

Shelburne Town Council hears County's plan on community safety

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Shelburne Town Council has been informed of the County of Dufferin's four-year plan to address community safety and well-being.

During their meeting on Monday, June 23, Shelburne Town Council received a presentation from Brenda Wagner, on behalf of the Dufferin Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan (CSWBP) Integration Table, regarding the 2025-2028 Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan.

Serving all municipalities in Dufferin County, the four-year plan is mandated under the Community Safety and Policing Act.

"What the province suggested is we focus on risk and protective factors, which we have done throughout. We also leverage community resources around this," said Wagner.

The development of the Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan began in early 2024 with data collection, which included a general community survey that saw over 600 responses. The data collection was followed by monthly meetings of the Integration Table, a group consisting of over 30 local agencies, and the completion of a draft plan in April.

"The plan is strength-based. It highlights what we are already doing well in identifying risks and looking for way to integrate with partnerships," explained Wagner.

The Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan highlights five areas of priority: community safety, housing and homelessness, mental health and wellbeing, family support, and food security.

Community Safety:

In the community safety area, the Integration Table heard about residents' raised concerns with opioids (mainly fentanyl), auto thefts, an increase in violent crimes like intimate partner violence, and growing road and mobility safety issues such as speed.

Wagner noted that while the perception from the community was that these types of crimes were on the rise, the data did not support a rise.

"If the Dufferin OPP and detachment board with support from community safety well-being partners continue to share information and engage with the public, we expect that the community will better understand local crime and available programs so people feel safer," said Wagner. "If government continues to invest in road infrastructure and traffic calming technologies ? for example, speed enforcement ? we expect that increases in traffic anticipated from the growing population will be better accommodated so mobility safety will improve."

Housing and Homelessness:

Housing and homelessness were one of the areas with the most attention, specifically increased shelter use, encampments, and lack of affordable housing.

According to the report, Dufferin County experienced 12 encampments with 14 people, mostly located in the Town of Orangeville, in 2024. Service interventions resulted in the number being reduced to one encampment with two people.

Connected to affordable housing, the report showed that only 50 per cent of households in the County of Dufferin can afford the average and that there are currently 670 applicants for the Housing Access Dufferin Centralized Waiting List, with an average wait of five years.

?The focus really here is to advocate for the housing solutions we need, engage developers for affordable housing, improve service coordination and enhance public awareness,? said Wagner.

Mental Health and Well-being:

The area of priority was a part of Dufferin's first Community Safety and Well-being Plan and was continued into the 2025-2028 plan.

According to results from the CSWB Survey, approximately 18 per cent of respondents rated their mental health as fair or poor, which is similar to the 2020 results. The survey also saw that roughly 1 in 3 Dufferin youth report low resilience and 25 per cent report not seeking professional support for a mental health concern when it was needed.

?It's about defining mental health for the community, promoting building resilience, improved data collection on service usage and effectiveness, and focussing as well on youth mental health and evaluation of future needs,? said Wagner about the 2025-2028 plans focus.

Family Support:

This area of priority is new to the Community Safety and Well-being Plan.

While the majority of respondents to the CSWB Survey strongly agreed or agreed that they have people in their lives to support them, the survey did show that one-third of them struggle to access services and programs. The most commonly reported reason was due to a lack of service awareness and accessibility.

To address access, the County plans to have local organizations continue to build a family-centred care model, create service awareness campaigns, consider the neighbourhood support network model and establish grassroots parent outreach programs.

Food Security:

Studies show that roughly 23 per cent of households in the Wellington, Dufferin and Guelph communities are food insecure.

Individuals most at risk of facing food insecurity include, low-income households, renters, BIPOC and other cultural/racial groups, female-led lone-parent households, and homes reliant on income support.

To address food insecurity the County of Dufferin plans to use the Dufferin County Food Insecurity Needs Assessment to inform regional planning as well as advocate for income-based solutions and expand programs such as school food service and community growing/meals.

?If members of the Dufferin Food Access Subcommittee take action by gathering more local data and facilitating groups to work together, we expect that programs and conditions will improve so that people experiencing food insecurity in Dufferin will have better access to food they need as well as social and community connectedness,? said Wagner.

The 2025-2028 Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan was officially approved by Dufferin County Council in May. An annual update on the progress of the Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan is expected to be released each June.

The entirety of the 2025-2028 Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan can be found on the County of Dufferin website.