

Sault Ste. Marie Poverty Round Table: **Progress on Impact Report** January 24, 2020

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following organizations and community members who are working tirelessly to reduce the impact poverty has on the lives of those living in Sault Ste. Marie. The Poverty Round Table members include:

- Algoma Education Gardening Committee
- Algoma Family Services
- Algoma Public Health
- Algoma Workforce Investment Corporation
- Breton House
- City of Sault Ste. Marie
- Credit Counselling of Sault Ste. Marie & District
- District of Sault Ste. Marie Social Services Administration Board
- Habitat for Humanity
- Huron Superior Catholic District School Board
- John Howard Society
- Ken Brown Recovery Home
- NORDIK Institute
- Sault College
- Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre
- SSM Soup Kitchen
- United Way Sault Ste. Marie & Algoma District – Essential Services & Harvest Algoma
- Women in Crisis

And the many other organizations and individuals who choose to participate actively on the Poverty Round Table working groups.

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Executive Summary

The Poverty Round Table is a group of organizations and community stakeholders who are committed to collectively reducing the impact of poverty in the lives of low income people in Sault Ste. Marie. Since its inception in 2015, the Poverty Round Table has been primarily concerned with increasing communication and partnerships to achieve its Poverty Reduction Strategy comprised of four priority areas: Food Security, Crisis Diversion & Resolution, Housing and Workforce Entry.

The Progress on Impact report was created to maintain the Poverty Round Table's accountability to the community at large, and encourage broader engagement in reducing poverty. This report provides, per priority area, contextual information, strategic goals, a baseline measure of indicators associated with each goal, opportunities to strengthen members' collective impact, and calls to action. The indicators presented provide a baseline picture of measurement that can be used to track the progress and impact the initiatives are making on reducing poverty over the upcoming years. The information found in the report has been collected for work completed in 2018 by the Poverty Round Table.

While there is considerable collaboration amongst members in some priority areas leading to optimistic results, the report indicates overall issues associated with poverty are on the rise. There are, however, a number of opportunities to strengthen and broaden partnerships and coordinate actions to foster innovative local solutions in meeting its goals. Following are a few of the collaborative opportunities that would increase the collective impact of the Poverty Round Table, providing positive wellbeing for low-income community members:

- Increasing access to health care, employment opportunities and the number of secondary school graduates;
- Increasing subsidized housing stock; assisting with home energy costs; and defining measures for the Homelessness count;
- Revisiting eligibility criteria and increasing limited program funding;
- Tracking persistent unmet needs of community members and substandard housing complaints and compliance;
- Advocating to hire based on the living wage;
- Increasing access to and availability of nutritious food; and
- Coordinating food literacy opportunities.

In sum, poverty is a complex issue which involves multi-level action to affect system and policy change that would support the development of specific initiatives and/or organizations to address unmet needs. Communicating the overall efforts to the community, and those most affected by it, will encourage further dialogue in understanding the impact of poverty on fellow citizens, and rally residents to engage in strategies to reduce it.

“...a number of opportunities to strengthen and broaden partnerships and coordinate actions to foster innovative local solutions...”

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

This section provides an overview of the background and context for the establishment of the Poverty Round Table, its purpose, their working definition of poverty, the creation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy and the development of this report. It also includes how the Round Table fits into broader community planning and the City's adopted resilience framework, and concludes with limitations to the study.

Overview of Community Resilience Framework

Community Resilience and Poverty Reduction

The City of Sault Ste. Marie, determined to shift away from economic dependency on Essar Steel, was approved to move forward with the creation of the Community Adjustment Committee (CAC) in 2016. The outcome of the CAC was a report identifying a comprehensive action plan that, when actionized, would create a resilient community that would be insulated against economic hardship and the uncertainty of the 'boom and bust' cycle of the steel industry.¹

The Community Resilience framework, as introduced in the CAC report, identified four key pillars: Cultural Vitality, Social Equity, Environmental Sustainability and Economic Diversity and Growth. When these pillars are synergized they allow a community to adapt to local and global changes effectively.² Poverty reduction efforts occur within the scope of the Social Equity pillar and within the work of FutureSSM, at the municipal level.

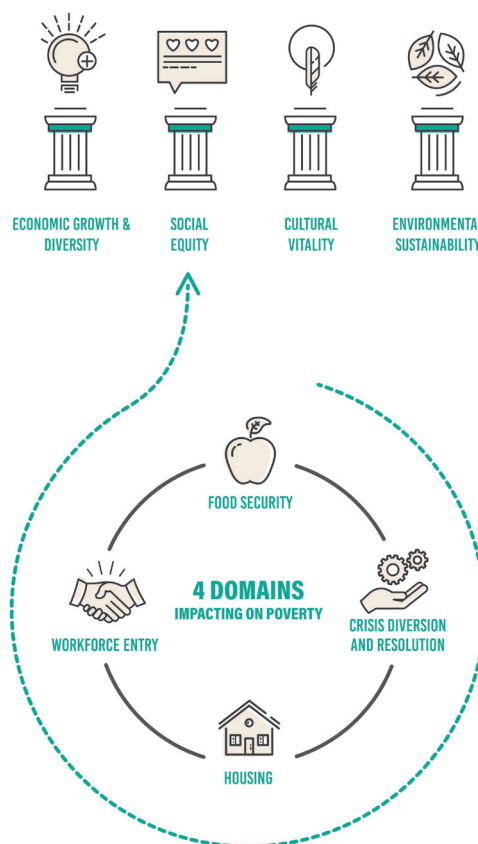
In the City of Sault Ste. Marie, poverty reduction work is carried out through the Algoma Leadership Table, FutureSSM, the Social Equity Action Team (a working group of FutureSSM), and the Poverty Round Table. These driving forces provide executive-level direction, coordination and implementation support to Poverty Reduction initiatives complementary to and strategized at the Poverty Round Table. See Appendix A for a visual representation of this structure.

The Round Table recognizes that a 'three strata' approach to poverty reduction is the most effective means of addressing such persistent community-wide challenges. There are three primary levels where systemic poverty reduction can effectively be addressed.

They are:

1. **Community Awareness and Will:** increasing public awareness of the of the breadth and depth of poverty, the moral and economic case, and increasing their will to act;
2. **System and Policy Change:** essential components that make deep and durable reductions in the overall level of poverty; and
3. **Niche Initiatives:** city-wide efforts to reduce poverty that are focused on developing interventions that generate immediate benefits for a targeted number of people.³

The Poverty Round Table falls within the Niche Initiatives category and is a key mechanism for supporting Social Equity as part of a comprehensive strategy to leverage the Round Table's organizational Niche Initiatives to affect Systems and Policy Change and vice versa.



Sault Ste. Marie Poverty Round Table

Numerous organizations have been working to reduce the impact of poverty on the health and well-being of those who live in Sault Ste. Marie. Many consultations and studies have investigated ways to understand this complex issue, engaging community members, service providers and community leaders in identifying challenges inherent in addressing the impacts of poverty. One outcome of these various pieces of research was the formation of the Sault Ste. Marie Poverty Round Table in the spring of 2016. The Poverty Round Table is a coordinating table designed to increase organization's participation in a multi-sectoral collaborative approach to its work, sometimes referred to as Collective Impact. Collective Impact brings together a group of important actors from different sectors committed to solving a specific social problem.⁴

Upon inception, the Round Table was co-chaired by representatives of United Way of Sault Ste. Marie and District, the Algoma Public Health Unit and NORDIK Institute, a community-based research institute affiliated with Algoma University. As a result of the commitment at the municipal and organizational level, FutureSSM's community development-focused Social Equity Coordinator has been designated as the Poverty Round Table chairperson as of November 2019.

Purpose of the Round Table

Organizational stakeholders have gathered to collectively “reduce the impact of low income on the health and well-being of individuals and families in Sault Ste. Marie.” Those sitting with the Round Table determined that ‘low income’ was a more inclusive term than ‘poverty’ which may require definition and justly accept that there are persons who continue to be denied access to services based on income however remain in hardships.⁵

The Poverty Round Table has been meeting quarterly since its inception and has been primarily concerned with increasing communication and partnerships between organizations who work in specific areas to reduce the effects of poverty. The concentrated effort, as described by the Poverty Reduction Round Table, is to create a “set of prioritized actions led by a broad-based collaborative of community members and service providers, and endorsed by Sault Ste. Marie's community leadership.”⁶

Creating a Definition of Poverty

Poverty is a complex issue. Income is one of the major indicators of poverty. Households living in poverty struggle to achieve minimum necessities to maintain basic living standards. However, to better understand poverty, it is crucial to understand the impact of other attributes, such as food insecurity, lack of health care, housing instability, unemployment, and child poverty.⁷ Poor health outcomes among adults and children are associated with a lack of nutritious food and housing stability. People who have experienced housing instability are more likely to be involved in crime, have substance use issues, and suffer from mental illness⁸ which implicates that the impact of poverty may have a further negative effect on workforce entry. The impact of poverty can even continue over generations.⁹

In Canada, the risks of living in poverty are higher for certain groups than others. Unattached individuals, including seniors, single parents, recent immigrants, Indigenous people living off-reserve, and people with disabilities are more likely to be poor.¹⁰

With several community stakeholder groups such as the Social Equity Action Team, Algoma Leadership Table, the Poverty Round Table and the City of Sault Ste. Marie now working to reduce poverty by 2027, a common definition of poverty was realized. In June 2019, the Poverty Round Table and the Social Equity Action Team, informed by community members with lived experience, formally adopted the following definition of poverty:

Poverty is a condition in which someone lacks the means necessary to acquire and maintain a basic level of living standards to achieve their desired level of participation in society.

Poverty Reduction Strategy

The Round Table developed a Poverty Reduction Strategy in April 2016 to provide supports to assist in the stabilization of income and basic needs necessary to improve the quality of life of individuals and families. It is a multi-sector approach that cultivates the appropriate community conditions through addressing local systemic barriers, access to goods, social support services, social inclusion opportunities and resources required to fully participate in society.

The plan identified four key domains:

1. Food Security
2. Essential Services (since renamed Crisis Diversion & Resolution)
3. Housing
4. Workforce Entry

The Progress on Impact Report is organized around these four domains.

Progress on Impact Report

The purpose of the Progress on Impact Report is to maintain the Poverty Round Table's accountability to the community at large by reporting on the members' overall effect in reducing poverty in Sault Ste. Marie as identified through the priority areas, and to encourage broader community engagement in reducing poverty.

The report uses indicators as a means of measuring the trends or results of initiatives, in this case, member organizations' actions to reduce poverty. This first report provides a baseline of the progress and impact of the Round Table's stakeholders actions,

and acts as the foundational measure for continual monitoring over the years. It is anticipated that the report will provide opportunity for discussion and action on how to increase the Round Table members' collective impact. It may highlight which initiatives are effective, identify what action or support is required to strengthen it, what other measures, at different community levels, would further reduce poverty, and/or which information should be included in future versions of this document.

Development of the Report

Team Members

In the spring of 2019 the United Way of Sault Ste. Marie and District, as a member of the Round Table, gathered a team of representatives from Algoma Workforce Investment Committee (AWIC), Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre, FutureSSM and NORDIK Institute to create the Progress on Impact Report. The group referred to themselves as the Indicator Team, leading the identification of indicators and gathering available data to create the report.

Development of the Report Framework

- The Poverty Reduction Round Table Strategic Action Plan (2016) drafted indicators and outcomes reviewed by Indicator team.
- A literature review was conducted to identify poverty risk and protective factors and strategies in relation to poverty and the identified priority areas of the Poverty Reduction Round Table Strategic Action Plan.
- An initial sweep of potential indicators were assessed for relevancy per priority area.
- Draft indicator data sources were identified, and the Indicator Team made the choice to only include indicators that were available through Round Table members, other local agencies, or through governmental agencies, for example, Statistics Canada or Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHC).
- Draft indicators were reviewed with Poverty Round Table membership and approval was provided where applicable.
- Personal interviews were conducted and transcribed for qualitative data in final report.
- The goals per priority area were presented to and approved by the Poverty Round Table.
- Each priority area section of the report was pre-approved by the working groups.
- Final draft report completed.
- Formal presentation of draft report and approval by the Poverty Round Table provided.
- Revisions of final report completed.
- Final report available for community.



The Report at a Glance: Four Areas to Assess

The Report is organized into the four priority domains identified in the 2016 Poverty Round Table Reduction Strategy: 1) Food Security; 2) Crisis Diversion and Resolution; 3) Housing; and 4) Workforce Entry. Based the literature review conducted by the Indicator Team, and its consultations with area experts, the following indicators were selected to assess each domain's overall progress and impact in addressing poverty reduction within the City of Sault Ste. Marie.

1. Food Security

3

Goals

5

Indicators

Fresh, healthy foods should be available and accessible throughout the community. Food security also includes knowledge of food preparation, decision making, skill development and confidence building as it relates to food.

Goal A: Nutritious food is accessible to low-income people

- A.1 Places by category to access nutritious food and their locations (indicating year-round/seasonal availability)
- A.2 Harvest Algoma's distribution of nutritious food

Goal B: Organizations are distributing nutritious food

- B.1 Percentage and weight of nutritious food distributed (including free, rescued and non-local food)

Goal C: Low-income earners are food literate (including decision making, meal planning, preparation, etc....)

- C.1 Number of organizations delivering types of food preparation skills/education
- C.2 Number of people participating in food preparation skills/education training

2. Crisis Diversion and Resolution (Essential Services)

2

Goals

3

Indicators

Primarily concerned with system navigation, emergency access to specialized financial sources and based on extraordinary circumstances, Crisis Diversion and Resolution provides services for those who are seeking assistance that may divert or mitigate a potential situation of crisis.

Goal A: The unmet needs of community members are addressed

- A.1 Number of unmet needs by type and by number of people (e.g., shift childcare; availability of afterhours services)

Goal B: Gaps in service are responded to by community organizations

- B.1 Number of persistent unmet needs
- B.2 Number of Gaps identified from 211 contacts/searches

3. Housing

3

Goals

4

Indicators

Affordable housing, supportive housing for at-risk populations and knowledge of substandard living conditions all contribute to housing stability.

Goal A: All low-income persons are housed in affordable units

A.1 Number of applicants on the Subsidized Housing Waiting List

A.2 Number of individuals/families accessing Subsidized Housing

Goal B: Housing is available to at-risk populations

B.1 Homeless individuals in Sault Ste. Marie

Goal C: Low-income people are living in housing that meets all appropriate standards of living

C.1 Complaints made about substandard housing or other housing issues

4. Workforce Entry

3

Goals

7

Indicators

Workforce entry skill development includes the spectrum of interviewing and resume writing, acquiring adequate education to working with employers who may have employees who require on-the-job supports.

Goal A: Employment supports for low-income people to enter the work force are accessible

A.1 Number of people participating in job readiness support programs

Goal B: Low-income earners' complete levels of education that is required to enter the workforce

B.1 Secondary School graduation rates

B.2 Post-secondary enrolments

B.3 Number of literacy service provides and the number of people participating in skills development

Goal C: Employers support training and hiring low-income people based on local labour market demand

C.1 Number of employers supporting training and hiring low income people

C.2 Number of people leaving financial assistance programs due to employment (e.g. Ontario Works, ODSP)

C.3 Training available to local income people to meet local labour market demands

Limitations

There are limitations to the study. Poverty is a complex issue, crossing multi-sectors and community strata. Identifying indicators that measure change over time, in contrast to providing a picture of the status of the situation, is a challenge all projects of this nature face.

The Round Table members are tackling diverse issues, and even when working within the same domain typically target specific aspects and employ different ways of measuring change. While it is impractical for everyone to use the same indicators, moving forward, where appropriate, there may be opportunity to develop a number of common data collection methods that would further support the creation of Impact on Progress Report.

Organizations' resources and expertise to measure progress differ. Many have limited staff and modest evaluation budgets. In some cases, available data may not provide a robust picture of the situation, or their impact.

Indicator projects typically focus on data within a timeframe. Community organizations' producing reporting cycles may or may not coincide with the designated period, and current Statistics Canada data is available at limited times. This means that the snapshot presented in this report is really a collection of smaller available snapshots that have occurred over the past year, conveniently packaged in a larger album.

It is difficult to determine the extent to which the Round Table partners have influenced the outcomes and impacts described in this report. This is particularly true for population-level poverty levels, which are affected by dozens of external factors outside of the network's and community's control (e.g. commodity prices, interest rates, income tax policy). The Report's focus, therefore, is on the Round Table partners' contributions to reducing poverty locally.

Another limitation is the difficulty in determining whether someone is "in" or "out" of poverty. The journey out of poverty differs from person to person – it is not like showing a passport and crossing a border. Even thresholds used in the Federal Government's three indicators for "income poverty" – LICO, MBM, and LIM – are widely debated. Therefore, this report focuses on capturing the general progress of reducing local poverty, rather than judging it along a hotly debated and definitive bottom-line.

With these limitations in mind, this report still offers the broader community a consolidated picture of the Round Table's goals and key initiatives, and a baseline of data, providing a snapshot of the Sault Ste. Marie Poverty Round Table's overall progress in reducing poverty over the last year.¹¹



Image by Convegna_Ancisa from Pixabay

ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS ON IMPACT

This section of the report begins with an overview of Sault Ste. Marie as a community and then provides a high level picture of the low income population through four lenses: Low Income Cut Offs, Census Family Low Income Measure, Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Program, and the Living Wage. Next, it lays out the assessment of impact framework at a glance, and then unpacks each of the four domains the Round Table has identified (Food Security, Crisis Diversion and Resolution, Housing and Workforce Entry), delving into the goals, indicators, and data used in creating a picture of the Round Table's collective impact.

Our Community at a Glance

The City of Sault Ste. Marie is located on the St. Marys River between Lake Superior and Lake Huron, which forms international boundary between Canada and the United States. The city rests on the traditional territory, known by the Anishinaabe and Métis peoples, as Baawaating or the “Place of the Rapids”. The city is surrounded by Garden River and Batchewana First Nations, is recognized as an historic Métis settlement and hosts a robust urban Indigenous population. Sault Ste. Marie is the third largest city in northern Ontario, behind Greater Sudbury and Thunder Bay.

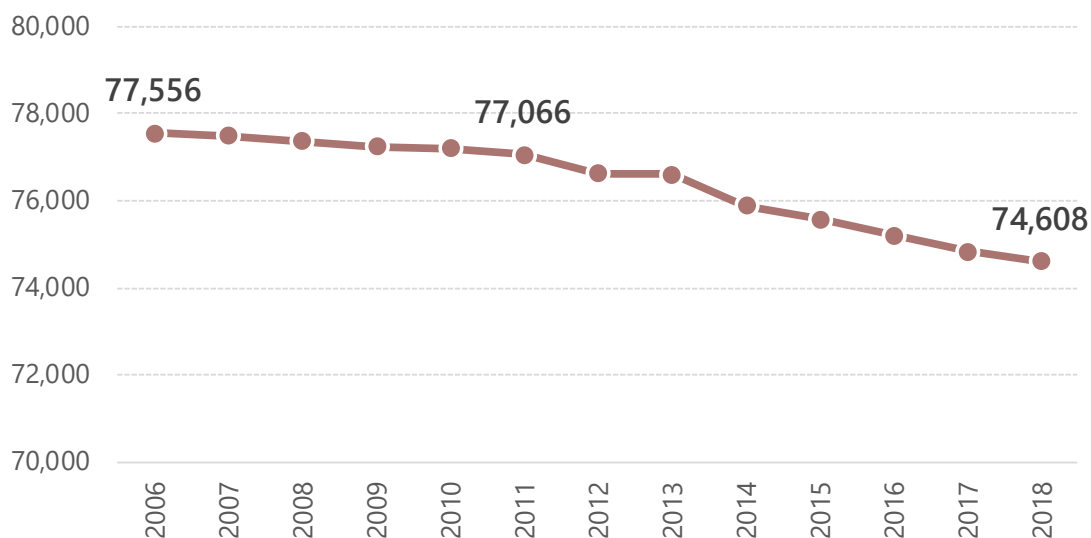
The economy of the city has traditionally been heavily dependent on the steel industry, which is susceptible to a “boom and bust” cycle. As such, the population of the city has declined from its peak in the early 1980's

as the community struggles with high rates of youth outmigration, relatively modest levels of immigration and an ageing population.

The population of the City of Sault Ste. Marie was estimated to be **74,608** in 2018. This is an estimated drop of 2,458 people (or -3.2%) since 2011.

According to the 2016 Census of Canada, the median age of the city was 46.8 years, compared to the provincial average of 41.3. In addition, 22% of Sault Ste. Marie's population is over the age of 65. This has implications to the city's workforce as more people retire, but more importantly it hugely impacts individual families as they deal with the considerable time and expense of caring for aging parents.

Figure 1: City of Sault Ste. Marie Population Estimates, 2011-2018



Source: Statistics Canada Annual population estimates by age and sex, July 1, 2006 to 2018

Low Income Population

Having a low income is associated with many challenges to wellbeing like lower levels of physical and mental health, less access to educational opportunities and poorer living conditions. Individuals living in a low-income situation are more likely to need/access services such as social housing, food banks, etc. Low-income families may face increased stress for the family which impacts physical and mental health and family dynamics.¹² In addition, some research has shown that living in persistent poverty may lead to reduced future outcomes for children which results in adult poverty.¹³

As such, decreasing numbers of people living below the low-income cut-off is a positive indicator of population wellbeing.

*There is no perfect way of measuring poverty in a given area.
This report presents four measures which tell part of the
poverty story of Sault Ste. Marie.*

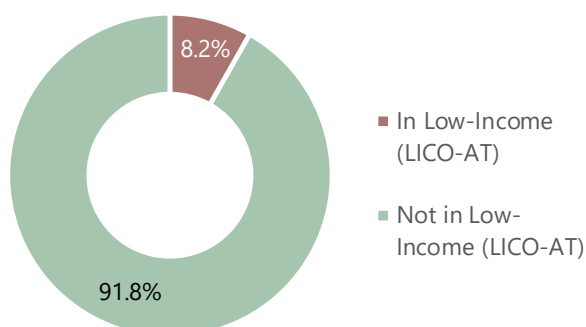
1. Low-income cut-offs before tax (LICO-BT) and after tax (LICO-AT)

Statistics Canada produces an annual threshold or “line” of low income by family size for cities with a population between 30,000 and just under 100,000. Persons who live in families who have an annual before tax (BT) and/or after-tax (AT) income below this amount are considered to be in poverty.

According to the 2016 Census of Canada, there were **5,985** persons (or **8.2%** of the total population) living below the LICO-AT cut-off in Sault Ste. Marie.

Please see Appendix B for a list of low-income cut-offs by family size and a further breakdown of the Sault Ste. Marie low-income population by age group.

Figure 2: Percent of Population Living Below the LICO-AT Cut-off in Sault Ste. Marie, 2016



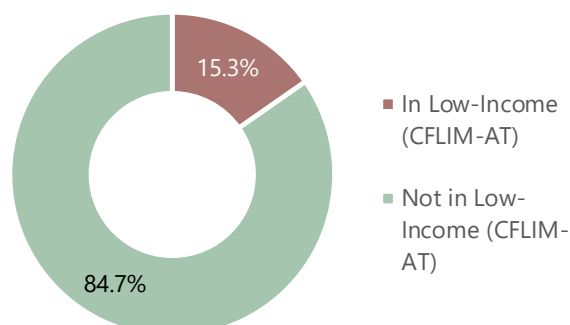
2. Census Family Low-Income Measure – After Tax (CFLIM-AT)

The Census Family Low Income Measure (CFLIM) is a relative measure of low income. It represents a fixed percentage (50%) of adjusted median census family income, where adjusted indicates a consideration of family needs and the size of the family. Although the CFLIM can be calculated using different income concepts, it is typically derived according to the after-tax income (CFLIM-AT). A person is considered to be in low income when their adjusted family income after-tax is below the CFLIM-AT threshold associated with their census family size.¹⁴

According to the 2016 Census of Canada, there were **11,000** persons (or **15.3%** of the total population) living below the CFLIM-AT cut-off in Sault Ste. Marie

Please see Appendix C for a further breakdown of the Sault Ste. Marie low-income population by age group and family type.

Figure 3: Percent of Population Living Below the CFLIM-AT Cut-off in Sault Ste. Marie, 2016



3. Number of Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) recipients

The Ontario Works program helps people who are in financial need. It offers financial assistance for costs of basic needs, health benefits for clients and their families and employment assistance to help clients find, prepare for and keep a job.¹⁵

The average monthly Ontario Works caseload in 2018 was **2,217** which is an increase of 1.7% from 2017. On average, there were approximately **3,650** persons living in families receiving Ontario Works in each month in 2018. This represents about **5%** of the total population of Sault Ste. Marie.

In June 2018: Just over one third (34%) of households were families with children. Most families with children were single parent families.

The Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) provides financial assistance and health-related benefits to people with disabilities who need help with living expenses.

The average monthly ODSP caseload in 2018 was **5,910** which is an increase of 2.3% from 2017. On average, there were approximately **8,300** persons living in families receiving ODSP in each month in 2018. This represents about **8%** of the total population of Sault Ste. Marie.

In June 2018: 16% of households were families with children. Most families with children were single parent families. The following chart shows the ODSP caseload by Family Structure for June 2018.

Based on the OW and ODSP cited above, on average about **13%** of the population of Sault Ste. Marie lives in a family that relies on these types of social assistance

Figure 4: Ontario Works Caseload by Family Structure, June 2018

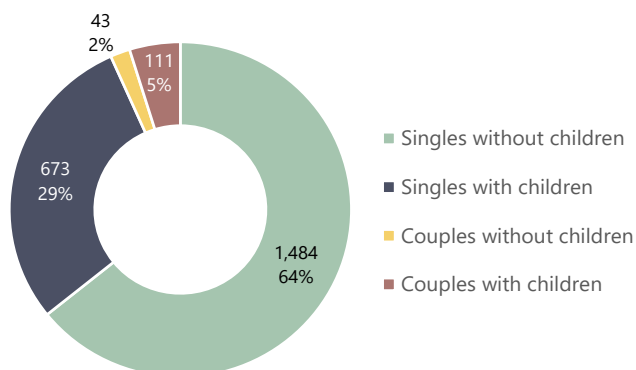
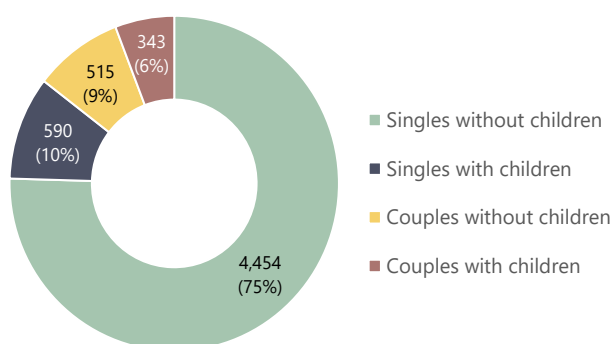


Figure 5: ODSP Caseload by Family Structure, June 2018



4. Living Wage

The 2019 living wage for Sault Ste. Marie is **\$16.16** an hour. This represents the hourly wage a family of four (two full-time working adults and two children) needs to meet their necessary family expenses and enjoy a decent life beyond poverty. A living wage is calculated with a consideration of community-specific family expenses and reflects a basic level of adequate income to cover the reasonable needs of Canadian families.¹⁶It includes necessary costs like food, rent, clothing, childcare and transportation as well as items like extended health care, recreation and modest family vacation.

Please see Appendix D for more information



Employment and Unemployment Rates

In 2018, Sault Ste. Marie experienced historically high levels of employment and low levels of unemployment. The city's largest employer, Algoma Steel, came out of creditor protection and subsequent investment in the company meant growth and security for not only those working in the industry, it has also meant renewed economic growth in the community.

The average unemployment rate in Sault Ste. Marie for the last 20 years is 8.6% and in 2018 the monthly unemployment rate averaged 4.6% (Ontario's unemployment rate was 5.6%). Youth unemployment

(15-24 years of age) is significantly higher than overall unemployment and averaged 12% in 2018.

The sectors that experienced the most employment growth in 2018 were Manufacturing and Health Care. These are both sectors that have a higher-level of skill requirements and specialization. Employment in Retail, which generally has lower skills requirements, fell in 2018. Therefore, even with the high levels of employment in 2018, some job seekers, especially those lacking in training or education, would not be able to participate in these sectors.

Figure 6: 2018 Monthly Unemployment Rates for Sault Ste. Marie, Including the Long-Term Unemployment Average

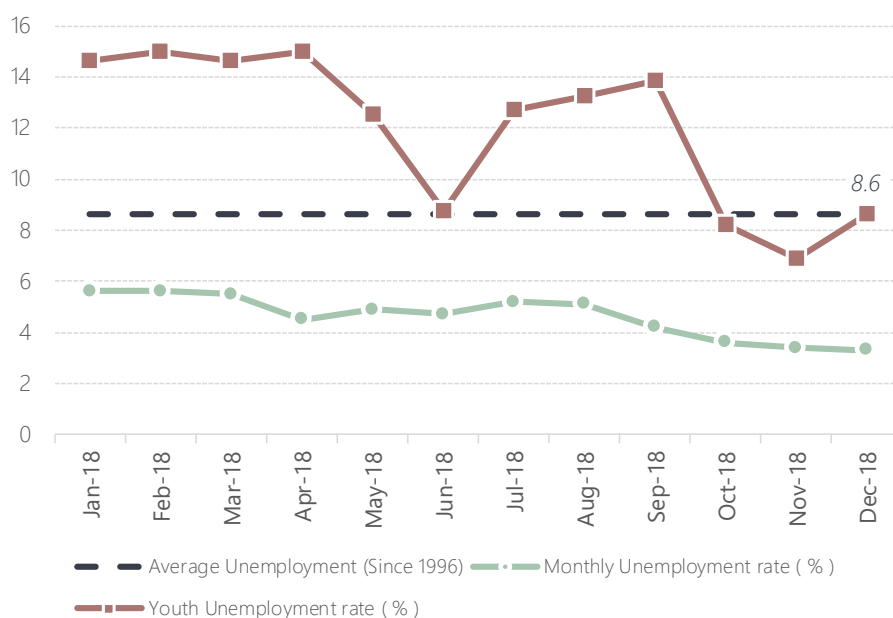
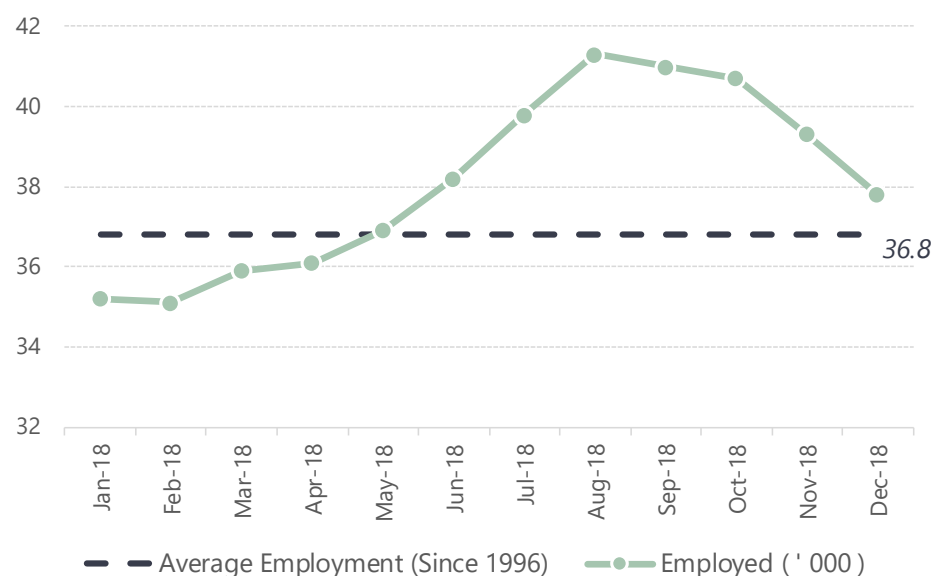


Figure 7: 2018 Monthly Employment for Sault Ste. Marie, Including the Long-Term Average Employment



POVERTY REDUCTION DOMAINS

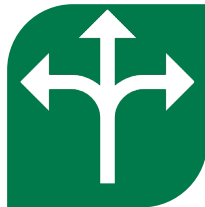
This section provides a brief overview of a few of the main issues and challenges within each domain followed by indicators, local data and analysis. This will help to create a picture of the Round Table's initiatives and plans in addressing them, as well as opportunities for strengthening their work thereby, increasing the collective impact, specifically, and the community's resilience generally. The four domains are: Food Security, Crisis Diversion and Resolution, Housing and Work Force Entry.

1. FOOD SECURITY

Goals



Nutritious food is accessible to low-income people



Organizations are distributing nutritious foods

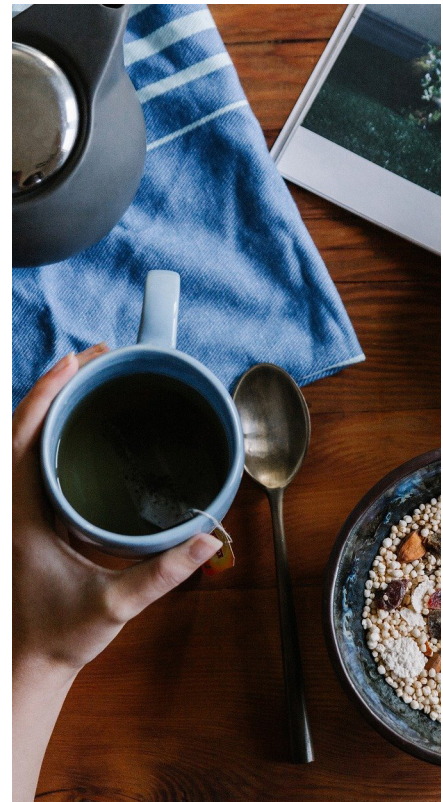



Low-income earners are food literate

How can we support low-income people in being food secure?

Food security is the ability to attain affordable and accessible nutritious food to meet dietary needs for a productive and healthy life. An individual's ability to adopt a healthy diet largely depends on the affordability, availability, and proximity of healthy foods within the area they live in.¹⁷ Households' failure to afford nutritious food is primarily associated with financial constraints.¹⁸ Climate change and environmental degradation hurt traditional food production and increase the risks of food insecurity.¹⁹ Inadequate transportation in rural and isolated communities can also contribute to food insecurity affecting growing, transporting, and accessing healthy food.²⁰

Households living in food insecurity experience several health problems including diabetes, heart disease, and hypertension.²¹ Lack of nutritious food at an early age also leaves an indelible mark on children's wellbeing.²² Public policies such as income support programs and universal childcare benefits can improve the financial circumstances of low-income houses and help to tackle this serious public health problem.²³ In addition, promoting food security programs to facilitate community engagement, awareness, and local efforts can be an effective way to deal with food insecurity.





According to the Canadian Community Health Survey, **12.4%** of the population 12+ in the Algoma District are experiencing food insecurity, meaning they are compromising in either food quality or food quantity or both [most likely due to low income].²⁴ This would mean that **approximately 9,200 individuals in Sault Ste. Marie** are food insecure at least part of the year.

Algoma Public Health has determined that the average weekly cost for a family of four to eat a healthy diet in the Algoma District in 2018 was **\$209.27/week**. Over the course of a year this would add up to **\$10,882**. For a family of four living right at the LICO-AT cut-off (net household income of \$33,157) this equates to about **33%** of their net annual household income.

This scenario assumes the family of four has an adult male (age 31-50), an adult female (age 31-50), a teenage male (age 14-18) and a female child (age 4-8). These costs are based on a healthy diet including a variety of foods from Canada's Food Guide.

“ *I prefer the Soup Kitchen number one, you don't have to write your name down anywhere. You don't have to answer people about why you don't have an income. The idea of sharing seems to come better and easier from the Soup Kitchen... If you've ever had to access a food bank...they ask you some questions that at first kind of make you feel okay like I'm going to get these type of groceries. But then you get things that have strange names that you can't understand... Not having a sense of community and answering questions to two or three different people before you get food feels you're begging for it. And that's the difference between the Soup Kitchen and our food banks.”*

-Jennifer Farrell,

Community Member experiences with Food Security

The goals of the Poverty Round Table are:

- A. Nutritious food is accessible to low-income people**
- B. Organizations are distributing nutritious foods**
- C. Low-income earners are food literate**

1.A Nutritious food is accessible to low-income people

Having reasonable access to a nutritious food location such as a supermarket/grocery store or a farmer's market can be associated with healthier diets and better nutrition. For people who do not own a car or have limited access to reliable and affordable transportation (e.g. those who cannot afford a taxi ride or a transit pass), nutritious food may not be accessible. Often, individuals without reasonable access to supermarkets/grocery stores choose to purchase most of their food at convenience stores or fast food locations, which typically sell highly processed food instead of the vegetables, fruits, whole grains foods and protein foods recommended by the Canada Food Guide.

Sault Ste. Marie Poverty Round Table members are working collaboratively to improve access to nutritious food in the community. With the establishment of United Way's Harvest Algoma in 2018, the city's capacity to store nutritious foods, whether they be

dry, refrigerated or frozen, has significantly increased. Harvest Algoma serves as an upstream storage facility for the traditional soup kitchens and food banks, as well as the twenty-three other distribution points, including social service organizations, shelters, treatment homes and educational facilities. The commercial kitchen at Harvest Algoma allows for food to be processed and consequently available to those in need for longer periods of time. Besides locations where food is available for purchase, nutritious food is available through three other avenues:

1. Locally grown (e.g. grown on a local food farm or in a community garden)
2. Rescued food (e.g. grocery store cast away)
3. Non-local food (e.g. surplus food provided by national food manufacturers)



See Appendix E for a full list of Food Producers and Food Distributors

1.A.1 Indicator: Public places by category to access nutritious food and their locations (indicating year-round/seasonal availability)

This indicator includes food grocery stores, farmer's markets, community gardens, and publicly funded school-based nutrition programs. Supermarkets/grocery stores, farmers market and on-farm markets and community gardens have a cost associated with them, i.e. individuals purchase their food or pay a membership fee to grow their own food. Their physical locations are an important factor in terms of accessibility. For locations see Figure 9 (pg. 23)

The Student Nutrition Program provides access to nutritious food through breakfast, lunch, and/or snack programs for all students at schools that have chosen to participate in the program. The physical locations of these schools are less important than the number of schools that have chosen to participate in the program. If all schools participate, then all students who attend publicly funded schools will have access.

In Sault Ste. Marie in 2018, there were:



SUPERMARKETS / GROCERY STORES

Offer a wide selection of nutritious food (including meats, fresh fruits and veggies) as well as other foods and non-food household products.

These stores are open year-round.

13

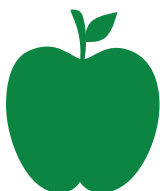


FARMERS' MARKETS AND ON-FARM MARKETS

Food markets typically include fresh fruits, vegetables, and other products. They can be centrally located or at a farm gate.

These markets are typically seasonal.

4



COMMUNITY GARDENS

Land collectively gardened by a group of people to produce nutritious foods such as fruits and vegetables. These gardens sometimes also produce ornamentals.

These gardens are based on the growing season.

13



SCHOOLS PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDENT NUTRITION PROGRAM

Offers school-age children nutritious food through breakfast, lunch, and snack programs. The program is open to all children at the participating school.

Available to students throughout the school year.

37
of 39 schools

See Appendix F for a list of locations for each grouping.

1.A.2 Indicator: Harvest Algoma's distribution of nutritious food

Given the difficulty low income earners experience with accessible transportation, it is extremely critical that nutritious food be available at multiple points in the community and to specific vulnerable populations. Poverty Round Table members are working to improve the access of nutritious food.



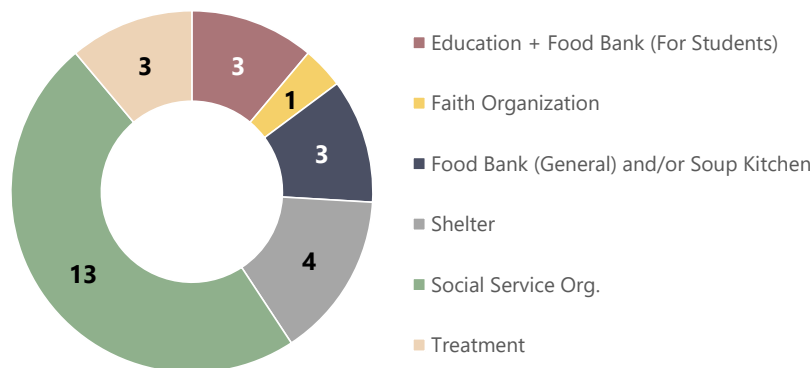
ORGANIZATIONS / ACCESS POINTS FOR FOOD DISTRIBUTED FROM HARVEST ALGOMA

Access points/places that distribute the free, rescued and non-local food from Harvest Algoma. See Figure 8 for a breakdown of the types of organizations distributing this food.

26

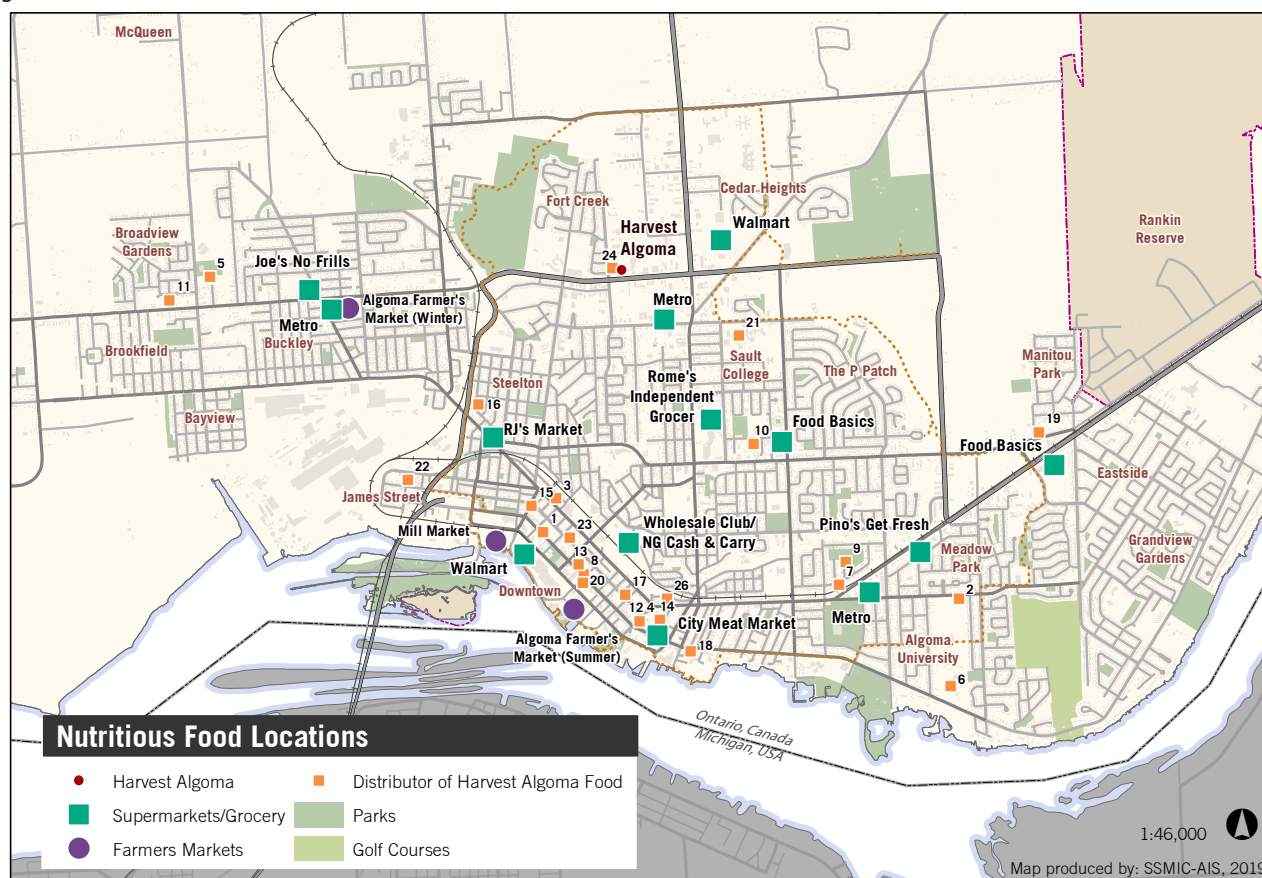
A look at nutritious food locations around the City: The map in Figure 9 shows the location of all supermarkets/grocery stores, farmer's markets, and the organizations/access points for food distributed by Harvest Algom. Community Gardens and schools have not been included as they are typically only accessible to a limited population. Please note that this map includes the Downtown Walmart location, as it was still open in 2018. This location has since closed.

Figure 8: Types of organizations distributing food from Harvest Algom



See Appendix E for a list of locations by name.

Figure 9: Nutritious Food Locations in Sault Ste. Marie in 2018



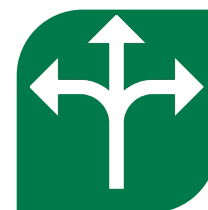
Supermarkets/grocery stores and farmer's markets locations are distributed throughout the urban area of Sault Ste. Marie, but there are significant gaps in some areas, particularly in the urban East End.

Some areas with high prevalence of low-income and/or high density of subsidized housing, such as La Chaumiere Place and Adrian Drive (near the Grandview Gardens label in the map) have a longer distance to travel to a nutritious food location than in other areas of the City.

According to the latest Census of Canada, there were approximately **6,200** low-income persons (or **56%** of all SSM low-income persons) living within a 1km walk from a supermarket/grocery store and/or a farmer's market. This means **4,800** (or **44%**) were living beyond a 1km walk. This calculation includes the Walmart downtown location, which has since closed.

1.B Organizations are distributing nutritious food

Throughout Sault Ste. Marie, there are a number of organizations that are able to offer food to those in need.



1.B.1 Indicator: Percentage and weight of nutritious food distributed (including free, rescued and non-local food)

The following data give an approximation of the food distributed in Sault Ste. Marie and an estimation on how much of this food was considered highly nutritious (i.e., typically whole foods that are not processed). The data are combined from a number of sources which track data in different ways, potentially resulting in some overlap because organizations may have re-distributed food they received from elsewhere. For example, St. Vincent may be re-distributing food they received from Harvest Algoma.



APPROXIMATE WEIGHT OF FOOD DISTRIBUTED 2018

The approximate combined weight of food that the Salvation Army, St. Vincent Place, Harvest Algoma and the Connect the Dots food rescue program distributed in 2018. A person typically eats around 1.8kg (4 lbs) of food per day.

144,257 kg*
or
318,072 lbs.*



ESTIMATED PERCENTAGE AND WEIGHT OF NUTRITIOUS (WHOLE) FOOD DISTRIBUTED IN 2018

The approximate combined weight of food that the Salvation Army, St. Vincent Place, Harvest Algoma and the Connect the Dots food rescue program distributed in 2018. A person typically eats around 1.8kg (4 lbs) of food per day.

10%
14,256 kg*

**Please note that the Soup Kitchen indicated that they did not track the weight or value of the food they distributed or number of meals they served in 2018, therefore their numbers could not be added to this total. No information was available for any other organizations who may have distributed food in 2018.*

If the average person consumes 1.8 kg of food per day, then 144,275 kg of food is enough to feed about **220** people every day of the year.

This calculation factors in all distributed food, whole or highly processed.

“Almost every school in our district, secondary school and elementary schools have a program, either breakfast, morning meal, or snack that are providing two or three food groups for children every single day of the week. I think that can have a big impact not only on kid’s home life but also their learning... Opening it up to all students, students that actually need it are taking advantage of it and they don’t feel the stigma of it. It’s really created a culture in a lot of our schools and communities where kids come in and have breakfast, they sit down and have chat in the morning, start their day off in a community setting where they are talking, eating and enjoying each other’s company.”

- Emily Tremblay,
Community Services Supervisor, Algoma Family Services speaking about the Student Nutrition Program.

1.C Low-income earners are food literate

The benefits of healthy eating are well documented. Food literacy encompasses knowledge of nutrition, meal planning, development of food preparation skills, dietary behaviour, knowledge of the sources of food, etc. Low-income earners who are food literate may be able to make nutritious food from scratch rather than relying on heavily processed foods and effectively “buy more nutrients for their food dollar”²⁵.



1.C.1 Indicator: Number of organizations delivering types of food literacy programming

These organizations (in alphabetical order) were: Algoma Educational Gardening/The SKILLS Project, Algoma Family Services, Algoma Public Health, Harvest Algoma, Indigenous Friendship Centre, Salvation Army Food Bank, Sault Ste. Marie EarlyON Centres, Sault Ste. Marie Horticultural Society, and Soup Kitchen Sault Ste. Marie.

**Please note that data and further information was not available a number of food preparation opportunities (example: food handling courses). These opportunities are not included in the statistic below.*



ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDING FOOD PREPARATION SKILLS/EDUCATION IN 2018

Includes education on cooking, gardening and/or preserving. Some of these organizations have multiple classes/workshops throughout the year.

9*

1.C.2 Indicator: Number of people participating in food literacy training

Some organizations that deliver training keep statistics on the number of people in attendance, while some do not keep formal records.



NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO PARTICIPATED IN FOOD PREPARATION/SKILLS TRAINING IN 2018

The combined total number of persons who participated in either Harvest Algoma's food preparation/skills training or the AFS Community Kitchens in 2018. This stat does not include the other organizations mentioned in the above indicator.

568*

Harvest Algoma had roughly 110 people participate in food preparation/skills training in 2018 with ages from 10+. Algoma Family Services held 77 Community Kitchens at various locations in Sault Ste. Marie in 2018 which attracted 458 participants making 1,596 meals. AFS has noted the Community Kitchen Program is in high demand. There are currently four community kitchens open to the public and four closed kitchens reserved for clients of specific programs/organizations. See Appendix H for a detailed description of the open Community Kitchens.

Also, Algoma Public Health also offers formal training in food handler safety through a Food Handlers Certification Course. In this course participants gain knowledge of food safety principles to ensure safe food handling and processing for their families and working in restaurants. In Sault Ste. Marie, APH certified 502 Safe Food Handlers in 2019.

**Please note that this stat counts all attendees not just those who are living in low-income situations. Also, participant statistics were not available for all of the organizations providing food preparation skills/education in 2018.*

Opportunities to increase the collective impact:

The following opportunities were identified as possible areas where those organizations working in the food security domain could increase its overall functioning. There are also opportunities for public/private partnerships and/or innovative business models to increase access to nutritious food.

- **Access to nutritious food:** There are some sections of the city that do not have food access points within a reasonable walking distance. This requires patrons to either drive or take public transportation. For some low-income persons, these are not options. Establishing an on-demand bus service, delivery program or increasing the number of access points would assist to mitigate this challenge. Social enterprises (e.g. non-profits, cooperatives) were mentioned during the development of the indicators as a potential approach to finding innovative solutions. Encouraging all schools to implement and/or expand their programs would also be beneficial.
- **Increase availability of nutritious food:** Harvest Algoma is working towards substituting fresher, higher quality foods for the processed and packaged items they currently receive. Plans include building greenhouses on Harvest Algoma property and increasing gardening capacity within the community to supplement the amount of nutritious food available in the community. This should help raise the approximate weight of food distributed in the city in future years and increase the estimated percentage/quantity of highly nutritious food distributed.
- **Coordinate food literacy opportunities:** There are several options for low-income persons interested in improving their food literacy, however, there does not seem to be a publicly available list of where to access this type of programming. A comprehensive online list or a collective pamphlet/poster available at locations around the city, would be beneficial to the low-income population and organizations serving them.

COORDINATE THE DATA AVAILABILITY AND RELIABILITY:

Increased coordination of data tracking amongst the organizations involved in food security efforts would assist in ensuring they are capturing data in a standardized and useful manner. Most of the data related to food security that is presented here is difficult to obtain. This is because many organizations across the city are contributing to food security efforts in various ways.

There is a very good chance that the indicators presented above are missing food access points, distributors, and/or organizations providing food preparation skills/education. The number and diversity of food programs being delivered is necessary to provide context to these indicators, however, this was not easily available.

2. CRISIS DIVERSION & RESOLUTION

Goals



Unmet needs of community members are addressed



Gaps in service are responded to by community organizations

How can we ensure that the unmet needs of low-income people are met?

Crisis Diversion & Resolution, previously named “Essential Services”, is a wide-reaching area that requires a variety of interventions, such as emergency aids and system navigation, in meeting various unmet needs. While it is important for individuals to consider longer-term solutions to poverty such as education or job-specific training, it is equally important that they have supports in place to meet their immediate needs, i.e. rent, hydro, transportation and childcare, allowing individuals to focus on the longer term. Identifying the types of prevention interventions that are most effective per need would increase the success of stabilizing those basic needs,²⁶ and identifying service gaps – unmet needs – would further support people during times of extraordinary need. Overarching questions for those working in this field may include: Who did you turn away? What were their needs? How many individuals did not receive a referral?

Individuals utilize various strategies including involvement in social programs, drawing on their social networks, and personal strategies such as bill-juggling or partial payments.²⁷ It is important to note, a supportive family results in maintaining a lower

number of unmet needs.²⁸ Strategies that are strongly effective in assisting unmet needs are: system navigator interventions, which aid in reducing barriers through flexibility and client-centric orientation; reminder mail-outs, for individuals with fewer unmet needs;²⁹ and services providing free access to non-food basic need items to low-income families, improves mental and emotional health and positively impacts household finances.³⁰

Locally, those who are currently working in this priority area (and the Poverty Round Tables) are attempting to mitigate or resolve circumstances that may move an individual into a crisis situation, such as financial issues, housing, bills, etc. Examples of Crisis Diversion & Resolution services are the Essential Services worker at United Way, Credit Counselling Service of Sault Ste. Marie & District and the United Way’s Community Assistance Trust (CAT).

Two key approaches to Crisis Diversion and Resolution are referrals to other organizations and Situation Tables that enables relevant organizations to work collectively.

In 2018, the United Way made **247** referrals for clients to other service organizations. Referrals ranged from general tax inquiries, to emergency funding, health care requests, food assistance, snow removal, etc.

See Appendix I for a detailed list of referral destinations and types.

The Rapid Response Situation Table (RRST) is a multi-sectoral risk intervention model and partnership that aims to mitigate risk and enhance the safety and well-being of the community of Sault Ste. Marie through collaborative mechanisms for responding to situations of acutely elevated risk. In 2018, there were a total of 33 Situation Table discussions of which the top 5 risk factors presented from these individuals were: anti-social/problematic behaviour (non-criminal), mental health and cognitive functioning, substance abuse issues, criminality and physical health.

The goals of the Poverty Round Table are:

A. The unmet needs of community members are addressed

B. Gaps in service are responded to by community organizations

2.A The unmet needs of community members are addressed

“Unmet needs” can mean many different things to many different people. One way to track unmet needs is to count the number of applicants to specific programs/services that were turned away and to identify the various reasons why. For example, some programs/services use an income cut-off (such as LICO or LIM) to determine if an individual or families are eligible for a particular service. If the individual /family income is even slightly above the cut-off, they may be denied service, despite being in need.



2.A.1 Indicator: Number of unmet needs by type and number of people

The selected statistics for this indicator are related to the inability of an individual or family to afford an immediate need. The indicators here are somewhat narrow in that they only focus on health interventions and persons at risk of losing their current housing situation. These statistics were selected for two main reasons: 1) the data was readily available and 2) they were not presented elsewhere in this report. In future reports, this section should be expanded as more unmet needs are identified.

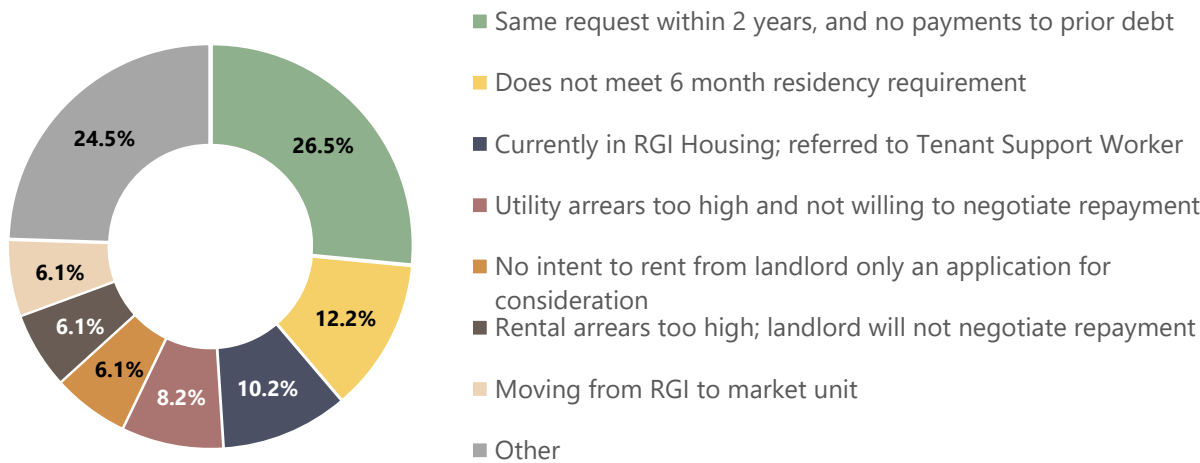
The Housing Stability Bank (HSB) is a service that helps people maintain their current housing when facing an inability to pay either their rent and/or utilities. A repayment plan is developed by the Housing Division of the DSSMSSAB.

The Housing Stability Bank advanced a total of **\$237,712** in assistance in 2018. The reasons for assistance were to pay for last and first month's rent, rental arrears, hydro arrears, and natural gas arrears.

The Northern Health Travel Grant program reimburses travel costs for northern Ontarians who need to travel long distances for specialized medical care. This program assists over 200,000 northern Ontarians per year with an average reimbursement of \$272.³¹ This program reimburses northerners who pay for their travel costs for medical care. Many lower income individuals may not have the funds to pay for travel costs upfront and out-of-pocket.



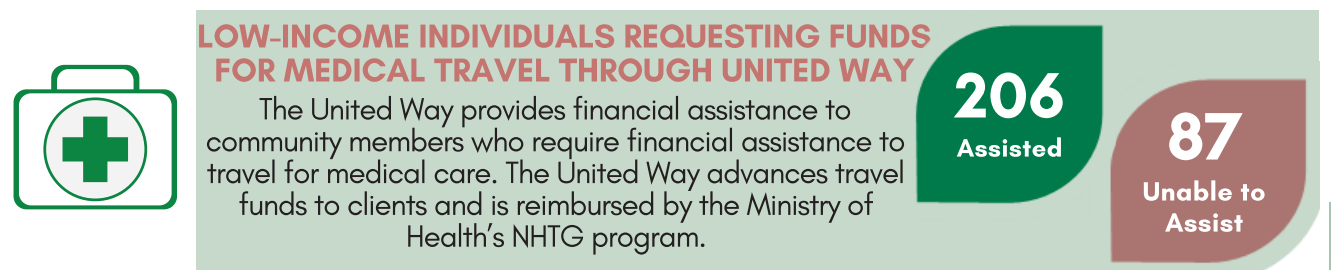
Figure 10: Reasons for denial of Housing Stability Bank Service (2018)



According to the Canadian Community Health Survey of 2014, roughly 3.4 million Canadians aged 12 and older **(11.2%) reported that they did not receive health care when they felt they needed it.** Some of the reasons cited were that wait times were too long (33.4%), health care services were unavailable at the time required (13.7%) and the cost was prohibitive (11.4%).

Data source: Statistics Canada, Health Fact Sheets - Unmet health care needs, 2014

The United Way program advanced a total of **\$144,612** in travel grant funds between April 1, 2018 and March 31, 2019. The main reason why requests for medical travel grants were denied by the United Way is that the program had run out of funds for the year.



In a 2016 survey, 31% of people in Ontario reported skipping dental checkups or care over the previous 12 months because of the cost. Studies have shown that people facing cost-related barriers to dental care also report poorer oral health outcomes.³²

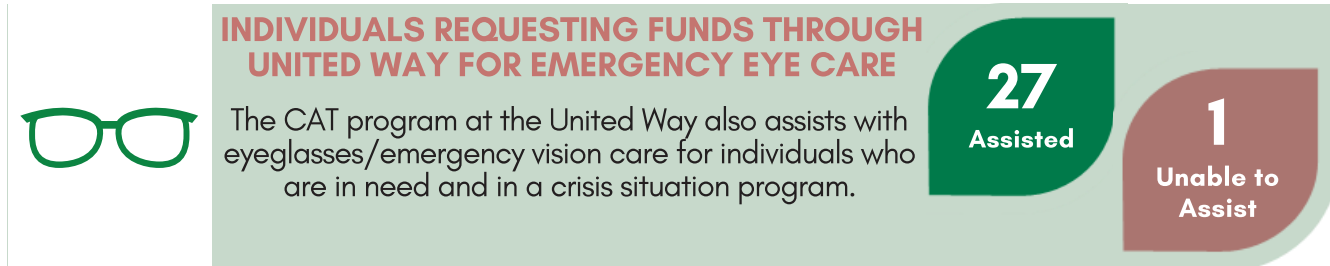
In 2017 the Canadian dental association noted that 50% of Canadians in the lower-income bracket have no dental insurance. Also, 1 out of 3 Canadians has a dental need and 1 out of 6 say they cannot address this need because of financial reasons.³³

The CAT program assisted with a total of **\$23,408** of emergency dental care between April 1, 2018 and March 31, 2019.



The Ministry of Community and Social Services covers routine eye examinations every two years if coverage under OHIP is not available for persons receiving income support either through Ontario Works or ODSP. The program assists with the cost of prescription eyeglasses once every three years for the benefit recipient, their spouse and children under 18 years of age. If individuals are in critical need (example broken glasses) they may not be covered under this program.

The CAT program advanced a total **\$5,398** of eyeglasses/emergency vision care between April 1, 2018 and March 31, 2019.



This is a starting point. There may be many more unmet needs in the community that have not been identified in this report. Tracking the unmet needs of community members is difficult task and would benefit from: 1) a list or information on all emergency assistance programs that exist in the community and 2) estimates of how many people are in need of emergency assistance but do not apply to these programs.

2.B Gaps in service are responded to by community organizations

Ideally, when gaps in services or persistent unmet needs are identified in the community, organizations should work together to fill the gaps and meet the needs of the community members.



2.B.1 Indicator: The number of persistent unmet needs

The Community Assistance Trust Program (CAT) assists Sault Ste. Marie's most vulnerable citizens with eyeglasses, utilities, home heating, rent, baby safety items, emergency dental and Northern Health Travel Grants. The CAT Coordinator ensures that all other avenues have been pursued prior to providing assistance. Those who receive assistance from CAT have nowhere else to go. CAT is the last resort for the working poor. A consequence of this work is the identification of gaps in service in the community.

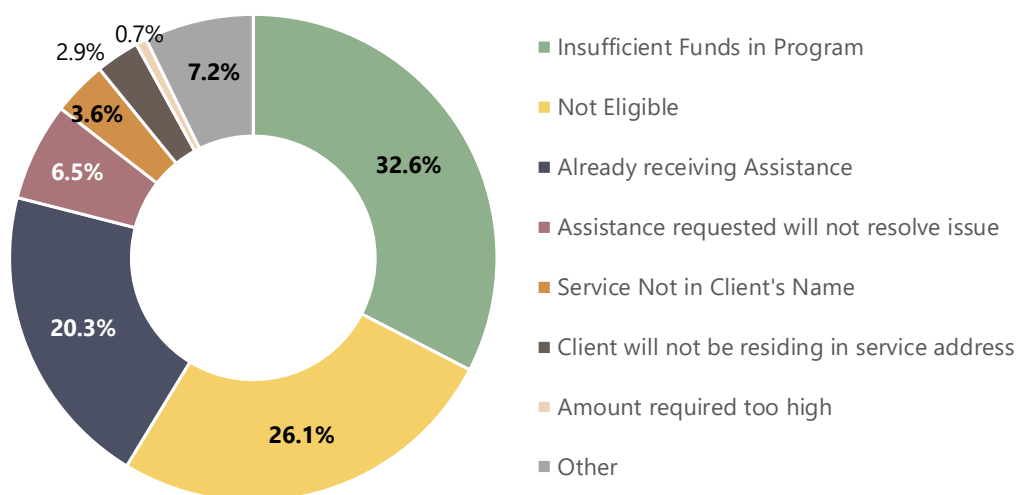


INDIVIDUALS UNABLE TO BE ASSISTED BY THE COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE TRUST

The following stat gives the number of persons that applied to the Community Assistance Trust (CAT) through the United Way but were declined for various reasons.

83

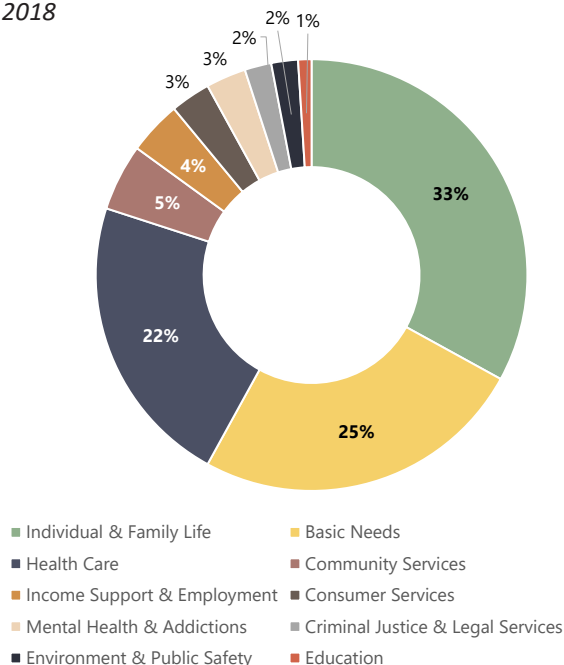
Figure 11: Reasons why individuals were not assisted by the CAT in 2018



2.B.2 Indicator: Number of Gaps identified from 211 contacts/searches

When 211 specialists are unable to locate an appropriate service or the service does not exist to meet an inquirer's need, they are identified as "unmet needs". According to 211 North, the top 3 categories for unmet needs in northern Ontario were Individual & Family Life (33%), Basic Needs (25%), and Health Care (22%). See Figure 12 for a complete chart of all identified unmet needs.

Figure 12: Unmet needs in northern Ontario identified by 211 North, 2018



An example of a program that was implemented to address an identified unmet need: the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program (CVITP) at the United Way

The CVITP is a team of volunteer preparers in Sault Ste. Marie and district who prepare basic income tax returns for Low Income Earners, Seniors, Disabled Persons and New Canadians. In 2018, this program completed **3,298** tax returns and brought in a total of **\$11,480,576** in tax-refunds and benefits to clients. Benefits include Climate Action Incentive, Child Care Benefits, Ontario Trillium Benefit, Working Income Tax Benefit, Seniors Homeowner Property Tax grant, and GST/HST rebates. Often clients are unaware that they are eligible for these benefits.

See Appendix J for drop-off locations.

There were many reasons why some needs were unmet. These include: No resource found to meet needs, ineligibility for service, hours of agency/program did not meet the needs of the inquirer, agency/program resources are depleted, waiting lists are full, etc.

Opportunities to increase the collective impact:

This domain is particularly challenging as unmet needs crosses domains and community organizations may have limited control over some interventions. By working collaboratively with various levels of government, the public and private sectors and community champions, innovative local solutions may emerge.

- **Increase access to health care:** In Sault Ste. Marie, there are persistent unmet needs related to health care and low-income persons. A lack of local specialized health care means that many individuals must travel to larger population centres for care. Travel costs are typically reimbursed through the by the Northern Health Travel Grant, but the individual will need to front the costs. Persons on OW or ODSP may be assisted by Social Services but working low-income persons may not have the financial resources to cover these costs even temporarily. The CAT assists with this, but the program has a limited budget and cannot assist everyone who applies.


TRACK PERSISTENT UNMET NEEDS:

211 North indicates that the majority of unmet needs in northern Ontario are related to Individual & Family Life (33%), Basic Needs (25%), and Health Care (22%). Tracking persistent unmet needs in the community as they relate to poverty is difficult as there are few readily available measures of "unmet needs".

- **Increase limited program funding:** When a person or family is assisted by the CAT, they typically have already explored other avenues and have no where else to go. When the CAT exhausts its funding for the year, these needs are at high risk of going unmet.
- **Revisit eligibility criteria:** Some of the recurring reasons why there are unmet needs in the community include: applicants do not meet the requirements because they had recently applied for the same program, they do not meet residency requirements, and they have an income above the cut-off used for eligibility. The Community at a Glance section of this report shows that different low-income measures produce somewhat different poverty rates for Sault Ste. Marie. A person or family who falls below the CF-LIM cut-off may be slightly above the LICO cut-off. When services or programs use LICO in their eligibility criteria, persons or families in this situation will be excluded from assistance, even though by some measures they are considered to be low-income.

TRACK PERSISTENT UNMET NEEDS CONT'D:

This report has presented several statistics related to unmet needs, but are there other ways to gather this information? Would a survey run by members of the Poverty Round Table to gather qualitative data on the unmet needs of their clients be useful? This would require a coordinated effort amongst the many organizations of the Poverty Round Table.



“It’s amazing how many people are not receiving the money they are supposed to be receiving... Last year United Way was able to claim \$230,000 for seniors for their Guaranteed Income Supplement and Canada Pension Plan by just applying. ODSP clients received \$192,000. So, it’s getting people the income that they are supposed to be receiving...”

-Sherry McCarthy,
Essential Services Outreach Worker, United Way
Sault Ste. Marie and Algoma District

3. HOUSING

Goals



All low-income persons are housed in affordable units



Housing is available to at-risk populations



Low-income people are living in housing that meets all appropriate standards of living

How can we provide sustainable housing opportunities for low-income earners?

Issues around access to affordable housing are primarily associated with the growing shortage of such. With limited affordable housing options, a high rent-to-income ratio contributes to homelessness for a large number of people.³⁴ At the same time, high rent can eat up a significant portion of household income and leave other non-housing necessities unmet.^{35, 36}

People who experience housing problems or homelessness can be characterized in two groups. For one group, lack of affordability stems from structural factors such as income poverty, higher rent, job loss etc. Any initiatives to increase housing affordability, including income support programs, rent assistance, tax benefits for new construction and rehabilitating old buildings, and housing investment programs can minimize risks for this group.³⁷ The other group, which is limited in numbers but experience chronic homelessness, are people dealing with personal issues,

including mental health and substance use. Adequate discharge planning for those leaving hospitals, correctional facilities, and mental health facilities should contribute positively to reducing their chronic homelessness. These corrective measures, along with the preventative framework, can go a long way in solving the overall housing problem.³⁸

Based on the Provincial Policy Statement definition and data from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, an “affordable” rental home in Sault Ste. Marie would have a monthly rent of **\$886** or less.³⁹ According to 2018 data compiled by both the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, **approximately half of all market rental homes in Sault Ste. Marie in 2018 can be considered to be affordable rental housing.**⁴⁰

“I’m just finding it really, really difficult to make that leap from living in housing... but how, how do I save up money to buy my own house? Like for a down payment? Or even get my credit built up enough. I don’t want to be in housing for 15 years. I’m working, you know, I should realistically be able to pay for a mortgage and everything that goes along with that...It would be great though if there were some type of assistance to help people make that move. Even something as simple as getting a line of credit or a bank loan...”

-Samantha Kyle,
Community Member discussing her experiences of living in Social housing

Between 2011 and 2018, the median rent of rental housing in Sault Ste. Marie increased from \$675 to **\$891**. This represents a 32% increase during this time period. According to the Conference Board of Canada, personal income per capita in Sault Ste. Marie increased by **14%** during this same time period.

Sources: CMHC and the Conference Board of Canada, Mid Sized Cities Outlook, 2019

For a family of four living right at the LICO-BT cut-off (gross income of \$33,157), an \$886 rental rate would account for **32%** of their gross annual household income. For persons in the lowest income decile (household income of \$12,900 or less), an \$886 rental rate would account for over **82%** of their gross annual household income.

Vacancy rates are an indicator of surplus residential supply. A healthy vacancy rate is between 3 and 5%. A vacancy rate below 3% is considered to be a “landlords” market which can have impacts on rental rates and affordability. Between 2011 and 2018, **the overall rental housing vacancy rate in Sault Ste. Marie increased from 1.1% to 5.9%**. This is partially related to a City of Sault Ste. Marie initiative to provide incentives for the construction of rental units

Figure 13: Median Rent vs. Income per Capita, 2011-18

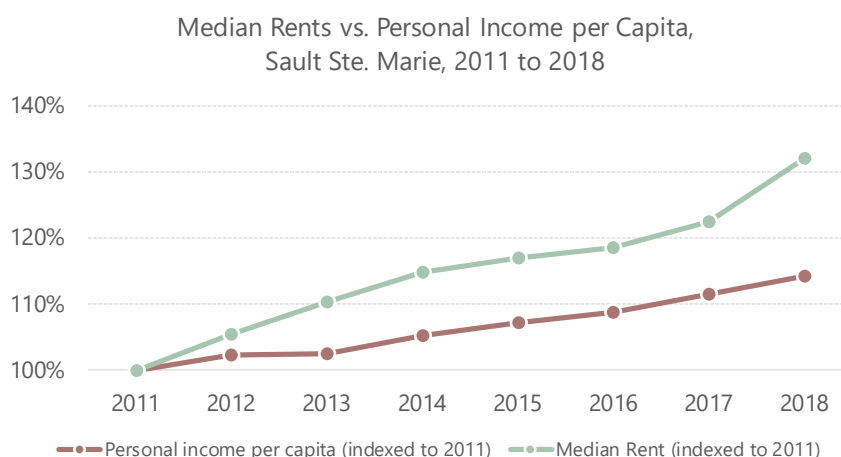


Image by Jens Neumann from Pixabay

- The goals of the Poverty Round Table are:**
- A. All low-income persons are housed in affordable units**
 - B. Housing is available to at-risk populations**
 - C. Low-income people are living in housing that meets all appropriate standards of living**

3.A All low-income persons are housed in affordable units

This is important because many individuals or families may rely on subsidized housing. If there is not enough social housing in a community, some individuals/families may face severe financial hardship and could experience homelessness.



3.A.1 Indicator: Number of Applicants on the Subsidized Housing Waiting List

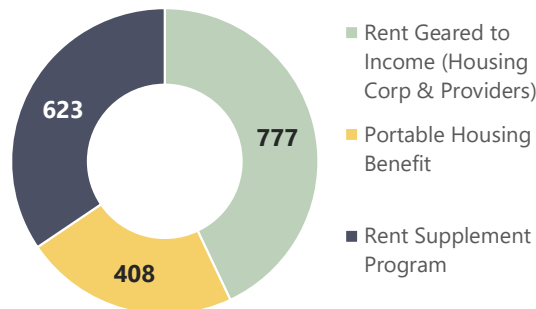


NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS/FAMILIES ON THE WAITING LIST FOR SUBSIDIZED HOUSING

Number of applicants (family units or individuals who will live alone) on the SSM Social Services waiting list for subsidized housing on December 31st, 2018. Note that there may be some inactive applications included in this number.

1,792

Figure 14: Requested subsidy type by individuals/families on the waiting list in 2018



A shelter-cost-to-income ratio of less than 30% is a commonly used line to deem housing affordable. According to the 2016 Census of Canada, **6,945** households (or **21.3%** of all households) in Sault Ste. Marie spent 30% or more of their household income on shelter costs. For those that rented their home, **4,640** (or **45.4%** of all rented households) spent 30% or more of their household income on shelter costs.

Source: Statistics Canada, Cats. # 98-400-X2016219 and 98-509-X2016001

Habitat for Humanity Sault Ste. Marie & Area provides an option for affordable homeownership. Habitat is involved in building and improving homes in partnership with individuals and families in need of a decent and affordable place to live. **There have been 9 Habitat builds in Sault Ste. Marie, 2 of which were completed in 2018.**

3.A.2 Indicator: Number of Individuals / Family Accessing Subsidized Housing



NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS/FAMILIES ACCESSING COMMUNITY HOUSING

Number of community housing units that were occupied individuals or families in Sault Ste. Marie on December 31st, 2018. Units can be owned by the SSM Housing Corporation or several other providers. This total excludes those accessing the Portable Housing Benefit (PHB). Those individuals are counted below

2,329



AVERAGE MONTHLY SUBSIDY FOR A RENT-GEARED-TO-INCOME HOUSEHOLD

Average amount of subsidy an individual or family received per month in 2018 from SSM Social Services for their rent. Subsidized or "rent-geared-to-income" (RGI) rents are about 30% of the gross monthly household income.

\$520
per month



INDIVIDUALS/FAMILIES ACCESSING THE PORTABLE HOUSING BENEFIT

Through the PHB, tenants receive a rental subsidy towards their current market rate rental unit or a different private rental of their choice. Some of these tenants are considered Special Priority Placement (SPP), where the individual or someone in the household are a current victim of abuse and/or a survivor of human trafficking.

55
17 SPP &
38 Regular



AVERAGE MONTHLY SUBSIDY FOR A PORTABLE HOUSING BENEFIT HOUSEHOLD

Average amount of subsidy an individual or family received per month in 2018 from SSM Social Services for their rent through the PHB.

\$260
per month



INDIVIDUALS/FAMILIES ACCESSING THE RENT SUPPLEMENT PROGRAM

When participating in this program, tenants pay rent-geared-to-income in a unit owned by landlords in the private market. SSM Housing Services or Algoma Public Health pays the difference to the landlord between the market rate and the tenant's portion of rent.

247

If rent and other housing related costs continue to rise faster than wages in Sault Ste. Marie, an increased demand for subsidized housing would be expected. This means more households will likely apply for subsidized housing and a greater proportion of Sault Ste. Marie households will be on the waiting list. This will require the supply of subsidies (community housing, RGI, PHB) in the city to increase as well.

In 2018, Sault Ste. Marie had approximately **33,441** households. There were **2,329** households receiving subsidy and a further **1,792** individuals/families on the waiting list of for a total of **4,121** requiring subsidies. This represents approximately **12%** of the total households in Sault Ste. Marie.

For subsidized housing, one-bedroom units are in the highest demand. On December 31st, 2018 about **61%** of the applicants on the waitlist were looking for a one-bedroom unit, **17%** were looking for a two-bedroom unit, **18%** were looking for units with three or more bedrooms, and **4%** were looking for bachelor unit.

3.B Housing is available to at-risk populations

At-risk populations are those who are dangerously lacking security or stability in their current housing situation. This includes people who are imminently at risk of homelessness, and individuals and families who are precariously housed.⁴¹



3.B.1 Indicator: Homeless individuals in Sault Ste. Marie



NUMBER OF HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS IDENTIFIED IN APRIL 2018

Number of unique individuals who were identified as experiencing homelessness through a Point-in-Time count on April 18th, 2018. This total should not include any duplicate counts.

102



TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS IN 2018

It was difficult to count or even estimate the number of individuals or families experiencing chronic homelessness in Sault Ste. Marie over the course of the 2018 year. Social Services is now using a By-Name List method to track chronic homelessness.

N/A



NUMBER OF UNIQUE INDIVIDUALS/FAMILIES THAT ACCESSED SHELTER IN 2018

This stat shows the number of unique individuals/families who accessed one of the shelters. This total should not include any duplicate counts.

287



NUMBER OF CLIENTS SEEN BY THE JHS SHELTER DIVERSION WORKER IN 2018/19

Provides on-site support to shelter residents to reduce emergency shelter living and increase the likelihood of long-term housing retention. Assists individuals/families in housing crises to access resources within the community that can assist them with housing and provide other supports.

347

It is difficult to count or even estimate the total number of individuals or families who experienced homelessness in Sault Ste. Marie at any time over the course of the 2018. A Point-in-Time (PiT) count gives a snapshot of the number of people who were homeless on any given night by counting those who are in shelters or on the streets. Many homeless people choose to seek shelter, but some homeless persons may decline help from a shelter for many reasons. Homeless persons who do not choose to visit a shelter may not be included in any of the above counts

Of the **347** clients seen by the JHS Shelter Diversion Worker between April 2018 and March 2019, **63 (or 18.2%) had positive outcomes recorded by the JSH worker.** These include changes in income (50 persons) and becoming employed (11 persons).

3.C Low-income people are living in housing that meets all appropriate standards of living



Housing that meets appropriate standards of living is safe, clean, in reasonable repair; offers basic privacy, security, personal space, and protection from outside elements.⁴² Important questions to consider for this indicator include: Are tenants and landowners aware of what constitutes adequate housing? Do people know the appropriate contacts to complain about substandard housing? Are there protocols in place to ensure substandard housing issues are addressed?

In 2016, of the Sault Ste. Marie area households who were renting their home and had an annual income of under \$30,000, **640 (or 9.4%) lived in a dwelling that required a major repair.**

These included dwellings with defective plumbing or electrical wiring, and dwellings that needed structural repairs to walls, floors or ceilings.

Source: Statistics Canada, Cat. # 98-400-X2016225

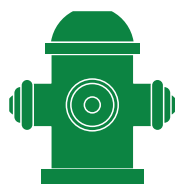
3.C.1 Indicator: Complaints made about substandard housing or other housing issues



NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS/ISSUES ABOUT SUBSTANDARD HOUSING

Property standards by-laws complaints received by the City of Sault Ste. Marie, as reported by the Property Standards Task Force.

377



NUMBER OF NONCOMPLIANCE INFRACTIONS ISSUED BY THE SSM FIRE DEPARTMENT

Infractions could include no working smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, no fire escape routes, etc. The Fire Department indicated that they do not currently track the number of infractions, but they may be interested in doing so in the future.

N/A



NUMBER OF CONTACTS MADE TO THE LEGAL CLINIC REGARDING HOUSING ISSUES

Community clinics serve the most vulnerable Ontarians on issues that are most critical to them. These are contacts/complaints made to the Algoma Community Legal Clinic regarding any housing issue.

338



COMPLAINTS ABOUT HOUSING MADE TO THE NEIGHBOURHOOD RESOURCE CENTRE

The NRC acts as a central drop-in centre to encourage neighbourhood residents to engage with local community partners and services. The NRC collects statistics related to the nature of the requests of clients including complaints/requests about housing.

117

As is the case with counting homeless individuals/families, it is difficult to count the total number of substandard housing units in Sault Ste. Marie over a given time. Every five years, the long-form census attempts to count the number housing units that require major repairs, but this will inevitably miss some substandard units.

This report presents the number of complaints about substandard housing that were made to various organizations rather than try to quantify the total number of substandard units in the City. If substandard housing issues are increasing in Sault Ste. Marie, we should expect the number of complaints to rise over time. We can also expect these numbers to rise if more tenants are becoming aware of their rights and what constitutes substandard housing.

Opportunities to increase the collective impact:

- **Increase subsidized housing stock:** Between 2011 and 2018, the median rental rates of housing units rose faster than per capita income in Sault Ste. Marie. If this trend continues, it is expected that there will be an increased demand for subsidized housing. Approximately 12% of the total households in Sault Ste. Marie are either on the waiting list for subsidy or are already living in subsidized housing.
- **Assistance with energy costs:** There are other programs to help low-income individuals/families with costs related to housing. The Ontario Energy Board offers two programs to help low-income consumers with their energy bills. The Low-income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP) is an emergency assistance program that is available to low-income consumers that are behind on their bill – or in arrears – and may face having their service disconnected. The Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP) provides monthly on-bill credits for lower-income customers to reduce their electricity bills. This is for emergency situations only and is not meant to provide clients with ongoing help to pay their bills. Ensuring low income individuals are aware of these programs through organizational referrals and community awareness would be very beneficial.

HOMELESSNESS COUNT:

In 2018, no sufficient method existed to count homelessness in a community over a designated time period. A Point-In-Time (PiT) count was used to get unduplicated count of people in the community who are experiencing homelessness on a single day/night. Social Services is now using a By-Name-List that will more accurately track persons experiencing chronic homelessness (homeless at least 180 days over the past year). This data will be available for subsequent indicator reports.

- This report presents several indicators of homelessness but does not attempt to total the number of individuals/families experiencing homelessness over the year. A decrease in the number of families/individuals identified in these counts over the coming years may appear to be a favourable change, however it will be impossible to determine if the change is real or if more people are being missed by these counts. A more measurable outcome for homelessness is the change in the number/percentage of clients seen by the John Howard Society Shelter Diversion worker who reported a positive change in their situation. An increase in this percentage is a favourable outcome as it indicates that proportionally more homeless individuals/families' have transitioned into permanent housing.
- A rise in complaints made about substandard housing may indicate that these issues are becoming more prevalent in the community or it could mean that more tenants are becoming aware of their rights and what constitutes substandard housing. The indicator presented in this report would benefit from a breakdown of the type of complaint and whether the complaint is new or an additional complaint about an unaddressed issue.
- The City of Sault Ste. Marie has recently hired an additional bylaw enforcement officer, which should help strengthen the enforcement of building standards and tenants' rights moving forward. Data gleaned from tracking such work will be helpful in future reports.

TRACK SUBSTANDARD HOUSING COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIANCE:

It is difficult to find data that counts the number of substandard housing units for a city the size of Sault Ste. Marie. The Core Housing Need indicator attempts to address this but also includes affordability in the calculation. Some substandard housing is inevitably missed in this calculation.

Also, the SSM Fire Department currently does not track the number of noncompliance infractions or fire safety violations in rental units/buildings in SSM. This could be a useful addition to this indicator if tracked in the future.

“...one of the biggest barriers is that not only is there a lack of housing, but the cost of housing. Most of these men are going to leave here and go on to Ontario Works or Ontario Disability [Support Program] at first, until they are able to secure employment ... Sometimes we can find them housing, but it's not safe, especially for a man who's just new in recovery and he's off the drugs and the alcohol, and we're trying to transition them back into the community and we don't have anything to put them into because the housing is inadequate.”

-Rev. Robert Thibodeau,
Senior Counsellor, Ken Brown Recovery Home

4. WORKFORCE ENTRY

Goals:



Employment supports for low-income people to enter the workforce are accessible



Low-income earners complete levels of education that is required to enter the workforce



Employers support training and hiring low-income people based on local labour market demand

How can we support workforce entry for those facing employment barriers?

Workforce Entry addresses the issues related to skill gaps in the labour market, barriers to employment, and workforce development strategy. The job market is constantly changing and evolving, which often creates a gap between skills workers have, and the skills employers need.⁴³ Lack of adequate skills affects youths' ability to enter the workforce. It also lowers the chances of re-entry for midcareer workers if they lose current jobs.⁴⁴ Employment barriers such as insufficient childcare assistance, housing problems, poor health and having criminal records are also

important to address in the workforce development plan.

Workforce development strategy requires job-market analyses to identify high growth local sectors, particular skills market needs, and supply-and-demand dynamics. Employment training based on market analysis and target-groups' specific requirements can improve workforce capacity.⁴⁵ Working in partnership with local employers, educators, and community leaders can be an effective approach to provide locally appropriate training and support for workers.⁴⁶

The Poverty Round Table is working towards increasing awareness of and access to:

A. Employment supports for low-income people to enter the workforce are accessible

B. Low income earners complete levels of education that is required to enter the workforce

C. Employers support training and hiring low-income people based on local labour market demand

4.A Employment supports for low-income people to enter the workforce are accessible



4.A.1 Indicator: Number of people participating in job readiness support programs

A number of service providers in Sault Ste. Marie provide support for people looking to enter (or re-enter) the workforce. These services range from employment and career counselling, pre-employment skills building programs, job placements and access to support programs. In addition, employment programs are offered for, but not limited to, students, young job seekers, people looking to re-train and newcomers. See Appendix L for a list of Employment Service providers in Sault Ste. Marie.

The following data is aggregated from the Employment Ontario Employment Service Providers. In Sault Ste. Marie in 2018, there were:

In 2018, the unemployment rate for Sault Ste. Marie averaged **4.6%** which represents approximately **1,900 people**. Since some of the individuals in the programs represented in this analysis may not be actively looking for work, they would not be part of the unemployment rate.



NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

Approximate number of participants in Employment Programs offered in the community in 2018.

3,652*

**Please note that data for some of the smaller providers was not available.*



PARTICIPANTS OF EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS WHO DID NOT HAVE A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

Education represents a potential pathway out of poverty. People who have not graduated high school will face barriers in finding employment.

31%



PARTICIPANTS OF EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS WHO ARE UNEMPLOYED

Most people who access Employment Service programs or assistance are unemployed

92%



PARTICIPANTS OF EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS WHO ARE RECEIVING ASSISTANCE OR HAVE NO SOURCE OF INCOME

The majority of people accessing Employment Services are receiving financial assistance (such as Ontario Works) or have no source of income.

76%

4.B Low income earners complete levels of education that is required to enter the workforce

For most, education represents a potential pathway out of poverty in that education and training can lead to more employment opportunities. Education is a very broad term but in the context of this report education refers to all aspects of training that a person may undertake in order to add to or improve their knowledge and skill set. This includes literacy, numeracy and essential skills training, secondary school diplomas, apprenticeship training, and college and university programs.

It is difficult for educational institutions to report numbers for only low-income students. As such, the following indicators reflect total enrollments/participants.



Of the population 25 to 64 years of age in Sault Ste. Marie, **9.5% did not have a Secondary school diploma.** This is similar to the provincial rate of 10.4% at the time of the 2016 Census.

Sources: CMHC and the Conference Board of Canada, Mid Sized Cities Outlook, 2019

4.B.1 Indicator: Secondary School graduation rates

The graduation rate is published five years after students begin Grade 9 although there are officially only four years of formal education in high school.



GRADUATION RATE FOR THE ALGOMA DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD (ADSB)

The five-year graduation rate for ADSB as of August 31, 2018. A student is considered a five-year graduate if they receive an OSSD within five years of starting Grade 9.

78.1%



GRADUATION RATE FOR THE HURON SUPERIOR CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD (HSCDSB)

The five-year graduation rate for HSCDSB as of August 31, 2018. A student is considered a five-year graduate if they receive an OSSD within five years of starting Grade 9.

84.3%

As of August 31, 2018, **87.1%** of students in the province were graduating from secondary school in five years. Students who have transferred out of province, or died, are not included in calculating the graduation rate. In 2018, ADSB was 9 percentage points below the provincial graduation rate and HSCDSB was 2.8 percentage points below.

Sources: Ontario Ministry of Education, School Board Progress Reports, 2019

4.B.2 Indicator: Post-secondary enrollments

When individuals have the opportunity to gain a post-secondary education, they are better placed to find and keep good jobs. The following numbers reflect full-time student enrollment for the 2018-19 academic year.

Being a first-generation student means your parents/guardians did not attend college, university or obtain an apprenticeship in Canada. First-generation students often come from lower-income families and have a more difficult time adjusting to life as a post-secondary student than those who have at least one parent with a college/university diploma or degree.⁴⁷

17% of Sault College's enrollment in 2018 were First Generation Students which means they are the first members of their families to attend post-secondary education. This number/percentage was not available for Algoma University.



POST-SECONDARY ENROLLMENT IN SAULT STE. MARIE

Approximate number of students enrolled in Algoma University and Sault College in the 2018/19 academic year. Please note that this number does not include those enrolled at private post-secondary institutions. This number also does not include the approximately 160 Ontario residents enrolled at Lake Superior State University in SSM, Michigan.

3,639



PERCENT OF POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS RECEIVING FINANCIAL AID THROUGH OSAP

Approximate number of students who were enrolled at Algoma University and Sault College in the 2018/19 academic year and receiving financial aid in the form of grants and loans through OSAP. The amount of aid offered depends on educational costs, family income and size, etc.

55%

The data in this report is focused on the 2018-19 school year, but it is worth noting that there were changes to OSAP in 2019. 'Free tuition' in the form of grants to families earning less than \$50,000 annually was eliminated. This change means low income students can still access OSAP, but the funding would be delivered through a combination of grants and loans.

4.B.3 Indicator: Number of literacy service providers and the number of people participating in skills development

There are **8** literacy service providers serving Sault Ste. Marie. Each offers literacy, numeracy and essential skills services that help earners transition to their goals of employment, apprenticeship, secondary-school credit, post-secondary education or independence.

See Appendix M for a list of Literacy service providers in Sault Ste. Marie.

In the 2017/18 academic year, about 441,000 Ontario students received a total of \$1.7 billion in OSAP funding, almost 98% of it in non-repayable grants, and the remaining 2% in loans. In the previous academic year, 360,000 students received a total of \$1.4 billion in OSAP funding, about 60% of it in grants and 40% in loans.

Source: Office of the Auditor General of Ontario and the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Ontario Student Assistance Program Report, 2018

The collective efforts of the Workforce Entry working group of the Poverty Round Table designed the Hospitality Training program in the summer of 2019 based on conversations on local labor market gaps. The program delivered interpersonal skills training, two weeks of in-class certifications and on the job opportunities within several local hotels to Ontario Works participants. Approximately 75% of those who entered into the program accepted paid employment in hotels post-training. A participant in the program describes her experience:

“...having been 2 years out of work plus my last couple jobs I didn't give the two weeks' notice, references were going to be a little difficult...going into this program when my worker suggested it to me, at first I was like, I wasn't interested I just showed up for the orientation but when they started to explain all the different benefits of the program like first aid/CPR...Smart Serve amongst other things I thought well that would actually be beneficial for me so I entered into the program and it's better than what I had initially thought...being able to learn while you're at work there's not so much pressure because you're not quite working for the business that we're all placed at...and they're also aware that we are learning. It's a nice place to learn and to gain skill but also it gives the employers a chance to see what we can do and whether they want to hire us once we're done this program or not.”

- Alicia,
Hospitality Work Entry Program Participant



The following data is aggregated from the Literacy Service Providers listed in the Appendix M. In Sault Ste. Marie in 2018, there were:



NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN LITERACY PROGRAMS

Approximate number of participants in Literacy Programs offered in the community in 2018.

390



PARTICIPANTS OF LITERACY PROGRAMS WHO ARE UNEMPLOYED

Almost one-third of people who accessed the Literacy Services in 2018 were unemployed.

31%



PARTICIPANTS OF LITERACY PROGRAMS WHO ARE RECEIVING ASSISTANCE OR HAVE NO SOURCE OF INCOME

The majority of people accessing Literacy Programs are receiving financial assistance (such as Ontario Works, ODSP) or have no source of income.

92%



PARTICIPANTS OF LITERACY PROGRAMS WHO WERE EITHER EMPLOYED, IN EDUCATION OR TRAINING UPON COMPLETION

The percent of participants who were either employed, in education or training upon completion of literacy programs.

39%

4.C Employers support training and hiring low-income people based on local labour market demand



4.C.1 Number of employers supporting training and hiring low-income people

Without the participation of a great number of employers, none of the employment programs in the community would survive. The challenge when preparing this report was finding an accurate measurement of employer support that was consistent across programs and that could be used year over year. While we know there is significant employer support, the Poverty Round Table will continue to develop a mechanism for quantifying the level of support on an annual basis across multiple organizations in order to track progress.

4.C.2 Number of people leaving financial assistance programs due to employment

Outcomes of workforce entry and employment programs are difficult to compare as they vary depending on the barriers the individuals served by the programs may be facing on their entry or re-entry into the workforce. Having said that the goal of any employment programs is to move people into jobs or additional training and education which will move them closer to employment. The outcome metric identified here combines the results of all programs and services to give an overall measurement of the services provided in Sault Ste. Marie. It should be noted that some individual programs and services achieved outcomes between 70 to 80%.



EMPLOYED, IN EDUCATION OR TRAINING UPON COMPLETION OF AN EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

The percent of participants who were either employed, in education or training upon completion of employment programs in 2018.

44%



EMPLOYED, IN EDUCATION OR TRAINING UPON COMPLETION OF AN EMPLOYMENT ONTARIO PROGRAM

Almost one-third of people who accessed the Literacy Services in 2018 were unemployed.

81%



EMPLOYED, IN EDUCATION OR TRAINING UPON COMPLETION OF AN ONTARIO WORKS PROGRAM

The majority of people accessing Literacy Programs are receiving financial assistance (such as Ontario Works, ODSP) or have no source of income.

10%



EMPLOYED, IN EDUCATION OR TRAINING UPON COMPLETION OF AN ODSP PROGRAM

The percent of participants who were either employed, in education or training upon completion of literacy programs.

1%

The percentages shown in this indicator should not be compared directly to each other as these programs service different clientele.

4.C.3 Training available to low-income people to meet local labour market demands

Employment supports offered by service providers in Sault Ste. Marie usually include a training component such as pre-employment skills building programs and training for a specific occupation or industry.

Employment Ontario employment services providers and Ontario Works offer general employment training throughout the year as part of their service offerings.

Other examples of employment training related programs in the community are:

- John Howard Society's Options for Change/Wellness program
- March of Dime's Skills for Work – Youth Employment program
- YMCA Starting Transitions toward Employment Program

See Appendix L for a list of Employment Service providers in Sault Ste. Marie.

Opportunities to increase the collective impact:

- **Increase the secondary school graduation rate:** Sault Ste. Marie secondary school graduation rates are lower than those of the province. This means proportionately more Sault Ste. Marie youth will face fewer job opportunities, lower salaries and other social pressures than those in Ontario as a whole.
- **Develop sector specific training:** With the help of employers, training programs can be developed that would help low-income people learn the skills necessary to work in sectors where there is a high level of unmet demand.
- **Employer support for the Living Wage:** Raising awareness of the living wage in Sault Ste. Marie and recognizing employers who support it would increase the number of employers who adopt it as a rate of pay. Supporting the living wage is an employer's opportunity to address poverty reduction in Sault Ste. Marie and invest in the long-term prosperity of the economy.

TRACK THE NUMBER OF FIRST GENERATION POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS AND THEIR OUTCOMES:

Research shows that first-generation students tend to lag behind students whose parent(s) earned a post-secondary degree. First generation students may face academic, cultural, social and financial barriers while attending a post-secondary institution. Tracking the number and outcomes of local post-secondary students will help indicate whether first-generation students in Sault Ste. Marie require additional supports to improve graduation rates.

TRACK THE NUMBER OF EMPLOYERS SUPPORTING TRAINING AND HIRING LOW-INCOME PEOPLE:

Sault Ste. Marie employers would likely need to be surveyed to determine if they are supporting training and hiring low-income people.

TRACK THE NUMBER OF POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS WHO COME FROM LOW-INCOME SITUATIONS:

Sault College and Algoma University were unable to report the percentage of their student body that come from low-income situations. The enrollment data presented in this report includes all students, even those not requiring any student financial aid.

TRACK THE NUMBER OF EMPLOYERS WHO SUPPORT A LIVING WAGE:

The 2019 living wage for Sault Ste. Marie is \$16.16 an hour. A Sault Ste. Marie living wage employer is one that pays all direct and contract staff at least this wage rate. Living wage employers can become certified through the Ontario Living Wage Network.

“...academic upgrading...gives students I think not only a solid foundation in the academics, but it...encourages them, shows them their potential, gives them a really strong foundation in developing their own skill sets and building that confidence that they can be successful...a lot of our students may come in with a lot of maybe social anxiety, depression, mental health issues, they may have had negative experiences with education in the past, they might not have the confidence in their abilities to be successful within a post-secondary education setting, so our job is to really to provide those wrap-around supports so not only the academic opportunities, but ensuring that people are getting the support they need in order to be successful on their learning journey...”

-Carolyn Hepburn,
Dean of Indigenous Studies and Academic Upgrading, Sault College - When asked how her work impacts poverty

What's Next?

This baseline report provides an initial overview of the goals of the Sault Ste. Marie Round Table Poverty Reduction Strategy, the indicators and the available data to demonstrate progress in meeting such. It is intended to provide some context that may assist in identifying which initiatives are effective, what action or support is required to strengthen the Round Table members' work, what other measures, at different community levels, would further reduce poverty.

Clearly there is considerable work and collaboration occurring within the four domains that is contributing to reducing the impact of low income on the health and well-being of individuals and families in Sault Ste. Marie. There are, however, a number of opportunities to strengthen the efforts, thereby increasing the

collective impact, through developing tracking and/or reporting mechanisms, coordinating initiatives and fostering innovative local solutions that have been noted at the end of each domain.

As indicated, there is very likely more organizations engaged in this sector offering programs addressing the needs of low-income earners that are not included in this report. The Indicator Team would like to encourage broader participation – a call to action – from all levels of the community to commit to reducing poverty, by continuing to discuss opportunities and strategies, as well as ways of ensuring future versions of this report creates a robust picture of the Round Table's progress on impacting this field.

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A. SSM Poverty Reduction Structure, 2020



B. LICO-BT and LICO-AT Calculations, 2017

This table shows the 2017 calculated threshold or “line” of low income by family size for cities with a population between 30,000 and just under 100,000. Persons who live in families who have an annual before tax (BT) and/or after-tax (AT) income below this amount are considered to be in poverty by Statistics Canada. LICO changes every year due to inflation.

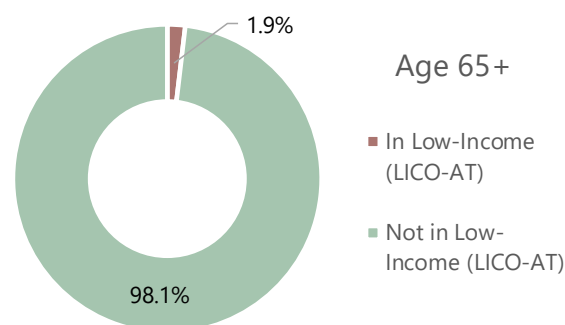
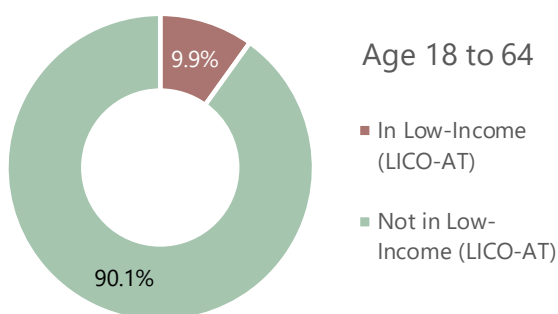
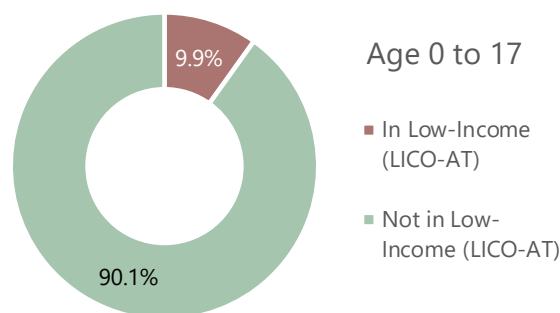
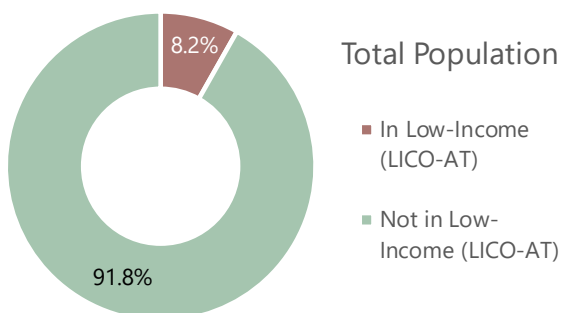
Persons living in Low Income Situations (based on LICO-AT) in Sault Ste. Marie, 2016

In low-income based on LICO-AT	5,895
0 to 17 years	1,250
18 to 64 years	4,360
65 years and over	285

LICO-BT and LICO-AT by Family Size for a Community with a Population Between 30,000 and 99,999, 2017

Family Size	LICO-BT (2017)	LICO-AT (2017)
1 person	\$21,687	\$17,536
2 persons	\$26,997	\$21,344
3 persons	\$33,190	\$26,577
4 persons	\$40,298	\$33,157
5 persons	\$45,705	\$37,757
6 persons	\$51,548	\$41,874
7+ persons	\$57,392	\$45,989

Source: Statistics Canada. Table 11-10-0241-01 Low income cut-offs (LICOs) before and after tax by community size and family size, in current dollars



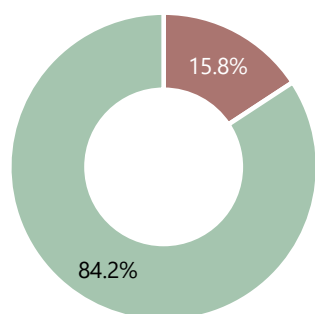
Source: Statistics Canada. 2017. Sault Ste. Marie, CY [Census subdivision], Ontario (table). Census Profile. 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001. Ottawa. Released November 29, 2017.

C. Persons living in Low Income Situations (based on CFLIM-AT), 2017

Persons living in Low Income Situations (based on CFLIM-AT), 2017

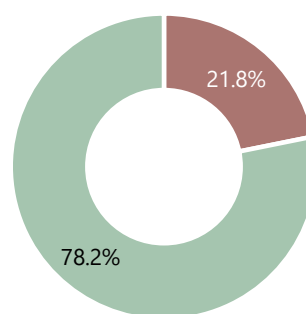
Number of Persons in Low-Income in 2017 Based on CFLIM-AT, City of Sault Ste. Marie	All Persons	Persons Living in Families	Persons Living in Couple Families	Persons Living in Lone-Parent Families	Non-Family Persons
All Ages	11,000	6,270	2,590	3,680	4,730
0 to 17 years	2,750	2,650	690	1,950	100
18 to 64 years	7,270	3,440	1,760	1,680	3,840
65 years and over	980	190	150	40	790
All Ages (%)	15.3	10.9	5.4	38.0	32.6
0 to 17 years (%)	20.8	20.2	7.6	48.4	100
18 to 64 years (%)	17.2	10.2	6.2	33.1	44.4
65 years and over (%)	6.0	1.8	1.5	6.8	13.6

Source: Statistics Canada. 2019. T1 Family File, Final Estimates, 2017.



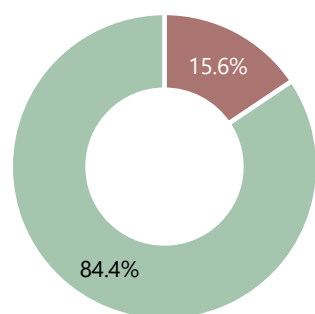
Total Population

- In Low-Income (LIM-AT)
- Not in Low-Income (LIM-AT)



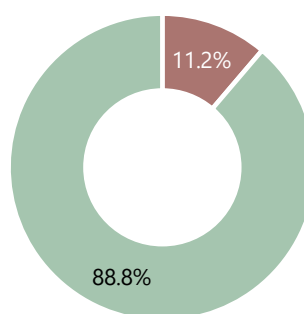
Age 0 to 17

- In Low-Income (LIM-AT)
- Not in Low-Income (LIM-AT)



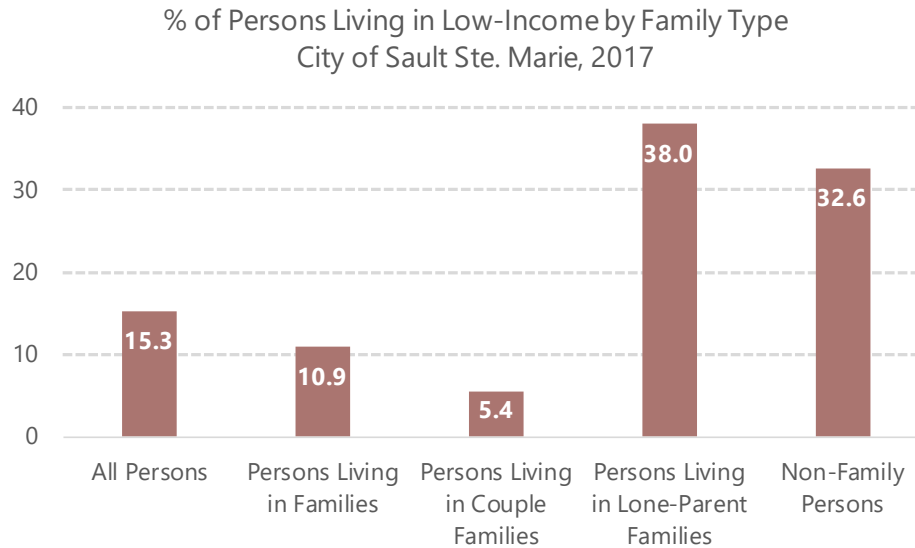
Age 18 to 64

- In Low-Income (LIM-AT)
- Not in Low-Income (LIM-AT)



Age 65+

- In Low-Income (LIM-AT)
- Not in Low-Income (LIM-AT)



Source: Statistics Canada. 2019. T1 Family File, Final Estimates, 2017.

D. Living Wage Calculation

The living wage calculation presented in this report follows the [Canadian Living Wage Framework: A National Methodology for Calculating the Living Wage in Your Community](#) developed by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA). Based on this framework, the Ontario Living Wage Network (OLWN) has developed an appropriate family expense workbook and CCPA-Ontario Living Wage Calculator to help to estimate the living wage for the communities in Ontario. The CCPA-Ontario Living Wage Calculator has been used for calculating the 2019 SSM living wage.

For this calculation, community-specific data is drawn on to determine expenses for the family of four. In our reference household, there are two working (35 hours a week full-year) adults age between 31 and 50, a 7-year old boy and a 3-year old girl. One child goes to full-time daycare, and one is in before- and after-school care. In addition, one parent taking professional development courses at a local college to improve employment capacity. The annual family expenses include-

- **Food:** The cost of Nutritious Food Basket.
- **Clothing and footwear:** The average cost of clothing and footwear.
- **Shelter:** Rent for a three-bedroom unit, utilities, and tenant insurance.
- **Communication and entertainment:** The cost of cell-phone, internet, and Netflix.
- **Transportation:** The cost of one vehicle and bus passes for one parent and both children.
- **Education (adults):** The part-time student rate for two courses, including books and other fees.
- **Child care:** The cost of local child care expenses for full-day care and before and after school care.
- **Health:** The cost of Non-OHIP medical expense, Life insurance and Critical Illness Insurance.
- **Other expenses:** This amount is intended to cover toiletries and personal care, furniture, household supplies, laundry, school supplies and fees, some reading materials, minimal recreation and entertainment, family outings, birthday presents, modest family vacation and some sports or art classes for the children.

The income side of the calculation takes into account all the government benefits (e.g., Canada Child Benefit, Working Income Tax Benefit, Ontario Trillium Benefit), subsidies (e.g., childcare) and taxes to incorporate with employment income. The final step is to estimate the employment income to meet family expenses. This employment income represents the living wage in this report.

NORDIK Institute will be releasing a Living Wage report for Sault Ste. Marie in the near future.

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E. List of Organizations Producing and/or Distributing Food

List of Locations Producing Food for or Distributing Food to Harvest Algoma

- Algoma Farmers' Market Vendors
- Cash 'n Carry
- Community Gardeners
- Community Populations (via food drives/donations)
- Connect the Dots Community Harvest
- Local Farmers (Mennonite)
- Lock City Dairies
- Mill Market Vendors
- Rome's Independent Grocer
- Salvation Army Railside Distribution Centre

List of Locations Distributing Food from Harvest Algoma, etc.

Name of Distributor	Type of Distributor	Label in Map
A New Link	Other Social Service	1
AFS Community Kitchen - Emmaus Anglican Church	Other Social Service	2
AFS Community Kitchen - Holy Angels EarlyON	Other Social Service	3
AFS Community Kitchen - Indigenous Friendship Centre	Other Social Service	4
AFS Community Kitchen - Northern Community Centre 55+	Other Social Service	5
Algoma University Food Pantry	Education	6
Breton House	Treatment	7
Canadian Mental Health Association Club 84	Other Social Service	8
DSSMSSAB - Boston Hub	Other Social Service	9
DSSMSSAB - Chapple-Albion Hub	Other Social Service	10
DSSMSSAB - Goulais Avenue-Second Line Hub	Other Social Service	11
Indigenous Friendship Centre	Other Social Service	12
John Howard Society	Other Social Service	13
Ken Brown Recovery Home	Treatment House	14
Neighbourhood Resource Centre	Other Social Service	15
Northland Adult Learning Centre	Education	16
Ontario Works / ODSP	Other Social Service	17
Pauline's Place	Shelter	18
Phoenix Rising Women's Centre	Shelter	19
Salvation Army Food Bank	Food Bank	20
Sault College Food Bank	Education	21
Soup Kitchen Community Centre		22
St. Vincent Place	Food Bank, Shelter, Soup Kitchen	23
Summit Church	Faith Organization	24
Teen Challenge	Treatment	25
Women in Crisis	Shelter	26

F. List of Nutritious Food Locations

Type	Name	Address
Supermarket/Grocery	City Meat Market	814 Queen Street East
Supermarket/Grocery	Food Basics	701 Pine Street
Supermarket/Grocery	Food Basics	625 Trunk Road
Supermarket/Grocery	Joe's No Frills	519 Korah Road
Supermarket/Grocery	NG Cash & Carry / Wholesale Club	173 Trelawne Ave
Supermarket/Grocery	Metro	150 Churchill Boulevard
Supermarket/Grocery	Metro	248 Northern Avenue
Supermarket/Grocery	Metro	275 Second Line West
Supermarket/Grocery	Pino's Get Fresh	219 Trunk Road
Supermarket/Grocery	RJ's Market	238 Wellington Street West
Supermarket/Grocery	Rome's Independent Grocer	44 Great Northern Road
Supermarket/Grocery	Walmart	293 Bay Street
Supermarket/Grocery	Walmart	446 Great Northern Road
Farmer's Market/On-Farm Market	Algoma Farmer's Market	Foster Drive
Farmer's Market/On-Farm Market	Mill Market	35 Canal Drive
Farmer's Market/On-Farm Market	Neal's Country Farm & Market	1764 Second Line West
Farmer's Market/On-Farm Market	Thompson Strawberry Farm	4057 Third Line W.
Community Garden	Algoma University People's Garden	1520 Queen Street East
Community Garden	Child Care Algoma	148 Dacey Road
Community Garden	Common Ground at Emmanuel United Church	224 Bennet Boulevard
Community Garden	Etienne Brule NRC Community Garden	120 Huron Street
Community Garden	Forest Heights Community Garden	18 Palace Drive
Community Garden	Grandview Public School	161 Denwood Drive
Community Garden	H.M Robbin's Public School	83 East Balfour Street
Community Garden	Kiwadin Public School	735 North Street
Community Garden	Northland Adult Learning Centre	440 Northland Road
Community Garden	NRC Communal Garden	138 Gore Street
Community Garden	St. Mary's College	868 Second Line East
Community Garden	St. Mary's French Immersion	124 Gibbs Street
Community Garden	Tarentorus Public School	96 Northwood Street

G. Food Distribution by Location

- The Salvation Army distributed \$100,000 worth of food in 2018. At an estimation of 4lbs/\$2.50 per meal this is approximately **160,000 lbs** of food.
- St. Vincent Place distributed \$57,686 worth of food in 2018. At an estimation of 4lbs/\$2.50 per meal this is approximately **92,298 lbs** of food.
- Between opening in July to December 2018, Harvest Algoma had received and distributed **40,000 lbs** of food.
- The Soup Kitchen indicated that they did not track weight or value of the food that they distributed in 2018.

H. Community Kitchens in Sault Ste. Marie

Name/Location	Frequency	Notes
EarlyON Child & Family Centre Family Meals Community Kitchen	Held once a month	This kitchen currently has a waitlist. Interested participants are put into groups and rotate each month; this means participants can only attend the kitchen once every three months due to the high demand.
Emmaus Community Kitchen	Held once a month	This kitchen currently runs at maximum participation each month with 10 to 13 participants, normal kitchens have 6 participants. Emmaus will likely have to begin a wait list soon if their numbers keep increasing.
Indigenous Friendship Centre Healthy Kids Family Kitchen	Held once a month	This kitchen just began in September of 2019. September's kitchen was at maximum participation and this month's kitchen will be the same. IFC is currently starting a wait list.
Northern Community Centre 55+ Community Kitchen	Held once a month	In October 2019 NCC 55+ Community Kitchen was held. We were at maximum participation for this kitchen and will also be at maximum participation for the upcoming months of November and December. As people are beginning to sign up for the new year, a waitlist has started for this kitchen as well.

I. Common Referral Destinations and Types from the Essential Services Division of the United Way SSM & District

Referral Destination	Referral Type
Canada Revenue Agency	General tax inquiries (including Child Tax Credit, OAS, CPP, GIS), change of income and survivor benefits
Terry Sheehan (Member of Parliament)	Expedite applications for OAS, CPP, GAINS, GIS, Child Tax Credit, Income Tax, change of income
Food Banks/Soup Kitchens, Community Hubs	Food assistance
Algoma Community Legal Clinic	Landlord and tenant issues, OW or ODSP Appeals
Neighbourhood Resource Centre	Walk-in clinic, dental clinic, free haircuts
SSM Housing Corporation	To apply for geared to income housing, Housing Stability Bank Loans
Mr. M's / Helping Hands	Furniture, household items, clothing, etc
Ontario Works	Housing Stability Bank, emergency financial assistance
Ontario Renovates Program	Provides up to \$25,000 in forgivable loan assistance to low- and moderate-income households to assist them in performing eligible major repairs, renovations and accessibility modifications to their homes
VON	Snow removal for seniors
Service Clubs	Help purchasing medical items or assistive devices

J. Community Volunteer Income Tax Program (CVITP) Drop-Off Locations

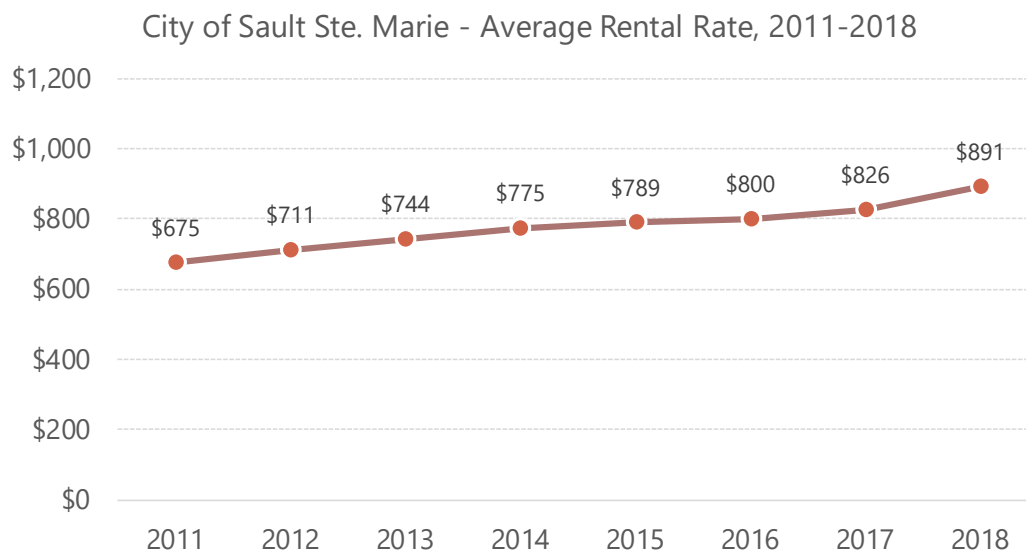
CVITP Drop-Off Location	Number of Returns in 2018
United Way	2,644
Credit Counselling Service of SSM & District	240
DSSMSSAB Community Hubs (3 locations)	72
Sault Ste. Marie Public Library	59
Seniors Drop-In	54
Ontario Works	49
Ontario Finnish Resthome Association (OFRA)	43
55 Chapple	23
Batchewana First Nation*	22
Neighbourhood Resource Centre (NRC)	16
Echo Bay*	15
Richards Landing*	11
Algoma Manor*	6
F.J. Davey Home	4
<i>*Drop-off location is outside of Sault Ste. Marie</i>	

K. Housing Market Statistics

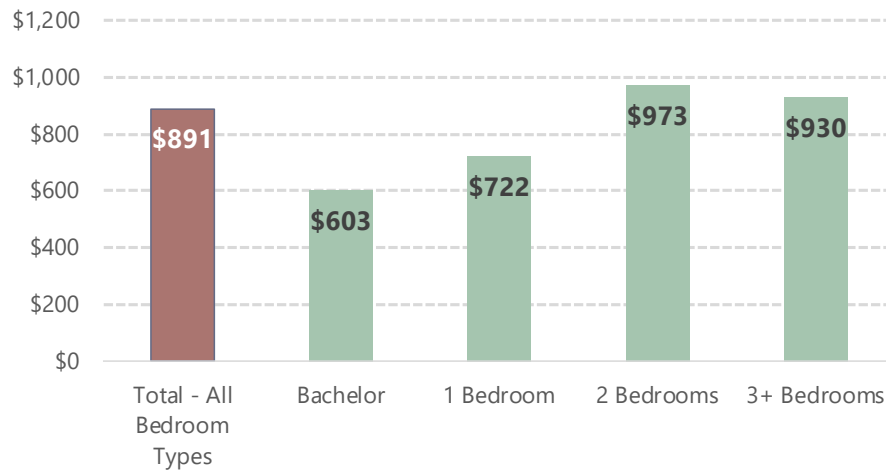
Apartment rental rates

This is important because people living at or near the LICO line may be unable to afford housing. As well, people that face unexpected financial hardships such as lay offs may be unable to afford housing. Has the cost of shelter increased over time? Has rental housing become unaffordable over time?

The Rental Market Survey, conducted in October of every year, provides data on the apartment and row-house rental market in Sault Ste. Marie.



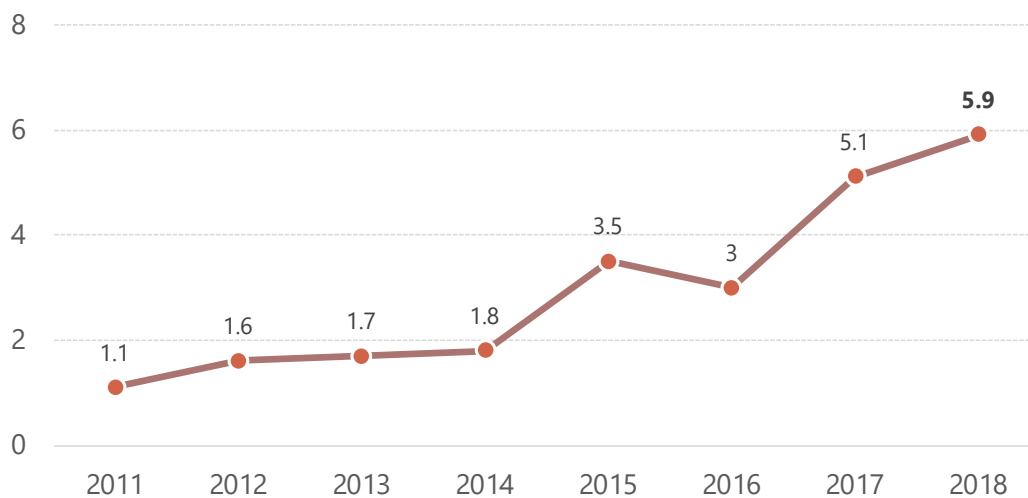
City of Sault Ste. Marie, Average Rental Rate by Number of Bedrooms, October 2018



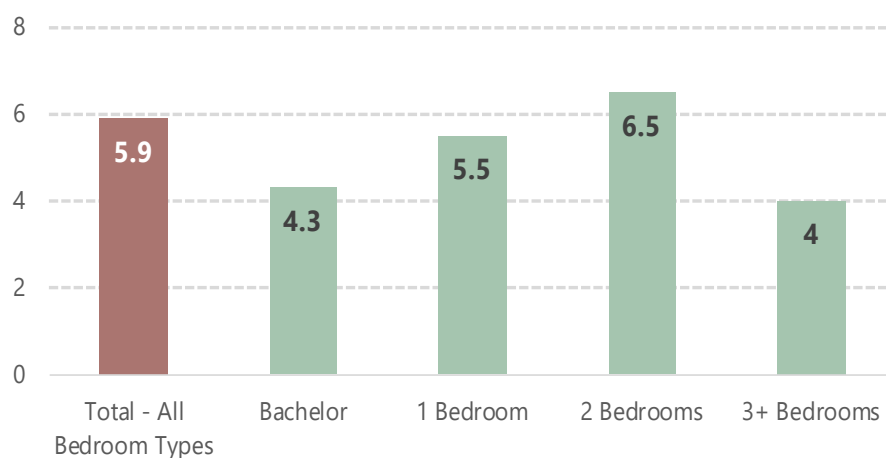
Vacancy Rates for apartments

Vacancy rates are an indicator of surplus residential supply. Are there enough apartments available for rent to meet the current and future need? If people are on a waitlist for an apartment, they may need to find temporary shelter elsewhere. As well, if there are too many vacant apartments, then the landlord may be forced to increase rent to the current tenants and may cause undue hardship.

City of Sault Ste. Marie - Vacancy Rate, 2011-2018



City of Sault Ste. Marie, Vacancy Rate by Number of Bedrooms, October 2018



L. Employment Service Providers in Sault Ste. Marie

SERVICE PROVIDER
Employment Solutions
Sault Community Career Centre
St. Vincent De Paul Society
YMCA Skills Link
YesYouCan Employment Consulting
Accessibility North
Community Living Algoma
Ontario Works
ER Employment Consulting
John Howard Society of Sault Ste. Marie and District
Ontario March of Dimes

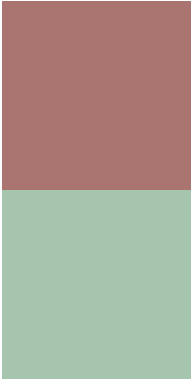
M. Literacy Service Providers in Sault Ste. Marie

SERVICE PROVIDER
Program Read
The Canadian Hearing Society
Northland Adult Learning Centre (Algoma District School Board)
Centre d'éducation et de formation pour adultes (CEFA)
Sault Ste. Marie Adult Learning Centre (Algoma District School Board)
Holy Angels Learning Centre (Continuing Education and Adult Learning)
Niin Sakaan Literacy (Indian Friendship Centre)
Sault College (Academic and Career Entrance – ACE) Upgrading

Endnotes

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