

# City Of Elliot Lake Community Safety and Well-Being Plan 2021



**Prepared June 1, 2021**

## **Table Of Contents**

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Message from Police Services Chair                | ...3  |
| Community Safety and Well-Being Plan Introduction | ...4  |
| Advisory Committee                                | ...6  |
| Community Overview                                | ...8  |
| What's Already Being Done                         | ...12 |
| Elliot Lake's Vulnerable Populations              | ...16 |
| Safety Strategy                                   |       |
| Sexual Assault Survivor Treatment                 | ...18 |
| Well-being Strategies                             |       |
| Isolated Seniors Support Strategy                 | ...20 |
| Youth Engagement Initiative                       | ...22 |
| Next Steps  | ...24 |
| Accessibility                                     | ...24 |
| Resources   | ...24 |

## **Message from the Chair of the Police Services Board**

The City of Elliot Lake is committed to providing residents of all ages a safe place to work, learn and play. As our community continues to grow and evolve, initiatives such as this Community Safety and Well-being Plan become an important tool in charting our course for the future. Proactive approaches such as this plan, will help to ensure that our community's future needs are met.

As the Chair of Elliot Lake's Police Services Board, I am fully dedicated to the well-being of our residents and exercises like the preparation of this plan allow Council, City Staff and our Community Partners to identify opportunities that will make a quantifiable and tangible difference in the lives of Elliot Lakers.

It was my pleasure to serve on the advisory committee that shaped this report. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the other members whose input brought this plan to fruition. The experience brought to the virtual meeting table was invaluable and it confirmed to me that our community is filled with talented and dedicated community partners. If these members are an indication of the resources we have available, I am excited for our future.

Although this plan is intended to serve as a guide for specific initiatives to increase safety and well-being in Elliot Lake, part of that responsibility also lies with our citizens. I ask all residents to be cognizant of each other's needs, to be kind to one another and to continue to make Elliot Lake the best place in the world to call home.



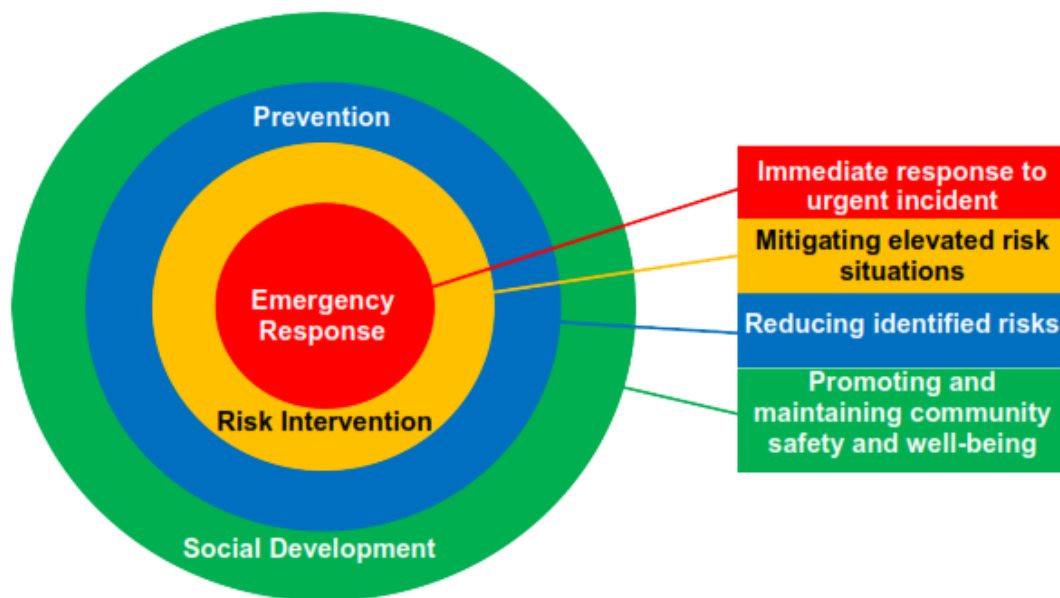
Mayor Dan Marchisella

## **Community Safety and Well-Being Plan Introduction**

On January 1, 2019, legislative requirements mandating Community Safety and Well-being planning under the Police Services Act came into effect. The City Of Elliot Lake, in accordance with the act, began the process of preparing a City specific plan. This plan allows communities such as Elliot Lake to take a leading role in defining and addressing locally identified and prioritized needs. An effective and comprehensive CSWB Plan requires collaboration among multiple partners to develop strategies for proactively addressing locally identified priority risks and/or populations. Essentially, CSWB is a concept that unites a local collaborative of service sectors under a pursuit of shared outcomes. This approach aims to improve interactions between police, community partners and the City's most vulnerable residents.

### **The Community Safety & Well-Being Approach**<sup>1</sup>

It is a long-term strategy to make safety and well-being a reality for vulnerable individuals, families, groups and locations. A CSWB Plan includes strategies for community safety and well-being at four levels of intervention: **social development**, **prevention**, **risk intervention**, and **emergency response**.



**The goals of a localized CSWB plan include:**

- Reduce harms and victimization for all elements of the community.
- Reduce demand for, and costs of, emergency response or incident interventions and services (Red Zone).
- Enhanced communication and collaboration among sectors, agencies and organizations
- Stronger families and improved opportunities for healthy child development
- Healthier, more productive individuals that positively contribute to the community
- Increased understanding of and focus on priority risks, vulnerable groups and neighborhoods
- Transformation of service delivery, including realignment of resources and responsibilities to better respond to priority risks and needs
- Increased engagement of community groups, residents and the private sector in local initiatives and networks
- Enhanced feelings of safety and being cared for, creating an environment that will encourage newcomers to the community
- Increased awareness, coordination of and access to services for community members and vulnerable groups
- More effective, seamless service delivery for individuals with complex needs
- New opportunities to share multi-sectoral data and evidence to better understand the community through identifying trends, gaps, priorities and successes

To achieve these goals, residents, community groups, organizations, partners, and municipal leaders must collectively prioritize and take action to enhance safety and well-being for all. This is a collective enterprise. No single agency, or even handful of agencies, can support community safety and well-being alone. Enacting a CWSB plan will require commitment, leadership, patience, creativity, and above all, interest in learning new ways of working together on behalf of the whole community.

### **The Advisory Committee**

The first step to conducting the CSWB plan was to identify a coordinator and assemble an Advisory Committee to serve as a guide in the formation of the plan. The Advisory Committee was intended to be reflective of multi-sectoral leadership and representation from Elliot Lake.

The CSWB plan was led by a coordinator, Steve Antunes, from the City of Elliot Lake, who was responsible for coordinating the advisory committee and supporting the writing of the plan.

As per CSWB toolkit requirements, an Advisory Committee was formed with representation from:

- The Elliot Lake Police Services Board
- Elliot Lake Secondary School
- Counselling Centre of East Algoma
- Children's Aid Society of Algoma
- Ontario Provincial Police
- City Of Elliot Lake

Representatives joining as part of the Advisory Committee were reflective of the community of Elliot Lake, and had the authority to make recommendations and decisions on behalf of their respective agencies concerning resources and priorities. The Advisory Committee consisted of representation from police services, children/youth service sector, community/social service section, health/mental health sector, and education sector.

In February 2021, the Advisory Committee held their first meeting to identify priority risks that would guide the formation of the plan.

The Advisory Committee identified the following priority risks within Elliot Lake:

- Mental health
- Substance use
- Poverty
- Housing
- Transportation
- Crime and Victimization

To address these priority risks, the Committee discussed:

- Risk and protective factors related to these risks
- Strengths, assets, barriers and challenges related to providing services
- Potential outcomes related to these risks
- Recommendations for improvement in service provision and integration, and to enhance overall community safety and well-being

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and capacity limitations, in-person community consultation with residents was not possible due to public health guidelines and safety restrictions in place. On May 19, 2021 a virtual public consultation was held and attended by several community members who offered valuable input to the plan.

It was the decision of the coordinators and Advisory Committee to use available resources, plans, and guidance documents, as well as the expertise of the representatives to form this initial CSWB plan.

A review of the plan was also completed by a Public Health Specialist from Algoma Public Health and very useful edits and additional information was provided.

As a living document, there will be opportunities for community input engagement in the future through the form of a community survey, roundtable, or engagement session/focus group when public health measures are lifted and the plan progresses through a revision period. The City of Elliot Lake understands the value of including public perceptions and feedback when working to identify local risks. Going forward, the City will look to include residents and members from vulnerable groups, such as youth and senior citizens, when implementing, evaluating, and advancing the CSWB plan.

## **Community Overview**

In 2018, the City of Elliot Lake conducted a Community Profile that outlined demographics, labor force, transportation and shipping, taxes and utilities, building and development-related fees, business support programs and services, and quality of life of the community. While this profile acts as a more comprehensive document giving the background of Elliot Lake, a brief summary has been provided below.

### **An Aging Population**

Established in 1955, The City of Elliot Lake is a community that combines the hospitality of a small town with the services of a larger, urban centre. The pristine wilderness and thousands of lakes that surround the community, provides residents and visitors with many opportunities for outdoor recreation such as hiking, camping and fishing. The City has a population of over 10,000 residents and remains the largest municipality between Sudbury and Sault Ste. Marie.

Originally a booming uranium mining town in the 1950's, the 1990's saw the closure of mines and the dwindling of the population. The City made a shift and began attracting retirees through a not for profit initiative called Elliot Lake Retirement Living. The Retirement Living initiative made Elliot Lake an affordable and ideal retirement destination, and one of the most popular retirement communities in the province. This initiative revitalized the city and led to new industries emerging, such as cottages and tourism.

Recent statistics revealed that the resident population of Elliot Lake is primarily composed of an older adult population, with the majority of residents being 60 years of age or older<sup>2</sup>. The median age of the population is 59<sup>2</sup>, indicating that the city has one of the oldest populations in Ontario. In addition, majority of couples (married or common law) were also without children<sup>2</sup>. Interestingly, only 10% of the City's population is under the age of 25<sup>2</sup>, however that number is changing. Enrollment in Elliot Lake Secondary School is up 17% in 2021 highlighting an uptick in younger families moving to the City. This also highlights a capacity issue in the local schools. Beginning in 2021, grade 7 and 8 students will be moved to Elliot Lake Secondary School to increase the available space in primary schools.



### Housing

In the preceding 18 months, available housing has all but vanished while the cost of housing has increased dramatically in Elliot Lake and surrounding areas. This lack of affordable housing (both for ownership and rental) coupled with increasing costs of living (hydro, taxes, etc.) has resulted in hardship for low-income earners, those on fixed incomes or pension plans, seniors and those seeking home ownership. Based on Census data from 2016, the average household size in Elliot Lake was 2 persons.<sup>2</sup>

### Income

According to Census data, income levels in Elliot Lake are below other cities in Ontario. The median individual income for residents in 2015 was \$24,594 as compared to \$33,539 in Ontario. In addition, the household gap is much larger with Ontario median household income at \$74,287 while median Elliot Lake household incomes register at \$42,466. Further, 31% of residents rely on Government funds as part of their income as opposed to 11% provincially<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, there is significantly lower income and higher reliance on government financial supports within Elliot Lake when compared to the province of Ontario, which can have implications to health and well-being as a primary social determinant of health.

### Public Transportation

The City of Elliot Lake has a public transportation system in place. This service covers the residential area of the community with most residents being less than a 5 minute walk from a bus stop. Being a city in Northern Ontario that sees winter temperatures drop below freezing from mid-October to April can pose challenges for safe, active transportation and increased reliance on public transportation systems.

### Geography

Geographically, the city is located 161 Kms from Sudbury and 200 Kms from Sault Ste. Marie. The distance from these larger centers requires substantial travel time for City of Elliot Lake residents to access health, recreational and commercial services not offered in the smaller surrounding communities.

### Education

Elliot Lake's educational institutions include 2 public elementary schools, 2 Catholic elementary schools, Public and Catholic French elementary schools and both French and English secondary schools.

## Health

The City of Elliot Lake has a wide range of health care services including Optometry, Dentistry, Chiropractic, Orthodontic, Dietetic, Family Health, Emotional support work, and Counselling (substance abuse, mental health, etc.). The City also is home to St. Joseph's General Hospital, a 58-bed accredited acute care facility with medical, surgical, obstetrical, pediatrics and chronic care facilities and a 24-hour emergency department. From a preventative and upstream service perspective, Elliot Lake is also serviced by Algoma Public Health and is home to a district office. Public health services include those focused on healthy, active living, chronic disease prevention, vaccine preventable diseases and emergency management, environmental health, healthy child development and school health.

## Facilities

The City contains a range of recreational facilities. These include a municipal pool, hockey arena, privately held curling club and 3 fitness facilities (1 public, 2 private). The City also has 2 municipal beaches and a Gym that allows for basketball and other indoor sports, as well as, walking programs. These facilities are aging rapidly, have required a large amount of maintenance and still require significant upgrades. The City is planning for a multi-use recreational hub, however, this project is still in its infancy. In 2019, due to a roof collapse, Elliot Lake lost its Lester B. Pearson Civic Center that housed the community's theater and served as a home to a multitude of arts clubs. This facility is also in the process of being replaced, but this project too is very much in its infancy.

## Safety

The Crime Severity Index measures the variance in severity of crime, as reported and brought to the attention of police, from year to year within Canadian municipalities. Based on the 2018 Crime Severity Index, Elliot Lake ranks higher than the national average in rates per 100,000 in:

| <b>Crime Type</b>                                 | <b>Elliot Lake Rate per 100,000</b> | <b>Canada Rate per 100,000</b> | <b>Comparison to National Average</b> |
|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Assault   | 576.65                              | 457.01                         | Higher                                |
| Sexual Assault                                    | 88.72                               | 75.89                          | Higher                                |
| Robbery   | 62.1                                | 60.58                          | Higher                                |
| Fraud   | 399.22                              | 349.2                          | Higher                                |
| Breaking and Entering                             | 345.99                              | 431.24                         | Lower                                 |
| Impaired Driving                                  | 133.07                              | 190.49                         | Lower                                 |
| Other Controlled Drugs, Trafficking or Production | 8.87                                | 31.58                          | Lower                                 |

According to the index, youth criminal justice act offences are non-existent.

In the Maclean's<sup>3</sup> ranking of Canada's most dangerous places for 2020, Elliot Lake sits at 22, up from position 25 in 2019, of 237 locations in the country ranked based on the Crime Severity Index.

## **What's already being done**

The Community Safety and Well Being Plan serves as a great tool to document and share what initiatives are already in place in our community, as facilitated by the community and other stakeholders. The plan also allows us to expand the reach and effectiveness of the resources available and being developed in the City. However, despite many assets and available resources, the Advisory Committee understood that there is always room for growth of the existing initiatives and that the opportunity certainly exists for new programs and collaborations.

### **Community Safety Officer**

The East Algoma (Elliot Lake) Detachment of the OPP has a designated Community Safety Officer (CSO). This officer is tasked with conducting a number of educational presentations meant to better inform the public on issues of concern within their community. The CSO specifically speaks to Senior Citizens regarding online fraud and students regarding drug use, bullying and the dangers of social media. The officer holds fixed officer hours, intended to allow the City's vulnerable citizens regular, scheduled access to a member of the OPP. Through education the CSO provides the public with the tools necessary to avoid situations where they may have otherwise become victims.

### **Mobile Crisis Response Team**

The Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCRT) was initiated in August 2020 and represents a joint venture between the City of Elliot Lake, the OPP and the Counselling Centre of East Algoma (CCEA). A social worker, employed by the CCEA, works with the OPP in order to provide a co-response to individuals in crisis. This program allows those in need to connect with a social worker at the exact moment they are in crisis and in turn assists in transitioning them to the most appropriate service provider. The program also gives officers the benefit of a social worker's input when determining whether an individual in crisis should be apprehended under the Mental Health Act for further assessment, or if they would be better served by being put into contact with community providers. In the event of a hospitalization, the social worker can be the conduit through which information flows to health care professionals, in order to ensure they have a full understanding as to why the person was deemed in need of psychiatric assessment. The co-response model is intended to provide the best possible response to those in crisis, while avoiding the criminalization of Mental Health.

### Situation Table

The Situation Table is a formalized, multi-agency, risk intervention model. It is a meeting which convenes regularly with police and other human service professionals from a multitude of organizations in order to review individuals or situations thought to be of acutely elevated risk. If it is determined that the situation or individual(s) are at imminent risk of harm or victimization, then the involved agencies will work collaboratively to coordinate an intervention intended to reduce those risk factors and increase safety factors. The Situation Table in Elliot Lake currently meets on a biweekly basis, however, ad hoc meetings can be called in order to address those in immediate needs of multi-agency assistance.

### Age Friendly Delivery Program

This project was rolled out in March of 2020 in response to Covid-19, and serves as a resource for the most vulnerable citizens in our community. Clients place their order through City Staff and groceries and personal care items are delivered to their doorstep followed by an invoice for payment. This has greatly reduced the risk of infection among vulnerable older adults, increasing the ability of homebound residents to have access to proper nutrition and essential resources.

### RIDE Spot Checks

The City of Elliot Lake annually applies for a Reduced Impaired Driving Everywhere (RIDE) grant from the Province in order ascertain funding to conduct additional RIDE programs within their community. This funding allows for dedicated officers to be deployed specifically to address the issue of impaired driving. Officers strategically perform RIDE spot check programs both as a means of stopping those who are driving while under the influence and as a deterrent for those who may otherwise have chosen to drive.

### Focused Patrols

The OPP employs the use of analytics to determine where an officer's time can be most effectively spent during their tour of duty. Regional Operational Analysts provide officers with real time information about where their efforts should be concentrated and those "prolific" offenders within their area. As new concerning trends are identified, focus initiatives are created to address those needs.

### Affordable Access Card

The City of Elliot Lake provides an affordable access card to residents who have a household income below the government issued low-income cut-off that is based on the size of the family unit. For example, for an average sized family of 2, the minimum necessary income is considered \$32,270.<sup>4</sup> Through this program, cardholders receive discounted prices when registering for buying transit passes, recreation or other municipal programs. This has several benefits:

- Reduced transit costs allow low wage earners to be able to commute more economically. This leads to better nutrition and health as users have additional financial resources for higher quality food and other basic necessities
- Lowered costs for municipal facilities including the pool and arena ensures that costs do not limit access to physical fitness opportunities, making community resources more accessible and equitable for all. This increases overall health and well-being
- Lowered costs for pet tags. This encourages low income earners to register their pets with the City therefore giving Municipal Enforcement the information on rabies vaccinated pets.

### Accessibility Action Plan

In 2020, the City of Elliot Lake put into place a 5-year accessibility plan. This plan takes into consideration the accessibility needs of community members that may have any form of disability. This allows members of the City with limitations the ability to access facilities and services while maintaining dignity and independence.

### Age Friendly Action Plan

In 2017, the City of Elliot Lake prepared an Age Friendly Action Plan. This plan outlined short, medium and long-term goals to make the City an age friendly community. An Age Friendly community adapts its structures and services to be accessible to and inclusive of not only older people, but people of all ages with varying needs and capacities. Some of the key initiatives in the plan included the following:

- Develop a vulnerable persons registry, which includes an investigation into developing a phone or visitor 'check in' service for isolated persons
- Investigate and review operations of outdoor facilities
- Maintain existing public benches and increase number of public benches along walkways and trails
- Improve way finding signage, label trails within community (i.e. Cross Country Ski Trails, ATV trails, walking/hiking trails), identify premium trails that are accessible and identify Age Friendly trails within city limits
- Create intergenerational programs to connect youth and seniors
- Develop a bike route
- Install equipment in parks that can be used by those with varying needs and abilities, including special needs
- Increase accessibility of beach areas by creating pathways for water access

### Safe Trade Spot

In conjunction with the East Algoma OPP, a safe trade spot was established in front of the local detachment. This was introduced to lower instances of fraud and assaults by encouraging those buying or selling items online to make the exchange in a spot monitored by video cameras. This initiative focuses on the enhancement and protection of public safety.

### Project Lifesaver

Project Lifesaver is a radio-frequency technology based system used by law enforcement search teams to help in the search efforts of missing individuals. The endeavour involves attaching a radio transmitter device to the wrist or ankle of persons at-risk of wandering. The transmitter emits an inaudible pulse once per second that can be picked up by a hand-held directional antenna. Trained operators are dispatched at the first notification of a missing person and are able to locate them by following the pulse. Average distance that a person is able to be tracked is a few miles. One (1) Elliot Lake resident has been saved with this valuable tool.

### Housing Initiatives

Algoma District Services Administration Board's (ADSAB) programs offer residences or financial assistance to allow clients to remain in their current rental accommodation. In the City of Elliot Lake, ADSAB offers both public housing and partnerships with community-based organizations for nonprofit housing. They also facilitate an affordable housing program offering homes at affordable market rents.

Maplegate Shelters is an organization within Elliot Lake that is sponsored by both public and private organizations. Maplegate offers a 13-bed women's shelter, 6-bed men's shelter, 5-bedroom transitional house for women and a 4-bedroom transitional home for men. Transitional facilities offer transitional and outreach supports including a food security program.

### Ontario Provincial Police Detachment

The City of Elliot Lake is policed by the East Algoma Detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police. This policing model allows the City to have access to a large amount of resources and experience not readily available to a local police force. The Ontario Provincial Police is one of North America's largest deployed police services with more than 5,800 uniformed officers, 2,400 civilian employees and 750 Auxiliary officers. They provide essential services that ensure the safety and security of the people of the Province of Ontario.

## **Elliot Lake's Vulnerable Populations**

The Advisory Committee identified the following list of vulnerable populations that are to be addressed by this CSWB plan.

### **Isolated Seniors**

This group has been identified as seniors who have moved to the community from other locations and then, as a result of circumstances (health decline, death of spouse), find themselves without a natural support network to assist them as they age. Residents who were accustomed to multiple shopping areas and social spaces have found that the urban way of life and availability of places to congregate is much less in a smaller community. This has resulted in them becoming isolated in their residences, where they must age in place and may lack social connections and supports. Isolation among older adults has been enhanced by measures in place to reduce Covid-19 transmission, furthering the barriers to socialization and gathering among older adults, despite some programming in place.

### **Isolated Youth**

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to an influx of isolated youth. For this group, peers are a significant part of their life and the reality of constant isolation has had a significant impact on the mental health of many of the community's young people. Virtual classrooms have only served to further impact this issue with students spending full school days in front of a computer without any casual, in-person social interactions. The ongoing lockdowns have meant that this group does not have the social or recreational outlets previously available to them by way of school sports and clubs. Opportunities for fitness are reduced and the acceptance of increased screen time are the 'perfect storm' for negative impacts on mental health and increased use of substances.

### **Low Income Children**

The education sector has identified children in low-income households as a vulnerable group. These youth are unable to participate in sporting activities due to lack of funds to purchase equipment or pay fees associated with leagues or clubs. This leads to a lack of physical fitness, as well as a strain on their mental health associated with mental exclusion. Without activities to focus their attention and energy, youth may pursue other, less positive or productive outlets to express themselves.

### **Students attaining their High School Diploma**

Prior to Covid-19, a high percentage of high school students in Elliot Lake successfully graduated with a diploma. Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, educators are raising concerns regarding lower credit accumulation. This lower success rate could lead to under-employment and an influx of youth remaining in the community as opposed to pursuing post-secondary education options outside of the City.



### Substance Involved

While the youth were not identified as a vulnerable population in regards to substance abuse, adults and seniors were. The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the use of alcohol and drugs, as other coping strategies have been limited by the pandemic. Additionally, face-to-face residential treatment options have been greatly reduced during times of lockdown to provide facilities with the time to bring in PPE required for congregate settings to be safe. The increase in opiate related deaths and overdoses cannot be overstated. For example, 42 opioid-related deaths in the public health region since the beginning of the pandemic to the end of 2020, is significantly higher number than the 15 deaths that occurred in the same period in the previous year<sup>5</sup>.

## **Safety Strategy**

### **Priority Risk #1: Sexual Assault as a Source of Crime and Safety Risk**

As explained above, the rate per 100,000 for sexual assault in Elliot Lake remains higher than the national rate. Currently, a survivor of sexual assault who comes forward, within the City of Elliot Lake must be transported outside of their community to have evidence collected post-assault. Hospitals in the area do not have the trained staff or the ability to collect a sexual assault evidence kit (SAEK). This results in the survivor being transported 200 kilometers (approximately 2.5 hours) via police cruiser to Sault Ste. Marie to have the evidence collected. The anticipated travel reduces the willingness of survivors to move forward with SAEK collection. As a result, should they wish to pursue criminal charges in the future, law enforcement are missing vital forensic evidence.

### **Sexual Assault Survivor Treatment**

#### **Objective**

To develop a client centric program that allows for the enhancement of services to survivors of sexual assault within the City of Elliot Lake, including the ability to have medical evidence collected locally, should the survivor choose. This will provide tools for Law Enforcement and the Healthcare Professionals to serve the community more effectively.

#### **Supporting Actions**

Community partners have been working for years to improve access to medical evidence collection in cases of sexual assault. The intention is to create a pool of trained health professionals (physicians, midwives, Nurse Practitioners and community health nurses) who would be available to provide dedicated time to the evidence collection when there is a need. This has the potential to occur in multiple sites in East Algoma, ensuring a community of practice as well as access to the best practice guidance documents of the Association of Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Treatment Centers. Crisis and emotional supports as well as access to clinical treatment and follow-up will be managed in the community or very close to it depending on client choice.

#### **Evaluation**

Collect case counts, SAEKs collected and numbers of assaults reported through the East Algoma OPP.

### Outcomes

The introduction of a trained staff member collecting SAEKs provides:

- Better investigative outcomes
- Creation of a culture that allows for increased survivor safety, reduces the potential of revictimization and provides immediate access to crisis and emotional supports
- Better survivor experience including:
  - Elimination of a 5 hour drive to/from Sault Ste. Marie to perform SAEK, improving access to resources and eliminating removal from the community for assessment and treatment.
  - Added community of care
  - More efficient and local follow-up

### Partners

Partners currently working on this initiative are the OPP, APS, CCEA, FHT, Maplegate Shelter, Children's Aid Society of Algoma and First Nation communities.

## **Well-Being Strategy**

### **Priority Risk #1: Isolated Senior Support Strategy**

#### **Rationale**

Elliot Lake for many years was advertised as an affordable retirement destination. As noted in the demographics provided above, the majority of the residents of Elliot Lake are 65 years of age or older, with the median age being 59 in 2016. For some seniors who moved to the area, they discovered that the availability of social outlets and activities were not plentiful as large urban centers. First, the weather of the region limits outdoor activity for several months. Secondly, the Covid-19 pandemic that struck the world through 2020 confined this vulnerable population to their homes. Lastly, with the roof collapse of Lester B. Pearson Civic Center, the venue where many gathered to take part in arts clubs or to see a show in its theater was eliminated. These cumulative challenges forced retirees to spend an increasing amount of time isolated and inactive. A study from the University of California San Francisco states that the effects of isolation and loneliness can have severe negative impacts on the health of seniors. One study found that lonely seniors have a 59% higher risk of physical and mental health decline, and a 45% greater risk of death.

#### **Objective**

To provide a multi-tier approach to address seniors within the community who may be suffering the health and mental challenges associated with isolation.

#### **Supporting Actions**

- The City of Elliot Lake is in the process of designing a new Arts Hub that will serve as a gathering place for arts clubs and the community as a whole to get together and enjoy live theater and events.
- The City is also in the process of designing a new Sports Hub. This Hub will offer programming at the facility to engage members of the community.
- Offer a platform on the City of Elliot Lake website and a Community Group Bulletin Board at Collins Hall for clubs and groups that are not dependent on a facility to advertise their meetings.
- "Friendly Visitors" drop in service. This would be a volunteer-based organization that would use either physical or electronic means to connect with seniors who may be experiencing isolation.
- Promotion of the services and programming at the Renaissance Active Living Center.
- Introduction of services, provided by Elliot Lake Retirement Living, within their Multi-Unit Residential properties.

- Establish an intergenerational mentorship program with non-active youth to address both strategies for youth engagement and senior isolation in the Elliot Lake Community Well-Being and Safety Plan.
- Work with the Elliot Lake Age Friendly Action Plan team to further the mandates of their plan which included:
  - Develop a vulnerable persons registry, which includes an investigation into developing a phone or visitor 'check in' service for isolated persons
  - Create intergenerational programs to connect youth and seniors
  - Install equipment in parks that can be used by those with varying needs and abilities, including special needs
  - Increase accessibility of beach areas by creating pathways for water access

### Evaluation

Identify measurements for evaluation of this strategy's impact such as community surveys and input from local mental health agencies.

### Outcomes

This strategy will result in:

- A healthier and more vibrant senior's population that is socially connected to others in the community and aware of available resources.
- Lowered healthcare costs associated with the negative physical and mental health implications of isolation.
- Lessened demand on local mental health agencies
- A more active arts community
- Higher residential home values as the community will be more inviting to higher income residents
- Transfer of skills and knowledge between youth and seniors

### Partners

City of Elliot Lake, Renaissance Active Living Center, Elliot Lake Retirement Living, Elliot Lake Secondary School, church groups and the Seniors Mental Health Program.

## **Priority Risk #2: Youth Isolation and Engagement Strategy**

### **Rationale**

According to the representative of the education sector of our Advisory Committee, one of the largest challenges facing our local youth is the availability of recreational, arts and digital equipment for those in low or limited income households.

Elliot Lake is a City surrounded by multiple outdoor trails and recreational assets, yet many youth lack the financial capacity to acquire the resources to be able to take part in those outdoor activities. In a report developed by the Active Healthy Kids Global Alliance, it states that “In Canada, for instance, only 35 percent of 5- to 17-year-olds are getting the recommended 60 minutes of heart-pumping physical activity, while 51 percent engage in more recreational screen time than is recommended by the Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines.” Making recreational items such as bicycles, snowshoes, basketballs and others more readily available to all, without the barrier of cost, can encourage youth participation in outdoor activities that can lead to better overall physical and mental health.

The initiative would extend beyond only physical pursuits. Youth interests range and so should the elements of the plan. This initiative should also embrace mental and creative engagements which would include music, digital creation, art and gaming.

### **Objective**

Develop a program that assists youth facing socio-economic challenges to have access to equipment and resources for physical activity, social interaction, and exploration of creativity and mental health support. This includes outdoor & indoor recreation, sports, music and digital endeavors.

### **Supporting Actions**

- Develop an awareness campaign about youth inactivity and the inability of low income youth to have equitable access to resources
- Establish a rental or donation system to get recreational goods into the hands of youth unable to access or retrieve these resources independently.
- Foster a youth community activity group to encourage youth of all backgrounds and financial means to interact with the environment and partake in outdoor recreation
- Work with the City’s recreation department to establish programming aimed at the city’s youth at little or no cost
- Establish a mentorship program with isolated seniors to address both strategies through intergenerational engagement

- Work with the Elliot Lake Age Friendly Action Plan team to further the mandates of their plan which includes:
  - Investigate and review operations of outdoor facilities
  - Improve way finding signage, label trails within community (i.e. Cross Country Ski Trails, ATV trails and walking/hiking trails), identify premium trails that are accessible and identify Age Friendly trails within city limits
  - Create intergenerational programs to connect youth and seniors
  - Develop a bike route
  - Install equipment in parks that can be used by those with varying needs and abilities, including special needs
  - Increase accessibility of beach areas by creating pathways for water access

### Evaluation

Quantitative measurements will be taken based on the usage of no cost rental of the equipment.

### Outcomes

An effective strategy will result in:

- A healthier, engaged and more active youth population
- A community that fosters inclusiveness regardless of socio-economic situation
- Retention of population, as youth may be exposed to the advantages of living in the community where they can participate in local activities both indoors and outdoors

### Partners

Elliot Lake Schools, City of Elliot Lake, Youth Advisory Committee, Canadian Tire Jumpstart Program, Digital Creator Media Lab & Eliot Lake Recreation and Culture Committee.

## **Next Steps**

This plan outlines priorities and strategies for improving the safety and well-being of specific, and vulnerable, members of the Elliot Lake population. In addition, this plan brings multiple agencies and interdisciplinary partners together to work towards common goals. It will help to facilitate the coordination of services, collaboration, knowledge exchange and sharing between agencies to leverage available resources and remediate any gaps in services. Together, committee members and partners will integrate this plan to enhance the quality of life for Elliot Lake community members.

This initial CSWB plan created by and for Elliot Lake serves as a framework and template for guiding ongoing and future efforts towards enhancing the health, well-being, and safety of Elliot Lake residents, partners, and visitors. The plan is meant to be a living document that will be updated as the municipality and partners move towards implementation and evaluation. The CSWB Advisory Committee will assess the community needs and priorities on an on-going basis.

The strength of the Elliot Lake CSWB Advisory Committee has made itself evident through its ability to work together to identify priority groups and how to address their specific needs. This collection of powerful resources from multiple agencies will collaboratively work to help build a stronger, safer and healthier City of Elliot Lake.

## **Accessibility**

To ensure that this plan is accessible to all residents, versions of this plan will be available electronically on the City's web site. Print versions will also be available in large and standard print at City Hall where it may be picked up or mailed upon request.

## **Resources:**

<sup>1</sup> *Community Safety and Well-being Planning Framework, A Shared Commitment in Ontario, Booklet 2 - Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services*

<sup>2</sup> *Statistics Canada. Census Profile, 2016 Census: Elliot Lake, Ontario.*

<sup>3</sup> *Maclean's. (2020). Canada's most dangerous places 2020.*

<sup>4</sup> *Government of Canada. (2020). Financial evaluation form.*

<sup>5</sup> *Changing Circumstances Surrounding Opioid-Related Deaths in Ontario during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Gomes T, Murray R, Kolla G, Leece P, Bansal S, Besharah J, Cahill T, Campbell T, Fritz A, Munro C, Toner L, Watford J*