Community Social Needs Assessment

CITY OF WETASKIWIN

Needs Assessment Report

January 2015

city of Wetaskiwin

RC strategies

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Section

1

Introduction

Located approximately 45 minutes southeast of Edmonton, the City of Wetaskiwin is home to approximately 12, 500 residents. Wetaskiwin also serves a much broader region and is an important "hub" community for a variety of retail, employment and social services. The City recognizes the importance of providing residents with a high quality of life and plays a major role in the delivery of numerous services and opportunities. The City's Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) is dedicated to strengthening and enhancing family and community life by offering locally based preventative and supportive services, promoting volunteerism and coordinating partnerships within the community.

The goal of FCSS programming is to develop a sense of integrity, self-worth, and independence among individual members of the community and within the City as a whole. The intention is that this will help to prevent a number of common personal and societal problems. FCSS programs focus on:

- Encouraging the adoption of healthy lifestyles;
- Strengthening and stabilizing family and community life;
- Improving people's ability to identify and act on their own needs;
- Helping to avoid family or community social breakdown; and
- Encouraging cooperation and coordination among community groups and service agencies.

The City of Wetaskiwin initiated a Community Social Needs Assessment to help guide planning decisions about community based social services. The Community Social Needs Assessment will help determine priority areas and put in place a structured plan for the City's Family and Community Support Services (FCSS). A structured plan will bring together a comprehensive picture of the community which will enable FCSS to apply its finite resources in the most effective manner.

To complete the Community Social Needs Assessment—and develop the associated recommendations—a thorough program of research was undertaken. Program elements included an analysis of the City's population characteristics and growth potential, and a review of various municipal and provincial strategic plans. An inventory of existing social programs offered to community residents was developed. Secondary research was conducted to identify trends in the delivery of social services and prevalent issues to address.

Public engagement was also deemed to be an important component to developing the Community Social Needs Assessment. Interviews were conducted with a number of stakeholders and organizational representatives in the community. A survey was fielded with community residents in order to gather broad based data and further insight into community needs. The detailed findings from the consultation are presented under a separate cover; a brief summary is included in this document.

Finally, a series of recommendations are presented that will guide the City of Wetaskiwin in its provision of preventative social services. An implementation plan accompanies these recommendations.

Section

2

Community Context

The City of Wetaskiwin (population 12,525)[1] is located in Wetaskiwin County, approximately 70km southeast of Edmonton, and 93km northeast of Red Deer. Wetaskiwin is directly connected to Highway 13, Highway 2A, and is 19km east of the Queen Elizabeth II Highway. The City is also served by the Wetaskiwin Regional Airport and is located along a Canadian Pacific Railway line. Wetaskiwin has a primary trading area of 48,762 with a secondary trading area of 89,232.[2]

The City of Wetaskiwin is a bustling community that is filled with recreational, cultural, and historical facilities, which its residents can enjoy year-round. Some of the facilities featured in Wetaskiwin are: the newly developed Manluk Centre (swimming pool, lazy river, and BoardRider surf system); five museums, including the famous Reynolds-Alberta Museum; the Wetaskiwin Civic Centre (twin ice rinks). The City features multiple parks, which include By-the-Lake Park; sport fields, and two golf courses. Wetaskiwin is also located near the Edmonton International Raceway and other region attractions such as Pigeon Lake and nearby campground areas.

Historical attractions remain an important attraction and tourist draw for Wetaskiwin. The Reynolds-Alberta Museum is located 2km west of Wetaskiwin and provides visitors with an interpretive experience based upon transportation, aviation, agriculture, and industry. Wetaskiwin is also home to Alberta Central Railway Museum, Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame (located on the Reynolds-Alberta Museum property), Reynolds Aviation Museum, and the Wetaskiwin and District Heritage Museum. These museums are bursting with information for the residents and tourists to enjoy, giving the City of Wetaskiwin a diverse culture. The City of Wetaskiwin Archives collects and cares for the documentary heritage of the City of Wetaskiwin and surrounding areas. Records from the earliest years of the Ctiy's history are stored in the Archives, much of which is available for public viewing.

Community organizations play a vital role in Wetaskiwin. The city has numerous organizations that serve a cross section of interests. A list of these organizations is provided in the City's annual Community Service Directory publication. Many of these organizations have been active within the community for many years. The Family & Community Support Services in the city also plays a large role in shaping the community. The FCSS in Wetaskiwin further promotes the livelihood of its residents by providing "preventative and supportive services, promoting volunteerism and coordinating partnerships within the community".[3]

The growing youth population in Wetaskiwin is serviced by a number of youth-focused organizations such as the Boys & Girls Club of Wetaskiwin. The Boys & Girls Club of Wetaskiwin has been providing quality programs and services for youth and their families since it was established in 1988. Their mission is to provide "a safe, supportive place where children and youth can experience new opportunities, overcome barriers, build positive relationships and develop confidence and skills for life."[4] The club offers a multitude of programs that encourage the youth to become active in their community.

Primary and secondary education in the city and local region is provided by the Wetaskiwin Regional Public School Division and St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Separate Regional Division #38. Norquest College offers access to post-secondary education, training and academic upgrading.

Health services in the City of Wetaskiwin are provided by the Wetaskiwin Hospital and Care Centre, which provides emergency acute care and long-term care. There are numerous programs and services provided by the facility for its patients.[5] Wetaskiwin is home to numerous senior living communities. Sunrise Village offers 84 units of various configurations with assisted senior living, while Northridge Estates and Northtown Village provide condominiums and apartments for its residents. So whether residents are looking for a place with assisted living or to live on their own, Wetaskiwin has plenty to offer. The Directory for Seniors Services identifies supportive living options for seniors in the City of Wetaskiwin.

1 Statistics Canada, 2011 Census of the Population.

2 Alberta Community Profiles, https://albertacommunityprofiles.com/Profile/Wetaskiwin/5

3 City of Wetaskiwin website, http://www.wetaskiwin.ca

4 Wetaskiwin Boys & Girls Club www.wetaskiwinyouth.ca

5 http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/facilities.asp?pid=facility&rid=1000366

Population & Demographics

The most recently completed census for Wetaskiwin is the 2014 Municipal Census, which records the population of Wetaskiwin at 12,621. The 2011 Federal Census showed a City population of 13,252. The median age of the population is 41.2 (2011 Census), which is greater than the provincial median age of 36.5. Between the years 2006 and 2014, there has been a 8.0% increase in population from 11,689 residents (an average annual growth of 1.0%).

The following table depicts the age distribution of Wetaskiwin in contrast to the provincial distribution averages. The overall pattern of the age distribution aligns closely with the provincial average. Age distributions that have a sizable variance are adults aged 20 – 54; compared with provincial figures, there is a lower proportion in Wetaskiwin. Conversely, Wetaskiwin has a higher proportion of residents 65 years of age and older than does the province.

Age Group	City of Wetaskiwin (%) (2014 Census)	City of Wetaskiwin (%) (2011 Census)	Provincial Average (%) (2011 Census)
0 to 4	6.27%	6.59%	6.72%
5 to 9	6.44%	6.07%	6.01%
10 to 14	6.22%	5.99%	6.06%
15 to 19	6.11%	5.95%	6.53%
20 to 24	5.23%	5.75%	7.09%
25 to 34	12.68%	12.30%	15.45%
35 to 44	12.50%	11.98%	14.23%
45 to 54	13.11%	13.97%	15.37%
55 to 64	11.92%	11.38%	11.41%
65+	19.54%	20.16%	11.13%

Wetaskiwin's population is comprised of relatively equal proportions of male and female residents: 51% are female and 49% are male (2014 Census).

Select additional household data for the City of Wetaskiwin is identified as follows. The data is from the 2011 Statistics Canada Census of the Population (2011), unless otherwise noted.

- 56.53% of private census family households consist of 2 persons (provincial average: 48.51%).
- There are 3,405 census families living in private households in Wetaskiwin.
- Of the 3,405 census families, 2,275 (66.81%) report being legally married (provincial average: 71.97%).
- 17.87% of couple-family households in Wetaskiwin are common-law (provincial average: 13.57%).
- 45.13% of couple-family households in Wetaskiwin have children (provincial average: 53.49%).
- 1,595 individuals (12.73% of the overall population) in Wetaskiwin live alone.
- 86.51% of Wetaskiwin residents report that English is their mother tongue. The next widely-spoken languages are:
  - » German: 2.98%
  - » Tagalog (Pilipino, Filipino): 2.86%
  - » French: 1.39%
- According to the 2011 National Household Survey, the total median income for Wetaskiwin was $54,619 (provincial average: $89,830).
  - » Median income of couple-with-children households was $90,591 (provincial average: $98,510).
  - » Median income of lone-parent households was $48,517 (provincial average: $42,150).

Student Population

Student enrollment data for the city's schools was compiled in order to further analyze child and youth growth patterns in the community. As reflected in the chart, the student population in Wetaskiwin has remained relatively stable. Overall, between the 2009/2010 and the 2013/2014 school years the student population in Wetaskiwin has increased by approximately 4%. A dip in the student population occurred in 2010/2011.

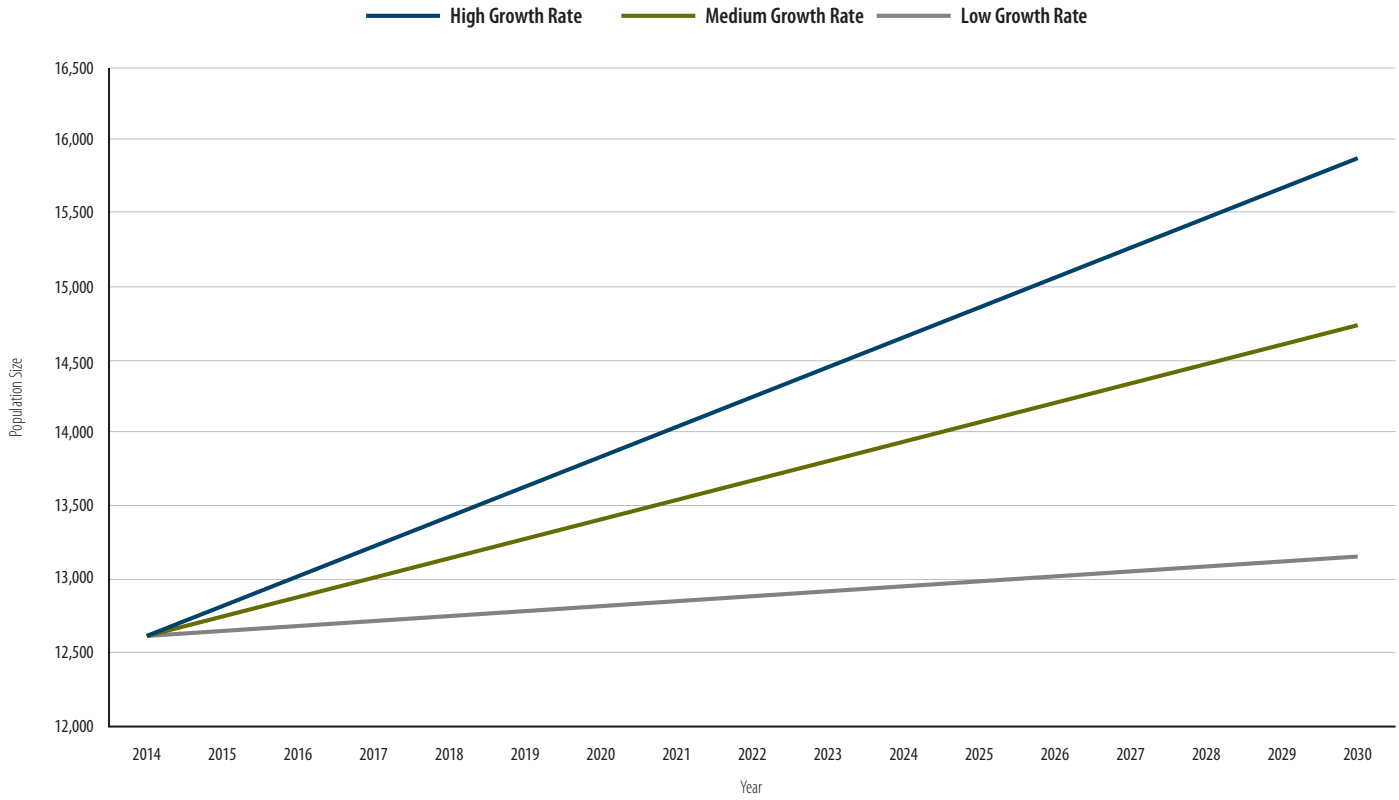
School	2013 / 2014 Enrollment (Preliminary)	2012 / 2013 Enrollment	2011 / 2012 Enrollment	2010 / 2011 Enrollment	2009 / 2010 Enrollment
C.B. McMurdo School (K – 9)	153	178	194	178	172
Centennial Elementary School (K – 6)	195	186	174	173	185
Clear Vista School (K – 9)	550	542	517	494	497
École Parkdale School (K – 6)	299	286	257	265	275
École Queen Elizabeth Junior High School (7 – 9)	279	274	255	264	285
Norwood School (K – 6)	215	214	201	234	245
Sacred Heart School (K – 9)	463	440	375	339	333
Wetaskiwin Composite High School (10 – 12)	690	711	717	787	816
Wetaskiwin Composite High School Off Campus Program (10 – 12)	58	44	26	—	—
Wetaskiwin Home Education	23	16	17	5	5
TOTAL	**2,925**	**2,891**	**2,733**	**2,739**	**2,813**

Growth Projections

Fifteen year growth projections for the City of Wetaskiwin have been developed and are displayed on the following graph. The low growth rate scenario (0.36% annual growth rate) reflects the slowing growth rate between the 1996 Statistics Canada Census and the 2001 Statistics Canada Census. This scenario sees a population size of 13,359 in Wetaskiwin for the year 2030. The medium growth rate scenario (0.96% annual growth rate) was developed using the growth rates experienced in the community between the 2001 and 2006 Statistics Canada Census. This scenario displays a population of 14,704 in Wetaskiwin in 2030. The high growth rate scenario (1.43% annual growth rate) was based on the growth rate reflected in the community between the 2006 and 2011 Statistics Canada Census. This scenario displays a total population of 15,841 in Wetaskiwin in the year 2030.

Growth Projections for the City of Wetaskiwin

2014 to 2030



Section

3

Strategic Review

A review of strategic planning and social policy documentation was conducted. Reviewing these plans helps ensure that the Community Social Needs Assessment considers, and aligns with, broader social and community service strategies at the municipal and provincial levels.

Provincial

Family and Community Support Services Act (2000) / Family and Community Support Services Regulation (last amended in 2013)

The Family and Community Support Services Act and Regulation is a provincial statute which outlines the responsibilities of municipalities as it pertains to the delivery of FCSS services. The Regulation document identifies five core responsibilities of a municipality in the establishment, administration and operation of FCSS programs:

a. Promote and facilitate the development of stronger communities;
b. Promote public participation in planning, delivering and governing the program and services provided under the program;
c. Promote and facilitate the involvement of volunteers;
d. Promote efficient and effective use of resources;
e. Promote and facilitate co-operation and co-ordination with allied service agencies operating within the municipality.

The Regulation further indicates that FCSS programs must:

Be of a preventive nature that enhances the social well-being of individuals and families through promotion or intervention strategies provided at the earliest opportunity, and do one or more of the following:

i. Help people to develop independence, strengthen coping skills and become more resistant to crisis;
ii. Help people to develop an awareness of social needs;
iii. Help people to develop interpersonal and group skills which enhance constructive relationships among people;
iv. Help people and communities to assume responsibility for decisions and actions which affect them;
v. Provide supports that help sustain people as active participants in the community.

The Regulation also outlines services that cannot be delivered by FCSS programs which include reactive or rehabilitative services and duplicate services offered by other government agencies or entities. The Regulation also stipulates that the primary focus of FCSS cannot be to deliver recreational or leisure pursuits. The Regulation mandates that municipalities must allocate to FCSS programs at least 20% of its operating budget on an annual basis as part of the matching agreement with the provincial government.

Alberta's Social Policy Framework (2013)

Alberta's Social Policy Framework was initiated to help guide the future direction of social policies and the provision of related programs. Fundamental to the objectives of the framework was the need to coordinate the "activities within and between government departments, to harmonize work between government and other stakeholders, and to ensure that there is policy alignment and consistency." Ensuring efficiency and collaborations between service providers is identified throughout the document as being crucial to the sustainability of Alberta's social service and program delivery capacity.

The strategic directions set forth in the Policy will be driven by eight key transformational initiatives:

- Early Childhood Development
- Poverty Reduction Strategy
- Common Service Access
- Primary Health Care Initiatives
- Results-based Budgeting
- Partner with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities
- Safe Communities
- 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness

The document indicates that future decisions and service provision will be largely driven and influenced by these eight key transformational initiatives.

Alberta's Poverty Reduction Strategy—Discussion Paper (2013)

Aligning with the development of the 2013 Social Policy Framework, Alberta's Poverty Reduction Strategy has been initiated to meet the following four objectives:

- A comprehensive strategy to eliminate child poverty in five years;
- A 10-year plan to reduce overall poverty;
- An implementation plan that outlines immediate, mid-, and long-term actions; and
- A comprehensive community-based evaluation and monitoring strategy.

In June 2013, a discussion paper was published to help set forth a context for the development of the Poverty Reduction Strategy and identify potential areas of exploration that may help drive potential strategies.

Identified in the discussion paper are a seven policy areas or "domains" that have research based rationale to support the positive effects they can have on reducing poverty.

- Affordable housing
- Early childhood development
- Education and literacy
- Training and skills development
- Income supplementation and replacement
- Assets
- Place-based interventions

The discussion paper suggests that building on these domains, the majority of which are preventative in nature, can help create a path to reducing poverty in Alberta. For each domain a number of potential strategies or options are provided. The discussion paper further mentions that strategy will "coordinate and leverage ongoing municipal efforts to address poverty."

An Alberta Approach to Early Childhood Development (2013)

Also aligning with the development of Alberta's Social Policy Framework was an initiative to create a strategy specific to early childhood development. The Alberta Approach to Early Childhood Development document identifies the need to focus efforts on ensuring a healthy start in life for children along with supports to ensure they can develop in nurturing and supportive environments. The document outlines five specific objectives for the next three years:

- Improve maternal, infant and child health to support healthy pregnancies, reduce the number of children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, optimize maternal mental health and provide early screening and follow up to support a child's development.
- Provide Alberta parents with access to leading edge early years information and practical tools that help support their child's development.
- Assist families experiencing periods of vulnerability to provide healthy, safe, nurturing experiences for their children and protect children who are not safe.
- Create a "made in Alberta" early years approach to provide responsive early learning and care options that help children to reach their developmental potential by the time they enter school.
- Collaborate with communities to develop a cohesive and accessible system of neighbourhood supports where families can get the right supports at the times they need it most.

Complimentary to the Alberta Approach to Early Childhood Development is the creation of a Children's Charter. The Charter will be "used to guide decision making, both within government and in communities, and represents a commitment to uphold a "children first" approach when looking at all programs and policies that impact children and their families."

Municipal (City of Wetaskiwin)

Strategic Plan (2015 – 2018)

The City of Wetaskiwin's Strategic Plan contains one vision, one mission, five core values, four strategic goals, twenty-one outcomes, and numerous actions. The Plan was created to help guide the City and the services that it provides for a period of four years from 2015 to 2018. The importance of social and community well-being are reflected in a number of the Plan's goals, outcomes and actions.

The first goal identified in the Plan is that "The City of Wetaskiwin is a proud community of engaged citizens." Pertinent outcome statements identified include:

- Citizens are organizing, supporting and attending social, recreational and cultural events in the City, year round;
- The City is viewed as clean, welcoming and safe by all;

A long term action item identified for the City to help achieve the above goals and outcomes is the implementation of a strategy to address welcoming and inclusive issues which identifies barriers and funding opportunities.

Throughout the Plan are a number of statements which reflect the need to support economic development activities. However the Plan also recognizes that generating economic activity requires a comprehensive and holistic approach. One outcome statement in the Plan specifically identifies that "The Quality of life in Wetaskiwin attracts the necessary workforce to support our growing business community." A near term action statement identified to help realize this initiative is to "Enhance partnerships with external organizations to advance community initiatives."

Municipal Development Plan (2009)

The City of Wetaskiwin's 2009 Municipal Development Plan (MDP; required under the Municipal Government Act for all municipalities with a population exceeding 3,500 residents) outlines a number of broad based goals and strategies to help guide future growth and development. Foundational to the Plan are eight guiding principles, a number of which have relevance to the provision of social services, quality of life and citizen well-being. These include:

- The plan WILL establish land use patterns that WILL ensure a high quality of life for all citizens of Wetaskiwin;
- The plan WILL promote the development of partnerships between businesses, community and government agencies; and
- The plan WILL ensure that UNDEVELOPED LAND AREAS are designed to consider the long term needs of the CITY for physical, social, protective and recreational purposes.

The MDP further outlines a number of planning goals, objectives and policies to meet future needs for public infrastructure such as schools, recreation facilities and other public spaces. Transportation and housing are also identified as priorities in the MDP. The document identifies the goal of providing "a wide variety of housing types and options including a mixture of densities" and housing that is "accessible by multi-modal transportation methods".

FCSS 2012 Home Support Survey

In 2012 a Home Support Survey was fielded in order to help assess the provision of these services by the City's FCSS. Surveys were mailed to 98 home support recipients and 69 were returned (70% completion rate). Key findings included:

- 97% of respondents indicated that housekeeping services allowed them to continue living in their residence, while 99% would recommend the service to others.
- 91% of respondents found the contact with their homemaker to be helpful.
- 85% of respondents indicated that the information provided to them by the FCSS Coordinator was beneficial.
- 97% of respondents indicated that the housekeeping subsidy they received was beneficial.
- 97% of respondents were satisfied with City of Wetaskiwin FCSS Home Support Services.

Recreation and Parks Master Plan (2012)

Completed in 2012, the City's Recreation and Parks Master Plan sets forth a strategic plan for the delivery of recreation, parks and related services. Development of the Plan involved extensive consultation with city residents and stakeholders. Key findings from the consultation included:

- The top three (3) barriers to household participation in recreation and leisure opportunities were:
    1. Too busy / no time
    2. Better opportunities elsewhere
    3. Unware of some opportunities
- The top three (3) reasons for household participation in recreation and leisure activities were:
    1. Physical health / exercise
    2. To be with family / friends
    3. Pleasure / entertainment
- Fifty-seven percent (57%) of residents were satisfied with the availability of recreation opportunities and services in the region.
- Stakeholders and community groups expressed that recreation and leisure activities are important and bring about a number of broader community benefits for residents of all ages.

The Plan identified a number of strategies and recommendations to strengthen the provision of recreation and parks services in the City. Recommendations in the Plan with potential application or relevance to FCSS services include:

- Develop and maintain a volunteer roster of willing city residents.
- Assistance to local groups to host special events and/or competitions be formalized, enhanced and expanded.
- Recommended that all partnership opportunities be explored when contemplating recreation facility or park development and/ or program delivery.
- Recommended that consideration be given to social inclusion when contemplating recreation facility, parks and program delivery.

Transportation Master Plan (updated 2012)

The City's 2012 Transportation Master Plan includes a section on public transportation, which outlines the characteristics and strategies for managing current and future public transportation services. Current services reviewed in the Plan were the para-transit service (handivan), school transportation, greyhound and taxi services. The Plan also notes that other municipalities in the region have explored mass or regional transit services.

Using population projection, current transportation data and available usage and operating cost data from other municipalities, the Plan provides a preliminary feasibility analysis for public mass transit in Wetaskiwin. To meet the need for public transit four alternative options are provided:

- Expand Eligibility of Wetaskiwin Transit Services (handivan service)
- New Local Transit Service
- New Intermunicipal Transit Service (North)
- New Intermunicipal Transit Service (South)

The Plan concludes that mass public transit in Wetaskiwin would be a difficult proposition in the short given the relative short distance of commutes in the community and overall operating cost. Expanding the eligibility for residents to use the existing Wetaskiwin Transit Services was deemed the best short term option to better meet community need. It is important to note that Wetaskiwin Transit, while partially funded by the City, is an independent society. Two members of Council do sit on the Wetaskiwin Transit Society's Board. This Board makes specific decisions with respect to level of service and customers served. The City does not direct Wetaskiwin Transit.

Section

4

Inventory of Social Services

The City of Wetaskiwin FCSS provides a number of community resources, services and programs. FCSS operates with a total annual budget of $351,211, which includes a municipal contribution of $70,242. FCSS operates with 2 FTE and utilizes a number of part-time staff and volunteers. While FCSS delivers some of these programs directly, many others are offered through partnerships and collaborations with other organizations in Wetaskwin. Presented in this section is an overview of the preventative programs and services available to residents in the Wetaskiwin area.

City of Wetaskiwin FCSS Programs & Services

The City of Wetaskiwin FCSS plays a leading role in the delivery or support of numerous program and services. Summarized as follows are the programs, services and supports offered or coordinated directly by the City's FCSS.

Home Support Program

Home Support Services has two main components; **Meals on Wheels** and Housekeeping Services. Meals on Wheels provides hot meals at a cost of $6.50 per meal. Meals are prepared by The Bethaney Group on a contracted basis and delivered to clients by volunteers (currently 38 volunteers) Monday through Friday. The program currently serves 23 clients. Housekeeping Services currently serve over 100 clients on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. The program is tailored to seniors and individuals with disabilities who require assistance in order to remain in their home. Clients are charged a rate of $7.50 - $15.00 per hour based on their net income. If the service is paid for by a third-party agency a higher rate of $20 per hour is charged.
The Housekeeping Services program currently operates with five (5) part-time paid staff.

Community Grant Program

The Community Grant Program provides funding to not for profit organizations in Wetaskiwin that provide preventative programs and services that meet the mandate of FCSS. Grants are reviewed once per year (deadline in March). Organizations that receive funding must submit a final report which includes an outcome measurement system. Training on the outcome measurement system is mandatory for all organizations receiving support.

Identified below is a list of organizations and programs that received support in the last fiscal year (2013). In total $47,185 were distributed to 14 organizations.

- Boys & Girls Club of Wetaskiwin:
  Out of School Care programs ($14,800)
- Brighter Future Society: Parent support ($1,200)
- Community Addictions Coalition:
  Awareness campaign ($500)
- Community Learning Council:
  Encounters With Anger program ($7,800)
- Horizons Centre:
  Community garden project & Pioneer Days family activities ($1,000)
- Trendsetters Club: Community event ($500)
- Wetaskiwin & Area Early Childhood Coalition:
  Community family workshop ($2,850)
- Wetaskiwin Allied Arts & Crafts: Summer Day program ($5,785)
- Wetaskiwin Community Literacy Program:
  Community Outreach programs ($1,750)
- Wetaskiwin Parent Link Centre: Program supplies ($2,500)
- Wetaskiwin Senior Citizens Society:
  Program & activities for seniors ($2,500)
- Wetaskiwin Twilighters Vision Support Group:
  Outdoor visionary/imagery event ($500)
- Wetaskiwin & District Victim Services:
  Volunteer program support ($5,000)

Home Alone Safely Program

The Home Alone Safely Program is geared towards children aged 9 to 11 years of age with the objective of providing them with the skills to stay home alone for short periods of time. Programs are offered throughout the year (weekend or PD days). The two-part program includes a session with the parents and child and a session with only the child. The program is funded by FCSS by delivered by City of Wetaskiwin Recreation staff.

Community Development

The City of Wetaskiwin FCSS fills an important community development role in the city. FCSS works in partnership with numerous community organizations, agencies, committees and service providers to facilitate to a multitude of opportunities that benefit the community. Current community development initiatives undertaken by FCSS include:

- Family Day Campaign
- Seniors Wellness Conference (in coordination with other community and regional organizations)
- FCSS Women's Conference
- Coordination of bi-monthly inter-agency meetings
- Youth conference (in partnership with WRPS annual student conference)
- Family Activity Bags (in partnership with the Wetaskiwin Public Library)
- Toy Lending Library (in partnership with Early Education & Family Wellness)
- Parenting Workshops (in partnership with Early Education & Family Wellness)
- Pink Shirt Anti-Bullying Coalition
- Secret Santa (part of organizing committee)
- Early Years Community Advisory Council (part of organizing committee)

Important to the successful delivery of FCSS programming is the ability to evolve and refine programming based on community needs and current issues. The City of Wetaskiwin FCSS organizes and helps facilitate a number of community presentations on a variety of topics that are deemed pertinent and are continually assessing new initiatives. Those planned for 2015 include:

- Main Street Community Block Parties
- Volunteer Income Tax Support
- Community Volunteer Recognition Program

Information & Referral Services

A critical component to FCSS is providing information and referrals on a multitude of other community organizations and social services. The City of Wetaskiwin FCSS provides information and referrals through a variety of mechanisms, which include:

- Publishing of a Community Services Directory
- Publishing of a Services for Seniors Directory
- Publishing of a Newcomers Welcome Guide (new for 2015)
- Providing other community organizations with information on various government initiatives and programs.

Volunteer Services

FCSS acknowledges the important role volunteers play in the community and the delivery of preventative programming by offering or supporting a number of volunteer services and initiatives. FCSS provides referrals to volunteer opportunities and communicates with community organizations to share information and address issues related to volunteerism in the community. Other volunteer initiatives that FCSS directs or supports include:

- Meals on Wheels (volunteer recruitment, coordination and training)
- Community Clean-Up (volunteer coordination)
- National Volunteer Week (administrative support)
- Leader of Tomorrow youth volunteer recognition program (major sponsor)
- Secret Santa (committee member and volunteer recruitement)
- Municipal Emergency Plan (volunteer recruitment for Emergency Social Services component)

Preventative Social Programs Offered by Community Organizations

Numerous organizations in the Wetaskiwin area provide programs that address preventative social issues. The following chart provides an overview of these programs and the needs that they address.

Organization	Preventative Programs	Target Market(s)	Main Preventative Social Issues Addressed
Alberta Health Services	Home care Mental health & addictions Adolescent / sexual health program Early intervention program School health and promotions Health promotion programs Nutrition programs	All age groups	Addictions prevention Physical health and wellness Disease prevention Childhood development Family wellness Mental health and wellness
Alzheimers Caregivers Support Group	Support to individuals caring for a person with alzheimers	All age groups	Mental health and wellness Social inclusion
Boys and Girls Club of Wetaskiwin	Out of school care After school programs Summer camps Early Learning and Child Care Centre Enrichment Program Family Support Program Mentoring programs Rogers Raising the Grade Restorative Justice	Children and youth	Addictions prevention Critical hours programming Child and youth skill development Physical health and wellness Poverty Mental health and wellness Social inclusion
City of Wetaskiwin Recreation Department	Recreation and leisure programs PD and summer camps/programs	All age groups	Critical hours programming Child and youth skill development Mental health and wellness Physical health and wellness

Organization	Preventative Programs	Target Market(s)	Main Preventative Social Issues Addressed
Community Learning Council for Wetaskiwin & Area / Wetaskiwin Community Literacy	Helping adults pursue their interests in lifelong learning ESL One on one tutoring Tots programs Outreach literacy programs Children literacy programs	Seniors Adults Youth	Adult education and literacy Employment Poverty reduction Social inclusion
Diabetes Education Program (Wetaskiwin)	Education programs Referrals and information	All age groups	Personal health and wellness Disease prevention
Employment Placement & Support Services	Job bank Employment assistance	Adults	Employment Poverty reduction
Food Bank	Food for families facing financial distress	Families	Poverty reduction Physical health and wellness Disease prevention
Horizons Centre	Employment, community engagement, volunteerism, self-advocacy and independent living programs for adults with developmental disabilities.	Adults Families	Social inclusion Skill development Physical health and wellness Mental health and wellness
McMan Family Services (Wetaskiwin)	Healthy Families program	Children Youth Families	Mental health and wellness Physical health and wellness Family issues Parenting
Jumpstart	Financial assistance for child and youth sport and recreation programs.	Children Youth Families	Poverty reduction Physical health and wellness Social inclusion Skill development
KidSport	Financial assistance for child and youth organized sport programs.	Children Youth Families	Poverty reduction Physical health and wellness Social inclusion Skill development

Organization	Preventative Programs	Target Market(s)	Main Preventative Social Issues Addressed
Neighbours Outreach Wetaskiwin	Food Personal support	Adults Families	Poverty reduction Physical health and wellness
Primary Care Network	Assessment Health promotion Pre and post natal programs/assistance Disease prevention programs Wellness promotion Mental health programs and support	All age groups	Addictions prevention Personal health and wellness Disease prevention Childhood development Family wellness
Royal Canadian Legion Branch No.86	Assistance with veterans benefits.	Seniors	Poverty reduction Income support
Wetaskiwin Transit Society	Transit services for individuals requiring transportation .	Adult Seniors	Social inclusion Mental health and wellness Physical health and wellness Poverty reduction
Wetaskiwin & District Victim Services	Aiding and assisting victims of crime and tragedy.	All age groups	Grieving Mental health and wellness
Wetaskiwin and District Association for Community Service	Programs and services to enhance the quality of life for children and adults with disabilities.	Adults Families	Social inclusion Skill development Physical health and wellness Mental health and wellness

Organization	Preventative Programs	Target Market(s)	Main Preventative Social Issues Addressed
Wetaskiwin Parent Link Centre (operated by Central Parkland Parent Link Network)	Early learning activities Parent education and support programs Childhood development screening	Children Families	Mental health and wellness Physical health and wellness Family issues Parenting Child and youth skill development Social inclusion
Wetaskiwin Public Library	Programs and activities Information providing Safe public space	All age groups	Critical hours programming Child and youth skill development Mental health and wellness Adult education and literacy
Wetaskiwin Regional Public School	Student councelling Career councelling Mentoring Education support	Children Youth	Critical hours programming Child and youth skill development Mental health and wellness Physical health and wellness
Wetaskiwin Senior Citizens Society	Social programs and events Medical and wellness clinics Pension clinics	Seniors	Personal health and wellness Social inclusion Mental health and wellness
Wetaskiwin Twighlighters Club	Support for the visually impaired Social and wellness programs	All age groups	Social inclusion Skill development Physical health and wellness

Section

5

Trends & Issues

The provision of preventative social services is often based in social research from a variety of government and academic sources. Presented in this section is research relating to a number of social issues that are important in the context of preventative social service delivery. Also presented herein are some trends and "best practices" in the provision of social services.

Social Issues

Mental Health

The Canadian Mental Health Association estimates that 20% of Canadians will personally experience a mental illness in their lifetime and that 8% of Canadian adults will experience major depression at some time in their lives. While mental health issues affect all demographics and ages, the issue is of a particular concern among youth and young adults.[1]

- An estimated 10 – 20% of Canadian youth are affected by a mental illness or disorder.
- Suicide accounts for 24% of all deaths among 15 – 24 year olds and 16% among 25 – 44 year olds.
- Suicide is second only to accidents in terms of causes of death in 15 – 24 year old Canadians.
- 3.2 million Canadian youth aged 12 – 19 year old are at risk for developing depression.
- Just under half (49%) of those who feel they have suffered from depression or anxiety have never gone to see a doctor about the issue.
- It is estimated that only 1 out of 5 children who need mental health services receives them.

The overall significance and impacts of mental health is also increasingly being recognized by both the private and public sectors. On an annual basis it is estimated that the cost of mental health issues to Canadian society is in the magnitude of $51 billion.[2] As a result, mental health and wellbeing is becoming a focus area for both the public and private sectors. Corporate driven campaigns such as "Bell Let's Talk" have helped raise awareness and funding for mental health and related issues such as addictions and bullying.

Risk Factors for Family Instability & Poor Parenting

Increasingly, many preventative social service agencies are recognizing the impacts that positive parenting and family functioning can have on individuals as well as a broader community. The City of Calgary's Family & Community Support Services published a research brief in 2014 that identified a number of risk factors which can lead to poor family and parenting environments.[3]

- **Low Income:** is clearly related to parents' ability to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, transportation and clothing, along with recreational and other forms of programming that are important for healthy youth development
- **Social Isolation:** isolated parents without supportive networks of relatives and friends are more likely to maltreat or neglect their children. Reduced social support restricts the ability of family and community to offset the direct effects of poverty
- **Marital Conflict:** children who live in families featuring conflict (but not necessarily violence) between the parents is often associated with poor parenting, which is, in turn, associated with children's mal-adjustment and behaviour problems

Identifying and implementing strategies to combat these risk factors can play an important role in mitigating a host of other community and societal issues. Inter-agency partnerships often play a key role in the provision of programs and services that can help prevent the occurrence of issues such as financial distress, social isolation and marital conflict.

Addiction & Substance Abuse

Addiction and substance abuse issues can come about in multiple forms and have a wide spectrum of family, community and societal consequences. In some cases addiction may be obvious and put an individual and / or the person's family in immediate distress. However addiction issues can also be less overt and more gradual. While this form of addiction may not always receive as much attention, the long term affects to the individual and their family and friends can also be profound and harmful.

1 Canadian Mental Health Association. http://www.cmha.ca/media/fast-facts-about-mental-illness/#.U8mHg7FFqkw

2 CAMH, 2014 Annual Report.

3 http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/CNS/Pages/FCSS/FCSS-Resources.aspx

Much of the focus by preventative health and social service providers remains around children and youth. Research continues to show the direct connection between addictive behaviours and the family and social environment in which children and youth are raised. The 2014 "Childhood and Adolescent Pathways to Substance Use Disorders" report specifically outlines that prevention efforts can have the most profound in childhood and adolescence and that more should be done to identify risk factors in these age groups.[4]

Another report published by the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse in 2007 recognized a number of sub-segments of the youth population that are at a much higher risk of having heavy use, multi-drug substance abuse issues. The groups identified as being at high risk included:

- Runaway and street involved youth;
- Adolescents with co-occurring disorders;
- Youth in custody;
- Sexually-abused and exploited youth;
- First Nation, Inuit and Métis youth; and
- Gay, lesbian, bisexual and questioning teens.

The report further identified the need to better recognize signs of trauma, violence, stigma and neurophysiological vulnerability in these groups as these often lead to chronic substance abuse later in life.[5]

Social Isolation

Social isolation has often been described as resulting from a lack of social ties or sense of belonging, and continues to be linked to numerous physical and mental health issues. The effects and need to better prevent social isolation is being increasingly recognized by social service and health care providers. Many efforts to prevent social isolation have been focused around seniors who are often identified as being at a higher risk for becoming socially isolated. A research brief published by Calgary's Family & Community Support Services in 2014 summarized research from a number of sources which identified a variety of issues that can result from seniors becoming socially isolated, which include:

- Increased risk of chronic disease.
- Disability or chronic disease
- Reduced self-care
- Decreased immunity and slow wound healing
- Premature death
- Poorer sleep efficiency and fatigue
- Abuse
- Stress
- Loneliness, depression and other mental illnesses and suicide
- Poor nutrition
- Psychosomatic illness
- Reduced well-being.
- Quality of life.

A number of other population groups are often at a higher risk for becoming socially isolated. These include:

- Immigrants and refugees
- Single parents
- New parents
- Unemployed
- Individuals with disabilities

Preventing social isolation requires ensuring that vulnerable groups and individuals are provided with opportunities to establish or strengthen social ties. In many cases individuals may not be aware of these opportunities and/or face barriers (e.g. language, cultural, financial) to becoming more integrated into the community. Service providers can play a role in eliminating these barriers by offering supports, facilitating partnerships between program providers, and putting an emphasis on creating or supporting programs that are inclusive and welcoming.

4 Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, Substance Abuse in Canada: Childhood and Adolescent Pathways to Substance Use Disorders (2014).

5 Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, Youth in Focus.

Trends & Best Practices in Preventative Social Services

Increased Demand for Social Services

Over the past years, demand for social services has both diversified and intensified. Intensification of demand has arisen largely because of family instability. This instability has translated into a higher percentage of single-parent families and common law relationships, which tend to be less stable.

The increase in cases of child poverty and family violence has also led to an increase in the need for services for children and families. Other factors have also contributed to the rise in demand for social services both in the health and social services sector and in community organizations: stress, alcoholism, drug addiction, gambling addiction, dropping out of school, behavioural problems, traumatic events, etc. While some of these dynamics have long been present in society, the public is increasingly aware of these and therefore demands more by way of intervention. All these trends should be maintained, or even accentuated, over the next few years.[1]

Identifying Vulnerable Populations

The delivery of effective preventative social services requires providers to be constantly in-tune with the needs and issues in their community. More specifically, agencies and organizations must be able to identify those populations which are most vulnerable, and then align services and programs to mitigate or prevent these issues.

The identification of vulnerable groups within a community can occur through a variety of mechanisms which include:

- Gathering feedback from current program participants and clients.
- Ongoing communication and collaboration with other organizations, agencies and service providers.
- Conducting regular surveys of residents or specific populations.
- Being cognisant of trends, both local and regional.

Research supports that many vulnerable populations in a community are characterized by having poor social ties and structures.[2] While these individuals and groups may be difficult to reach, developing strategies to engage them in programs and services can have a significant impact. Many preventative service providers have found that reaching many vulnerable populations requires an increased focus on developing outreach initiatives and being creative in the implementation of promotions and marketing strategies. Vulnerable populations often face additional barriers to accessing services. In order to engage these individuals and groups, service providers must often find ways to eliminate barriers.

1 www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/qc/job_futures/statistics/4212.shtml

2 Calgary Family & Community Support Services. http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/CNS/Pages/FCSS/FCSS-Resources.aspx

Best Practices in After-School Programming

Many educators, preventative organizations and agencies and levels of government have placed a focus on after-school or "critical hours" programming. This is based largely on the recognition that providing positive programs and activities for youth can help deter deviant behaviour and build skills that will benefit children and youth later in life. Identified as follows are selected key attributes of successful after-school programs.

1. **Sustained Participation:** children and youth experience greater gains across a wide variety of outcomes if they participate with greater frequency (more days per week) in a more sustained manner (over a number of years).
2. **High Quality Programming:** there are a number of attributes that describe high quality programming.
   - » Appropriate supervision and structure
   - » Competent, qualified staff who:
     - – model positive behaviour
     - – actively promote mastery of the skills or concepts presented in activities
     - – listen attentively to participants
     - – frequently provide individualized feedback and guidance during activities
     - – establish clear expectations for mature respectful peer interactions
   - » Intentional programming with opportunities for autonomy and choice
   - » Strong partnerships:
     - – programs are more likely to exhibit high quality when they effectively develop, utilize, and leverage partnerships with a variety of stakeholders like families, schools, and community
3. **Mentoring Program:** the most effective mentoring programs are those that adhere to promising practices.
   - » Regular meetings, ideally at least once per week for at least a year are most beneficial
   - » Mentoring programs that engage parents appear to have greater successes in fostering positive developmental outcomes
   - » For young children, especially boys, mentoring activities that focus on play and structured activities may be most effective. Programs for adolescents should provide opportunities to explore and learn new things for which they can receive attention and praise, and emphasize the development of social skills and positive connections with adults
   - » A close relationship characterized by mutuality, trust, and empathy between the mentor and the mentee is one of the best predictors of positive developmental outcomes and may be even more important than the frequency of contact

Fostering Positive Parenting & Strong Families

Many preventative social service providers play an important role in ensuring that parents have access to the resources and supports required to successfully raise children and youth as well as create strong family environments. Ensuring that parents have necessary skills and supports to create these environments can have a profound impact in preventing instances of abuse, addiction, mental illness and a host of other ailments. A research brief published by Calgary's Family & Community Support Services identifies a number of key dimensions of positive parenting:

- **Warmth & Responsiveness:** parents express love and affection and are responsive to their child's needs and requests.
- **Control & Discipline:** parents outline specific rules and expectations and enforce these consistently as a child grows and matures, parents continue to set limits, but allow for more autonomy in the child's world.
- **Cognitive Stimulation:** parents ensure their children have materials that are stimulating; parents are verbally engaging and actively teach their children key concepts.
- **Modeling of Attitudes, Values, and Behaviours:** parents discuss their values, convey their attitudes, and act toward their child and others in the way they want their child to act.

- **Gatekeeping:** parents serve as links to the environment, influencing which family and friends their child interacts with and what outside activities and programs they become involved in.
- **Family Routines & Traditions:** parents create a daily routine as well as family traditions that help structure a child's expectations for the day as well as promote knowledge of cultural and family heritage.

A number of municipalities and their umbrella agencies (e.g. FCSS) have gone as far as to create and fund programs that can directly offer these supports to parents. This programming often consists of both "drop-in" and structured programs, and in many cases can provide referrals to parents that require additional or more ongoing supports.

Partnerships

Partnerships in the provision of preventative social services are becoming more prevalent. These partnerships can involve multiple entities and include government, not for profit organizations, schools and the private sector. The creation of partnerships can enhance service levels and more efficiently lever public funds.

In Alberta, many Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) organizations rely heavily on partnerships. Provincial FCSS funding has not increased in since 2009 which has resulted in the need to rely even more on collaborations with not for profit organizations and other municipal departments to deliver services. The Family and Community Support Services Association of Alberta offers its members with a number of resources and case studies that can be used to replicate best practices that have been experienced across the province in the development of partnerships.[3]

The complexity of preventative social services also requires many providers to establish strong working relationships with organizations and agencies that provide "reactive" or rehabilitative services such as health care providers and law enforcement. In many instances these services see the value of investing in preventative programs and initiatives.

3 Family and Community Support Services Association of Alberta.

Section

6

Community & Stakeholder Consultation Overview

A household questionnaire and stakeholder interviews were the two main mechanisms utilized in the consultation program. Utilizing both mechanisms ensured that a wide array of perspectives and feedback from residents and community organizations could be gathered and used in the development of the Community Social Needs Assessment. **The detailed findings from the consultation activities are presented under a separate cover entitled "Engagement Report".**

Method	Contacts	Responses	Response Rate	Margin of Error
Resident Mail-Out Survey	6,525	494	7.6%	±4.4%
Online Survey	—	17	—	N/A
Stakeholder Interviews	20	15	75%	N/A

Household Survey

- Top five overall issues in the community:
  - » Substance abuse / addictions (86% stated this issue exists);
  - » Depression / mental health issues (84% stated this issue exists);
  - » Violence & bullying (79% stated this issue exists);
  - » Can't afford recreation programs (74% stated this issue exists); and
  - » Relationship breakdown (73% stated this issue exists).
- Top five priorities that should be addressed in the community:
  - » Substance abuse / addictions (70% identified as a top priority);
  - » Affordable housing (54% identified as a top priority);
  - » Violence and bullying (46% identified as a top priority);
  - » Depression / mental health issues (44% identified as a top priority); and
  - » Seniors in-home support needs (41% identified as a top priority).
- Improvements required to existing social programming:
  - » Promotions and marketing of social programs in order to increase awareness and participation.
  - » Youth programming needs to be a continued priority and where possible enhanced.
  - » Increased and more stable funding sources for not for profit organizations that deliver social programs.

- New community based social programs that are required:
  - » Programs and services to address the issue of homelessness.
  - » Affordable housing strategies and programs
  - » New programs and approaches to address mental health issues.
- Approximately three-quarters (72%) indicated that they were able to locally access the services they needed (7% of respondents indicated that they were not able to access the services they needed).
- 71% of respondents had heard of FCSS while 23% had not.
  - » 53% were aware of programs provided by FCSS.
- Approximately two-thirds (66%) of respondent households had at least one member volunteer in the previous 12 months.
  - » 24% indicated that they had volunteered for a social service organization or activity

Stakeholder Interviews

Key findings and themes from the stakeholder interviews included:

- Mental health issues are considered significant and important. Respondents recognized and identified that mental health issues have a direct correlation to a host of other social issues (substance abuse, family violence, poverty, etc.).
- Concerns exist about substance abuse and addictions issues in the community. However differing perspectives exist over the nature and prevalence of these issues. Prevention and education programs have been identified as being important to combatting this issue.
- Transportation was identified as an issue and barrier for many individuals in accessing services and programs.
- Preventative programming for youth should be a high priority.
- Program and service provision in the community needs to be inclusive and culturally sensitive to ensure that services are accessible and positively perceived by all residents.
- Strong perspectives and opinions exist on the "state of" social well-being in the community. Perhaps more so than other similarly sized communities, social issues appear to have an impact on the overall perception of the community.
- Affordable housing is an issue that requires addressing.

Section

7

Conclusions & Recommendations

Based upon the research conducted and presented herein, and in the Engagement report, a number of conclusions and recommendations are identified. It is important to recognize that there are many services delivered by a variety of agencies, including FCSS, in Wetaskiwin. The intent of the following recommendations is not to suggest that the residents of the community are significantly under-served. Rather the recommendations are presented as means to further the services available in the community; enhance the strengths of the community; address some gaps; and make Wetaskiwin a better place to live. In some instances efforts are in place already—mentioning them in this context serves to reinforce their importance.

Social issues are best addressed through a holistic approach. While the recommendations presented herein provide direction for the City's FCSS department, it is important to recognize that some efforts will see FCSS work with other agencies. In the same vein as the axiom "it takes a whole village to raise a child", all members of the community have a hand in strengthening the community itself and the families and individuals within.

1. Ongoing Needs Identification

Through the development of this Needs Assessment a thorough program of research was undertaken to uncover the social needs in the community. An ongoing process should be instituted that would enable the identification of emerging or changing community needs. FCSS should institute an annual "State of the Community" survey. This survey, which could be fielded online, would enable community members and social agencies operating in the community the occasion to express their insights into the social needs in Wetaskiwin. Certainly the interagency meetings fulfill some of this function. However, formally gathering this information as an annual exercise, and soliciting input from community members, puts more structure around the research. The information gathered from this process will help FCSS allocate its resources.

2. Enhanced Promotion of FCSS & Other Community Programs

Wetaskiwin and its residents are serviced by a broad array of social service agencies and programs. While it is not unusual that people are often unaware of agencies and services until they require them, the level of awareness of the services, and of FCSS itself, could be stronger. Seventy-one percent of residents in the household survey indicated that they are aware of FCSS with fifty-three percent of that segment saying they are aware of FCSS programming. Greater awareness of organizations and programs can enhance the efficiency of people accessing programs at their time of need. Making people aware of FCSS is important as further means of demonstrating the good work of the City government. Residents should be aware of the resources and efforts expended to enhance wellness in Wetaskiwin.

While promotion is already occurring it is recommended that efforts are continued to promote the brand of FCSS and the various other social agencies and programs in the community. Community directories and guides should continue to be developed. The Wetaskiwin Times should be utilized as should other mediums (Program Guide, e-newsletters, social media, etc) to communicate this message. Consideration should be given to feature various programs and agencies and the good works they are doing in the community in some form of messaging. FCSS could further be promoted as a referral agency for people looking for programs. This can facilitate a "one-stop shopping" type of approach that occurs to some degree already. Positioning FCSS as an information hub can enhance the efficiency of people's search for appropriate organizations and services.

3. Issues of Focus

Several issues of focus should be addressed in Wetaskiwin. This is not to suggest that programs are not available or offered to deal with these issues. It is also not to suggest that these issues are dominant in the community. Rather, these are issues that have been identified through the community consultation as ones that require particular attention. An aspect of this focus may be communicating the actual circumstances or degree to which the issue exists in Wetaskiwin. The issues to focus upon include the following.

- Substance abuse & addictions
- Affordable housing
- Violence and bullying
- Depression and mental health
- Seniors in home support (they have a successful program now)

These issues are not always independent on one another—in fact they may be interrelated. People dealing with mental health issues, for example, may also have issues with substance abuse. The specific approach implemented by FCSS to these issues needs to be determined. The approach may involve working with other agencies in the community. Whatever it may be, specific strategies need to be developed and implemented that respect the proactive nature of FCSS program and service provision.

4. Transportation

Currently the Wetaskiwin Community Transportation Society (Wetaskiwin Transit) operates a public transportation service in the community. This operation is provided for seniors and adults with special needs and for those unable to drive due to medical reasons. Transportation is provided in the city as well as bordering areas. This service is essential for many in the community. Through the consultation process, greater access to public transportation as well as enhanced services were identified. The existing program of transit is currently being expanded. Periodic reviews of the service vis-à-vis the public demand should be implemented. Affordable public transportation can be an expensive proposition for a provider. There is a balancing act to adequately address the needs of the public in a manner that is affordable. As noted previously in this report, the Wetaskiwin Transit Society operates independently. It is not suggested that this independence be challenged. FCSS can share the findings of this Needs Assessment with Wetaskiwin Transit.

5. Cultural Inclusiveness

Wetaskiwin is home to a sizeable Aboriginal population. While the City is working to improve its relationship with nearby bands, additional work is required to ensure the population of Aboriginal people living in Wetaskiwin is able to effectively access needed services. While services are typically available to all residents, further efforts are needed to ensure they present a welcoming environment to the Aboriginal community.

The population of immigrants in Wetaskiwin is growing. It is important to ensure these newcomers are welcomed into the community. The local churches are working in this regard as many of the new immigrants join their congregations.

The same cannot be said for many of the city's Aboriginal population, many of whom are not affiliated closely with a church in the community. Many of these people are not even affiliated with the neighbouring bands so that relationship building between the City and the bands does not benefit this group of people. Initiatives to be more welcoming and inclusive should be explored for services and programs. Modeled through City leadership (which is occurring) these populations should be considered welcome additions to the community. Further, exploration of an Aboriginal welcome and service centre should be undertaken. This may include investigating partnership opportunities with the Canadian Native Friendship Centre.

6. Emphasis on Youth

There is a variety of programs, recreation and otherwise, for youth in the community. The Boys and Girls Club is an excellent example of youth programming as is minor sports. Canadian Tire's Jumpstart program is active in the community—it removes financial barriers for kids so they are able to participate in sports. KidSport also operates in Wetaskiwin offering financial assistance for children aged 18 years and younger for registration fees and equipment so they can play a season of sport. Offering programs for youth, even those considered as recreational programs, can serve as preventative. Effective programs can keep youth from participating in less than desirable activities. These types of programs can also have positive impacts on many other issues that can affect youth such as violence and bullying, substance abuse, social isolation, or mental health issues to name some.

The critical hours (from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.) are important ones to ensure programming is offered. Consideration needs to be given to working across City departments and with other sectors (including the schools) to see that programming in the critical hours is available. Programming that accommodates

unstructured activities is desirable. The City should investigate "Everybody Gets to Play" which is a Canada wide initiative developed by the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association that aims to make recreation more accessible for children and youth from families living with lower incomes.

Some community members and businesses in Wetaskiwin have been generous in providing equipment for underprivileged youth. Consideration should be given to formalizing this type of program. While the interests of children and youth are being considered and programs are operating to provide opportunities for them, efforts need to be continued.

7. Positive Messaging for Wetaskiwin

Wetaskiwin serves as a regional hub for business, recreation, retail, and social services and programs. As noted previously there are innumerable agencies and programs available for access in the community that address the need of community members in all areas including social issues. Because of the prevalence of programs and services, Wetaskiwin attracts people to the community that require these services.

In some circles there is a negative perception of Wetaskiwin and its residents. Efforts are needed to positively promote the city to outsiders and to residents themselves. Wetaskiwin is a caring community. Positive affirmations and celebrations should be undertaken to promote the positive aspects of the community and of the service providers in Wetaskiwin. Community building and image enhancements would help people see the community in a more positive light. A more positive self-concept can help the community become more unified and more caring. Additionally, an enhancement to its image can be beneficial in attracting additional residents and businesses. Key messages should be developed as should a plan to communicate them.

8. Cross-Sectoral Collaboration

There is a well-established interagency group that meets regularly. This body provides a great opportunity to discuss and address community social issues. The effectiveness of this group should be leveraged. Open dialogue about broad community issues can be discussed. There may be opportunities for community outcomes to be addressed and sub groups of the larger group to be developed to focus on certain areas. Comments provided by stakeholder indicated that there are many positive outcomes from the meetings currently—wins are occurring.

Each organization that is part of the interagency group does have its own mandate to address – each is also working with individuals, groups, or the community to make the community a better place. There is an opportunity to take this functioning group and further its efforts by bringing a focus on broad community outcomes. In effect, this group could serve as an overall steward of this Community Social Needs Assessment.

9. Volunteerism

As in any community, volunteers are an integral component of program, service, and event provision in Wetaskiwin. The volunteer spirit is good in the community, and generally volunteers are able to be recruited. FCSS does offers some support services for community volunteers including promoting opportunities and identifying potential volunteers. Certainly the assistance of volunteer recruitment for community organizations is a great help. Some focus should be given however to working with the community to creating meaningful volunteer opportunities for persons with disabilities and at risk and marginalized youth. Providing opportunities for these segments of the community widens the volunteer pool. At the same time it helps bring these individuals "into" the community.

A meeting of organizations that utilize volunteers can be convened to discuss their volunteer challenges and inform them of the existing services that are available. Through this discussion additional services that could be provided to help address volunteer issues can be identified. Efforts have been expended and initiatives attempted to address challenges with volunteers. For example a volunteer fair has been held previously to limited success. Organizations have experienced ongoing challenges to varying degrees recruiting and retaining volunteers. Any assistance that can be provided will be beneficial both to the organization but to the community more broadly.

10. Housing

There is an articulated need for affordable and low cost housing in Wetaskiwin, some specifically for seniors. While it is rarely the City's duty to provide housing, the City can provide encouragement and even incentives to entities that provide housing. For example, bylaws can be put in place that can help increase the number of basement suites. A housing registry could be developed as well. Long a staple on university campuses used by students looking for affordable accommodations, a registry can provide one location where rental accommodations can be perused. Habitat for Humanity is a program that provides housing to families in need. There are currently Habitat building projects in Wetaskiwin.

The Rental Housing Report (Fall 2014) released by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation illustrates that rental rates are lower than the provincial average. These rates are higher than those in Camrose and Lacombe, however.

11. Seniors Services

While a number of the conclusions and recommendations can apply to the seniors population, specifically identifying services for seniors is warranted. Wetaskiwin has a greater proportion of seniors than does the provincial average. As a hub in a rural area, Wetaskiwin becomes a draw for some seniors moving closer to services than can be found in the rural areas. There is a home support program that is in operation within Wetaskiwin that is successful—clients have provided very good reviews of the service. This service needs to continue. Isolation is an issue that impacts many seniors. Providing in home supports certainly helps seniors stay in their homes longer but it also provides a solution to the issue of social isolation. Programs need to be in place which provides opportunities for seniors to recreate with others in addition to addressing their health needs.

Developing and offering multi-generational programs which will bring youth and seniors together can have great benefits as well. These type of programs can address isolation, community cohesiveness, and disconnected youth. Programs of this ilk can see increased understanding and respect among people in each segment.

12. Life/Job Skills Training

Recommendations have been provided relating to youth, seniors, and the Aboriginal population and immigrants. There are services needed for adults that pertain to participation in society and the work world. Literacy skills are being addressed to some degree, particularly for immigrants with English as a second language. Literacy skills for others in the community in need are available and should be continued to be offered. These programs need to ensure that they are welcoming and inclusive. Further, skills for successful participation in the workforce is a need. For some people who have had little experience in the workforce, the understanding of basic expectations employers have of staff is not fully entrenched (e.g. the importance of being on time, length of breaks). These programs are often aimed at youth but there is a place to offer this type of training for anyone needing it. The Aboriginal and newcomer populations are an obvious place to extend it. There are some organizations and agencies in the community that do offer services to address these issues. Efforts should be expended to ensure people have appropriate access to the needed programs. As mentioned previously as well, it is important that people are able to connect to the existing services in the community.

city of Wetaskiwin

RC strategies