







Community Safety & Well-Being Plan

Lambton County | 2026 - 2030

Discoveries That Matter

COUNTY OF LAMBTON

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Citation Statement

Unless otherwise noted, all statistical indicators and metrics presented in this Plan are compiled from the accompanying Data Report (Appendix A).



Acknowledgement of Ancestral Lands

We acknowledge that Lambton County is part of the ancestral land of the Chippewa, Odawa, and Potawatomi peoples, referred to collectively as the Anishinaabeg. It is through the connection of the Anishinaabeg with the spirit of the land, water and air that we recognize their unique cultures, traditions, and values. Together as treaty people, we have a shared responsibility to act with respect for the environment that sustains all life, protecting the future for those generations to come.

Message from the Warden



On behalf of the Community Safety and Well-Being Steering Committee, we are pleased to present the 2026–2030 Community Safety and Well-Being Plan for Lambton County.

Community safety and well-being are built through strong partnerships, shared leadership, and collective commitment. The challenges facing communities today are complex and interconnected, and no single organization can address them alone.

This Plan reflects the importance of working together to understand local needs, build on existing strengths, and identify opportunities for greater collaboration.

The Steering Committee has identified four interconnected priority areas that will guide our work over the next four years:

- Community Safety
- Housing and Homelessness
- Mental Health and Addictions
- Equity and Systemic Racism

These priorities reflect the conditions that influence safety, health, inclusion, and well-being across Lambton County. Together, they contribute to our shared vision of a community where everyone is safe, included, supported, and has equitable opportunities to thrive.

We extend our appreciation to the many organizations, partners, and community members whose knowledge and commitment continue to support this important work.

Warden, County of Lambton

Executive Summary

Lambton's Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Plan builds on the foundation established through Lambton County's inaugural Plan, reflecting current evidence, community priorities, and opportunities for continued collaboration across sectors.

The CSWB Plan ("Plan") represents the second iteration of Lambton County's Plan under Ontario's legislative framework under the Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019. Building on the governance structures, partnerships, and priorities established through the inaugural Plan, this refresh reflects a stronger understanding of local conditions, community assets, and opportunities for continued alignment across sectors.

Priority areas were identified through a review of local evidence, community assets, existing strategies, previous CSWB work, and partner-informed perspectives. The accompanying Data Report established a shared understanding of current conditions, emerging trends, system pressures, and opportunities for collaboration. Existing community consultations, surveys, lived and living experience initiatives, and partner engagement processes were also considered.

The Plan identifies four priority areas that reflect key factors influencing community safety and well-being in Lambton County:

- Community Safety
- Housing and Homelessness
- Mental Health and Addictions
- Equity and Systemic Racism

Implementation of the Plan will occur through existing governance structures, partnerships, and community initiatives. Ongoing monitoring will focus on reviewing community conditions, emerging trends, partner perspectives, and opportunities to strengthen collaboration and coordination.

1.0 | Overview of Lambton County.

Lambton County is a geographically diverse region in southwestern Ontario, bordered by Lake Huron and the St. Clair River. The county includes a mix of urban centres, small towns, rural communities, and First Nation Communities, each with unique strengths, opportunities, and service needs. This diversity shapes how residents experience access to housing, health care, transportation, and other essential services. While many residents enjoy a high quality of life, others face barriers that can affect their health, safety, and well-being.

Like many communities across Ontario, Lambton continues to experience pressures related to housing affordability, homelessness, mental health and addictions, community safety, and the rising cost of living. These challenges are often interconnected and can have a greater impact on individuals and families experiencing multiple vulnerabilities. Despite these challenges, Lambton is strengthened by resilient residents, strong community networks, dedicated local organizations, and a long history of collaboration. This collaborative approach recognizes that improving community safety and well-being is a shared responsibility and that lasting change is achieved through coordinated, prevention-focused action.

The Plan builds on these strengths by bringing partners together around shared priorities, evidence-informed decision-making, and collective action to improve outcomes for everyone who lives, works, and visits Lambton County.



2.0 | Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of Lambton's Plan is to provide a shared framework for advancing community safety and well-being across Lambton County through collective action. The Plan brings together local evidence, community context, and existing initiatives to identify shared priorities and highlight opportunities where efforts can align and complement one another.

The Plan does not direct service delivery or replace organizational responsibilities. Instead, it supports coordination, strengthens connections across sectors, and helps align efforts around shared community priorities.

Lambton's Plan is grounded in a shared commitment to equity, inclusion, and long-term well-being. Through collaboration across sectors and municipalities, the Plan supports a shared understanding of complex community challenges and opportunities for coordinated action.

Building on the Foundation

The Plan represents the second iteration of Lambton County's CSWB Plan under Ontario's legislative framework. It builds on the relationships, governance structures, and partnerships established through the inaugural Plan while reflecting a deeper understanding of local priorities and opportunities for continued collaboration.

Since the development of the first Plan, Lambton has established a cross-sector governance model that brings together municipalities, Indigenous partners, health care, education, social services, justice, policing, and community organizations.

Through shared leadership and ongoing collaboration, partners contribute their expertise while remaining accountable to their respective mandates. This approach supports coordinated planning, shared learning, and informed decision-making.

3.0 | Priority Identification

The priority areas were informed by a review of local data, community assets, existing strategies, previous CSWB work, and community and partner perspectives. Findings from these sources were synthesized through the Data Report, which examined community conditions, existing system strengths, emerging issues, and opportunities for alignment across sectors.

When determining the priorities, considerations included the **availability of local data, trends, and indicators** demonstrating significant or emerging challenges affecting residents and communities, and the **presence of established programs, partnerships, strategies, and community assets** that provide a foundation for continued collaboration.



Local Evidence and Community Consultation

The identification of priority areas was supported by quantitative and qualitative evidence that provides insight into community conditions, emerging trends, existing strengths, and areas requiring continued attention.

The Data Report reviewed indicators related to housing stability, mental health and substance use, economic conditions, and community safety, alongside existing plans, strategies, and initiatives. The evidence review considered both challenges and protective factors to provide a balanced understanding of Lambton County's current landscape.

Community perspectives were incorporated through existing consultations, community surveys, lived and living experience initiatives, and engagement processes undertaken by municipalities, community organizations, and sector partners.

Equity and Systemic Racism

For this Plans iteration, the Systemic Racism priority area was broadened from Systemic Racism to Equity and Systemic Racism to reflect the ongoing development of local knowledge, partnerships, and community perspectives in this area and to highlight the interconnected nature of systemic barriers, discrimination, and inequitable access across community systems.

While systemic racism remains an important area of focus, local evidence points to broader equity and inclusion considerations that influence access to services, opportunities, and participation in community life. This framing recognizes the importance of addressing systemic racism while providing a broader lens through which Lambton County can continue to understand and respond to inequities affecting diverse communities.

Poverty as a Cross-Cutting Determinant

While poverty is a critical issue affecting community safety and well-being, its underlying causes are complex and extend beyond the ability of any single organization, sector, or level of government to resolve independently. Poverty is influenced by broader structural factors, including income policy, labour markets, housing supply, education systems, and economic conditions.

Although poverty is not identified as a standalone priority area in this iteration, it remains a significant factor influencing community safety and well-being in Lambton County. The Plan therefore recognizes poverty as a cross-cutting factor that influences outcomes throughout the priority areas.

Identified Interconnected Challenges in Lambton County:

Mental Health

In 2023, perceived mental health had decreased from **70%** in 2017 to **57%**

66% of adults, 18-34 years, reported experiencing a mental health condition (2023)

Economic Vulnerability

9.9% of residents were living below the Low-Income Measure, After Tax

18% of households were experiencing food insecurity

Safety

In 2024, the City of Sarnia reported **1,658** violent Criminal Code incidents and **2,968** property crime violations



2,463 IPV incidents were reported across OPP and Sarnia Police jurisdictions (2024)

When individual households are secure, stable, and free from violence, it directly minimizes neighborhood crime, lessens the strain on emergency response services, and fosters social well-being. [1]

Substance Use

24.1% of residents reported to engage in heavy drinking (2024)

Lambton continued to see opioid-related harms and emergency service demand, with **273 opioid-related EMS calls** reported (2024)

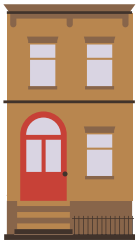
Housing & Homelessness

In Sarnia, Vacancy rate increased to **2.7%** with a rental turnover rate of **13.7%** (2024)

> *Access to safe, affordable housing is a basic human need that improves health, lowers stress, and helps people keep steady jobs.* [3]

There were **22,526** shelter use instances in 2024

In 2024, there were **326** individuals/month were on the By-Name List



Employment & Income

In 2024, Lambton's unemployment rate was **8.75%**; this is slightly higher than the provincial average (7.0%)



Employment affects income levels which influences access to basic needs, resources, and well-being. [2]

Priority 1: Community Safety

Community Responses and Supporting Initiatives for Community Safety

- **Community Health Integrated Care Team:** An integrated outreach approach supporting individuals experiencing complex health and social needs, including homelessness, mental health challenges, and substance use concerns, through coordinated health and community responses.
- **Integrated Mobile Police and Community Team:** A collaborative response model supporting individuals experiencing mental health, addictions, and social challenges through coordinated intervention and connection to community supports.
- **O.P.P Mental Health Screener:** A standardized assessment tool supporting police response to individuals experiencing mental health crises and improving coordination with health care providers.
- **Sarnia Lambton Coordinating Committee on Violence Against Women:** A multi-sector coordinating committee that brings together organizations involved in preventing and responding to violence against women.

By the Numbers:

1,658

In 2024, **1,658** Violent Criminal Code Incidents.

In 2024, **domestic disputes** were among the most common reasons for police calls in Sarnia.

In 2024, **2,463** intimate partner violence incidents were reported across OPP and Sarnia Police.

In 2025, Sarnia's Violent Crime Severity Index was **121.41**; which exceeds the national benchmark of 100.

Only **31%** of students (grades 7-12) feel safe in their school change room

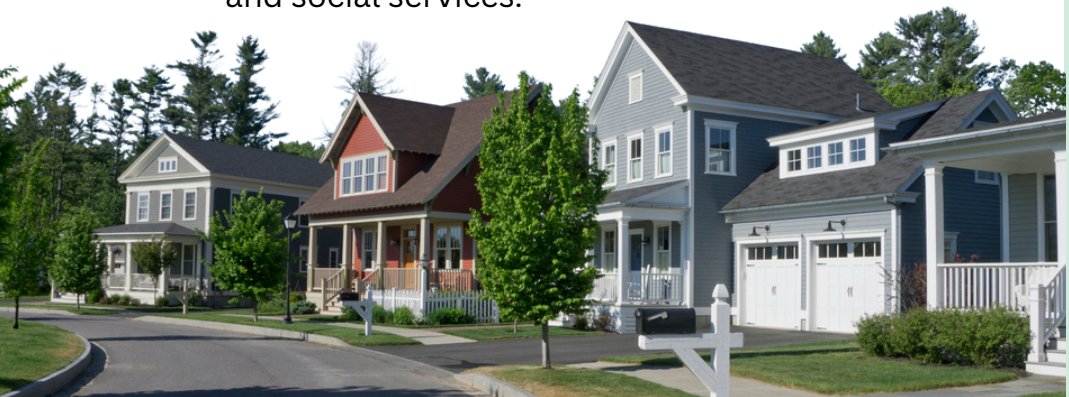


Data Source for Community Safety Metrics: Data Report (Appendix A)

Priority 2: Housing & Homelessness

Community Responses and Supporting Initiatives for Housing and Homelessness

- **10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan (2026–2035):** A community-informed plan establishing priorities, actions, and targets to address current and future housing needs across Lambton County.
- **A Better Tomorrow Committee:** A group of community members, who have been homeless in the past or are currently experiencing homelessness, use their lived expertise to recommend changes to local services and processes that improve system navigation for people experiencing homelessness.
- **Affordable Housing Initiatives:** Includes initiatives such as the Additional Dwelling Unit Incentive Program, Affordable Housing Seed Funding, and rent subsidy programs designed to increase housing options and improve affordability.
- **Homelessness & Addiction Recovery Treatment Hub:** Provides access to primary care, mental health and addiction treatment, and employment assistance to individuals who face complex barriers in accessing care.
- **Social Services Homelessness Outreach Team:** Provides direct outreach and case management supports to individuals experiencing homelessness, including connection to housing and social services.



By the Numbers:

In the 2024 Homelessness Enumeration, **79%** of respondents identified rent affordability as a barrier to securing housing

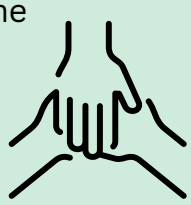


Lambton's By-Name List averaged **326 individuals** per month in 2024, with **72%** experiencing chronic homelessness

In 2024, Lambton's rental vacancy rate was approximately **2.7%**, reflecting limited rental availability



321 unique individuals were supported by the Community Outreach Team while sleeping outdoors



Emergency shelter services recorded **22,526 shelter stays** in 2024, demonstrating continued demand for emergency housing supports

Priority 3: Mental Health & Addictions

Community Responses and Supporting Initiatives for Mental Health and Addictions

- **Community Health Integrated Care Team:** An integrated care approach to support individuals with complex health and social needs through coordinated services.
- **Homelessness & Addiction Recovery Treatment Hub:** Provides access to primary care, mental health and addiction treatment, and employment assistance to individuals who face complex barriers in accessing care.
- **Indigenous Health Advancements:** Ongoing work through the Sarnia-Lambton Ontario Health Team to advance culturally responsive health services and improve outcomes for Indigenous communities.
- **Mental Health First Response Team:** Provides 24/7 free and confidential telephone crisis intervention, mental health assessments, and support for individuals experiencing mental health crises or seeking guidance.
- **MobileCare Clinic:** A mobile clinic providing outreach-based primary care, mental health, and addiction support in participating communities.
- **Working Together for Kids Strategy:** A collaborative approach supporting youth mental health and well-being through community and school-based efforts.
- **Youth Wellness Hub Ontario:** An integrated mental health and addictions support space for youth aged 12–25, incorporating youth voice and advisory involvement.

By the Numbers:

In 2023 nearly **46%** of residents reported experiencing a mental health concern within the past year, most commonly anxiety, depression, and loneliness.

In 2023, emergency departments recorded **637 visits** related to mental health conditions and **212 visits** related to substance use conditions



In 2024, Emergency Medical Services responded to **273 opioid-related calls**, compared with 220 calls in 2023

The proportion of residents reporting excellent or very good mental health declined from **70%** in 2017 to 57% in 2023

In 2023, adults aged 18–34, **66%** reported experiencing a mental health condition, with only **34%** reporting excellent or very good mental health



Priority 4: Equity and Systemic Racism

Community Responses and Supporting Equity and Systemic Racism

Unity Table: A multi-sector partnership of community organizations working to advance equity, diversity and inclusion across Sarnia-Lambton. Truth and reconciliation are foundational to this work, with Indigenous and Francophone communities recognized as essential partners. The Table brings together community organizations and members to provide opportunities for dialogue, shared learning and research. It helps identify systemic issues and evidence-based barriers, brings issues forward through advocacy, and shares tools and resources that can support organizational practice. In this role, the Unity Table provides a forum for community perspectives to inform broader conversations about issues that may affect safety, inclusion and well-being.

Continued cross-sector collaboration can strengthen understanding of systemic racism and support the consideration of equity in community planning, service delivery and organizational practices. Partnerships such as the Unity Table provide an avenue for organizations and community members to share perspectives, identify concerns and contribute to more inclusive community responses.

By the Numbers:

In 2024, the Sarnia-Lambton Alliance Against Hate supported **27 individuals** impacted by hate-motivated incidents.

In the 2023 Community Health survey nearly **one in five respondents** reported personally experiencing racism

In the 2023 Community Health survey **two-thirds of respondents** identified systemic racism as an issue in Lambton

7% of students (grades 7-12) and **5%** of student (grades 4-6), were bullied once or twice a week in a 4 week period, based on racism



4.0 | Implementation Framework

The Plan will be advanced through continued collaboration among organizations and sectors across Lambton County. Implementation will occur through existing governance structures, partnerships, and community initiatives, with each organization continuing to operate within its respective mandate, responsibilities, and areas of expertise.

Implementation will focus on maintaining connections among partners, sharing information, and supporting coordinated approaches where priorities intersect across systems.

Implementation activities will include:

- Maintaining partner collaboration to support continued alignment with CSWB priorities.
- Sharing relevant data, system insights, and emerging trends to strengthen collective understanding of community conditions.
- Identifying opportunities to improve coordination, address service gaps, and reduce fragmentation across systems.
- Supporting alignment between CSWB priorities and existing community strategies, initiatives, and planning processes.

Monitoring and Ongoing Collaboration

The Steering Committee will monitor CSWB priorities in relation to emerging pressures, changes in community needs, and opportunities to enhance coordination across sectors.

Monitoring will focus on understanding changing community conditions, identifying areas requiring continued attention, and recognizing opportunities to strengthen collaboration. This ongoing review will support shared learning, informed planning, and continued alignment among partners.

An annual update will be developed to highlight significant developments, emerging trends, and collaborative efforts supporting community safety and well-being across Lambton County. Through continued partnership, shared learning, and responsive planning, Lambton will maintain focus on supporting safe, healthy, inclusive, and connected communities.

Opportunities for Continued Collaboration:

- Ongoing **integration of equity, inclusion, and culturally responsive approaches** across community systems.
- Ongoing **collaboration** to improve connections to timely, accessible supports.
- Continued focus on **early identification, prevention, and support** for populations experiencing increased vulnerability, including children and youth.
- Use of **shared evidence, service insights, and lived experience perspectives** to inform system planning and improvement.
- Continued **coordination across community partners** to support individuals experiencing housing instability.
- Continued **alignment of housing initiatives, affordability strategies, and homelessness responses** to support housing stability.



Recognizing the CSWB Steering Committee

CSWB Plans are mandated to be supported by advisory committees with representation from police services, local municipalities, education, health, and community and social service providers. Lambton's CSWB Plan is overseen by a multi-sectoral steering committee who were instrumental in co-creating Lambton's updated CSWB Plan presented in this document.

We deeply appreciate their contributions and ongoing efforts to foster collective action to create a safer, healthier, and more inclusive community.

Aamjiwnaang First Nation
Canadian Mental Health Association - Lambton Kent
Kettle and Stony Point First Nation
Conseil scolaire catholique Providence
County of Lambton; Public Health Services Division and Social Services Division
Inn Of The Good Shepherd
Government of Ontario, Probation and Parole Services
Lambton County Council
Lambton County Municipal Clerks
Lambton-Kent District School Board
Local Immigration Partnership
Municipality of Lambton Shores
Ontario Provincial Police, Lambton Detachment
Sarnia Police Services
Sarnia-Lambton Coordinating Committee on Violence Against Women
Sarnia- Lambton Ontario Health Team
St Clair Catholic District School Board
St. Clair Child and Youth Services
The Centre, Sarnia
Walpole Island First Nation

References

1 | https://www.cdc.gov/community-violence/prevention/index.html
2 | https://www.cpha.ca/what-are-social-determinants-health
3 | https://www.cpha.ca/affordable-housing