

**Municipality Of Chatham-Kent**  
**Community Human Services**  
**Library Services/  
Employment and Social Services**  
**Information Report**

**To:** Mayor and Members of Council

**From:** Tania Sharpe, HBA, MLIS  
CEO / Chief Librarian  
Polly Smith, B.A. Dipl.M.M.  
Director, Employment and Social Services

**Date:** December 9, 2019

**Subject:** Community Navigators – Update

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**Background**

The purpose of the Community Navigators Pilot Project (the pilot project) is to assist at-risk and low-income residents of Chatham-Kent in accessing and navigating social and health services, including job searching sites, government services, and government forms (federal, provincial and municipal). This project also promotes the value of the public library in the community, educating people on library services that can assist with health and well-being.

Projects similar to the pilot project have been successful across North America; they include San Francisco Public Library, Cuyahoga Community Public Library (Ohio), and the Edmonton Public Library. These communities have recognized that because public libraries are open to the public, accessible, and free, that it is a safe place for people to stay. As well, many at-risk, vulnerable, and low-income residents come to the library and genuinely value the services and space available. There is also a greater awareness that the need has always been there and that library staff have been working to connect patrons with the resources available in the community.

Chatham-Kent Public Library (CKPL) is at the centre of the community and assists patrons on a daily basis by connecting them to community information and services. CKPL staff work directly with patrons to assist them with using their electronic devices and navigating the internet for information and resources , however, they have limited time to spend in a one-to-one capacity.

The Community Navigators' primary duties are to assist and support residents of Chatham-Kent (CK) with navigating government, social, and health services online. Duties include helping to find and complete the appropriate online forms through all levels of government. Assistance is in the form of one-on-one instruction as well as small group clinics and workshops. Navigators connect patrons with services in the community that will attend to their diverse needs, including housing, food resources, employment needs, emergency and other wrap around supports as well as digital literacy.

Community Navigators work with community social service agencies to assist clients in accessing library services. This may include getting library cards and accessing virtual library services such as downloading reading materials, taking free online courses, and assistance in finding information and resources to upgrade skills.

Community Navigators partner with other municipal, government, and health service providers in the community to provide workshops and presentations at the Library. Community Navigators help other library staff identify community services applicable to their patrons' needs.

The Library is known as a welcoming environment, considered safe, and, at its centre, is a source of information. Residents are less intimidated accessing services through the Library and are more likely to seek support and help from library staff.

This project was funded by the Employment and Social Services Division as a prevention program to augment homelessness programming provided by that division. Funding is available to continue at this time and the project will be assessed and further funding will be pursued later in the year.

## **Comments**

Currently, CKPL has three Community Navigators on staff. The positions are shared primarily between the Chatham and Wallaceburg branches, with time booked in each branch on a biweekly basis. Appointments are scheduled and drop-in times are provided as well. The Community Navigators are flexible with their schedules and travel to branches as the need arises.

From the pilot program's inception, Community Navigators have taken the concept and made it a reality. Since the launch in July 2017 through November 2019, there have been 3,132 one-on-one appointments with CK residents. See Table 1 for community details. The appointments have ranged from assisting people with: birth certificate, Canada Pension Plan (CPP), and Old Age Security (OAS) applications; Employment Insurance (EI) applications; Guaranteed Income Supplement forms; Ontario Electricity Support Program; assistance with housing and income supports; accessing mental health services, and; other services as requested.

**Table 1: Appointments June 2017-December 2018**

<b>Appointments June 2017 – November 2019</b>	
<b>Library Branch</b>	<b>Number of Appointments</b>
Chatham	1,533
Wallaceburg	977
Tilbury	119
Wheatley	17
Blenheim	149
Merlin	40
Ridgetown	140
Bothwell	22
Highgate	11
Dresden	62
Thamesville	62
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,132</b>

Government identification is an important means of accessing the full range of services and benefits available, especially for lower income individuals, yet obtaining it can be complicated and overwhelming. Employment and Social Services staff and the Community Navigators created an ID Clinic for Chatham-Kent residents. There was a soft launch of ID clinics in the fall of 2017 in Wallaceburg, Chatham and Blenheim. Since the pilot launched, the ID clinics served (398) individuals with obtaining birth certificates, photo ID cards, Social Insurance Numbers, as well as answering questions around CPP, OAS, and Health Cards.

Service Ontario's Special Projects Manager in Toronto asked the Community Navigators to share the ID Clinic concept with the Community & Social Services Supervisor, Salvation Army, in Ottawa. In November of 2018, these officials visited an ID clinic held in Wallaceburg.

The success of these clinics is also highlighted by the invitation from both the Walpole Island First Nation and Delaware Nation Administrators for the Community Navigators to assist with clinics in their area. These clinics are held in partnership with Employment and Social Services, Service Canada and the support of Service Ontario to assist in answering questions for individuals in unique and difficult situations. See Table 2 for detailed clinic information.

**Table 2: 2018 ID Clinic Statistics**

ID Clinic Stats								
Date	Location	Birth Certificates	Photo ID Prep	Financial Screening	Service Ontario	Service Canada	Total	Notes
2017	Soft Launch	25	17	N/A	N/A	N/A	42	Chatham, Blenheim, Wallaceburg
25-Jan-18	Chatham	29	19	45	N/A	7	49	
05-Apr-18	Wallaceburg	16	9	19	N/A	3	34	
11-Apr-18	Moraviantown	19	0	N/A	N/A	5	21	4-RESP / 4-CLB
07-Jun-18	Chatham	30	18	41	N/A	10	47	
06-Oct-18	Ridgetown	3	2	6	3	8	14	6 Passport Apps
02-Nov-18	Chatham	10	6	16	5	3	17	
06-Nov-18	Wallaceburg	18	8	23	13	5	29	
26-Nov-18	Walpole Island	5	-	-	-	-	5	Service Canada's SIN Clinic

**Table 3: 2019 ID Clinic Statistics**

ID Clinic Stats								
Date	Location	Birth Certificates	Photo ID Prep	Financial Screening	Service Ontario	Service Canada	Total	Notes
11-Apr-19	Chatham	30	14	42	0	7	46	6-SIN; 1-passport info
12-Apr-19	Wallaceburg	19	5	20	0	2	26	2-SIN
06-Jun-19	Walpole Island	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	Service Canada's SIN clinic
12-Sep-19	Chatham	17	12	26	3	6	29	
19-Sep-19	Blenheim	5	1	5	1	2	9	
28-Nov-19	Wallaceburg	11	4	12	0	2	16	1-Photo ID paid by Walpole OW

<b>Totals 2018/2019:</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>386</b>	.
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After the Employment and Social Services homelessness team identified a need, the Community Navigators became a driving force in the successful launch of RentSmart, Ontario; an initiative which assists tenants who are new to renting, or who have faced barriers in the past to housing and are not familiar with tenants' rights and responsibilities. By obtaining the RentSmart certificate (a 12-hour course), attendees can show potential landlords that they have the knowledge needed to be a good tenant. Most recently, the Landlord Association of Chatham-Kent has come on board and will

be offering Landlord Certification training sessions to their members to further strengthen the success of this project.

### RentSmart Course Data

Type of Training	Number of Participants
Basics (3 hour)	45
Certification (12 hour)	77
<b>Total</b>	<b>122</b>

In partnership with the Employment and Social Services division, Community Navigators have facilitated 22 RentSmart sessions with 122 participants achieving certification. Access to the RentSmart program for both members of the public and community partners is now more efficiently streamlined as prospective participants can register through the municipal website.

Canada Learning Bond (CLB) is a municipal-wide initiative intended to increase the number of young people signed up for the Registered Education Savings Program (RESP). CLB is a Federal Government program and the Municipality is tasked with promoting and encouraging parents of eligible children to sign up for this RESP program thereby supporting post-secondary education of tomorrow's workforce.

In partnership with Employment and Social Services, Community Navigators assisted with this program across CK in the fall of 2017, 2018 and 2019 by helping families complete government forms such as birth certificate applications, a required document to sign onto the CLB program. With the restructuring of the CLB clinic format in 2019, Community Navigators continued to participate by being on-call to assist with birth certificate applications.

An integral part of the Community Navigators pilot project is to invite community service providers into the Library to facilitate information sessions to all CK residents, no matter their circumstances.

The Bright Ideas series of workshops and information sessions was launched in the fall of 2018. Community Navigators worked closely with staff in Wallaceburg and Chatham to provide a Children's Services Fair in Wallaceburg and a very successful Housing Support Services Fair in Chatham, attracting close to 50 attendees. A Housing Support Service Information Session was also held for 28 students at St. Clair College. The Community Navigators, with the Branch Librarian, hosted four Make-a-Will Workshops in Wallaceburg, Ridgetown, Chatham and Tilbury, which saw 84 in attendance.

Community Wellness Clinics were also held in Wallaceburg and Chatham, as mental health initiatives, in January and February of 2019 and saw over 100 attendees. At both events participants were engaged in de-stressing activities and were informed of wellness supports in the area from local social service partners.

The need for the Community Navigator pilot was identified, even before the project launched. Now, 18 months into the pilot project, there is an increased awareness in the community for the service. The corresponding result has been increased appointments.

The goal of the pilot project was to assist low-income and vulnerable CK residents by linking them to supports and services in the community before they are in crisis. This directly aligns with the CKPlan 2035 Healthy & Safe Community area of strategic focus, and is an investment in a service that reduces poverty, promotes wellness, and enhances prosperity for all. The pilot project fulfilled strategic objectives identified in the Library's strategic plan.

Employment and Social Services division is making a request for ongoing funding during the 2020 budget process in order to continue this program.

### **Consultation**

As this report was prepared jointly between CK Public Library and Employment and Social Services, there was no additional consultation required in producing this information report.

### **Financial Implications**

The cost to continue the program is part of 2020 budget deliberations.

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Attachments: None

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