

COMMUNITY PLAN FOR SAFETY AND WELL-BEING

LANARK COUNTY

AND

THE TOWN OF SMITHS FALLS

2025-2029

**PRESENTED BY THE
COMMUNITY PLAN FOR SAFETY
AND WELL-BEING ADVISORY COMMITTEE**



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge Lanark County is situated on sacred land that has a rich Indigenous history extending back for more than 10,000 years. This land is the ancestral and unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe Nation. We are grateful to the Algonquin ancestors who cared for the land and water in order that we might live here today.

Before the arrival of settlers, the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Nations peaceably shared and cared for resources under the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant. After the settlers arrived, the territory was subject to the Three Figure Wampum Belt, which commemorates the sharing of this land between the English, French and Indigenous Nations under natural law.

We know these covenants have been broken and acknowledge the harm it has caused. We understand we must reconcile with all of our relations and work towards healing and strength together.

We are grateful for the knowledge shared by the Algonquin Peoples and their many contributions, past and present, to our communities. This territory is home to many other Indigenous peoples, and we extend respect to all First Nations, Inuit and Metis people. Together we must care for this sacred land and each other, and work to understand our shared history in order to build a peaceful future together that is mindful of generations to come.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The process to update the Community Plan for Safety and Well-being for Lanark County and Smiths Falls began in 2023 under the direction of the multi-sectoral Community Safety and Well-being (CSWB) Advisory Committee. These plans are mandated for municipalities to complete under the *Community Safety and Policing Act* (2019). This 2025-2029 update builds upon the original CSWB plan, which was approved by local municipalities in 2019. The overall purpose is to identify assets in the community, assess risks and develop strategies to mitigate those risks and gaps, leading to enhanced community safety and well-being. This plan is for the following municipalities: Beckwith Township, Town of Carleton Place, Drummond/North Elmsley Township, Lanark Highlands Township, Municipality of Mississippi Mills, Montague Township, Town of Perth, Town of Smiths Falls and Tay Valley Township.

Consultation for the update has included surveys of the community and agencies, interviews and meetings with sector leaders and stakeholders, an examination of data and reports, and several focus groups. Four theme areas supported by a range of pillars were developed for the plan, with an overview of assets and issues in each pillar along with goal statements, measures and strategies. Overall outcome statements set the stage for the vision of community safety and well-being in Lanark County and Smiths Falls as follows:

- Lanark County and Smiths Falls is a community of opportunity and equity for its diverse populations.
- Lanark County and Smiths Falls is a community where citizens have access to the basic needs of housing, a liveable income and nutritious food.
- Lanark County and Smiths Falls is a community where its residents respect the legacy of stewardship by the Indigenous people who lived here before us and continue to care for the Earth in a way that will sustain it for seven generations.
- Lanark County and Smiths Falls is a community of collaboration, where service providers work together for the benefit of residents in order to prevent harm.
- Lanark County and Smiths Falls is a community offering a robust range of health and social services that are accessible in various formats within a period of time that is reasonable to prevent emergency or crisis situations.
- Lanark County and Smiths Falls is a community of healthy relationships and respectful and welcoming neighbours, where people look out for one another and where residents are safe from violence in all its forms.

Assets, risks, goals, measures and strategies are set out for the pillars in each of the themes shown below. Implementation teams or working groups will be established to work on the goals and strategies in this living document, and regular updates will be provided to municipalities, stakeholders and the community. The plan will be revisited in four years. Many thanks to the advisory committee members, municipal councils, community partners, stakeholders and residents who contributed toward the creation of this plan.

THEMES AND PILLARS	
<p>Affordability and Quality of Life:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income and Employment • Housing and Homelessness • Transportation • Food Insecurity and Food Access • Climate Change and Environment • Belonging and Civic Engagement 	<p>Health:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical Health (including access to care – primary, long-term care, end-of-life care) • Mental Health and Substance Use
<p>Violence Against Persons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence, Intimate Partner Violence, Gender-Based Violence • Hate-Motivated Crime • Children, Elderly and Other 	<p>Priority Populations and Diversity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and Youth • Seniors and Elderly • Indigenous • 2SLGBTQIA+ • New Canadians and immigrants • Accessibility

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INTRODUCTION

This is the second Community Plan for Safety and Well-being for Lanark County and Smiths Falls, with the first being approved by local municipalities in 2019. These plans became mandated by the province for each municipality in 2021, and the new *Community Safety and Policing Act* (2019) stipulates those created before then should be updated by July 1, 2025. Work on this update began in 2023. Consistent with the requirements of the Act, this work has been completed through a multi-sectoral advisory committee and with a range of community consultations conducted.

The *Community Plan for Safety and Well-being for Lanark County and Smiths Falls (2025 to 2029)* represents the work and ideas of agencies and individuals in the community. CSWB plans are not meant to reinvent the wheel but, rather, to acknowledge and build upon existing assets in the community and to identify and remedy gaps that may exist in order to enhance community safety and well-being.

Since 2016, the CSWB Plan Advisory Committee has been working towards achieving identified goals. The committee is comprised of representatives from a range of sectors, as shown below:

COMMUNITY SAFETY AND WELL-BEING PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE		
SECTOR	AGENCY	REPRESENTATIVE
Justice	Lanark County OPP	Insp. Kerlous Tawdrous
	Smiths Falls Police Service	Chief Jodi Empey
Community Organizations	United Way	Deanna Theander
	Perth & District Community Foundation	Victoria Gibb-Carsley
Youth	RNJ Youth Services	Rachel Burns
	Family and Children's Services	Erin Lee Marcotte
	Open Doors LCY/Planet Youth	Kevin Clouthier
Health Care	Health Unit	Elaine Murkin
	Lanark County Mental Health	Garry Laws
	Rideau Community Health Services	Cristina DiTomaso
	Lanark County Paramedic Services	Breanne Lapointe
Social Services	Lanark County Social Services	Brooke Coutts
Victim Services	Lanark County Interval House	Erin Lee
Education	UCDSB	Josh Harrison
	CDSBEO	Selina Mackie
Culture and Diversity	Indigenous	Larry McDermott
	Queer Connection Lanark	Elizabeth Snyder
	Smiths Falls for All Diversity Committee	Mitra Ghaffari

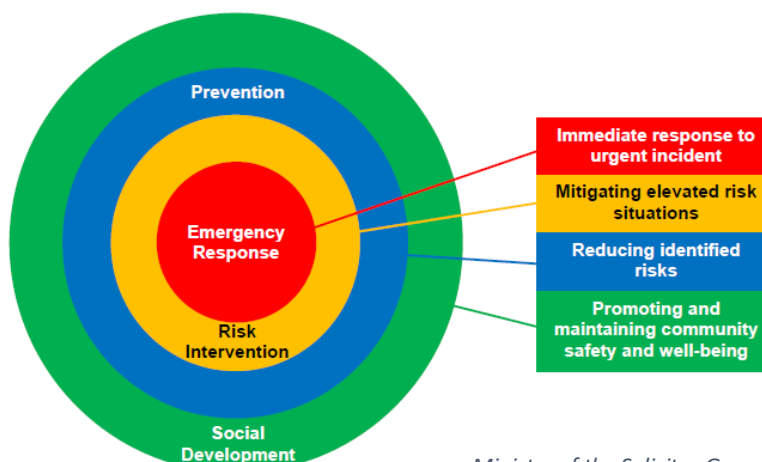
Local Government	Lanark County Council	Brian Dowdall
	Smiths Falls Council	Peter McKenna
Climate/Environment	Lanark County (Climate Environmental Sub-Department)	Elizabeth Boldt or Michelle Rabbetts
	Coordinator	Stephanie Gray

This plan is a living document that aims to guide the advisory committee and implementation teams in a process to enhance health and well-being in our communities. Consultation and research have identified assets and risk areas, resulting in strategies to help achieve positive outcomes. The advisory committee meets regularly to review progress on the plan, and teams will be identified to assist with implementation of strategies.

Under the Act, once a municipality adopts a plan it “shall take any actions that the plan requires it to take and shall encourage and assist other entities to take any actions the plan requires those entities to take” (Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019). As of the date of adoption, there were no regulations for monitoring and reporting to the Ministry; however, progress updates will be developed through the advisory committee and shared with municipalities, stakeholders and the public on a regular basis.

As this 2025-2029 plan neared completion, Ontario was having a provincial election, a federal election was expected to be called in 2025 and the municipal election was slated for 2026 – all of which could impact outcomes and strategies outlined in the plan. At the same time, significant global uncertainty has added to the challenges, leaving many people to wonder how they can possibly make a difference. This plan serves to underline the importance of recognizing our ability to make a difference closer to home and the impact we can have at a local level when we work together.

There is a long and positive history of collaboration in Lanark County and Smiths Falls, and this has been identified as a key asset in this plan to enable work that benefits our communities. Thank you to the members of the advisory committee, councils, agencies and those with lived experience for your work to make things better in Lanark County and Smiths Falls.



Ministry of the Solicitor General

APPROACH, METHODOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The CSWB Plan Steering (now Advisory) Committee was established in late 2016 and began working on the first plan, which was completed in 2018 and approved in early 2019. Regular progress updates were released to the community. It identified 12 priority risk areas and provided an overview for each, including existing assets. Specific issues were identified with background detail, and a set of actions was developed for each priority risk in the areas of social development, prevention, risk intervention and emergency response, with outcomes and measures established for each risk area. The risk areas included mental health, substance use, poverty, housing, transportation, health and well-being, domestic violence/sexual assault, youth and families, seniors, justice, Indigenous health and well-being, and culture and diversity.

A key starting point for the update of the CSWB Plan was a review of the previous plan and the progress made. The advisory committee examined the 12 previously identified risk areas and, for the new plan, established four theme areas (health, affordability and quality of life, violence against persons, and priority populations) supported by various pillars. The committee assessed and inventoried preliminary risk categories, and consultations (surveys and interviews) were held in Fall 2023 with advisory committee members about assets and issues in their sectors. The committee built off of the identified risks in the previous plan and assessed new considerations, such as climate change and environment, belonging and civic engagement, and accessibility when determining the new themes and pillars. Data from Statistics Canada and a range of local reports were also evaluated.

As part of the consultation process, a community survey was released in late 2023, garnering 393 responses from across the county. The survey included questions related to health, mental health, substance use, affordability and quality of life (including employment, income, food security, housing, transportation, climate change, sense of belonging and volunteering), and violence against persons (including crime victimization and intimate partner violence).

An agency survey was also issued in Fall 2023. It received 37 responses from a cross-section of agencies serving a wide range of populations and age groups. The survey assessed populations served, resources used, risk factors encountered, the impact of the pandemic, cultural considerations for clients and barriers/systemic gaps. It provided an opportunity for feedback on suggested solutions, service gaps and workarounds, wait times, urgently needed services and barriers for hard-to-reach populations.

A virtual Partner Day was held on Nov. 14, 2023, with 23 agencies participating. This was an opportunity for asset mapping, a review of and prioritization of risks, and identification of desired outcomes. Assets, gaps and strategies were identified in the four theme areas of health, affordability and quality of life, violence against persons and priority populations. Some evaluation strategies were also discussed.

Focus groups were held in the Fall of 2023 with the Successful Aging Advisory Committee, which consists of member agencies that serve the aging population, and the Lanark County Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence (SADV) Advisory Committee, which includes organizations providing services to victims of SADV. Those sessions asked members to discuss pressures they are facing, what is working well in the community and what is needed to better serve clients. Feedback of SADV clients from annual

surveys through the Victim Advocate program is also taken into account. In June 2023 a focus group with the Lanark County Child and Youth Services Collaborative, which consists of youth-serving agencies, discussed pressures, factors that are most influencing children’s mental health difficulties, how parents can be supported and key gaps agency representatives are seeing in services for children and families.

A Council/Police Services Board/Community Policing Advisory Committee Focus Session was held in November 2023 with nine local municipal leaders and examined pressures (gaps and issues) in the identified risk areas, suggestions on how to address the pressures, and how municipalities can be involved in implementation of the CSWB plan. In addition, meetings were held with the Mississippi Mills Library Board in April 2024 and Indigenous Elder Larry McDermott in January 2025.

The CSWB Plan Coordinator’s regular ongoing networking with committees such as Planet Youth Lanark County, Lanark County Child and Youth Services Collaborative, Successful Aging Advisory Committee, Lanark County Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Advisory Committee, Vital Signs (Perth and District Community Foundation) and others, and the subsequent information sharing that takes place as a result, has also helped to inform the CSWB plan.

A key takeaway from the consultation process was that housing, food security and income are priorities. Better access to basic needs, such as safe and affordable housing, nutritious food, a sustainable income and transportation leads to health improvements and would mitigate many other risks. Other key takeaways included protecting and building on the assets we have, continuing our track record of good collaboration and doing so upstream, increasing awareness of services and supports available and sharing that information with professionals and the public, and continuing to learn and train and educate. It also became clear that our children and youth need attention.

Upon review of all of the data and consultations, the advisory committee established overarching outcome statements for community safety and well-being. Within each theme area, goals, measures and strategies were developed with a view to developing a more detailed work plan as part of the implementation.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

What is now known as Eastern Ontario and Western Quebec was once a vast territory belonging to the Algonquin, or Omàmawî’inini. The geography now called Lanark County consists of fertile land in the east and south that was once covered by the inland Champlain Sea, while the west and north regions are the foothills of the Canadian Shield and consist of forest, lakes and thin, rocky soil. “Algonquin and other Indigenous people have prospered here for many thousands of years through hunting, trapping and gathering wild foods, and have developed intricate systems of governance based on family units represented by a Grand Council” (Lanark County Neighbours for Truth and Reconciliation).

Today, Lanark County is made up of eight local towns and townships, including Beckwith, Carleton Place, Drummond/North Elmsley, Lanark Highlands, Montague, Mississippi Mills, Perth and Tay Valley. The adjacent, but politically separated, Town of Smiths Falls shares numerous services with its neighbouring local municipalities and the County. Carleton Place, Perth, Smiths Falls and Almonte (part of Mississippi Mills) are urban centres in the county. These municipalities are located on traditional unceded Algonquin land. The settlement history for the towns and townships began in earnest in the 1790s and

consisted largely of immigrants from the United Kingdom and an influx of United Empire Loyalists from the United States.

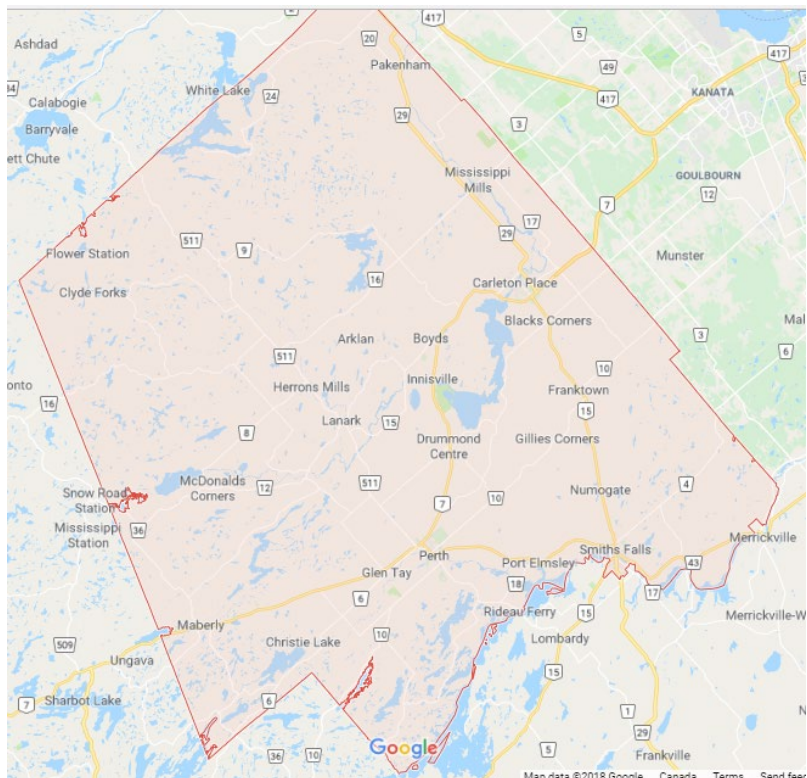
Lanark County is in a distinct region of the Frontenac Axis where Canadian Shield lands meet the Limestone Plains, which presents a topography of rivers, lakes, forests, fields and rocky terrain. The land area is about 2,986 square kilometres and is largely rural. Because it is located between the cities of Ottawa and Kingston, residents have access to the amenities of these major centres. Two provincial highways (7 and 15) cut through the area, and there is a passenger rail system with its hub in Smiths Falls that accesses the Montreal to Windsor corridor, including Ottawa and Kingston. The Rideau Canal Waterway also winds through the county and Town of Smiths Falls. The geography/topography of the area invites a significant seasonal population of cottagers and recreational visitors.

According to 2021 Census data, the population of Lanark County and Smiths Falls is 75,760, a 10.3% growth from 2016, which is almost double provincial growth for that period. Sixty per-cent of the population falls in the 15 to 64 age group, with 15% ages 0 to 14, 25% ages 65 and over and 3% are 85 years and older, which is a 17.2% change from 2016. The population is aging – the average age of the population has increased slightly to 45.6. The median age is 49.

Statistics Canada shows the median economic family income for 2020 at \$107,600, compared to Ontario at \$112,200. The median income for lone parents is \$68,500. The poverty rate in Lanark County (household income under \$40,000 per year) rose to 16% in 2020, compared to 17% in Ontario. The poverty rate for children ages 0 to 17 living in lone-parent homes was 14.4% in 2020 compared to 20.8 provincially. For couple-led homes in Lanark County it was 2%. The unemployment rate for people ages 15 and older in Lanark County increased to 8.5% from 7%, compared to 12.2% in Ontario.

In 2021, 4.3% of the population identified as Indigenous – a 24.6% change since 2016. Immigrants represent 7% of population. Three per cent of residents are racialized people.

Lanark County is served by four hospital sites (Perth, Smiths Falls, Carleton Place and Almonte), and community health centres in Smiths Falls and Lanark Village. Police services for the Town of Smiths Falls are supplied by the Smiths Falls Police Service. Lanark County OPP serves the municipalities of Lanark County. There are 27 elementary schools and six high schools in Lanark County and Smiths Falls, as well as alternate schools and private school options. An abundance of social service agencies can be found throughout the area.



AFFORDABILITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE THEME

OUTCOMES

- ↳ Lanark County and Smiths Falls is a community where citizens have access to the basic needs of housing, a liveable income and nutritious food.
- ↳ Lanark County and Smiths Falls is a community where its residents respect the legacy of stewardship by the Indigenous people who lived here before us and continue to care for the Earth in a way that will sustain it for seven generations.

PILLAR: Income and Employment
Assets
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Lanark Basic Income Network formed in 2023 and is committed to advocating for a basic income guarantee to allow individuals to meet their basic needs, participate in society and live with dignity regardless of their employment status. The group has been working with community agencies and municipalities to garner support.• Lanark County continues to seek opportunities to advocate to provincial officials regarding the need for higher Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program rates. Lanark County Council has included Universal Basic Income as one of its strategic priorities for the 2022-2026 term.• Many organizations work to supplement basic needs for vulnerable populations in the community. An example of this is the collaboration between OPP and Family and Children’s Services of Lanark, Leeds and Grenville to provide snowsuits for children and other needs through the Snowsuit Fund and the Angel Tree Program.• In his report “Needs and Resilience of Children and Families in Eastern Ontario” prepared for Every Kid In Our Community, Robert Fulton notes the median income for individuals has increased significantly from 2015 to 2020 – by 24% in Lanark County. The median income in 2020 for Lanark County was \$44,400 compared to \$35,805 in 2015. “The dividing line of median income, which splits the range of incomes in half, has moved 23% higher in the province. This is further evidence of the increasing wealth of Ontario” (p. 34).• Grant opportunities are offered through groups such as Perth & District Community Foundation and municipal community grants, which can be found by checking with each organization.• Lanark County’s “Children’s Services 5-Year Service Plan” for 2024-2029 sets strategic priorities around increasing accessibility of child care; ensuring sustainability of child care; offering high-quality programs; ensuring responsive engagement with providers, families and community partners; and increasing inclusivity for children with special needs.
Risks/Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In its “Addressing Food Insecurity in Leeds, Grenville & Lanark, 2024 Report,” the South East Health Unit, formerly the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, indicated the 2024 living wage for the region to be \$21.65 per hour. The Ontario Living Wage Network (www.ontariolivingwage.ca) calculates the living wage rates each fall with data from a variety of sources. It cites poverty as the root of food insecurity and suggests increasing minimum wage and social assistance rates, improving employment standards, and providing a basic income as strategies (Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Unit, 2024).• In his “Needs and Resilience of Children and Families in Eastern Ontario” report, Fulton used Statistics Canada data to outline the potential for adverse outcomes for families in the region.

He noted when looking at household income under \$40,000 per year, which is the bottom income group for households, Smiths Falls and Perth had the most affected households in Lanark County. He looked at the percentage of households falling below the market basket measure threshold, which is the income necessary to pay for basic human needs, and found children under six living in poverty in lone-parent homes were at risk of substantial harm. Locally, Smiths Falls at 29.3% and Carleton Place at 26.3% carried this risk. Families falling below the market basket measure “must consider options, such as using a food bank, postponing medical care, losing their housing” (p. 24).

- Fulton’s report also addressed households with income over \$200,000 compared to under \$40,000: “There is a balance in the fraction of households living on less than \$40,000 compared to those living on \$200,000 or more....A more equitable distribution of wealth is an indicator of resilience.” Rural households in the Ottawa area have fewer households with more than \$200,000 income. He noted the balance of poor and wealthier neighbours in high-risk municipalities: Smiths Falls with 28% under \$40,000 and 2% over \$200,000; Perth with 27% under \$40,000 and 4% over \$200,000. “There is much more poverty in these disadvantaged jurisdictions, but some wealthier neighbours, which helps the local economy” (p. 32-33).
- Fulton said a significant decline in mature adults ages 45 to 54 is projected until 2030 unless targeted immigration fills the gap. “This is a critical age group because it is the source of expertise and management for the private sector, health care, education, and social services. The crises in the number of nursing jobs unfilled will not be repaired by simply graduating more nurses, which is good news 20 years down the road. It takes years of work experience to fill this gap.” He said the resulting harm is the degradation of health care, education and social services resulting from lack of skilled workers from this age cohort, which can result in longer wait lists, higher caseloads and fewer childcare spaces despite funding for expansion. “In general, small towns, and rural places carry the burden of this risk factor” (p. 18).
- At the Council/Police Services Board (PSB)/Community Policing Advisory Committee (CPAC) Focus Session, councillors indicated municipal pressure to support businesses is growing and that people are starting to stay in communities by necessity (based on affordability) rather than desire, which is “not preferable because of shame, self-esteem, worth, successful, defeated or depressed – measuring stick is previous generation of people who had a relatively easy time of moving into their own homes.” They also cited income disparity, the rising costs for housing, increased food bank usage and barriers for help with mental health and addiction issues due to transportation as ongoing issues. Rural communities don’t always have infrastructure in place for those experiencing challenges (e.g., no vehicle).
- Program affordability for families was cited as a concern at the Feb. 29, 2024 CSWB Advisory Committee meeting.
- Community consultations indicated there is difficulty in identifying students and families in need and that hidden poverty is an issue, which creates challenges with connecting families to support. There can be resistance to working with supports due to family, cultural, generational, historical or anonymity concerns. Getting information out to those in desperate poverty can also be a challenge (Partner Day).
- Statistics from the 2023 “Vital Signs” report note the median employment income for men was \$69,500, while it was \$59,200 for women – pointing to ongoing pay equity concerns (p. 6).
- Fulton’s report addressed the impact of hidden unemployment, which he described as an important social indicator that is difficult to count. It affects those between 15 and 64 and can include those who are underemployed or have stopped looking for work, which can lead to risks such as mental illness, substance use, family conflict, poverty, housing instability and poor

socialization of children and youth. Smiths Falls was found to have a high percentage of hidden unemployment at 23%, affecting 1,200 people (p. 20).

- Fulton highlighted the importance of workers receiving training beyond high school to be employed in the new economy, including competency with computers, automated equipment, literacy and numeracy. “Cities and towns that have a concentration of workers with no education beyond high school will be at a disadvantage in future jobs. Many of them are part of the hidden unemployed.” In Lanark County, for the population between ages 25 and 64, between 27 and 53% have no post-secondary education. The unemployment rate for Lanark County was 8.5%, with the highest being in Perth at 12.9%, followed by Tay Valley and Smiths Falls.
- Research for Lanark County’s “Children’s Services 5-Year Service Plan” for 2024-2029 found there is a pressing need for more affordable childcare spaces. One issue is extensive and inconsistent wait lists, making it difficult to obtain an accurate count of need. A report to Lanark County Council in November 2024 notes 82 additional Registered Early Childhood Educators are needed by 2027, more work is needed regarding inclusivity of children with special needs, there is a lack of child care options for part-time and non-traditional hours (overnight and weekends), insufficient transportation hinders access to child care and programs, and affordable child care is not accessible to everyone who needs it.

Goal	Measures	Strategies
1. Reduce levels of poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer households receiving less than \$40,000 annually • Reduced poverty gap 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased income will help to address other risk areas, including housing, food security, health/mental health. • Advocate for increased income through Basic Income and/or increased Ontario Works and Ontario Disabilities Support Program rates. • Collaborate to increase housing affordability in communities. • Continue and enhance existing community supports that address immediate access, e.g., Snowsuit Drive, food drives, etc.
2. Nurture local employment opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor median employment income between men and women • Monitor living wage in Lanark County • Monitor unemployment rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage local employers to pay workers a living wage. • Share information related to education about employment programs. • Monitor and address pay equity issues. • Continue working to increase local and varied employment opportunities.

<p>3. Increase availability and accessibility of affordable child care and supports</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced child care wait lists • Increased alternate programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for any necessary adjustments to Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care program and support efforts to expand locally. • Collaborate with community partners to ensure effective communication of available programs for families and children (e.g., extra curriculums, students at risk, after-school options, Champions for Kids Foundation, Critical Hour Programming, youth centres). • Facilitate equitable access to programs and activities, not dependent on income.
<p>4. Support efforts to increase availability of good, reliable, affordable access to digital resources critical to quality of life</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased connectivity stats (EORN) • Surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor activities of Eastern Ontario Rural Network to increase cell and broadband connectivity in Lanark County. • Advocate for improved connectivity if needed.

<p>PILLAR: Housing and Homelessness</p>
<p>Assets</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a report to Lanark County Council on the “State of Homelessness” in October 2024, Lanark County Social Services highlighted current programs: By-Name list for people actively experiencing homelessness and accessing coordinated services facilitated by the committee; funding for housing/homelessness staff at Lanark County Mental Health and Cornerstone Landing; approximately 75 beds in adult supportive housing facilities with priority to people on the by-name list; 13 beds at the Bridge House in Smiths Falls (supported transitional housing with access only from the by-name list); Housing Allowance Program; housing allowance rent subsidy spaces allocated to by-name list; private landlords and service providers declaring services and housing units to the by-name list. • In the 2023 Housing and Homelessness Report from Lanark County Social Services, highlights included the opening of 188 Chambers Street in Smiths Falls with five rent-geared-to-income (RGI) units and construction started on 44 Chambers Street in Smiths Falls (28 RGI units and six affordable housing units). Other supports included RGI housing, a homeownership downpayment for first-time home purchase, funds through the Renovate Lanark program, rent assistance with Portable Housing Benefit spaces and the OPHI Housing Allowance. In 2023 there were 116 new referrals to the by-name list and 62 were housed, and 1,356 households were assisted through the Housing Assistance Program to prevent eviction or attain housing. The county offers emergency backpacks, gift cards and after-hours homeless assistance.

- In the CSWB Community Survey, the vast majority of respondents owned homes (89%) and felt secure in their housing (91%). Top factors affecting housing included difficulty or unable to pay rent or mortgage (12.06%), difficulty or unable to pay utilities (8.89%), unable to find affordable housing (5.4%) and living too far from services (6.67%). Several comments expressed concerns about being able to keep up with maintenance, repair/upgrade costs, and affordability upon retirement.
- In February 2025, the Town of Carleton Place and Municipality of Mississippi Mills announced they will each be receiving funding from the Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation’s (CMHC) Housing Accelerator Fund. Carleton Place is receiving \$5.6 million to accelerate the construction of 168 homes over the next three years, which will help spur the construction of 934 homes over the next decade. Mississippi Mills will be receiving \$3.3 million, which will help it take quicker action on growth-related projects with the goal of creating missing middle and affordable housing for families in the community. Four payments will be released over three years from the fund.

Risks/Issues

- In the CSWB Agency Survey, a need for supportive, subsidized housing (for specific populations) and lengthy wait times for housing were cited as issues.
- The 2023 Lanark County Housing and Homeless Report reported 465 active applications on the waiting list for rent-g geared to-income housing at the end of 2023.
- In the “State of Homelessness” report to Lanark County Council in October 2024, the number of known actively homeless persons had increased from 44 in September 2023 to 71 in August 2024. The number of chronically homeless rose sharply since July 2023. In August 2024, 70% of individuals on the by-name list were adults between ages 26 and 64, with 15% between 16 and 25. Smiths Falls, Carleton Place and Perth have the highest rates of homelessness. Family or relationship breakdown was cited as the top reason for homelessness, followed by eviction, “other” and mental health and addiction. Sleeping arrangements included motels, couch surfing, unsheltered, vehicle, trailer/cabin and other.
- In his report, Robert Fulton noted renters with unsuitable shelter arrangements, e.g., not affordable (rent greater than 30% of before-tax income), not adequate (e.g., not structurally sound) and with no alternative units available locally face the significant stress of being homeless. “If they have children, this is a significant risk factor driving the need for admission to Children’s Aid Society care” (p. 19). He also noted the Census found 7% of all housing units in Ontario were either completely unoccupied or occupied on Census Day by someone who has another primary residence elsewhere. “Moreover, the vacancies are spread throughout the province, and not within the largest cities where the demand is located” (p. 31). Statistics Canada shows the vacancy rate in Lanark County was 10%, with the highest rates in Tay Valley (35%) Lanark Highlands (27%) and Drummond/North Elmsley (11%).
- Councillors in the Council/PSB/CPAC Focus Session indicated some families would like to stay in the community but cannot because there is nothing affordable and/or no available rentals.

Goal	Measures	Strategies
1. Eradicate homelessness in Lanark County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced number of homeless • Monitor and address unoccupied unit rate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with partners to continue/encourage incorporating Housing First model strategies.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor short-term rental rates • Increased number of supportive housing units/beds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore creation of programs to encourage reduction of unoccupied units (e.g. vacant property tax, use of short-term rentals). • Determine need for specific supportive housing for vulnerable populations. • Ensure safe housing options for youth over 16.
2. Increased affordable housing options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Lanark County Housing and Homelessness report • Reduction in wait times for housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor Lanark County Housing and Homelessness Plan and collaborate to support where relevant. • Advocate to give municipalities more power to direct affordable housing needs with developers. • Encourage modest homes and modest units that are affordable, secondary units and more density in urban areas.

PILLAR: Food Insecurity and Food Access
Assets
<p>Food Insecurity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The South East Health Unit, formerly the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, releases its nutritious food basket costing each year and the living wage calculation. <p>Food Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Table Community Food Centre offers nourishing food, mental health improvements, a place to gather without judgment, many programs, and is expanding to Smiths Falls. Other local food hubs include the Lanark County Food Bank-The Hunger Stop in Carleton Place, The Lanark Highlands Food Pantry, Smiths Falls Community Food Bank and the Falls Food Hub. • A range of food access options are available county wide, including community gardens. FoodCoreLGL (www.foodcorelgl.ca) provides a listing of meal programs and an inventory of food providers, programs and activities in Lanark, Leeds and Grenville. Food drives, such as Build a Mountain of Food, are held throughout the county.
Risks/Issues
<p>Food Insecurity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In its “Health Unit focusing on root causes of food insecurity during November” media release on Nov. 18, 2024, the former Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit outlined food insecurity as an income issue, stating the average monthly costs of a nutritious food basket in the region for a family of four on Ontario Works (a male and female adult between ages 31 and 50, a female aged 4 to 8 years and a male aged 14 to 18) was \$1,196 in 2024. With a household monthly income of \$2,916, minus \$1,964 for rent, they would have \$952 for everything else (utilities, insurance, clothes, toiletries, etc.) before accounting for the cost of food. The health unit indicates, from 2021 to 2023, one in seven households (15.5%) in Leeds, Grenville and Lanark reported experiencing food insecurity, which includes worrying about running out of food to compromising on quality or quantity and eating less or missing meals.

Food Access

- Participants in Partner Day indicated food security resources lack common or siloed evaluation strategies, often simply counting number of meals served or number of people using food banks.
- The Table Community Food Centre reported in November 2024 it was seeing a 15% increase in use of the Good Food Bank over last year and that they used 76% of the year’s budget for food purchases in the first half of their fiscal year to March 31 (The Table Community Food Centre).

Goal	Measures	Strategies
1. Address root causes of food insecurity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Unit annual food insecurity report • Reduced number of individuals relying on food banks 	<p>Follow the South East Health Unit, formerly the LGLDHU lead on addressing root causes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Advocate for social assistance rates and minimum wage that provides for basic costs of living. ➤ Support and expand tax filing initiatives targeted at low-income households to increase access to government subsidies. ➤ Ensure access to safe, affordable housing, child care and transportation. ➤ Implement basic minimum employment standards to reduce precarious employment and encourage businesses and agencies to become Living Wage employers.

PILLAR: Transportation

Assets

- Lanark Transportation Association is subsidized through federal gas tax funding and offers transportation to families, seniors, children, youth and others in Lanark County and Smiths Falls for medical appointments, day programs, counselling, social services, food programs and more. It can also help people return home from hospital and has wheelchair-accessible service. It also operates the Ride the LT service, which offers scheduled low-cost routes in Lanark Highlands, Carleton Place, Mississippi Mills and Perth.
- Lanark County will be completing a transportation feasibility study to explore options.

Risks/Issues

- Issues identified by participants at Partner Day included a lack of transportation creating difficulties in terms of accessing care, as well as a gap in getting patients home or back to a nursing home after they have been taken by ambulance to emergency rooms.
- Partner Day participants expressed a need for more information about what transportation resources are available.

- Youth-serving agencies at Partner Day noted a lack of transportation options to get youth to and from some youth centres. They noted funding and sustainability would support increased numbers of youth. Agencies that support seniors added this would help to keep seniors in their own homes as long as possible, as many are paying out of pocket to access senior programs.

Goal	Measures	Strategies
1. Increase transportation options for access to health care, employment, school and other activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of available transportation options • Community survey to monitor gaps and improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor transportation feasibility study results for opportunities. • Develop and communicate comprehensive list of transportation options available, including active transportation.

PILLAR: Climate Change and Environment
Assets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are active climate action committees at the local municipal and county levels, as well as in Smiths Falls. These communities have created climate action plans and have set targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. • Lanark County’s Climate Environmental Sub-Department has undertaken a range of initiatives, including climate action (climate action plan and a Climate Action Working Group), green energy activities, tree planting, invasive species monitoring and control, increasing pollinator habitat and a comprehensive vegetation management plan that includes roadside restoration and weed control. In December 2024, Lanark County Council approved a motion to move forward with a Natural Heritage Systems workplan and working group, which aims to maintain, restore and enhance ecologically sustainable and resilient landscapes on a regional basis. This would address biodiversity loss, land use change and uncertainties of climate change. • Lanark County will be working on a Climate Adaptation Plan, which ties in with municipal emergency planning. The county is having conversations with all local Community Emergency Management Coordinators. • Climate Network Lanark is a group of citizens that has come together to act on climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and to prepare for impacts of climate change by advocating for measures to reduce risk. • Indigenous teachings offer information about customs and practices for land stewardship. • Lanark County is home to a range of protected areas, including provincial parks, conservation areas, Crown land and municipal greenspace.
Risks/Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants at Partner Day noted climate change negatively affects vulnerable populations to a greater extent, particularly people exposed to the elements. • The most comments received in the CSWB Community Survey were, by far, about climate change. Regarding levels of concern about climate change, 66% said they are extremely or very concerned and 23% said it has impacted their mental health a great deal or a lot. Respondents expressed concerns about natural disasters/extreme weather, loss of electricity, shelter, risks around electric vehicles and remote rural driving, water and air quality, food security, societal instability, degrading biodiversity and habitat, plastic waste, government

inaction on the issue and the carbon tax. Another theme was a strong desire for more information and how citizens could help.

Goal	Measures	Strategies
1. Undertake comprehensive action on climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greenhouse gas emission reductions • Monitor environmental protections • Monitor greenspace and encroachment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Lanark County, local municipalities and community groups to encourage climate action through various existing plans. • Encourage completion of climate change emergency plans for municipalities and communication of plans to the public. • Monitor changes to environmental protections at other levels of government and determine actions/advocacy that may be needed. • Have new housing meet climate targets. • Advocate for strengthened electrical grid and better infrastructure for electric cars. • Assess recycling and compost programs for possible improvements. • Encourage reuse/repair centres.
2. Increase community involvement in climate action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community survey • Increased active transportation opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase public education about climate change and what individuals, families and businesses can do to help. • Offer opportunities and information about emergency response training. • Advocate for or offer increased incentives to participate in climate actions, e.g., heat pumps, home upgrades/retrofits, air conditioning.
3. Create understanding of our relationship with the Earth through Indigenous teachings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of community strategy and actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with local Indigenous communities to create greater understanding of teachings (e.g., Dish With One Spoon, natural law) and how they can be applied to climate change and

		<p>sustainability in the context of land stewardship.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek funding to work with Indigenous communities to develop a community strategy and to share knowledge.
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PILLAR: Belonging and Civic Engagement

Assets

- In the Council/PSB/CPAC Focus Session, Lanark Highlands indicated it has a strategy to promote “belonging” in the community that could be shared and scaled up. Other communities have active online engagement activities.
- More electronic participation has allowed for additional access to some activities (e.g., council meetings).
- The Local Immigration Partnership and Lanark and Renfrew Shared Settlement and Recruitment Coordinator offer networking and engagement services for new Canadians.
- The Successful Aging Advisory Committee is working to establish the “Volunteer Connector” database to support volunteers and agencies seeking volunteers.
- In the CSWB Community Survey, 90% of respondents said they vote in elections and 84% say they are actively or somewhat engaged in community activities. As well, 73.58% of respondents said they are actively or somewhat involved in community activities (volunteering, attending events and public meetings, participating in clubs).
- In the CSWB Agency Survey, 79% of respondents said they have cultural considerations in place for clients.
- Smiths Falls has established a Diversity for All Committee.
- In 2024, Lanark County established a Government Relations Committee and an Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) Committee. Representatives on the IDEA Committee include two county councillors, five members from community-based organizations, four members at large who represent diverse communities and different backgrounds and experiences, and county staff support.

Risks/Issues

- Partner Day participants expressed that volunteerism is shrinking, especially post-pandemic.
- In the CSWB Agency Survey, participants highlighted limited space for programs, fewer volunteers and limited cell and Internet access as issues.
- In a report on Council Strategic Priorities 2022-2026 at the Aug. 14, 2024 Lanark County Corporate Services Committee meeting, a gap in advocacy and diluted efforts were noted, citing a need for collective advocacy for those without a voice and prompting a motion to develop a government relations strategy. The Government Relations Committee can help to be a conduit for this (Lanark County Corporate Services Committee, Aug. 14, 2024).
- Participants in Partner Day expressed a need for stronger strategies to welcome new Canadians to Lanark County and Smiths Falls.
- Most respondents in the CSWB Community Survey were not from marginalized groups and ranked their sense of belonging as 8/10. Comments from those who feel they don’t belong were that it is hard to connect when not from here/born here; more community events are needed; immigrants feel victimized by landlords and authorities; and there is negativity towards “city folk” moving here.

- Concern about anti-science and anti-establishment being on the rise, as well as a lack of respect for leaders, numbers and data, was expressed at the Council/PSB/CPAC Focus Session. A need to consider intersecting issues for people, such as job loss, poverty, victimization of violence and the impact of children, was also expressed. This means thinking of people in a larger context and how they intersect because people living with shame and fear of judgment may make them reluctant to get services.
- In the CSWB Agency Survey it was noted online resource use increased with the pandemic, but technology capacity is an issue for some clients. It is important to meet clients where they are able to meet – whether that is a physical location or one supported by technology.
- Councillors at the Council/PSB/CPAC Focus Session noted the ability to participate is sometimes affected by large geographic areas and different services areas in the county. In Lanark Highlands, for example, distance for travel can be an issue. Rural connectivity for virtual activities can be difficult.

Goal	Measures	Strategies
<p>1. More people are aware of and connected to local services and activities to reduce isolation and increase social inclusion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of local services (health, mental health, transportation, leisure activities, etc.) by establishing or connecting to resource lists and promoting them. • Work with community agencies to enhance engagement of youth in recreational/social activities. • Encourage municipalities to support engagement activities through community grants (incentivize groups that are collaborating and align with plan priorities). • Use municipal strategic plans to look at how communities can be bridged – look for weaknesses and opportunities. • Encourage greater participation and belonging in municipal activities and inspire citizens to become leaders; work to increase trust in research, data and leadership in order to foster greater civic engagement. • Work with libraries to encourage technical support for activities. • Increase representation of Indigenous populations in services.

<p>2. Increased volunteerism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and agency survey • Statistics from Volunteer Connector database 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish Volunteer Connector database for non-profits and citizens to access and provide ongoing communication to promote it.
<p>3. Increased connection between municipalities and CSWB Plan objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual reports • Council survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include CSWB Plan in council orientations. • Explore ways to increase links to CSWB Plans (e.g., when making recommendations, increased communications to councils, quarterly updates to councils, standing item on agendas). • Work with county government relations committee on advocacy planning strategies and share with community partners; continue to engage with the Rural Ontario Municipal Association and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

HEALTH THEME

OUTCOMES:

- ↳ Lanark County and Smiths Falls is a community of collaboration, where service providers work together for the benefit of residents in order to prevent harm.
- ↳ Lanark County and Smiths Falls is a community offering a robust range of health and social services that are accessible in various formats within a period of time that is reasonable to prevent emergency or crisis situations.

PILLAR: Physical Health (including access to care – primary, long-term care, end-of-life care)
Assets
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lanark County is served by four hospital sites (Perth & Smiths Falls District Hospital, Carleton Place and District Memorial Hospital and Almonte General Hospital). Community-based primary care resources include ConnectWell Community Health and Rideau Community Health Services, along with Tay River Health Centre and local family health teams. As well, residents can access virtual care services, including Telemedicine and Health Connect Ontario Tool (Health811) that allows Ontarians to call or chat online with a registered nurse to find what they need.• The Lanark County Paramedic Services (LCPS) and its Community Paramedicine Program offers new models of care (treat and release/discharge), mobile wellness and vaccine clinics, education, emergency room diversions and referrals to community resources. These diversions helped to see a drop in call volume from 25,008 in 2022 to 22,541 in 2023. In 2023, 267 patients were enrolled in the Community Paramedics Long-Term Care program, up from 221 in 2022. With expansion funding, 338 new patients were enrolled in 2023, up from 147 in 2022. Since 2019 (to 2023), 1,509 clients have been served, with 4,672 patient interactions completed in 2023, including in-home and virtual visits, up from 3,553 in 2022 (Lanark County Corporate Services Committee, 2024).• The South East Health Unit, formerly the Leeds Grenville Lanark District Health Unit, offers chronic disease prevention work, infectious disease prevention, vaccine and food- and water-safety work, Healthy Babies Healthy Children and surveillance and data collection. It has nurses working with municipalities to add a health perspective to municipal plans, policies, etc. Nurses are also assigned to schools and support the four pillars of comprehensive school health: social and physical environment, teaching and learning, healthy school policy, and partnerships and services.• Other programs and initiatives include, but are not limited to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">➢ Perth Enrichment Program: Seniors Therapeutic Centre – ongoing education and access to health, Caregiver ID program, caregiver respite, and more.➢ Services from North Lanark Home Hospice and The Hospice Hub – supporting north and south ends of the county respectively.➢ Lanark Leeds and Grenville Ontario Health Team includes a partnership of more than 50 health, community and social service agencies across the region striving to deliver more coordinated, seamless care for residents. The overall vision of Ontario Health Teams (OHT) is to better connect different parts of the health care system by bringing together, as one team, patients, families, communities, providers and system leaders to deliver more coordinated care for people attributed to the Lanark, Leeds and Grenville areas. OHTs are not geographically based, yet residents are linked to an OHT using the physician

networks. Patients, residents and clients retain full choice in who they see, e.g., outside of their OHT (Lanark, Leeds & Grenville Ontario Health Team, 2024).

- The Caregiver Strategy through United Way is expected to be released in 2025.

Risks/Issues

- The Lanark County Paramedic Services reported the top three reasons for 911 calls in 2023 in Lanark County and Smiths Falls were breathing problems, unknown emergencies and falls, with people aged 51 and older making up about 76% of calls for service. “Unknown emergencies” are expected to be better defined after the paramedic service moves to a new dispatch service in 2025, which may help to clarify highest crisis needs. (Lanark County Corporate Services Committee, 2024). At Partner Day, LCPS suggested a need for alternate destinations for those who don’t require the emergency room (e.g., mental health, hospice, substance use support).
- Feedback from the Community and Agency Surveys referred to long wait times for specific or specialized services in various sectors. Additionally, wait lists for primary care continue to be an issue across the province. In the Partner Day consultations, waiting longer to access family physicians is cited as a reason patients wait too long for care and then have to come to emergency. While many Community Survey respondents indicated they did not currently need access to home care, long-term care or end-of-life care, many commented this is a concern for the future. Additionally, 29% of respondents said that difficulty accessing care has been a factor in their physical health. Respondents in the Agency Survey indicated a lack of hospice and palliative beds is a concern, particularly as demand for services has increased in the last five years and pressure on caregivers grows.
- Consistently, in surveys, consultations and other feedback, community partners have expressed the need for a resource list of services that can be shared both with the public and amongst service providers in order to create an awareness of what services, supports and programs are available in the community in order to improve system navigation and efficiencies.

Goal	Measures	Strategies
1. Increased diversion from emergency medical responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced calls to paramedics • Increased diversion to non-emergency alternatives • Increased number of residents attached to primary care • Community paramedicine stats, number of new clinics, number of hospice beds, number of palliative beds, number of respite beds, number of alternate locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with community partners regarding possible increased resources for seniors to reduce 911 calls to paramedics. • Consider alternative care models (paramedicine, nurse practitioners, telemedicine, group medical appointments, other) to increase diversion from emergency. • Work with OHT regarding health care accessibility and pathways. • Offer a diverse range of service provision methods to address needs, including accessibility (online, in-person, accessible, transportation availability).

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for consistent, stable, increased funding, staffing and training in order to provide sufficient resources. • Increased education about alternative health-care options/resources available. • Work with partners to increase supports for caregivers. • Continue/enhance education about health at a young age, including mental health and healthy relationships.
2. Have wide-ranging information sharing about available services for the public and for sector workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of resource list and communication strategy about sharing • Survey of public and agencies to determine improved system navigation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a communication strategy to provide education about what is available to the public and to sector workers. • Explore ways to centralize referral platforms and create awareness of available programs. • Use libraries to help with technical support for system navigation. • Strengthen work between municipalities (and partners) and public health and build into mandates to increase allyship over common goals.
3. Improved communication about wait times and expectations for a range of services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a communication strategy • Survey of public to assess improved wait times 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with OHT and other partners to monitor wait lists for a range of services (e.g., primary care; mental health and addictions services; home care, long-term care and end-of-life care) and flag trouble areas for follow-up. • Offer a range of expected service times and articulate limitations through improved communication.

PILLAR: Mental Health and Substance Use
Assets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition to mental health services provided by Lanark County Mental Health (LCMH), Open Doors for Lanark Children and Youth, and Lanark, Leeds and Grenville Addictions and Mental

Health (LLGAMH), mental health services are integrated into the programs of many other community partners and private service providers.

- LCMH offers a nurse practitioner, specialized staff and a harm reduction case worker. It works in partnership with Lanark County OPP and Smiths Falls Police Service to offer the Mobile Crisis Response Team, which pairs LCMH crisis workers with police for mental health calls. The team responded to 967 calls in 2024, up from 838 the previous year. They work to divert visits from hospital, when possible, with 65% of MCRT encounters resolved on scene and 60% diverted to community services. Lanark OPP reports a 69% increase in mental health calls to police between 2019 and 2023 (Lanark County Ontario Provincial Police, 2024).
- The Upper Canada District School Board (UCDSB) and Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario (CDSBEO) have a range of protocols for students related to accessing care, system navigation and healthy relationship education.
- In his report “Needs and Resilience of Children and Families in Eastern Ontario” prepared for Every Kid In Our Community, Robert Fulton noted the self-described mental health well-being for the former Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit was significantly higher than the provincial average and has been so for three years continually” (p. 35).
- In 2024, 13 beds opened for transitional, supported housing at The Bridge House in Smiths Falls, which can only be accessed through Lanark County’s By-Name List for homelessness. The program is operated by Lanark County Mental Health and efforts have been underway to increase the number of beds. The number of beds increased to 22 in early 2025.
- The South East Health Unit, formerly the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, does robust substance use and harm reduction work. In addition, Planet Youth Lanark County (in partnership with other community agencies) has a goal of upstream prevention that ties in to youth substance use.
- The Rural Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) peer support network is active in the county. This is a grassroots group offering support, advice and advocacy (Partner Day, 2023).
- In the Agency Survey, various system navigation resources were listed as being used by agencies, including internal databases, 211, Big White Wall, Togetherall, Counselling Connect, Bounce Back Ontario and the Lanark County Situation Table. Sixty-one per cent of respondents said they use 211 but that it is not always accurate or current; several were not familiar with it.
- The Lanark County Situation Table brings together multi-sectoral community partners that can refer individuals or families in a privacy-protective format when they reach a threshold of acutely elevated risk of harm to themselves or others. Relevant agencies can then provide wraparound support in order to reduce the level of risk and get them connected to services. Since it was established in late 2015, mental health and substance use have consistently been top risk factors identified for individuals and families referred to the table.
- In early 2025, the provincial government announced funding for new Homeless and Addiction Recovery Treatment (HART) Hubs in Ontario, including one to be operated by Lanark, Leeds and Grenville Addictions and Mental Health. This will address gaps for individuals with complex needs through a centralized, coordinated approach to care under one roof. Proposed services include primary care; mental health and addictions (case management, withdrawal management beds, medical detoxification, structured relapse prevention); peer support; mental health and addictions supportive housing, transitional living and overnight shelters; and vocational and employment support and guidance (Ontario, 2025).

Risks/Issues

- The need for a regional detox/community withdrawal program has been expressed by community partners as they submitted proposals for funding to establish this in Lanark County and Smiths Falls. In a proposal to Ontario East Health by the Perth & Smiths Falls District Hospital in 2023 for Mobile Community Withdrawal Management, the report cited rising withdrawal-related presentation to emergency (an 11% increase between 2017 and 2019) marking the second highest increase across the province, and the South East Local Health Integration Network was the third highest in the province in visits for substance use in 2020. “Alcohol/substance use” consistently rank in the top three reason for police calls, the report indicated, with a 149% increase between 2015 and 2021. As well, the county experienced a 61% increase in reported overdoses between 2019 and 2021, and a 76% increase in fatal overdoses between 2019 (17) and 2020 (30). The report stated up to 200 candidates per month had been turned away from regional detox beds in Kingston since March 2020, with limited alternatives in the community, and 80% of individuals are withdrawing from alcohol (Cohen, 2023).
- In the Community Survey, 28.75% of respondents said their mental health was fair, poor or very poor. Respondents ranked finances (39.42%), family (30.43%), physical health (31.88%), work (27.25%) and being a caregiver to elderly parents, a spouse or other vulnerable person (21.16%) as top stressors.
- In the Agency Survey, concerns about the ability to support clients experiencing hoarding behaviours was expressed. While Lanark County Mental Health offers clinical treatment, finding resources to help with clean-up is sometimes challenging for community agencies.
- Fulton indicates the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit results for “perceived mental health: very good or excellent” for the 12 to 19 years age group are trending lower and are well below the provincial average in 2019/2020, which could indicate poor mental health locally (p. 36).
- In the Community Survey, 31% said they rarely drink, 20% said they do not drink, 18% said they consume 2 to 5 drinks per week; 88% said they rarely or never use recreational drugs and 7% indicated they are concerned about their substance use, but the overwhelming majority said they do not have a problem or do not need support. Twenty-two respondents commented on a lack of availability of local supports (including rapid/short-term counselling, rehab, detox and residential treatment), as well as long wait lists and costs. There were 24 comments about services available elsewhere, including safe injection sites, residential treatment, detox, accessibility to services, transitional housing with harm reduction support and ketamine therapy.
- At the Partner Day, it was noted FASD requires diagnosis for support – a confirmation of drinking while pregnant. This creates a stigma around disclosure, which can be multi-generational. Prevention awareness, stopping shame and education were cited as needs.
- Fulton noted “heavy drinking is a powerful risk factor and driver of Children’s Aid Society admissions to care. Heavy drinking causes premature death, disease, mental illness, family conflict, marital breakdown, traffic fatalities, intra-uterine brain damage, suicide, and violence.” He noted the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit has a rate of heavy drinking that is close to the provincial average (p. 26).
- As of December 2024, the number of confirmed and probable deaths from overdoses/drug poisonings for the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit in 2024 was 11 and suspected deaths were 33. Over the last seven years, these numbers have fluctuated and in

2023 they rose to 18 confirmed and probable deaths and 33 suspected deaths (Drug-Related Overdose & Death Summary, 2024).

- In an advisory member interview, the Smiths Falls Police Service expressed a need to further divert calls for service related to issues such as homelessness, assisting with food, transportation, etc. This could be through a front-line assistance program with nurses or social workers in the community, or increased community hub access.
- In applications for provincial funding, Lanark County Mental Health has indicated it faces challenges in retaining high-quality crisis workers for the Mobile Crisis Response Team over the longer term without increased and sustained base funding. This sometimes results in staff vacancies that reduce hours available. Lack of capacity affects the number of calls the team can respond to in person.

Goal	Measures	Strategies
1. Increased resources for complex mental health or addictions, including prevention and management of addiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in number of supported housing beds • Decrease in fatalities related to substance use • Increased number of detox and treatment beds • More space in treatment programs for addictions and mental health • Planet Youth data on substance use in young people • Health unit stats on substance use; lower rates of heavy drinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support efforts to bring withdrawal management program to Lanark County. • Explore need for safe usage sites. • Increase education and social programming for young people to reduce reliance on substances. • Increased awareness of opioid management and harm reduction strategies. • Increased prevention awareness and reduced stigma for FASD diagnoses. • Explore additional funding and resources for hoarding situations.
2. Improved reported mental health in children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistics Canada measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with community partners to assess pressures on children and youth and strategize additional supports needed.

VIOLENCE AGAINST PERSONS THEME

OUTCOMES:

- ↳ Lanark County and Smiths Falls is a community of collaboration, where service providers work together for the benefit of residents in order to prevent harm.

PILLAR: Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence (SADV), Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

Assets

- The Lanark County SADV Hospital Program provides medical care and diversion from emergency departments. It uses a trauma-informed approach and ensures privacy, counselling and crisis support, follow up and safety planning for all demographics. Cell phone access to SADV nurses is provided for clients. The program covers all four local hospitals, with Smiths Falls being the designated treatment hospital.
- Lanark County Interval House and Community Supports (LCIHCS) offers emergency and on-going programs to women and children living in or escaping from domestic violence. Programs include the emergency shelter program for women and their children; individual or group counselling services for women, children and youth; Family Court support; a perseverance pantry (food and hygiene supplies for women and children needing support); second stage housing (safe and secure housing for up to one year); sexual assault support program; Suit Yourself (complimentary work and professional attire to support women facing court appearances or job interviews); and the Victim Advocate Program, as well as a 24/7 crisis line for women.
- Various programs are able to provide taxi chits and gas and grocery cards for SADV clients.
- Many organizations in Lanark County and Smiths Falls offer trauma-informed spaces and care along with crisis support and system navigation. Trauma-informed care training opportunities have been routinely offered to police and community partners for several years through grant funding.
- Lanark County and community partners have worked to implement several recommendations from the Culleton, Kuzych and Warmerdam Inquest, including declaring IPV an epidemic, ensuring IPV is a pillar in its CSWB plan, working on restorative justice initiatives in IPV and a range of prevention and education efforts. This is possible due to good relationships between partners and municipal councils.
- Feedback from victims continues to inform programs and services.
- The Lanark County Victim Advocate Program is housed with LCIHCS and works in partnership with Lanark County OPP, Victim Services, Victim/Witness Assistance Program, the Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Hospital Program, Smiths Falls Police Service and other partners. Victim advocates have trauma-informed care training and assist with system navigation, court supports, crisis-related counselling, safety planning and referrals to other services in support of victims of SADV, IPV or GBV.
- The Smiths Falls Police Service is committed to reviewing domestic violence incidents, providing trauma-informed training and offering support to victims of violence. The OPP have an East Region Intimate Partner Violence Action Plan, and Detachment Abuse Issues Investigators have been created for each detachment. There is now a Detective Constable responsible for abuse issues. This covers IPV, child abuse, elder abuse and sexual assault, and it includes IPV case

review, enhancing community partnerships, mentoring and having subject matter expertise available.

- The SADV Advisory Committee for Lanark County and Smiths Falls brings together service providers from across the county for networking, education, training, public awareness and advocacy. The coordinator liaises with a provincial network of coordinating committees.
- LCIHCS's See It Name It Change It campaign promotes ending violence and has been adopted by Interval House in Ottawa as well as in Mexico, meaning it will be available in English, French and Spanish. LCIHCS has been actively involved in international work with the federal Department of Justice, taking part in delegations with Costa Rica, Mexico and Kazakhstan to share best practices in its work to end violence against women.

Risks/Issues

- Participants at Partner Day stressed ensuring continued feedback from victims and increased participation in programs, services and groups is a need. They also noted victims should have access to basic needs such as food, housing and transportation in order to escape violence.
- In a Focus Group with SADV Agency workers, needs cited included follow-up counselling support, addressing transportation challenges for medical appointments and having more SADV nurses for better coverage in the large catchment area. They indicated there are clients with concurrent mental health issues, and that a lack of primary health care providers affects treatment. It is difficult for women leaving abuse to be able to afford housing, and additional pressures make mental health worse. There is a need more housing and better income. There is some housing funding available, but wait lists are long. Workers note a need for more support for men, whether as an aggressor or victim of violence. This was echoed in the Agency Survey.
- In funding applications in 2024, Lanark County OPP reported that from January 2020 to September 2024 the victim advocates responded to 557 victims of SADV and human trafficking. The number of clients has increased annually, with an 80% increase in 2023 over 2022. From January to September 2024, Lanark County OPP cleared 174 IPV incidents by charge, compared to 198 in all of 2023 and 133 in 2022. Smiths Falls Police Service (SFPS) also showed a steady rise in IPV cases, from 135 in 2020 to 212 in 2023, and one femicide in 2022. From January to Oct. 4, 2024 they had 191 cases. SFPS indicates the number of sexual assaults is increasing and recidivism is also an issue.
- In the Community Survey, 27.95% of respondents indicated they had been a victim of a listed crime (13.66% sexual assault, 10.25% domestic violence, 8.07% IPV, 7.14% child abuse, 4.35% hate-motivated crime, 4.66% gender-based violence, 0.31% gang violence, 1.24% elder abuse). Of this, 26% involved verbal or emotional abuse, 15% sexual violence, 14% physical violence. 12% accessed police and 21% did not access services (small percentages for other services). Several respondents said the crimes were quite dated.
- Feedback from multiple consultations confirmed improved funding and resources for organizations working in these sectors is needed in order to create real change.

Goal	Measure	Strategy
1. Supports are in place to reduce SADV/IPV/GBV and to continue to support victims/survivors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rates of SADV/IPV/GBV • Survivor feedback • Number of participants in programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase support, information, services and education for boys and men struggling with relationships and perpetuating gender-based violence.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to seek funding for program supports for victims and for prevention (including staffing, training). • Explore restorative justice options for SADV/IPV offences.
2. Lanark County becomes a Zero-Femicide community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a protocol and strategies • Number of femicides 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with provincial groups to establish protocols and strategies on becoming a zero-femicide community. • Address issues around basic needs (income, housing, food security) and health/mental health to a) reduce pressures leading to domestic and other violence, and b) help survivors to be able leave abusers. • Enhance, develop and promote support for other community agencies and municipal partners to increase collaboration and build relationships with the sector in order to reduce violence. • Advocate for including “femicide” wording in Criminal Code of Canada.

PILLAR: Hate-Motivated Crime
Assets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A provincial Proceeds of Crime Grant through the Ministry of the Solicitor General (2023-2026) includes a partnership between OPP and the school boards related to hate-motivated crime. This includes officers reading curated books to Grade 2 students that promote positive relationships and diversity. The grant includes community outreach related to hate-crime, as well as training for officers. There is also a partnership with Planet Youth Lanark County to promote safety in schools. This includes multiple educational initiatives for the community, coalition building and youth-directed educational opportunities. • LCIHCS is part of Coaching Boys Into Men (CBIM), which is an evidence-based program that equips high school coaches to guide young male athletes in building healthy relationships, practising mental wellness, and understanding that violence never equals strength. Through 12 weekly sessions, coaches help boys develop respect, empathy and leadership. • The Inclusive Voices social media program has been funded through a provincial grant for three years. Led by a partnership between OPP and LCIHCS, it has encouraged young people to contribute to videos on a range of topics, from racism to gender-based violence, accessibility, mental health and more. • The See It Name It Change It Campaign through LCIHCS promotes ending violence and racism by identifying, raising awareness and speaking out about incidents safely.

Risks/Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the Council/Police Services Board (PSB)/Community Policing Advisory Committee (CPAC) Focus Session, work to help new Canadians feel welcome and supported was identified as a need in communities, including anti-racism and discrimination efforts. • In the Agency Survey, anti-hate programming was identified as a need, • The Lanark County Child and Youth Services Collaborative Focus Group indicated more knowledge is needed about how issues of racism, homophobia, misogyny and sexism, etc. are affecting mental health of youth from marginalized groups, as well as how teachers, coaches and others who work with youth are being trained/prepared to speak about the issues and intervene in constructive ways when they arise. • Lanark County OPP reported a 233% increase in reported hate-motivated crime incidents from 2021 to 2022. In 2023, there were nine reported, representing a 46% decrease from 2022, but 8 were reported in the first three quarters of 2024. The data points to a need for education and prevention.

Goal	Measure	Strategy
<p>1. Increase cultural competency in community in order to reduce incidents of hate-motivated crime</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incidents of reported hate crime • Participation in anti-hate programming for students • Participation in community outreach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote and enhance existing supports for newcomers. • Develop a repository of information and training to help municipalities and community organizations to incorporate anti-oppression/anti-racism and/or equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) protocols into their work. Consider a Lanark County position to develop the information and implement the training. • Seek opportunities to work with school boards and other youth-serving organizations to a) combat racism, homophobia, misogyny, etc., and b) gain feedback from youth from marginalized groups on the impact of these issues. • Work with teachers, coaches and other youth-serving individuals on constructive intervention strategies to combat issues that arise. • Utilize Lanark County Community Justice to expand the options to address hate-motivated crimes. • Continue to seek funding opportunities for programming to address hate-motivated crime.

PILLAR: Children, Elderly and Others

Assets

- There are a number of protocols in place to support children in the event of abuse or violence, including the Child Protection Protocol, Duty to Report and, in school settings, a Joint Protocol for Student Achievement.
- Fraud awareness programs for seniors are ongoing through police services and other agencies, both through group trainings and publicity and social media.
- The Lanark County Community Justice Program offers restorative justice programming to help with healing and to reduce recidivism.
- The Intersections program through RNJ Youth Services provides early intervention for police-involved youth.
- The Triple P Parenting program has led to universal messaging and approach to parenting and is offered through various organizations.
- Trauma-informed approaches have been implemented in a wide range of organizations.
- The Lanark County SADV Hospital Program covers all of Lanark County and all demographics, including elder abuse. Workers meet clients where they are and can help with transportation.
- The Violent Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) Program is incorporated in school boards and is an early intervention tool to help support students so their behaviour does not become violent to others or cause self-harm.
- Community partners have demonstrated an ability to convene quickly to ensure a collaborative response to crisis issues. The Lanark County Situation Table has been a venue for this kind of collaboration.

Risks/Issues

- In his “Needs and Resilience of Children and Families in Eastern Ontario” report, Robert Fulton said “crime and violence are significant risk factors for adverse outcomes affecting the children in the families involved. Families get enmeshed in crime as victims and at the home where the offender lives. This means that crime touches a large segment of society, especially in high crime areas” (p. 26). He highlighted the rate of adults charged with a crime over the past five years in Lanark County. Based on a rate of per 100,000 adults charged, Perth is slightly above the provincial average, and Smiths Falls is well above.
- Participants in the Lanark County Child and Youth Services Collaborative Focus Group raised concerns regarding bullying. This was later echoed in discussions and events surrounding a community response to the murder of a young person in Perth in late 2024.
- The CSWB Advisory Committee identified a need for all community agencies to adapt a trauma-informed approach when working or dealing with issues of violence against persons.

Goal	Measure	Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the incidence of crime victimization in general and in specific populations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rates of child abuse • Rates of elder abuse • Rates of violent crime • Rates of adults charged (to monitor adverse outcomes for children and families) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to support use of early intervention programs for youth, such as Intersections. • Use restorative justice as a mechanism to reduce recidivism. • Advocate for longer-term grants for preventive programs.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage trauma-informed approaches when working with both victims and perpetrators; seek ways to enhance trauma-informed trainings/supports where needed.• Increase education about the cycle of violence across sectors.• Advocate for more investment in sectors such as child welfare, mental health, etc.• Support and enhance education around elder abuse, scams, fraud, etc.
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PRIORITY POPULATIONS AND DIVERSITY THEME

OUTCOMES

↳ Lanark County and Smiths Falls is a community of opportunity and equity for its diverse populations.

PILLAR: Children and Youth
<p>Assets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family and Children’s Services of Lanark, Leeds and Grenville (FCSLG) has access to important data that may inform the community on needs of their clients and families. As well, their Ready Set Go program increases the age for youth to stay with the agency up until 23 years from 21, with funds for support and a focus on employment, education and mental health outcomes. • The Upper Canada District School Board (UCDSB) and the Equity and Diversity Team has the Champions for Kids Program to support children and families for help outside of school, i.e., eyeglasses/hockey equipment. It also offers stability support for children in care, psychiatric evaluations, 2SLGBTQ1A+ ongoing work in creating safe places for kids, and equity work around education, what's appropriate in school and beyond in the community and society (Partner Day). • The health unit offers the Healthy Babies Healthy Children program, which provides home visits. The Almonte Hospital offers support for breastfeeding (Partner Day). • There are five youth centres in Lanark County and Smiths Falls, including Mississippi Mills Youth Centre, Lanark Highlands Youth Centre, YAK Youth Services (Perth), Big Brothers Big Sisters Lanark County (Smiths Falls) and Carleton Place Youth Centre. They serve youth from all local municipalities and some on the border of Lanark County. In its report “Making a Difference 2023” to the Lanark County Community Services Committee, the Lanark County Youth Centre Coalition indicated from January to October 2023, the combined total of youth served was 9,720. The coalition has completed several joint projects, including food security and nutrition, learning loss, increasing youth centres’ service delivery capacity, and a 2SLGBTQIA+ rural youth toolkit, along with special events (Lanark County Community Services Committee, 2023). • The Lanark County Community Justice (LCCJ) Program runs a Triple P Parenting of Teens course with funding from the Perth and District Community Foundation and in partnership with FCSLG. LCCJ reports parents say they feel like they are not alone in their parenting when they are part of this group. • The Perth Community Services Hub opened in 2021, co-locating YAK Youth Services and the youth centre, LCCJ, Perth Fire Services, a satellite library of Perth and District Union Public Library, counselling with Open Doors for Lanark Children and Youth, Queer Connection Lanark and Second Harvest (surplus food). A shuttle service to the centre is available and dinner is served nightly at the youth centre. • In 2021, the Lanark County Youth Centre Coalition had external consultant Joanne Wells complete the “Shared Future” report on increased collaboration between youth centres. Recommendations are being implemented, including regular meetings between executive directors and program coordinators to share resources, data, best practices, program ideas and to collaborate on joint projects. The coalition reports stigma about youth centres has been reduced, all centres have excellent reputations and they have worked on educating respective communities on services they provide and calibre of staff.

- Planet Youth Lanark County (PYLC) uses an approach developed in Iceland to identify and establish long-term, community driven strategies that promote positive social and environmental change. Lanark County was the first community in Canada to adopt the approach. In 2022 and 2024, Grade 10 students were surveyed at schools across Lanark County on topics around substance use, peer groups, family, leisure and school. Results are leading to strategies to enhance safety and well-being. PYLC partners with leaders in education, health care, local government, police services and more to make evidence-based recommendations. It is working closely with local youth centres and also provides opportunities for engagement and education with the community.

Risks/Issues

- FCSLLG has repeatedly noted there is a lack of services for children and youth with complex needs in this area. When parents are unable to access the needed care, it lands families on FCS's doorstep. The Agency Survey noted a lack of foster/kin providers for high risk/complex youth.
- Open Doors for Lanark Children and Youth notes there is a recognized gap in service for children/youth with complex needs in terms of the availability of live-in treatment resources and out-of-home respite service. Step Up Step Down is a live-in treatment program for youth ages 12 to 17 with complex mental health needs, but as of Fall 2024 there were only four beds across the former Champlain LHIN region, which makes it difficult to access. Often children requiring live-in treatment receive it at Child and Parent Resource Institute in London, Ontario. Psychiatric consultation is easier to access, but ongoing psychiatric service is rare. The local needs for high-risk children overwhelm resources available. A large number of children and youth who present complex special needs are supported in the community through single plans of care delivered through multiple organizations, which places significant time and labour demands on local organizations. If high-intensity resources were more readily available, there would be less time spent locating and negotiating service and more time delivering service (Clouthier, 2024).
- The Lanark County Situation Table Annual Report (2023 & Jan. 1-May 31, 2024) indicated the number of family referrals began increasing in 2023. Between 2015 and mid-2024, more than half of individual referrals to the situation table have been for youth ages 12 to 24 years (this does not include family referrals). In 2023, one-third of referrals involving individuals were youths ages 12 to 17. This age range also figured prominently in family referrals from 2025 to mid-2024 and during the pandemic specifically.
- The Lanark County Youth Centre Coalition delegation report "Making a Difference 2023" notes rural youth are more likely to experience lower levels of supervision, have academic challenges, a lack of transportation, increased use and access to drugs and alcohol, increased rates of poverty, and higher mental health challenges (isolation, depression, self-harm and suicidal ideation).
- At Partner Day, participants expressed concern about overt, casual racism, specifically within high school, and that youth are not feeling included, thus will not likely stay in this community once they graduate.
- In the Council/Police Services Board (PSB)/Community Policing Advisory Committee (CPAC) Focus Session, participants suggested more resources for young families are needed and proposed finding some balance with needs of children and child care.
- In the Lanark County Child and Youth Services Collaborative (LCCYSC) Focus Group, Lanark County Community Justice indicated youth are reporting alienation and bullying, which is

leading to crime and charges (assault, harassment, online distribution of intimate images, sexual assault, gender-based violence and harassment, etc.).

- At the LCCYSC Focus Group, a number of key pressures for children and youth were identified by participants, including social difficulties (navigating conflict); academic challenges (learning and time management); mental health (healthy relationships, overwhelm); risk of child exploitation, sexual assault and violence; social media engagement; peer pressure (e.g., vaping, relationships); gender diversity expression and support; poverty; family stress; overscheduling; and body image. Identified gaps include wait times to discuss mental health issues or having to see multiple people and retell the same story, developmental gaps, parents being unsure where to get help (system navigation, wait lists, expensive alternatives), and gaps in school supports.
- FCSLLG reports a crisis in Family and Children’s Services, including a shortage of appropriate places for children to address mental health and trauma needs when in care, as well as the complexity and intensity of mental health and addictions needs for adults and children. Staff burnout is another issue (CSWB Advisory Committee Meeting, Feb. 29, 2024).
- In a presentation to the Lanark County Community Services Committee in June 2024, FCSLLG said more than half of all societies, including FCSLLG, are in deficit. For Lanark, Leeds and Grenville, demographic indicators for adverse outcomes are above provincial averages according to the 2023 Fulton Report and there is a higher demand for child welfare services than the ministry socio-economic factors indicate (according to the funding formula). Total investigations opened/closed in 2023/2024 for FCSLLG was 1,382, with 40% of those in Lanark County. Challenges include foster family recruitment, lack of placements and extraordinary costs for complex special needs children, attracting volunteers and continuing budget cuts.
- Robert Fulton’s report (2023) highlighted a number of adverse risk factors for children in Lanark, Leeds and Grenville (LLG), especially for lone-parent families. Data shows 14% of the families in LLG are lone parents, with the highest concentration in Smiths Falls (25% of families) and Perth (21%). He found indications they may not be receiving equitable access to the health unit’s Health Babies Healthy Children (HBHC) program. Other risk factors identified as part of the HBHC caseload include the number of mothers/infants with no primary care provider (3.1% of the caseload) and the number of parents or partners with a disability that risks compromising parental capacity (1% of the caseload). Fulton outlined eight adverse outcomes at the public health unit level, including all causes of death, preventable death, suicide, intentional injuries (ages 0-19), injuries due to assault (ages 0-19), hospitalization for neurotrauma injuries (ages 0-19), mental health conditions entirely caused by alcohol (all ages), and rate of adults charged with a crime. “The first obvious finding is that Leeds & Grenville and Lanark exceed the provincial average on all adverse outcomes.” He said “there is considerable evidence of concentrated disadvantage in the Census database. Moreover, the same areas of disadvantage are experiencing higher levels of adverse outcomes. The areas of concentrated disadvantage include: (1) The Leeds & Grenville and Lanark Public Health Unit (2) Cornwall (3) Hawkesbury (4) Brockville (5) Prescott (6) Smith Falls (7) Perth” (p. 37).

Goal	Measure	Strategy
1. Children and youth are supported in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of belonging survey (Planet Youth Lanark County) • School board surveys • Other feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate system navigation, opportunities to intervene earlier, and availability of complex care services to prevent children and youth from needing to be in Family

		<p>and Children’s Services care – provide advocacy and look for opportunities within community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support efforts to recruit foster families and kin providers. • Support efforts by community partners (e.g., youth centres and Planet Youth Lanark County) to engage with youth and address risks/barriers associated with living in a rural community. • Collaborate with schools to address issues of overt and casual racism, homophobia, misogyny, bullying, etc. in schools to encourage youth and families to stay in community. • Seek opportunities to increase community resources for children, youth and families. • Seek opportunities for collaboration between schools and community partners to provide supports for youth related to topics such as navigating conflict, addiction, academic challenges, healthy relationships, mental health, child exploitation, body image, social media, gender diversity, familial stress, and more. • Work to address issues around basic needs in order to further support families. • Help parents to establish connection with services that can help.
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PILLAR: Seniors and Elderly
Assets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Perth Enrichment Program supports seniors to stay in their own home and supports caregivers while awaiting long-term care. They work to facilitate conversations with physicians to make it easier for elderly persons to access care. The Caregiver ID project with the Ontario Health Team recognizes and validates the contribution caregivers are giving to community and family, as well as to highlight who to check in with (Partner Day). • Local hospitals work to ensure a smooth transition for elderly in the community by having a care plan when coming out of hospital.

- Home Hospice North Lanark serves adults with declining health and their caregivers in the communities of Almonte, Carleton Place, Appleton, Clayton, Beckwith, Blakeney, Pakenham and the surrounding areas. It delivers services to where clients live. It also offers public education, events and resources, and grief and bereavement support. Their registered nurse can help to determine how they can help best. In the south end of the county, The Hospice Hub serves those who use the Perth and Smiths Falls District Hospital. It is a community-led initiative providing comprehensive, compassionate and integrated services to provide home support for those at end-of-life and their families and caregivers, as well as bereavement support. Both Home Hospice North Lanark and The Hospice Hub have engaged with Queer Connection Lanark to offer their volunteers an awareness session on 2SLGBTQI+ community members.
- Tay Valley Township is working towards becoming an age-friendly community as the majority of residents are over the age of 55 and the median age in Tay Valley is expected to increase over the next several years. It developed its Age-Friendly Community Planning Report in 2017 along with a working group to provide recommendations to council on how best to implement the report. The plan explores factors such as housing, transportation, and health and social inclusion (Tay Valley Township, 2021).

Risks/Issues

- A focus group with members of the Successful Aging Advisory Committee (SAAC) identified pressures such as a need for more hospice, reliable communications following the breakdown of small newspapers and online news restrictions, overlapping boundaries, inequity in services and availability of funding across the legacy lens, and risks around working in silos to reduce duplication of services and increase efficiency in serving the community.
- Home Hospice North Lanark cited pressures around funding, volunteer recruitment and retention, and increasing demand. They need to be able to afford trained staff such as nurses and RPNs to do what people need. Their client base jumped over 1,000% in last two years (to 2023). Accessing ministry funding is difficult and community fundraising competes against hospital fundraising (SAAC Focus Group).
- The “kin-less” society is a risk – when people have no one (e.g., no spouse, children or siblings nearby) to help make decisions or help navigate the health-care system. Sometimes both a client and the caregiver have dementia and it is hard to get accurate information from them (SAAC Focus Group).
- Staff shortages and the need for more personal support workers (PSWs) is a continuing pressure. Wages are low, which creates retention issues. PSWS are critical for helping people to stay in their homes. A need for more volunteers was also highlighted (SAAC Focus Group).
- At the Council/PSB/CPAC Focus Session, councillors noted more seniors may be staying in their home in rural areas because there is nowhere affordable or nothing available for them to go to. This results in some seniors being overhoused. Older residents often choose to move to places with public transportation or family support when faced with medical issues.

Goal	Measure	Strategy
1. Seniors and elderly are supported in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and agency surveys • Increased number of volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support efforts to increase volunteer recruitment and retention in this sector.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of municipal age-friendly community plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for increased funding to support staffing (e.g., RPNs, PSWs) and examine ways to pool resources. • Develop strategies to support kin-less seniors in community (e.g., around decision making). • Explore creating more age-friendly communities in Lanark County.
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PILLAR: Indigenous

Assets

- Family and Children’s Services of Lanark, Leeds and Grenville (FCSLG) indicated it is working with Indigenous supports and partnering with local Indigenous members to help youth to reconnect in a safe way with their culture (Partner Day).
- Steps have been taken to incorporate Indigenous history and culture into school curriculum.
- Numerous community partners have included or embedded cultural competency training into their operations. Information sharing about available Indigenous supports is ongoing with increased networking.
- The Perth Family Health Team (PFHT) has an Indigenous Care Navigator who accepts referrals from all local service providers, health professionals and self-referrals. Services (with client consent) include counselling, system navigation and resourcing for Indigenous service users, needs assessments, accompaniment to appointments, advocacy, consultation with clinicians, reduction of barriers to healthcare for the Indigenous population, assistance with connection to community, promotion of cultural safety in PFHT, networking, and participation in equity, diversity, inclusion and justice groups.
- Community-based groups such as Mississippi Mills All My Relations and Lanark County Neighbours for Truth and Reconciliation work to restore relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and to provide education about the Indigenous history of Lanark County.
- Ginawaydaganuc Village was founded in 2022 in Almonte and is a multi-tribal Indigenous-led non-profit dedicated to building an Elder’s lodge and an eco-sensitive educational and tourist centre. It is “committed to creating opportunities that pave the way for the next seven generations” (Ginawaydaganuc Village, 2024).

Risks/Issues

- In a presentation to the Lanark County Community Services Committee in June 2024, FCSLG reported Indigenous and Black children continue to be over-represented in the child welfare system. They are working on addressing this through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action and 11 race equity practices while providing a quality service that improves outcomes for all the children and youth they serve.
- At Partner Day, a lack of consistency, availability and awareness of cultural supports for the Indigenous population was cited as a gap.
- Robert Fulton’s report (2023) noted Indigenous and other groups experience many more adverse outcomes than others. “Variables such as race, ethnicity, family structure are not causes of adverse outcomes. It is what happens to these groups that produce the bad outcomes” (p. 6). Indigenous people were less likely to report positive mental health than non-Indigenous (53.2% compared to 64.3%) (p. 35). In 2016, there was a Special Census Profile of people identifying with the Indigenous community. In the presentation that accompanied his report to Every Kid In Our Community (Community Data Predicts Adverse Outcome), Fulton

reported on the higher rate of Indigenous children living in foster care and indicated a lower percentage of Indigenous children are growing up in an intact family, with higher percentages living with stepfamilies or lone parent homes. He highlighted two aspects of housing stress – major repairs needed and unaffordability – which were two times more prevalent among Indigenous households. Indigenous households in jurisdictions he identified as being centres of concentrated disadvantage shared the same stressors, but to a great degree. Forty-one per cent of Indigenous households in high-risk communities spend too much on shelter. He indicated hidden unemployment is between 1.5 and 2 times more likely for Indigenous people. In Smiths Falls, for example, the rate for Indigenous people is 35.7% compared to 28.8% for the non-Indigenous population; in Drummond/North Elmsley the rates are 40% versus 16.3% and in Tay Valley it is 47.8% versus 16.4%. The statistics showed a higher percentage of Indigenous people do not attain educational standing beyond high school. Five of the six locations in Lanark, Leeds and Grenville (Smiths Falls and Perth in Lanark County) that Fulton indicated as having concentrated disadvantage on the general census also showed higher rates of risk factors, stressors and low income on the Indigenous profiles (Fulton, 2023).

- There has been a lack of follow-through on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, with more items municipalities specifically can do (McDermott, 2025).

Goal	Measure	Strategy
1. Indigenous Peoples are supported in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation for feedback • Community and agency surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate available cultural supports, determine gaps and communicate resources across all sectors so that clients can be supported. • Incorporate Calls to Action into activities. • Work to establish or enhance cultural competencies in municipalities and community organizations. • Work with Lanark County IDEA Committee to identify gaps and strategies.

PILLAR: 2SLGBTQIA+

Assets

- Queer Connection Lanark County works to increase the visibility of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and is represented on several local committees and advisories. It has been active in Lanark County since 2014 and built upon the work of LGBT Lanark County and LGBT Lanark County Civitan. It continues to work with others to keep Lanark County a welcoming community for people of all genders and orientations.
- The Upper Canada District School Board works towards “reducing achievement gaps and improving learning outcomes for all students, regardless of class, gender, race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and other historical forms of marginalization.” Additional actions and strategies seek to eliminate systemic racism that still exists in society, as well also other forms of discrimination (Upper Canada District School Board, 2025).
- The Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario is “committed to supporting the dignity, worth and safety of our 2SLGBTQIA+ students....The Board’s strategic priorities include a commitment to nurturing safe and including learning environments where every student and

every member of our community is welcomed, valued and respected” (Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario, 2025).

- PRIDE continues to be promoted in communities. Many communities and agencies host events to support PRIDE activities. The Transgender Day of Remembrance in Perth experienced its largest turnout in its history in November 2024.
- The Perth and District Community Foundation (PDCF) is project focused and offers small grants, community conversations, vital conversations and promotes belonging and all its forms. Its mission is to build and strengthen communities across diversity, through community conveyor activities, conversation and building strategies (Partner Day). PDCF has funded Queer Connection Lanark for two projects: a speaker series and support for the launch of the film “Lanark County Voices...There’s a Place for Me Here,” in which 13 2SLGBTQI+ community members are interviewed.

Risks/Issues

- At Partner Day, participants flagged discrimination for youth with disabilities, both visible and invisible, and for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities as issues (Partner Day).
- A rise in hate speech against 2SLGBTQIA+ students and community members was noted following the murder of a youth in Perth in late 2024. Community collaboration efforts worked to address this issue and statements were issued by many groups, but more work needs to be done to combat this at its roots.

Goal	Measure	Strategy
1. 2SLGBTQIA+ people are supported in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and agency surveys • Consultation and feedback • Number of new programs • Participation in programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with community partners to increase 2SLGBTQIA+-specific expertise, access and outreach. • Encourage parents of 2SLGBTQIA+ children to establish a parent-to-parent support group. • Increase education related to hate speech, violence and actions; incorporate accountability and restorative practice in dealing with issues. • Engage more and provide education around being a welcoming and safe community. • Work with QCL and Lanark County IDEA Committee to identify gaps and strategies. • Promote and encourage community partners to be more visibly engage, i.e., by participating in Pride parade.

PILLAR: New Canadians and Immigrants

Assets

- The Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) “aims to strengthen the role of local communities across Lanark and Renfrew counties in integrating and serving our newcomer population.” It is funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and works to bring together service providers, settlement agencies, community groups, employers and key municipal organizations to support newcomers. In Lanark and Renfrew, the work is administered by Algonquin College’s Pembroke Campus. LIP conducts research to identify challenges that prevent newcomers from fully participating in communities and locates new opportunities to help newcomers settle in rural areas. There is a LIP Advisory Council with a wide range of membership and a strategic plan that has four priorities: creating connections, building trust, employer outreach and support, and community-integrated learning. Services include facilitation, knowledge sharing, research and mentoring (Local Immigration Partnership Lanark & Renfrew, n.d.).
- The Rural Community Inclusion Pilot Project is a collaborative initiative between Lanark and Renfrew counties funded until March 2026 by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) Rural Economic Development (RED) program. Its mission is “to create a more inclusive, diverse and economically vibrant community by connecting local businesses with skilled newcomers and fostering a welcoming environment.” There is a shared Settlement and Recruitment Coordinator who works to connect local businesses with newcomers who are seeking opportunities (Lanark County, 2025).
- Community-based groups throughout Lanark County have worked to assist refugees to settle in local communities.
- Fulton’s report states “new immigration is a powerful asset for the community. It directly increases wealth and job creation. New immigrants also bring in a new perspective on hardship to the long-term residents of Ontario. Municipal jurisdictions that are geographically isolated and have little mobility and zero immigration are at risk of higher levels of resentment, anger, and despair about their situation in life” (p. 33).
- The Table Community Food Centre has Community Navigators who connect people to resources. They have seen new Canadians accessing services and worked on an equity and diversity action plan – Equity Walk (Partner Day)
- In 2024, Lanark County conducted the “Land in Lanark” campaign with Valley Heartland Community Futures Development Corporation, which aimed to position the county as the top choice destination for newcomers seeking relocation and employment opportunities. This was a six-week digital campaign that focused on health-care professionals and skilled trades workers in the Greater Toronto Area, Ottawa and suburbs of Montreal. There was good engagement and follow-up, resulting in 96 referrals to a range of employment opportunities (Lanark County Media Release, Dec. 4, 2024).

Risks/Issues

- Agencies at Partner Day identified a need for more support for new Canadians and immigrants, including transportation or access to services that may be offered in Ottawa, more local English as a Second Language training, systems navigation information, improved community awareness to help them participate and help for parents to support home life and make referrals if needed.
- At the Lanark Child and Youth Services Collaborate Focus Group, the Local Immigration Partnership identified a range of pressures and challenges immigrant children may face as they adapt to their new environment, including language and cultural barriers, educational

challenges, discrimination and social exclusion, settlement and integration, and family separation and reunification. Their mental health can be affected by adapting to a new culture and society, language barriers, discrimination and racism, family dynamics and adjustment, traumatic experiences, limited social support networks, and barriers to accessing mental health services.

- In the Agency Survey, among the services noted that were not available in some situations were facilitators and interpretation, and culturally specific organizations and services.
- At the Council/Police Services Board/Community Policing Advisory Committee Focus Session, councillors noted a gap in new Canadians not feeling as if they belong and struggles with getting basic needs met. There is a need to ensure people are getting connected as demand increases.

Goals	Measure	Strategy
<p>1. New Canadians and immigrants are welcomed and supported in the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More newcomers arrive and stay. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop strategies to increase participation of these populations in community events (determine why they are or are not participating), including strategies to break down the isolation with those who identify from the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. • Work with the Local Immigration Partnership and community partners to communicate services, supports and system navigation for newcomers. • Assess needs related to a trauma-informed approach with newcomers and work to identify and eradicate barriers encountered (e.g., language/lack of local interpreters, cultural stigma); share strategies with partners. • Work with Lanark County IDEA Committee and community partners to identify gaps and strategies.

PILLAR: Accessibility
<p>Assets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The <i>Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)</i> aims to identify, remove, and prevent barriers for people with disabilities. It applies to all levels of government, non-profits, and private sector businesses in Ontario that have one or more employees (full-time, part-time, seasonal, or contract). The Act specifies requirements organizations must meet depending on their type and size (<i>Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005</i>). • Lanark County formed an Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) Committee in 2024 that includes representatives from municipalities, community partners and stakeholders from the community.
<p>Risks/Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community partners participating in Partner Day noted discrimination faced by youth with disabilities, both visible and invisible. • The Rural Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) organization highlighted a gap for people with disabilities as there are limited FASD practitioners in the region. This includes accessibility, (emotional self-regulation, sensory, executive functioning) (Partner Day). • Senior-serving agencies have highlighted the importance of affordable hearing aids as hearing loss can contribute to memory issues. Hearing aids are not funded leaving some individuals at a disadvantage.

Goal	Measure	Strategy
1. People with disabilities are supported in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and agency surveys • Consultation and feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure accessible locations for services (both visible and non-visible). • Work with Lanark County IDEA Committee, community partners, Accessibility Committees and stakeholders to identify gaps and strategies. • Encourage community at large to address the need for improved accessibility.

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Lanark County Child and Youth Services Collaborative

Lanark County Situation Table

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