

### A County that performs and delivers results

- Enhance our customer service focus and responsiveness to our municipal partners and the public.
- Deliver exceptional services by conducting regular service reviews to ensure delivery, effectiveness and efficiency of shelter services.

# This plan aligns with and is supported by...

## ...the Oxford County Official Plan

### Encouraging efficient land use:

- Encourages infilling and intensification and adaptive re-use of former non-residential buildings and brownfields for new housing.
- Encourages a mix of housing types and establishes minimum residential density requirements.
- Supports the use of garden suites and the conversion of existing dwellings to create additional units.

### Monitoring population & housing need:

- Requires regular review and monitoring of growth forecasts, residential land supply and housing affordability.
- Establishes an affordable housing target of 20% of all housing within the County.

### Encouraging integration of people with special needs:

- Encourages and supports the integration of housing for people with special needs in all residential areas.

### Encouraging accessibility:

- Encourages housing and residential development to be designed as barrier free and facilitate access for persons with disabilities or special needs.

## ...Ontario's Housing Services Act

This Shelter Plan meets the requirements of the Housing Services Act including:

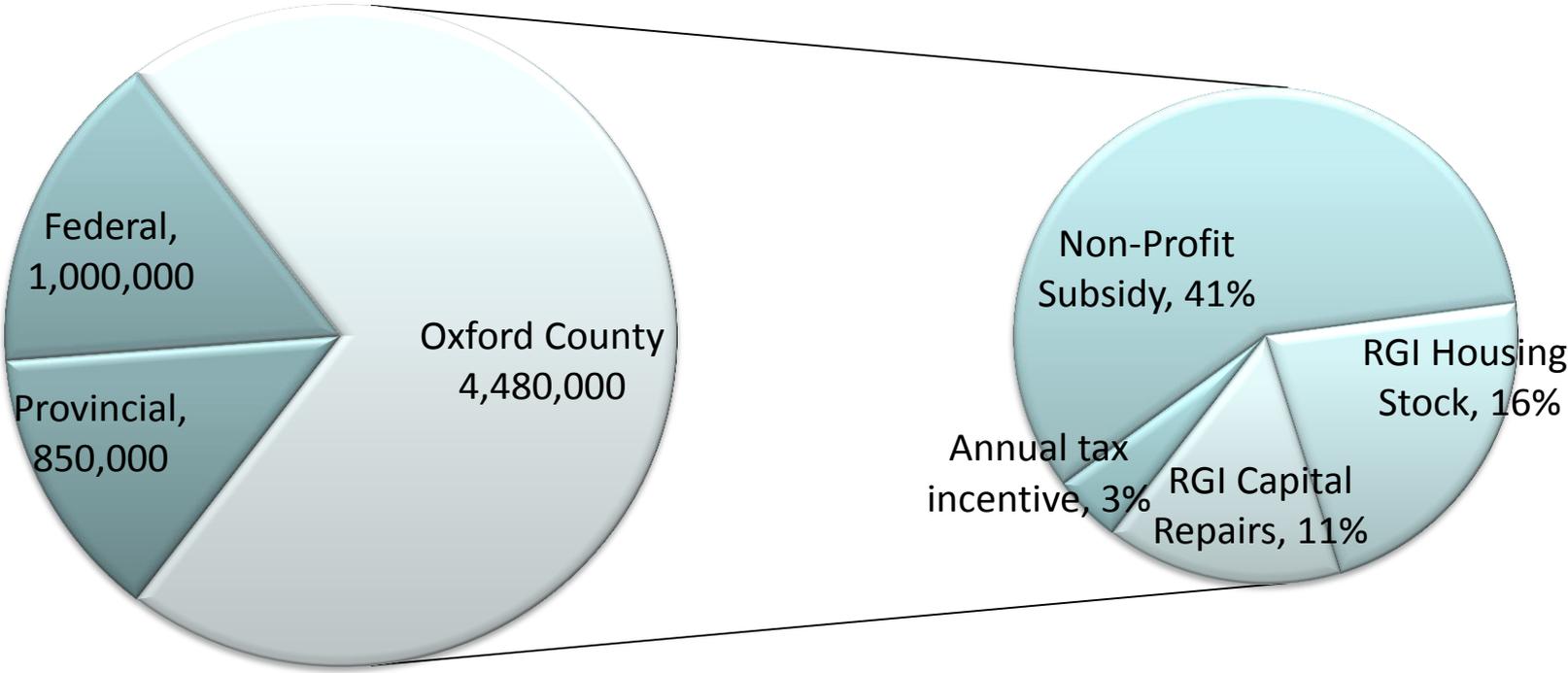
- An assessment of current and future housing needs
- Objectives and targets related to housing needs
- Description of measures proposed to meet the objectives and targets
- A description of how progress towards meeting the objectives and targets will be measured.

## ...Provincial Interests

The Shelter Plan addresses matters of Provincial interest which is defined as having a system of housing and homelessness services that:

- is focused on achieving positive outcomes for individuals and families
- addresses the housing needs of individuals and families in order to help address other challenges they face
- has a role for non-profit corporations and non-profit housing cooperatives;
- has a role for the private market in meeting housing needs
- provides for partnerships among governments and others in the community;
- treats individuals and families with respect and dignity
- is co-ordinated with other community services
- is relevant to local circumstances
- allows for a range of housing options to meet a broad range of needs
- ensures appropriate accountability for public funding
- supports economic prosperity
- is delivered in a manner that promotes environmental sustainability and energy conservation

# Investments in Oxford County Shelter



# Tax Contribution to Shelter in Oxford

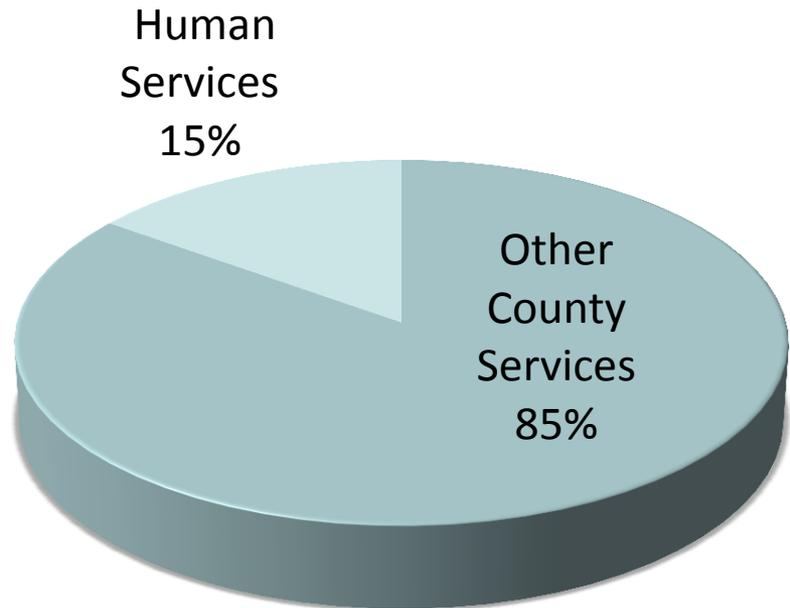
For every \$200,000 of assessed property

**\$134**

Oxford County  
Household Tax  
Contribution to Human  
Services



## Oxford County Allocation of Tax Contributions



# Vision



***Vibrant communities where residents have access to affordable, suitable and stable housing and a good quality of life.***

**Affordable:** respects that there are varying levels of housing affordability in Oxford County. What is affordable for one person would be unattainable for others. Use of this term recognizes the needs of residents along the housing continuum.

**Suitable:** is comprehensive recognizing the varying housing needs including accessibility, supportive housing, shelters, transitional housing, safety, and tenure.

**Stable:** Reflects the need for individuals to have a long-term housing solution.

## This will be achieved by being a County that:

### Works Together

- Enhance quality of life for all of our citizens.

### Thinks Ahead and Wisely Shapes the Future

- Influence federal and provincial policy with implications for the County.
- Implement development policies and community planning guidelines that actively promote the responsible use of land.
- Apply social, financial and environmental sustainability lenses to significant decisions.

### Informs and Engages

- Better harness the power of the community through conversation and dialogue.
- Better inform the public about county programs, services and activities.

### Performs and Delivers Results

- Enhance our customer service focus and responsiveness to our municipal partners and the public.
- Deliver exceptional services.

## By working with:

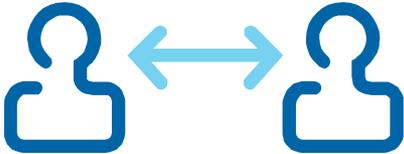
Residents

Social Agencies

Landlords

Developers & Real Estate

Government



# Our Approach: Toolkit for Change

## Plan

### Through communication

- Increase awareness
- Discuss opportunities
- Identify next steps

Stakeholders will be involved in all stages of this approach, as we work towards our vision of:

*Vibrant communities where residents have access to affordable, suitable and stable housing and a good quality of life.*

## Build

### Focusing on Streamlining & Integration

- Simplify processes
- Build through partnerships
- Integrate services to improve service delivery

## Inspect

### Review Changes & Trends

- Measure impact of changes
- Review status of housing needs in Oxford County

## Renovate

- Review findings
- Make adjustments to the plan and build again



# What we know: Cost of Living

1 in 14 Oxford Households are in Core Housing Need



## Core Housing Need

Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) monitors the number of households whose shelter does not meet standards for:

- Adequacy** (not requiring major repairs)
- Affordability** (less than 30% of household income)
- Suitability** (not over crowded)

And they cannot afford the median rent of alternative acceptable housing.

CMHC calculates the Core Housing Need Census data from Statistics Canada. The most recent Core Housing Need data available is from 2006.

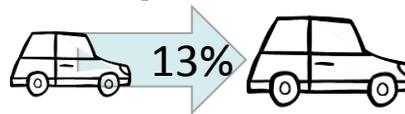
**\$ 63,180** Median Household Income (Oxford)

**\$ 26,768** Average non-mortgage debt (Canada)

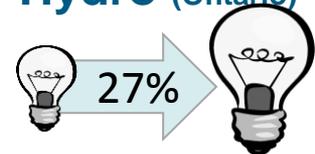


**Increase in Cost of Living**  
since 2009

## Transportation (Ontario)



## Hydro (Ontario)



**\$189** Food (Oxford)

per week to feed a family of 4



**\$732** Rent (Oxford)

Monthly



**\$1063** Ownership (Oxford)

Monthly



# What we know: Community Trends

- It is forecasted that Oxford County will have 49,800 households in 2031, an increase of 412 houses per year. Oxford has enough residential land in its 10 year supply to accommodate the forecasted household growth. Oxford County Community & Strategic Planning monitors housing supply, housing affordability, and is updating the household forecast. In 2011 there were 41,555 households in Oxford County.
- As Oxford's baby boomer population ages, the demand for lower maintenance and accessible housing will increase, along the housing continuum.
- More affordable rental and home ownership options are needed for the approximately 1700 renters and 900 home owners whose housing does not meet adequacy, suitability, or affordability standards ([Core Housing Need](#), 2006). An even larger group of over 7000 households, spend more than 30% of their household income on shelter (2011 Census).
- Non-mortgage debt is a challenge faced by many households.
- Minimum wage, Canada Pension and Social Assistance benefits (particularly for singles) have not kept pace with the cost of living and average rents in Oxford County. Singles, female lone-parents, and people with health issues more often face challenges with shelter affordability (Statistics Canada, 2006)
- Educational attainment affects a person's ability to find and maintain higher paying employment.



## The facts

- Population growth will primarily be due to net migration, occurring mainly in the urban centres.
- An average single full-time worker earning minimum wage, renting a 1-bedroom apartment, would have to spend 36% of their income on rent.
- 68% of Ontario Works benefit units were spending more on shelter than was covered by their Shelter Allowance.
- A single in receipt of ODSP receives \$479/month for shelter. The average market rent for a 1-bedroom unit is \$645.



## Feedback

*"I would like to see new, very small homes (500-600 sq. ft.) single-detached built on very small lots with a driveway suitable for a single person or couple. It would be less expensive and less work than the homes they build today."*

*"Work is unable to provide consistent hours"*

*"People are carrying a lot of debt, which causes them great stress and many other challenges."*

*"I am 63 in receipt of Canada Pension, \$680 a month, and cannot afford rent."*

# What we know: Homelessness

*Homelessness does exist in Oxford County. It is primarily hidden and therefore is difficult to monitor and track. Within Oxford County there are people that sleep outside, use shelters, couch surf, or are at risk of losing their home.*

## Strengths & Opportunities

- The number of people accessing shelters is decreasing and most often shelters are not at capacity. Space is also regularly available through the domiciliary hostel program.
- The renovation of Domestic Abuse Services Oxford (DASO) has increased the safety, accessibility, and comfort of shelter tenants.
- Changes to Social Assistance rates will provide some relief, particularly to singles and those who find employment.
- Emergency rent assistance programs help prevent evictions & disconnection of utilities.

## Weaknesses & Threats

- There are homeless and vulnerably housed households in Oxford County. While this is a one time incident for many households, for some it is reoccurring or chronic. These households often have complex needs, limited resources, and may need supports to find, secure and maintain housing.
- Application processes and navigating services is challenging.
- More data is needed on the homeless and vulnerably housed households.
- The cost of rent and finding a new apartment are barriers to securing and maintaining shelter.



## The facts

- An estimated 101 Oxford County residents were homeless at one point in 2012. An even larger group were at risk of homelessness needing assistance with rent or utilities.
- A national report estimated that providing 30 days emergency shelter costs \$1320 to \$1950. Permanent or transitional self-contained housing could be provided for less cost.
- 72% near homeless households were at the same address a year after receiving [Rent Bank](#) assistance.



## Feedback

*“The lack of emergency housing is very problematic. I've worked with a person who was living in their car as they were trying to do a job search.”*

*“I would like to have a place period. I have medical issues and have it no easier than someone without. Although we all deserve a place but my health gets worse the longer I am homeless.”*

*“I would like help with how to start everything (getting an apartment) guidance to make the right choices.”*

# What we know: Rental Housing

*Low-income renting households are under financial strain due to no increase in minimum wage and increases to the cost of living. Household debt is a concern for many households.*

## Strengths & Opportunities

- Programs are available, and are being utilized, to create additional affordable housing units as well as assist low-income households in reducing their energy consumption and thereby energy costs.
- Vacancy rates are critically low in Woodstock, while vacancy rates are higher in Tillsonburg and Ingersoll. Rates for other area municipalities are not available.

## Weaknesses & Threats

- Minimum wage, Canada Pension and Social Assistance benefits (particularly for singles) have not kept pace with the cost of living and average rents in Oxford County. Singles, female lone-parents, and people with health challenges more often face challenges with shelter costs.
- As baby boomers age, the demand for modified and accessible rental units will increase.
- The cost of rent continues to increase in Oxford County causing affordability challenges for low-income households. Without creating new rental stock could cause increase in demand and then an increase in average rents.
- Finding rental accommodation in Woodstock is very challenging due to critically low vacancy rates and high average rents.



## The facts

- 25% of Oxford County Households rent their home.
- Woodstock average rent, \$881, is the third highest in Western Ontario.
- A balanced acceptable vacancy rate is 3%. Vacancy rates below 3% typically correlate with upward pressure on rents. April 2013, Woodstock had a critically low vacancy rate of 1.8%. Meanwhile Ingersoll's was 13.7% and Tillsonburg was 3.3% (Ontario 2.6%, Toronto 1.6%).
- From 2007-2011, the average monthly rent in Oxford increased 12%.



## Feedback

*"High debt and low financial assistance has forced me to go without certain necessities"*

*"Depending upon how much my other household bills are it can be hard to pay my rent. Usually it is late due to other bills such as hydro and gas."*

*"I have some debt but I budget and get help with food from family so I am one of the lucky ones."*

*"We are a family of 5 living in a 2 bedroom apartment"*

# What we know: Social Housing

*The demand for Social Housing will remain high as long as the gap between income and cost of living remains.*

## Strengths & Opportunities

- Affordable Housing projects have helped address the need of low income households.
- The eligibility process for [Rent Geared-to-Income \(RGI\)](#) housing has been streamlined resulting in more client contact time.
- Oxford's [Special Priority Program \(SPP\)](#) waitlist for Rent Geared-to-Income housing is on-par or exceeds provincial statistics.
- From an operational standpoint, most social housing providers will be fiscally viable after their mortgages end.

## Weaknesses & Threats

- More Affordable Housing options and rent supplements are needed.
- The RGI waitlist has grown significantly, which impacts wait times.
- The demand for modified and accessible rental units is expected to increase. More accessible transitional housing is needed.
- There are 28 tenants in Oxford County RGI units paying [Average Market Rent](#). These households could be housed for similar rents in other housing. These are RGI units that would otherwise house applicants on the RGI waitlist.



### The facts

- There are 1429 [Social Housing Units](#) in Oxford County
- The 275 Affordable housing units being built in Oxford County has addressed the needs of 16% of the 1700 Core Need tenant households (2006).
- There are over 1400 households on the RGI waitlist.
- Oxford County provides \$250,000 per year to pay for the bridge subsidy program.
- 62% of RGI applications were for 1 bedroom units.
- 55% of RGI applications are for units in Woodstock.



### Feedback

*"We have a huge debt"*

*"I would like help with prescription costs"*

*"I would like to get my credit cleared up. I have really bad credit"*

*"I would like a first time home buyers incentive"*

# What we know: Supportive Housing

*Several supportive housing programs currently have a waitlist. Yet, pressures on these programs should be assisted through new program initiatives and funding. The demand for modified/accessible housing will increase as baby boomers age.*

## Strengths & Opportunities

- Affordable Housing funding increased the number of supportive housing units targeting: mental health clients, developmental disability clients, at risk youth and victims of domestic violence.
- Assisted living is changing from a building specific model to care in designated neighbourhoods. This model will allow more people to receive support in their current home and help seniors to age in place. Seniors can also increase home safety/mobility through the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit.
- Provincial funding was announced to reduce waitlist pressures for developmental disability support.

## Weaknesses & Threats

- Assets limit prohibit some clients of women's shelters and transitional housing from accessing services. Until their finances with their ex-spouse are settled, they may not be eligible for some services.
- As Baby Boomers age demand for supportive living and accessibility services is expected to increase.
- CMHA cannot sell underutilized group living properties to reinvest funds in other supportive housing which have a waitlist of up to 2 years.



### The facts

- 29% of Affordable Housing units being built are for people with Mental Health issues.
- Since 2003, the number of retirement beds in Oxford County has increased 23%.
- 70 people were in Domiciliary Care beds in January 2013. While some facilities may be full, there has always been space available at one of the locations in Oxford.
- Over 100 people are waiting for supportive housing in Oxford County.



### Feedback

*"County of Oxford has helped better my living expenses. The apartment I live in is handicapped. It has improved my living ten fold. Thank you."*

# What we know: Homeownership

*Homeownership is a reality or possibility for most households. The average household can afford a home worth \$214,000, which is within the typical starter home price range. Resale homes, at lower price points, are available but housing stock is more limited, many require renovation, and availability varies by community.*

## Strengths & Opportunities

- Oxford County has enough residential land in its 10 year supply to accommodate forecasted household growth.
- Home ownership opportunities are available through Habitat for Humanity Oxford, Middlesex, Elgin.
- Home ownership is viable for most households in Oxford County.
- Changes in mortgage rules ensure first time home buyers are more financially prepared for home ownership over the long-term.
- Programs are available to reduce low-income household's energy consumption.
- Seniors can access home renovation grants to help them age in place. The Official Plan supports garden suites on rural properties allowing seniors to live in temporary housing close to family.

## Weaknesses & Threats

- More recent data about home value and income is needed to get a better picture of home affordability in Oxford County.
- Many households have a large non-mortgage debt. Debt is more unequally distributed amongst low-income households.



## The facts

- 75% of Oxford County Households own their home.
- In 2006 there were 895 home owners in Core Housing Need.
- 15% of Home owners are experiencing an affordability problem (2011 Census).
- 57% of household can afford a home worth \$187,000.
- 80% of households can afford a home worth \$119,000.



## Feedback

*"I am a single mother, homeowner and have been employed for over 20 years. With the high cost of transportation, medical costs etc.. I feel that I can not afford to do needed repairs on my house."*

*"We budget to keep up with bills and because of that have maintained an excellent credit rating. Yet if one of us lost our job we would be in serious trouble and lose our house in a matter of 1 pay. We are a family of 4 spending \$100 a week on groceries, cleaning and toiletries is a huge challenge, but we have no choice."*

# What we Know: Specific Populations



## Households with Accessibility Needs

- In Oxford, 4 people with physical disabilities are on the waitlist for supportive housing/assisted living. Eight are on the waitlist for attendant outreach services.
- Accessibility has been improved at Domestic Abuse Services Oxford, but Ingamo Homes reports they could benefit from additional modifications to improve accessibility.
- There are 43 accessible rent geared-to-income (RGI) units in Oxford County. Six of these units are fully accessible. There are 9 applicants on the RGI waitlist waiting for a modified unit, and 22 applicants waiting for a ground floor unit. Oxford County has been working to address accessibility needs of its tenants with the creation of modular kitchens that can be modified for wheelchair access, and the creation of scooter storage.
- The Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit will assist seniors to make mobility and safety home renovations. By 2021 seniors will make up approximately 25% of Oxford's Population.



## Student Households

- Fanshawe and Conestoga Satellite Post-secondary students in Oxford County account for less than 1% of the Oxford's total population.
- Estimating the number of students requiring housing is difficult as many students use their parent's address for school correspondence.
- Both schools do offer specialized programs which attract some students from out of County. Fanshawe College 2010-2011 enrollment (full/part time) was 679 students. Conestoga College enrollment is typically 50-85 students.
- An estimated 24 Conestoga students rent in Oxford and typically "pass-on" their accommodation to a future student. Some landlords in the community rent only to Conestoga Students accommodating their school calendar and housing requirements.

# What we Know: Specific Populations

## Victims of Violence

- Domestic Abuse Services Oxford (DASO) offers a range of programs and services for women and children who are impacted by domestic abuse and or are homeless. Residential services include safe, short-term, emergency accommodation at the 21 bed shelter located in Woodstock.
- In 2013 the average length of stay at the shelter was 39 days. The increase is due largely to the time it takes for clients to secure new permanent accommodation that is affordable and appropriate.
- DASO offers outreach services and in 2012 provided services to 64 women in Tillsonburg, 38 women in Ingersoll, 57 women in Woodstock, 9 women in Norwich and 4 women in East-Zorra Tavistock.



## Aboriginal Households

- Oxford County has a small aboriginal identity population (950), representing .9% of Oxford's total population. The largest component of the aboriginal population in Oxford County lives in Woodstock (385), followed by Ingersoll (130), Norwich (120) and Tillsonburg (110).
- There are no reserve lands within Oxford County.
- The aboriginal leaders were consulted and asked to identify housing needs of aboriginal households. They were also asked to provide feedback on the 10 Year Shelter Plan.

## Mental Health & Addictions

- “Evidence indicates that Housing First approaches and various community mental health programs can be effective in improving the housing and health outcomes of homeless individuals with mental illness.” (Government of Canada, 2006).
- A need for more housing for people with mental health challenges has been identified in several reports. The Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) report “The Time is Now: A Plan for Enhancing Community Based Mental Health and Addiction Services in the Southwest LHIN” recommended “staffing to support additional supportive housing units should be added in Oxford....subject to funding availability for community investments.....” (Whaley and Company, 2011).
- Two local organizations provide group and supportive housing for 111 people with mental illness: Canadian Mental Health Association and Indwell formerly known as Homestead Christian Care.

# What we know: Conservation

*Conservation has occurred in Oxford County through efficient use of land, repurposing buildings, energy conservation and energy generation. Programs are also in place to help low-income households conserve energy.*



## Affordable Housing Developments

Of the 15 affordable housing developments in Oxford County

- 9 were infill developments using existing space in serviced areas within the community. One development included the remediation and use of a brownfield.
- 6 involved the conversion of empty or underutilized buildings including a church, a library, factories and historic downtown buildings.
- Numerous developments occurred within or on the periphery of Central Business Districts.
- Future proposal calls will weight evaluation criteria to encourage energy efficiencies in the building design.



## Energy Conservation

- Oxford County Human Services has installed energy efficiency and alternative energy features providing an annual estimated savings of \$100,000 per year. Projects include increasing insulation, conversion to LED lighting, water conservation, solar collectors, and solar thermal heating systems.
- Oxford County has an Energy Management Plan with objectives to reduce the carbon foot print and operating costs.

## Supports & Programs

- Home energy renovation grants are available, but are limited and for specific renovations.
- The Home Assistance Program and Helping Homes Conserve programs are available to assist Low-income households with reducing energy consumption.
- Social Housing is being renovated for greater energy efficiency benefitting both the landlord and tenants.

# Strategic Directions

Several directions were developed by the County as part of their Strategic Plan. The below directions were used as the foundation in the creation of the recommendations included in (page 21 to page 30).

1. Enhance the quality of life for all of our citizens.
2. Influence federal and provincial policy with implications for the County.
3. Implement development policies and community planning guidelines.
4. Apply social, financial and environmental sustainability lenses to significant decisions.
5. Better harness the power of the community through conversation and dialogue.
6. Better inform the public about county programs, services and activities.
7. Enhance customer service focus and responsiveness.
8. Deliver exceptional services by conducting regular service reviews to ensure delivery, effectiveness and efficiency.

# A County That Works Together

## Direction #1 Enhance the quality of life for all of our citizens.

No.	Recommendation
1.1	Increase recognition of shelter as the number one Quality of Life priority when providing client services.
1.2	Increase hybrid housing subsidy with supportive assistance.
1.3	Review the Quality of Life Assessment tool during annual review of rent geared to income tenants to determine if assistance is required in other areas such as employment, education, health, transportation , in addition to shelter.
1.4	Support tenants paying market rent and occupying rent geared to income units in an effort to move them along the shelter continuum into home ownership or the private market rentals.
1.5	Further develop comprehensive services to assist those in greatest need assisting them in moving along the shelter continuum.
1.6	Further develop the campus hub of human services in downtown Woodstock.
1.7	Assess the community need for accessible, transitional housing units.



# A County That Works Together

- Enhance the quality of life for all of our citizens.

## Targets:

- Increase service integration by continuing to collaborate with community agencies and stakeholders.
- Increase use of a shelter first approach when assisting clients with Quality of Life assessment tool.
- Ensure the most vulnerable individuals and those experiencing domestic violence have a place to live and are referred to the appropriate support service agency.
- Ensure the aboriginal population receives shelter options and services as needed.
- Ensure clients who are experience mental health and addiction issues are referred to the appropriate support service agency.
- Ensure clients that require accessible units are referred to appropriate landlords who offer accessible units.
- Ensure new affordable housing buildings incorporate a percentage of units which are accessible and adhere to the Facility Accessibility Design Standards.
- Encourage developers to include units for individuals or families who require support services from the Domestic Abuse Services of Oxford.
- 100% of tenants paying market rent receive information about homeownership and budget planning to own a home.



## Measures.

- Agencies are meeting and collaborating to better address the multiple needs of their clients.
- Individuals in receipt of social assistance are also on the social housing wait list.
- Client referrals to mental health and addiction agencies increases.
- Client referrals of those experience domestic violence increases.
- Request for Proposals include evaluation criteria that is weighted to encourage developers to provide units for those who are victims of violence or are mental health consumers.
- Request for Proposals include provisions to encourage developers to create accessible units in accordance to the Facility Accessibility Design Standards.

# A County That Thinks Ahead and Wisely Shapes the Future

## Direction 2: Influence federal and provincial policy with implications for the County

No.	Recommendation
2.1	Secure funding for affordable housing options.
2.2	Advocate to the provincial and federal government for funding that assists the municipality in the delivery of services related to housing and housing supports.
2.3	Advocate for greater funding for more supportive housing units that address the needs of multiple population segments (i.e. seniors, individuals living with mental health and addiction issues or physical disabilities).
2.4	Advocate for blending funding programs at the Provincial and Federal level (e.g. joint funding through the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing).

### Targets:

- Meeting attended with community partners including the LHIN
- Letters sent to provincial and federal governments outlining community needs and advocating for funds to address needs.

### Measures:

- Community needs are identified, documented and communicated to appropriate organizations and all three levels of government.
- Participation at the local LHIN collaborative committee meetings.
- Collaborative funding proposals submitted to the LHIN that document and advocate for blending funding opportunities.

# A County That Thinks Ahead and Wisely Shapes the Future

## Direction 3: Implement development polices and community planning guidelines

No.	Recommendation
3.1	Increase Market Rent in Oxford County units by 10%.
3.2	Consult with non profit housing providers regarding operating agreements and opportunities to intensify social housing lands with new affordable housing units.
3.3	Conduct an annual review of Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) policies to ensure they are meeting community needs.
3.4	Consider developing a housing first policy for County owned surplus land and assets.
3.5	Encourage mixed housing and mixed income development in all neighbourhoods by increasing opportunities for rental, social and affordable housing in areas that currently offer limited opportunities.
3.6	Establish annual affordable housing targets.

### Targets:

- 100% of social housing providers are sustainable, 100% of social housing residents sustain their housing

### Measures:

- Exit strategy for non profit housing providers with expiry operating agreements are complete.
- Social housing providers are sustainable and residents remain in their homes.
- Report to Council seeking approval of a housing first policy for county owned surplus land and assets complete.
- Annual review of CHPI complete.
- New affordable housing and market rent housing units are created.

# A County That Thinks Ahead and Wisely Shapes the Future

**Direction 4: Apply social financial and environmental sustainability lenses to significant decisions.**

No.	Recommendation
4.1	Conduct a Quality of life assessment of all clients applying for social assistance to ensure their housing needs are met.
4.2	Work with Domestic Abuse Services Oxford (DASO) and Ingamo to ensure these agencies secure financial resources that enable them to delivery support services in the community.
4.3	Consider requiring all new affordable housing buildings to include 5% of units for victims of violence.
4.4	Consider requiring all new affordable housing buildings to include 5% of units for those who require an accessible unit.
4.4	Continue to implement strategies to maintain the quality and energy efficiency of Oxford County Housing stock in an effort to reduce operation costs and the carbon footprint.
4.5	Examine options for unoccupied mental health group home beds as identified by CMHA.

## Targets:

- Increase affordable housing options.
- Maintain local decision making with respect to shelter options and expenditures.
- Promote infilling and intensification and adaptive re-use of former non-residential buildings and brownfields for new housing.
- Ensure Oxford County Housing buildings are safe, affordable, sustainable and well maintained.

# A County That Thinks Ahead and Wisely Shapes the Future

## Measures

- Additional affordable housing units created each year.
- A formula is created to calculate the number of new affordable housing units required to meet the growing housing needs in the community.
- Request for proposals issued by the County will encourage infill development, intensification and adaptive re-use of former non residential building and brownfields
- Sustain and increase the number of rent geared to income units



# A County That Informs and Engages

## Direction 5: Better harness the power of the community through conversation & dialogue

No	Recommendation
5.1	Strengthen relationships with non-profit/co-operative housing and private market housing providers.
5.2	Participate in community planning activities such as the Community Sustainability Planning committee to ensure that housing is an ongoing topic of conversation.
5.3	Exchange best practices with Community Partners in an effort to increase awareness of shelter and quality of life services.
5.4	Leverage social media to raise awareness of shelter options in the community.

### Targets:

- Ensure effective shelter planning, involving integration with community partners.
- Increase public awareness of shelter programs and options.

### Measures

- Meetings held with non profit/co-operative housing and private market housing providers.
- Increase in client referrals to Human Services Resource Room regarding shelter.
- Assessment conducted to determine if clients have information regarding shelter options and best suited for their needs.
- Program information kept current on the County's website.

# A County That Informs and Engages

## Direction 6: Better inform the public about county programs, services & activities.

No	Recommendation
6.1	Increase public access to information about shelter options along the shelter continuum.
6.2	Launch a Speak-up Oxford campaign to gather feedback and increase awareness about Human Services Integrated Quality of Life framework.

### Targets:

- n/a

### Measures

- Information brochures regarding programs and services created.
- Distribute new brochures to community agencies.
- Create a fast fact sheet regarding Human Services stats, services and or programs.
- Speak up campaign launched.

# A County That Performs and Delivers Results

## Direction 7: Enhance customer service focus and responsiveness.

No.	Recommendation
7.1	Provide staff training and educational opportunities that address client service needs related to housing.

### Targets:

- n/a

### Measures

- Staff training sessions held.
- Staff participate in educational opportunities.

# A County That Performs and Delivers Results

**Direction 8: Deliver exceptional services by conducting regular service reviews to ensure delivery, effectiveness and efficiency.**

No	Recommendation
8.1	Review the audit frequency for Rent Supplement and Bridge Subsidy Programs.
8.2	Review Rent Geared to Income (RGI) application process to determine if there are additional opportunities to streamline the process.
8.3	Complete regular service delivery review of the Human Services integrated model to ensure shelter is the number one priority .

## Targets:

- n/a

## Measures

- Rent supplement and Bridge Subsidy programs are audited for frequency.
- RGI application process reviewed.
- Staff meetings held to review Human Services Integrated model.

# Next Steps

This plan aligns with and is supported by the Oxford County Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan provides concrete direction for all services facilitated by the County. One of the Strategic Plan directions is, “A County that informs and Engages to better inform the public about county programs, services and activities through planned communication”.

In an effort to make people more aware of shelter services available in the County, the Speak Up Oxford communication campaign will offer an opportunity for people to “speak up” about shelter and find out more about the myriad of services available. This campaign allows residents to become aware and “have a say” about the hard and soft services available to County residents.

During the fall of 2015, County staff will host a meeting inviting local agencies/partners, members of Council, and seek their input in prioritizing the recommendations in the 10 Year Shelter Plan. Once the priority recommendations are identified then an Implementation Plan will be developed outlining actions required to implement the recommendations, timelines, targets, lead staff and or agency, performance indicators and any budget implications. An annual progress report will be provided to Council and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.



**Speak Up, Oxford!**

The community is encouraged to provide feedback on the draft Shelter Plan through Oxford County's online town hall -- *Speak Up, Oxford!*

[www.oxfordcounty.ca/speakup](http://www.oxfordcounty.ca/speakup)

# Glossary

**Affordable Housing Program:** Affordable Housing Program (AHP) units offer rental accommodations with a rent based on less than 80% of the current Average Market Rents. Several private and co-operative non-profit housing developments offer Affordable Housing in Oxford County. Applications for market rent units must be made directly with the applicable housing provider.

**Aboriginal Household Status:** Aboriginal household status refers to whether or not a household is classified as being an Aboriginal household. An Aboriginal household is defined by CMHC as one of the following:

1. a non-family household in which at least 50% of household members self-identified as Aboriginal; or
2. a family household that meets at least one of two criteria: at least one spouse, common-law partner, or lone parent self-identified as an Aboriginal; or at least 50% of household members self-identified as Aboriginal.

A person self-identifies as being Aboriginal on the census questionnaire. Aboriginal identities include North American Indians (both status and non-status), Métis and Inuit.

**Average Market Rent:** Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation calculates what the average rental income that a property would command on the open market (market rent). This is used to determine what the average market rent would be. The average market rent varies based on unit size and the community the unit is located in.

**Core Housing Need Status:** A household is said to be in core housing need if its housing falls below at least one of the adequacy, affordability or suitability standards and it would have to spend 30% or more of its total before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing that is acceptable (meets all three housing standards).

1. Adequate housing are reported by their residents as not requiring any major repairs.
2. Affordable dwellings costs less than 30% of total before-tax household income.
3. Suitable housing has enough bedrooms for the size and make-up of resident households, according to National Occupancy Standard (NOS) requirements.

A household is not in core housing need if its housing meets all of the adequacy, suitability and affordability standards

OR, If its housing does not meet one or more of these standards, but it has sufficient income to obtain alternative local housing that is acceptable (meets all three standards).

NOTE: Regardless of their circumstances, non-family households led by maintainers 15 to 29 years of age attending school full-time are considered to be in a transitional stage of life and therefore not in core housing need.

# Glossary

**Rent Bank (Provincial Rent Bank Program):** In 2004 the Province established the Provincial Rent Bank program to provide short-term assistance for rent arrears in order to avoid tenant household evictions. In 2013 Human Services provided the funding through CHPI. (Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative). The Salvation Army (Woodstock, Tillsonburg, Ingersoll, Norwich) is the local operator for this program. The overall purpose of the PRBP is in the interest of achieving two main objectives: promoting and maintaining housing stability; and achieving costs savings for the Province of Ontario through reducing the use of emergency shelters. The program provides financial assistance for up to two months to aid households with rent or the disconnection of utilities.

To be eligible for the program applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Have rent arrears with a Notice to End a Tenancy Early for Non-payment of Rent (N4) and a Tribunal date to be evicted.
- Are low income
- Must be residents of Oxford County
- Loans must be for permanent housing
- Must agree to repay the loan by means of monthly payments

**Rent Geared-to-Income Housing (RGI):** RGI housing that offers subsidized rent based on 30% of the gross household income to a maximum of the established "market rent" for the unit . The minimum rent for a unit is \$85.00 plus any applicable utility charges. There is a waitlist for RGI housing, which is managed by Oxford County Human Services

**Social Housing:** Social housing is an important part of the “social safety net” for low-income tenants that cannot afford market rents. Several types of Social Housing are available in Oxford County including: Affordable Housing, Rent Geared-to-Income Housing (RGI), and Private Market Rent Subsidy Agreements (including Bridge).

**Special Priority Program (SPP) :** Is an application status for RGI housing. SPP applicants have the highest priority on the RGI waitlist. These households have a member who has been a victim of domestic violence. SPP applications are processed based on the chronological order of the date they applied .

# Sources

## Cost of Living

- Nutritious Food Basket 2009 & 2012, Oxford County Public Health & Emergency Services .
- Oxford County Average Monthly Rent , CMHC, 2009 & 2011.
- Home Ownership Monthly Payments , 2011 National Household Survey, Statistics Canada.
- Home Ownership Increased Cost, Woodstock-Ingersoll & District Real Estate Board Data, 2009-2012.
- Hydro Costs, Lower Tier Price, Cents per kWh, Ontario Energy Board, November 2009 – November 2012.
- Transportation, Consumer Price Index, Ontario Monthly Data, January 2009 and July 2013.

## Ontario Works Statistics:

- Ontario Works recipients shelter expenditures (Oxford County Human Services, September 2012)
- Ontario Works and ODSP rates, as of October 1, 2013.

## Rental Statistics:

Statistics for Oxford County were provided by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). Statistics are for 2011 unless otherwise stated. Statistics for the urban centres of Ingersoll, Tillsonburg, and Woodstock are from the CMHC Spring 2013 Rental Market Statistics Report.

## Population Data & Household Data:

- Population: Statistics Canada, 2011
- Household Forecast: Oxford County Population, Household and Employment Forecasts – 2013 Discussion Draft, Watson and Associates.

## Homelessness & Near Homelessness:

- Count of people using shelters, due to homelessness in 2012. For Inn Out of the Cold the count is based on the 2012-2013 season.
- Rent Bank Assistance. In 2013, Salvation Army surveyed clients that received assistance in 2011 to determine how many were at the same address. If they were at the same address that indicates that the Rent assistance helped them maintain their current housing.



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## **Oxford County Human Services**

[www.oxfordcounty.ca](http://www.oxfordcounty.ca)

[humanservices@oxfordcounty.ca](mailto:humanservices@oxfordcounty.ca)

Phone: 519-539-9800 ; 1-800-755-0394

21 Reeve Street, Woodstock

PO BOX 1614

Ontario, N4S 7Y3