

City of Kenora

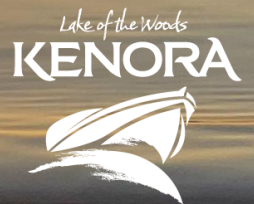
Community Safety and Well-Being Plan

2025 - 2035



Updated

March 18, 2025



This report was prepared by More Better Solutions for the City of Kenora.



www.morebetersolutions.ca

Cover photo was provided by Azalea K. who participated in a Photo Voice Project, titled 'Youth Photo Contest: My Community, My Lens', during the development of the plan. She writes:

"This photo represents the many lakes in Kenora that makes summer, well, summer. I love how there are so many lakes and beaches that are close to neighborhoods that make summer memorable."

This report features other photos from youth that show what they love about Kenora.

Disclaimer

While care has been taken in the preparation of this document to ensure its contents are accurate, complete, and up to date, certain limitations with the data must be acknowledged. The information presented in this report is based on a review of existing data, consultations with community groups, and findings from a public survey. One major challenge with qualitative data (focus groups, open-ended survey questions, etc.) is the subjectivity of responses. Participants share their perspectives and opinions based on their own experiences and knowledge. As a result, the statements made by an individual may not reflect the perspectives of others. It is therefore important to recognize that the findings from the research that inform the plan cannot be deemed as unequivocally representing the reality of community safety and well-being challenges in the City of Kenora. At the same time, the data offer valuable insights through a thematic analysis. Further discussions of data limitations can be found in the supporting documents of which there are three: a community data profile, a survey report and a report on findings from the engagement sessions.

This is a living document. New evidence, actions, and recommendations related to community safety and well-being emerge regularly. This plan reflects the data collected at the time of the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan (CSWBP) development.



Trigger Warning: This document and the supporting documents include discussions about sensitive topics related to crime, safety, and victimization that could be triggering to some people.

If you have any questions about the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan, please contact Eric Shih the Community Safety and Well-Being Coordinator at the City of Kenora at: eshih@kenora.ca or 807-467-2000.

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Land Acknowledgement for the City of Kenora

In the spirit of reconciliation, the City of Kenora acknowledges that we are on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe and Metis of Treaty #3. The City of Kenora was originally the land base of one collective First Nation community, which was separated into three communities now known as Wauzhushk Onigum, Niisaachewan, and Washagamis Bay First Nations. Kenora now sustains many others, all of whom have been welcomed to peacefully share and care for these ancestral Lands and Waters.

To support stewardship of the land, the City recognizes the importance of a strong relationship with our Treaty #3 partners. The City of Kenora acknowledges that our economy greatly benefits from the Anishinaabe and Métis that live in and around the city.

Land Acknowledgement for the Crime Prevention and Community Well-Being Advisory Committee

As we gather today in support of the important work of building a Community Safety and Well-Being Plan, we respectfully acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe people, part of Treaty #3 land. The Anishinaabe people have been stewards of this land, and we recognize their enduring connection to the land, water, and skies. We honour their wisdom, resilience, and strength, as well as the contributions of the Métis and other Indigenous Peoples who have shaped the rich cultural heritage of this region.

As we embark on the work of enhancing the safety and well-being of all in our community and its surrounding areas, we are reminded of the importance of inclusivity, equity, and justice, values that are deeply rooted in the teachings of the First Nations of this land. Let us be guided by these principles, ensuring that our efforts reflect the spirit of partnership and mutual respect.

In the spirit of reconciliation, we commit ourselves to understanding the historical and ongoing impacts of colonization and to creating spaces of safety and belonging for Indigenous Peoples, as well as all members of our community. May today's work contribute not only to a safer and healthier future but also to a path towards healing and unity for everyone who calls this land home.

All meetings of the Crime Prevention and Community Well-Being Advisory Committee (CPCWBAC) started with a land acknowledgement such as the one provided here.

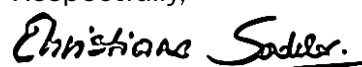
A Note about Indigenous Endorsements

Ideally, this plan would start with an endorsement from Kenora's Indigenous leaders who play a critical role in shaping the safety and well-being of the community every day. Getting such endorsement was the goal all along. However, a project of this magnitude does not allow sufficient time to be fully inclusive of all the different planning approaches required to gain full support. This challenge was to some extent anticipated and led to adjustments in the engagement approach such as adding validation meetings. In fact, the decision to include a validation process emerged from consultations with Indigenous representatives. They made it clear that Indigenous leaders would likely only support the plan if there was significant reassurance that Indigenous voices had been meaningfully included. Additionally, they shared that any processes for seeking supports and endorsements needed to be shaped by Indigenous leaders and their elders to reflect the Nations' diverse values and talents.

Care was taken to make Indigenous experiences as central to the plan as those of the non-Indigenous population. Participation from Indigenous peoples in the survey was notably higher than is typical for this type of research. Meeting with elders around a sacred fire at the Fellowship Centre, and hosting three sharing circles, each co-facilitated by an Indigenous person and by a member of the local Indigenous community, were all efforts solely dedicated to hearing the First Nations' and Métis' voices. Dialogues with organizations such as KCA and WNHAC and with one of the local Chiefs provided many valuable insights. Disaggregating some data helped to ensure that Indigenous experiences were not overshadowed in the research. Additionally, an Indigenous member of the advisory committee led a subcommittee focused on integrating the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action into the Kenora Community Safety and Well-Being Plan. This resulted in the overarching theme on dialogue, moving beyond polarization, and fostering harmony.

However, in the end, the planning process was constraint in time. And trust-building takes time and cannot be rushed. I fully acknowledge that. It is my hope that going forward the goal remains to continue to nurture the relationships that are essential for fully engaging the Indigenous peoples of Kenora and area in the implementation of this plan. This plan is a living plan. But it cannot have a life with only half of the population engaged. As a first step, therefore, opportunities should be sought to meet with Indigenous leaders and elders, in the very least each Spring, to see how the vision of a safe and harmonious community for all can be moved forward together. These conversations might be well guided by the seven grandfather teachings of: wisdom, love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility and truth. While sustainable change can indeed take seven generations to come about, the release of the plan presents an opportunity for all in Kenora and area to be part of a momentum for change as of today. I look forward to seeing Kenora model the way in making their CSWB plan a catalyst for inclusion and for working together, for bridging divides and ultimately for building a stronger more united community that is aware of the past while looking ahead. As is often said: "The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago. The next best time is now."

Respectfully,



Christiane Sadeler,
Owner/Consultant, More Better Solutions

Message from Mayor and Council



We appreciate the dedication of our community as we move forward with the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan. This plan is essential in our ongoing commitment to creating a safe and inclusive environment for everyone in Kenora.

We recognize that our city's strength lies in its residents' active participation. Your insights, gathered through

thoughtful discussions, collaboration, surveys, and community engagement, have played a crucial role in developing this plan. Thank you for your essential contributions; they are at the heart of our shared goals.

We sincerely thank the Crime Prevention and Community Well-Being Advisory Committee (CPCWBAC) for their hard work and commitment in bringing this plan to fruition. Special thanks to our consultant, Christiane Sadeler from More Better Solutions, for her expertise and guidance throughout this process. Her insights have played a significant role in creating a strategy that meets Kenora's unique needs.

As we implement this Community Safety and Well-Being Plan, it is crucial that we maintain collaboration among all organizations, sectors, and community members in Kenora. The success of this initiative will depend on our ongoing partnerships and teamwork and the contributions by everyone in our community.

Together, we can build a safer and more welcoming community for all residents and visitors. Thank you, Kenora, for your continued support and dedication to our community.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "And For".

Mayor and Council,
City of Kenora

Message from the Chair of the Crime Prevention and Community Well-Being Advisory Committee



As Chair of the Crime Prevention and Community Well-Being Committee (CPCWBAC), I am proud to present the final version of the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan for the City of Kenora. Over the past year, our committee has worked tirelessly, with the support of a dedicated consultant, to develop a comprehensive plan that reflects the diverse voices and concerns of our entire community.

The decision to engage a consultant was a crucial step in ensuring that we had the expertise and resources necessary to create a meaningful and effective strategy. Through extensive consultations and community engagement efforts, we have gathered invaluable input from residents, stakeholders, and local organizations. This plan is the result of their shared experiences and insights, and it is a testament to the strength of our collective commitment to building a safer and more inclusive community.

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the members of the Advisory Committee who have remained steadfast in their dedication to this process. Their tireless work, unwavering commitment, and willingness to engage in difficult conversations have been the cornerstone of our success. While the journey has not always been easy, and the path has presented its challenges, the collaborative spirit and passion of this group have been truly inspiring. I also extend our collective thanks to the City Administration for their dedicated support and commitment to this process. And finally, thank you to Mayor and Council for putting your trust in your community to engage in this important task.

Moving forward, it will be essential for all of us to continue working together to ensure the success of this plan. Collaboration across sectors, organizations, and individuals will be key to addressing the complex issues facing our community. I am confident that with continued commitment and partnership, we will create a safer, healthier, and more vibrant Kenora for all.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Darcia'.

Darcia Curtis
Chair of Crime Prevention and Community Well-Being Committee

Acknowledgements and Appreciations

A deep sense of gratitude is owed to the Crime Prevention and Community Well-Being Advisory Committee (CPCWBAC) who remained steadfast throughout what was often a challenging process. Their unwavering dedication and resilience were evident at every stage of the plan's development. Their genuine care for the well-being of their community—its residents, visitors, and future—is clear and immeasurable.

However, the Advisory Committee's ability to engage in meaningful deliberations would not have been possible without the contributions of many other community members. Sincere thanks are due to everyone who participated in the extensive survey, interviews, and focus groups, as well as to the individuals and organizations that provided essential data and background information. It is evident that Kenora is a community that cares. A special thanks is also owed to those who offered their time and input not as professionals, but as engaged community members. No community can thrive without those who selflessly contribute because they believe in a cause.

Special recognition goes to the elders who gathered around a sacred fire to share their stories and wisdom. Their participation not only enriched the experience but also grounded it in both content and spirit, creating a deeper connection to the community of Kenora past and present.

And none of this would have been possible without the eager and skilled team spirit of staff at the City of Kenora. For many of them public service is not a job but a calling.

Finally, thank you to the children and youth who participated in the Photo Voice Project and the sharing circles. May this plan be a part of shaping a future that is bright for you all.



From left to right the members of the City of Kenora Crime Prevention and Community Well-Being Advisory Committee in 2024: Jill Hager, Anita Cameron, Heather Pihulak, Shannon Bailey, Jim Neild, Cynthia MacDougall, Denise Forsyth (Vice-Chair), Jared Olsen, Darcia Curtis (Chair), Haley Pentek, Taras Manzie, Jodelle Maksymchuk, Grant Cowles, Regan Dearborn, Jeff Duggan, Logan Haney, Councillor Robert Bernie, Christiane Sadeler (consultant), Eric Shih (Coordinator), and Kyle Attanasio (Chief Administrative Officer). Absent at time of photo taking: Councillor Barb Manson.

A Note to the Reader

Many members of the community and even members of the Advisory Committee wanted to get straight to the place of solutions. In fact, almost all people who engaged in this process came with ready made solutions that they were keen to share. Notwithstanding that enthusiasm for change or sense of urgency, the Advisory Committee took great care to first understand the challenges and listen to the community and include those with lived and living experiences before deciding on priorities and proposing actions.

If you participated in the survey or engagement sessions, you may or may not see your specific input directly reflected in this plan. Some suggestions fell outside the project's scope, which will be explained later. However, every voice was heard, and every story mattered. Together, all the voices that informed this plan have shaped its foundation, helping to create a more comprehensive and community-driven vision. A detailed summary of survey responses and engagement sessions, including sharing circles, is available in separate supporting documents. Due to the overwhelming level of participation, incorporating all analyses directly into the plan would have been unmanageable.

Therefore, the plan includes only high-level summaries of the various data sources, whether from official reports, survey responses, or insights gathered from focus groups and interviews. For a deeper dive, you can access the supporting documents found at: kenora.ca/communitysafety

Conversely, you might want to go straight to the action tables, and you are certainly welcome to do so. Any engagement with the plan is valuable but it is important to understand that action statements that are taken out of context may lack the depth of knowledge and experiences that informed them. You are therefore encouraged to read the plan in its entirety. It is designed to guide you through the journey of its development and provide a fuller understanding of the thinking behind the actions.

The goal of this plan is not only to provide a roadmap but also to create an opportunity to re-examine longstanding issues from a fresh perspective. Achieving this requires a balance between transactional and transformational approaches. Transactional strategies focus on practical, short-term goals that can be implemented reasonably quickly, while transformational strategies drive lasting change by shifting the status quo.

A Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Plan that prioritizes only immediate needs will fail to address deeper, systemic challenges. Conversely, a plan that focuses solely on long-term transformation may overlook more urgent concerns that affect community safety and well-being in the here and now. In that spirit, this plan is designed to deliver meaningful timely progress while laying the groundwork for sustainable, longer-term changes.

A Vision for Kenora

Kenora is a community rich in history, nature, and people — a place where everyone can live, grow, and play together in harmony.

Kenora is located on the beautiful Lake of the Woods in Treaty #3 Territory in Northwestern Ontario, Canada.



This vision statement serves as a foundation for the planning. It is meant to be a big picture statement, a north star that we reach for. Vision statements are ambitious and future oriented.

*“Vision without action is merely a dream.
Action without vision just passes the time.
Vision with action can change the world.”
-Joel A. Barker*

A Brief Overview of Kenora

Perched on the north shore of Lake of the Woods and its 14,522 islands and 65,000 miles of shoreline, the City of Kenora is iconic Canada – granite, pines, and water. The community is in the Northwestern corner of Ontario, approximately forty kilometres from the Manitoba border and two hours east of Winnipeg, Manitoba, on the Trans-Canada highway. Situated on Treaty #3 territory, the home of Anishinaabe and Métis peoples, Kenora benefits from the natural setting that surrounds the community and its many friendly, passionate, and proud residents.

Kenora was established as “Rat Portage” in 1882 and has since evolved into a resilient and forward-looking community that values its storied local heritage and rich cultural diversity. Residents and seasonal residents alike are afforded a unique quality of life, while Kenora’s visitors benefit from limitless opportunities to relax, play, and share in the memories created here.

Kenora has developed its position as a regional economic, tourism and services hub, while maintaining the character and charm that makes the community distinct and memorable. Kenora is supported by a municipality that is passionate about serving the community and prioritizes collaboration and innovation when confronting challenges or seizing new opportunities.

Kenora’s population of approximately 15,000 residents is bolstered by a seasonal resident population estimated to be two to three times larger than the permanent resident population. Kenora is an internationally recognized visitor destination and gateway for the world-renowned Lake of the Woods. Visitors and residents are provided with access to a limitless range of recreation, leisure, and adventure opportunities. The region’s original inhabitants, the Anishinaabe, have resided in the Kenora and Northwestern Ontario region for millennia. Three neighbouring communities include Anishinaabe Wauzhushk Onigum Nation, Niisaachewan Anishinaabe Nation, and Washagamis Bay First Nation and they passionately share the lands of Kenora, which serves as a hub community.

Kenora has evolved from its traditional resource-based economy into a modern and thriving service-based economy that includes tourism, health care, retail, hospitality, education, and government services. Kenora is an active community where residents have access to eight municipal parks, five beaches, thirty kilometres of trails, a splash park, five outdoor and one indoor children’s play structures, and recreational facilities that include hockey rinks, indoor and outdoor soccer pitches, ball diamonds, swimming pool, dog park, and much more. Kenora also has a vibrant arts and cultural community supported by key facilities such as the MUSE, two municipal libraries and countless special events, festivals, and other activities.

That said, Canada has a long history of colonial policies that devastated communities nationwide, including the legacy left by residential schools – the last of which closed in 1996. Kenora shares this painful past, with five residential schools operating in and around the community until 1974. Throughout the consultation process, it became evident that Kenora’s future is deeply intertwined with the lasting impact of this history. At the same time, many expressed a powerful collective will to transform the community and position Kenora as a city of unity and healing.

Harmony in Our City

Kenora is renowned for its natural beauty and outdoor recreational opportunities, particularly around the Lake of the Woods. Often described as a "shining city in the wilderness," it offers residents and visitors access to activities like fishing, boating, and hiking. Kenora is built on a long history of Indigenous stewardship of the land as well as the tenacity of those who left their homeland to settle there. However, Kenora also faces longstanding social and infrastructure challenges that impact its collective well-being and reputation.

One of the City's most pressing challenges is its history of relationships with Indigenous peoples including residential schools and the related policies that to the present-day impact families and the collective ability to effectively solve problems together. As a community with one of the largest per capita Indigenous populations in Ontario, this history remains deeply relevant, shaping present-day experiences and contributing to division, mistrust, and disengagement.

However, polarization in Kenora extends beyond Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations. It also manifests between long-time residents and newcomers, the wealthy and the poor, homeowners and renters, the housed and unhoused, business and service sectors, and others. All residents have inherited the complex systems and relationships of the past; the divisions caused by past events affect the entire community.

Kenora is not alone in grappling with these challenges. Polarization has become the leading concern among young adults, surpassing even climate change and economic uncertainty. This phenomenon, where opposing viewpoints become increasingly rigid and exclude dialogue, hinders progress and pits people against one another, even at times when lives are at stake and shared solutions are urgent.

Amidst these challenges, it may seem difficult to envision Kenora as a place where everyone can live, work, and play together in harmony. Yet, that is the guiding vision behind this plan. Achieving this vision requires careful planning, consistent action, ongoing evaluation, and a steadfast commitment to inclusivity and diversity. It also demands a collective recognition that the status quo is undesirable and that imposing one worldview over another always results in exclusion. Whenever someone is left out, their knowledge, experiences, and talents remain untapped. Relationships erode, and both the process and the results of the efforts are diminished. Changing this requires transformation and deep cultural work.

For this reason, truth and reconciliation are not treated as a separate section or strategic approach in this plan. Truth and reconciliation are not standalone initiatives; they are an ongoing, transformative process that must be woven into the fabric of the community and the implementation of this plan. As Senator Murray Sinclair stated:

"Reconciliation is not an event. It is a process. It is a journey. It is not a destination that can be reached by one or two or three steps. It is a process that requires ongoing effort, commitment, and humility."

Recognizing this, the Advisory Committee sought guidance from Indigenous leaders to connect community safety and well-being with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. These leaders emphasized that change does not happen by committee and that achieving harmony requires a collective, all-hands-on-deck approach, because reconciliation has become a somewhat divisive term, it was decided that the concept of **harmony** offers an inclusive vision for all Kenora residents. However, harmony cannot be built on a foundation that ignores or minimizes challenges. It requires an honest acknowledgement of struggles while holding onto the view that a better future is possible.

For harmony to take root, we must facilitate ongoing opportunities to bridge divides, foster understanding, and appreciate diverse perspectives. This cannot be done through isolated events but must be a continuous, overarching theme woven throughout the community including this plan and its proposed actions. The following efforts can help bring this vision of harmony to life:



Focus on Community Engagement and Belonging

- Support public education on the importance of belonging and its link to health, safety and prosperity.
- Foster initiatives that encourage connections across socioeconomic and cultural differences, such as shared projects, community events, and cultural exchanges.



Reject Polarization and look for the Radical Middle

- Engage in conversations that promote empathy and understanding of different life experiences.
- Model open communication and critical thinking by identifying and countering misinformation and inflammatory rhetoric that harm the community.



Promote Inclusive Decision-Making

- Ensure marginalized groups, including Indigenous peoples, newcomers, renters, youth, and seniors, have a voice in all planning and decision-making.
- Always actively engaging diverse perspectives in shaping Kenora's future.

These are not easy tasks, nor will they be completed overnight, but without taking the first steps, they will never be accomplished.

A vision of Kenora as a harmonious community requires commitment from all sectors—government, business, social and health services, volunteer and faith groups, as well as

permanent, seasonal, and transient residents. Only by recognizing the dangers of polarization and actively fostering inclusivity can Kenora become a place where all residents feel valued and connected.

With a unified effort, Kenora can set an example for other communities by overcoming division and building lasting peace. By embracing this vision, Kenora can put itself on the map as the city of harmony.

This part of the plan is grounded in the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) subcommittee of the CPCWBAC with support from [Intercultural Strategies](#). A supporting document to elaborate on the work of the subcommittee is provided under separate cover.

“Fall in Kenora is truly special for many reasons. The changing colors of the leaves, the crisp air, and the cozy feeling that comes with the season make it a beautiful time of year. The landscape transforms into a stunning palette of reds, oranges, and yellows, creating picturesque views around town. This picture also reminds me of Halloween and I love it.”

- Talissa P.

*(Photo submission from
Photo Voice Project)*



Summary of Priority Areas, Goals and Recommendations

The Advisory Committee recommends that actions be taken in seven distinct but interrelated priority areas with a total of forty-eight (48) actions. The priority areas and the goals and recommendations contained within them are outlined here. A detailed overview of the actions designed to achieve them, is provided starting on page 57.

Together these pages form the core of the CSWB Plan.

Goals

1. To foster greater collaboration across the community enhancing engagement and maximizing resources.
2. To reduce the number of children and youth who are at risk of harm to self or others.
3. To enhance safety and inclusivity in the downtown core—the heart of the community—as well as in surrounding neighborhoods.
4. To increase the percentage of residents in Kenora who feel welcome and a sense of belonging by 25% within five years.
5. To increase the housing stock across the housing continuum by 2030.
6. To reduce inter-personal violence in the Kenora community by 25% by the year 2035.
7. To strengthen individual and community well-being in the areas of mental health and addictions.

*“Enjoying and appreciating
the lights, stars and sky,
our ancestor’s spirits
are watching.”*

- Jax A.

*(Photo submission from
Photo Voice Project)*



Recommendations



Priority Area One: Collaboration and Communication

Leverage the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan to enhance collaboration across the service sectors and the community.

Keep the community informed about the implementation of the plan and provide opportunities for engagement along the way.



Priority Area Two: Children, Youth, and Families

Advocate whenever possible to make the safety and well-being of children and youth a priority.

Pro-actively and collaboratively address the factors that put children and youth at risk.



Priority Area Three: Downtown and Community Spaces

Adopt a proactive, integrated approach to addressing downtown challenges and enhancing public safety and security.

Make improvements to the downtown area an ongoing priority across departments of the City and across sectors.

Continue to support victims of crime, the unhoused, and other marginalized populations.



Priority Area Four: Belonging and Engagement

Mobilize the significant number of residents in Kenora who want to participate in actions that increase community safety and well-being.

Take meaningful actions that foster a more inclusive and welcoming community.



Priority Area Five: Housing Along the Continuum

Foster and showcase a united effort in expanding access to housing ranging from shelters to market level option.

Attend to the immediate needs arising from homelessness.



Priority Area Six: Prevention of Interpersonal Violence

Develop a clearer understanding of the extent and nature of interpersonal violence in Kenora.

Increase efforts to raise awareness about the multiple facets of interpersonal violence and how they can be prevented.



Priority Area Seven: Mental Health and Problematic Substance Use (including Alcohol)

Engage key stakeholders in establishing the connection between problematic substance abuse, the prevention of crime and victimization, fear of crime, and overall community well-being.

Build upon, expand, and strengthen current efforts to improve mental health and addiction support, particularly at the intersection of community safety.

Other Considerations

It is further recommended that:

1. this plan be considered as a ten-year strategy, with a midpoint review in 2030 to assess progress, adjust priorities, and update goals and actions based on lessons learned.
2. a developmental evaluation approach be adopted to help ensure that the plan remains a dynamic, living document, allowing for continuous adjustments to enhance its success over time.
3. the issue selection process designed by the Advisory Committee continue to be used and refined to attend to evolving situations.
4. a multi-disciplinary implementation committee be appointed with the mandate to guide the implementation of the plan.
5. the committee employ a lightweight governance approach to balance flexibility and engagement with accountability.
6. a dedicated budget be provided for the coordination of the CSWB efforts as they appear in this plan.

The Importance of Language

Words create worlds

They shape our perceptions, emotions, and realities. Recognizing this isn't about political correctness – it is about understanding the power of language to unite or divide, uplift or oppress. The way we speak, influences how we see ourselves and others. It also reinforces social hierarchies, biases, and group identities. Throughout this plan, careful consideration has been given to the impact of language, emphasizing not only what is said but also how it is communicated. Words can significantly contribute to “othering.” Othering is the process of marginalizing people who are perceived as different or outside of the dominant group. Language can contribute to othering in several ways:

- **Labeling:** Words like “addict”, “thug”, or “crazy” create negative stereotypes and reduce people to single aspects of their identity. Such labels also dehumanize individuals and reinforce divisions between “us” and “them.”
- **Narratives:** Media and political discourse at times frame certain groups as dangerous, inferior, or unworthy. For example, describing unhoused individuals as invasive to our cities makes them seem like a problem to be solved rather than people in need of help. How we frame a situation can foster compassion and a focus on solutions, or it can foster fear and resentment.
- **Euphemisms:** Language can mask harmful policies and make them sound neutral. The term “urban renewal” is sometimes used to describe redevelopment projects that lead to gentrification or even displacement. While “urban renewal” sounds positive, it often leads to rising rents, the demolition of affordable housing, and the displacement of long-time residents. Language can mask harm by making something seem like progress when in reality, it uproots lives.
- **Microaggressions:** Everyday phrases and jokes can reinforce stereotypes, often unconsciously. For example: when we say “I don’t see colour” when discussing race, we dismiss the lived experiences of people of colour, downplay the discrimination they experience and the unique challenges they face, all of which makes addressing racial inequalities even harder.
- **Silencing:** When certain voices or languages are marginalized, people are denied recognition and representation.

How we define and name problems influences policies, social interactions, perceptions, and finally actions. Words can either dismantle barriers or deepen divisions.

Finally, all disciplines create a language of their own that is often not easily understood unless you are part of that professional or volunteer group. Acronyms are a key example of this practice. A glossary of terms is provided at the end of this plan to facilitate inclusive reading.

What is Community Safety and Well-Being?

In 2023, City Council appointed a Crime Prevention and Community Well-Being Advisory Committee (CPCWBAC) to oversee the plan development. One of the first tasks for this committee was to agree on a description of community safety and well-being. After all that is what they set out to accomplish. They decided to call it a description rather than a definition allowing for the fact that there is no one definition that fits all community realities. Their goal was to describe what community safety and well-being means in the context of Kenora.

Here is what they arrived at:

Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) describes a wholistic view of a community in which everyone is and feels safe.

To accomplish this, our work needs to be:

- evidence-informed
- culturally appropriate
- proactive
- collaborative
- accountable in its implementation
- combining immediate actions with longer-term commitments to change

The goals of community safety and well-being work are:

- greater access to existing services
- better integration of services
- changes at the level of policy and programs through being engaged in key decision-making efforts and through advocacy
- reductions in risks for vulnerability¹, including the risks resulting from broader disparities, marginalization, and the history of colonization and intergenerational trauma.

A focus on community safety and well-being is a departure from reliance on traditional methods of dealing with public insecurity alone. As a result, this work is ambitious and may not be fully realized. It becomes only possible by bringing together both large and small systems, grassroots efforts and decision makers, as well as the community at large, in a shared vision of a better future.

Ongoing communication with the public is vital in building the civic trust and engagement needed to create this shift in focus on prevention.

(This description was approved by the CPCWBAC at its regular meeting in January 2024).

¹ The description of vulnerability is provided on page 33.

Theory of Change

Root Causes, Risk Factors and Protective Factors

To develop a plan that effectively addresses the complexities of crime, safety, and broader well-being, it is essential to have a **theory of change**. This framework clarifies why a change is desired and how it is expected to occur, mapping the connections between actions, outcomes, and longer-term impacts. It serves as a roadmap for achieving collectively agreed-upon goals. Fortunately, research and knowledge about community safety and well-being is by now extensive even if it is still continuously evolving. Perhaps the most well-known and widely used model is the **root causes of crime** framework which, in Canada, was shaped by the Standing Committee on Justice in 1993 and later refined by the then National Crime Prevention Council (1994-2007). The framework suggests that “for the crimes committed by the offender they are responsible, for the not attending to the root causes when these are known to us, all of us are responsible” (Dr. Irvin Waller, 2024 – presentation to the Advisory Committee). Simply stated, to prevent crime it is important to know its causes.

We know that crime is primarily the outcome of multiple adverse economic, social, community and family conditions. The root causes approach challenges us to think systemically and wholistically about the complex, multiple, and interconnected roots of social problems of which crime is one. It calls for collaborative, comprehensive, integrated, and sustained efforts to transform underlying conditions rather than focus solely on the symptoms. The goal of a root causes approach is to prevent crime and victimization from occurring in the first place by building a society and communities that support the well-being of everyone. A root causes approach merges the prevention of crime with the advancement of well-being. It doesn't excuse or overlook behavior that disrupts the community; rather, it helps us understand it.

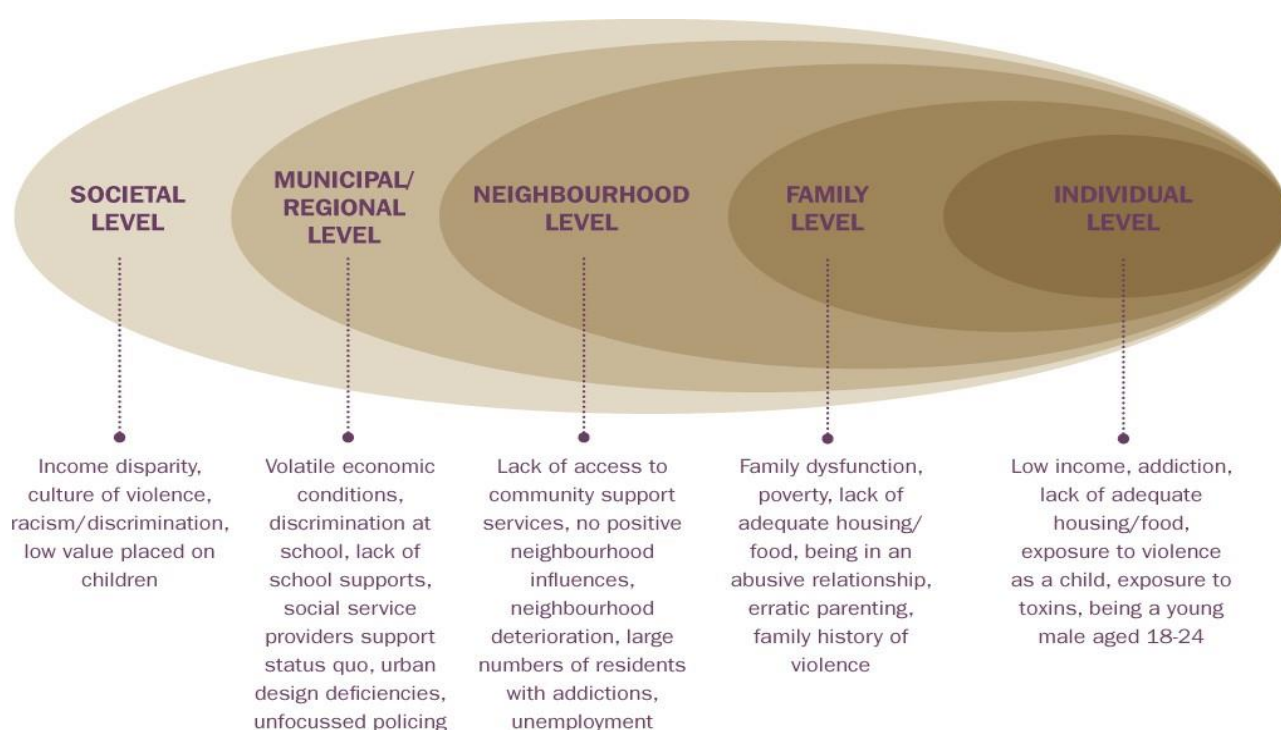
Though the terms ‘risk factors’ and ‘root causes’ are sometimes used interchangeably, there are important distinctions between them. For example, not completing high school is a “risk factor” that can predict negative consequences for individuals. A “root causes” approach takes a deeper look at the family, community and societal conditions over time that explain **why** some children are less likely than their peers to complete high school in the first place. It then goes about changing these conditions whenever possible. For example, we now have accommodations for children with learning disabilities. Rather than assuming that there is only one way to learn we provide additional supports for children with neurodiversity.² This increases their chances of completing high school. High school completion in turn is a solid predictor of future success. It is not coincidental that a sizable number of inmates in federal correctional institutions have **undiagnosed** learning disabilities. Had their barriers to succeeding in education been identified earlier in life and had they received attention for these challenges as a child their life trajectory may well have been quite different.

² Neurodiversity is the concept that neurological differences—such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and other cognitive variations—are natural and valuable aspects of human diversity rather than deficits to be fixed.

While risk factors are negative influences that increase crime and reduce quality of life, protective factors strengthen individuals and communities and thereby reduce crime and victimization. Strengthening protective factors helps counteract risks. A list of known risk and protective factors related to community safety and well-being is provided in Appendix one. It is a list based on research by Public Safety Canada, www.publicsafety.gc.ca, that has been augmented over time to include practitioner experiences and new research. These tables informed the Advisory Committee's deliberations from the start and were the basis of their theory of change.

Crime, victimization, and the fear of crime are shaped by a complex interplay of risk and protective factors—no single factor operates in isolation. Instead, these outcomes result from interactions at the individual, relationship, community, and societal levels, a perspective known as the ecological framework. Developed by the World Health Organization, this framework explains the broader context of health and well-being. For instance, while lifestyle choices influence individual health, external conditions can limit those choices. Reports may encourage healthy eating, but if access to nutritious food is restricted due to distance, transportation barriers, or financial constraints, individuals face challenges beyond their control. Similarly, crime and victimization are best understood within the broader community and social context.

Root Causes



(Adapted from: Krug *et al.* 2002. *World report on violence and health*. Geneva: World Health Organization.)

A root causes approach focuses on improvements in the following three areas:

- **Economic Factors:** These include lack of financial resources, lack of educational opportunities, lack of meaningful employment options, poor housing, lack of hope, and the prejudice against persons living in poverty.
- **Social Environment:** These include inequality, lack of support to families and neighbourhoods, real or perceived inaccessibility to services, lack of leadership in communities, low value placed on children and individual well-being.
- **Family Structures:** These include dysfunctional family conditions such as parental conflict, erratic parenting, parental criminality, lack of communication, lack of respect and responsibility, abuse and neglect of children, and family violence.

Upstream Approaches to Prevention

A root causes approach is now also often referred to as an upstream approach to prevention. Upstream approaches to prevention change a focus on individual behaviours to a focus on conditions in which the behaviour occurs. This takes communities beyond cooperation, coordination, and even collaboration to thinking and acting as an integrated system. Rather than treating each individual situation, going upstream means seeking to discover and change the conditions that land individuals in problem situations in the first place. Upstream approaches also lead to horizontal and vertical level integration. At the horizontal level, we can identify the challenges an individual is facing. At the vertical level, we examine whether these challenges are singular or whether they point to a larger trend at the level of community and society. A more detailed explanation is provided in Appendix Two.

Downstream changes are like changing the software of our community (such as providing health care to someone who is ill) while upstream approaches change the hardware (such as changing the conditions that lead to ill-health). If we attend to the “hardware” of society it is more likely that projects, programs, and services will succeed. Upstream approaches to prevention refer to measures aimed at addressing the roots of problems before the problems arise. For example, implementing affordable housing policies to address poverty and prevent homelessness is an upstream approach that reduces the need for emergency interventions later.³

³ Some of this work remains under development and has benefitted greatly from the research of David Siladi, University of Waterloo PhD student.



Visual from upstream campaign at www.preventingcrime.ca

It is critical to understand that community safety and well-being cannot be achieved through providing programs and projects alone. Projects and programs can and should be part of a plan but in and of themselves are insufficient. A project-based approach can also lead to the creation of silos and ad hoc actions rather than comprehensive integrated approaches. While projects can be valuable, we also need to look for the barriers that stand in the way of community safety and well-being and go about removing them.

This takes us to the level of policy change. Some of this work is beyond the control of local governments and communities. This makes CSWB planning complex and at times frustrating, but it also provides incentives for advocacy. Nonetheless, the power of communities to create change should not be underestimated and has been demonstrated widely across the country, or as Margaret Mead suggested:

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

Social Determinants of Health

The root causes of crime and the social determinants of health are often used interchangeably in community safety and well-being work. Critical elements of a healthy community include the following:



Access to Care



Community Design



Community Safety



Affordable Quality Housing



Parks and Recreation



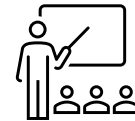
Social and
Cultural Cohesion



Economic Opportunity



Social Justice



Educational Opportunity



Transportation



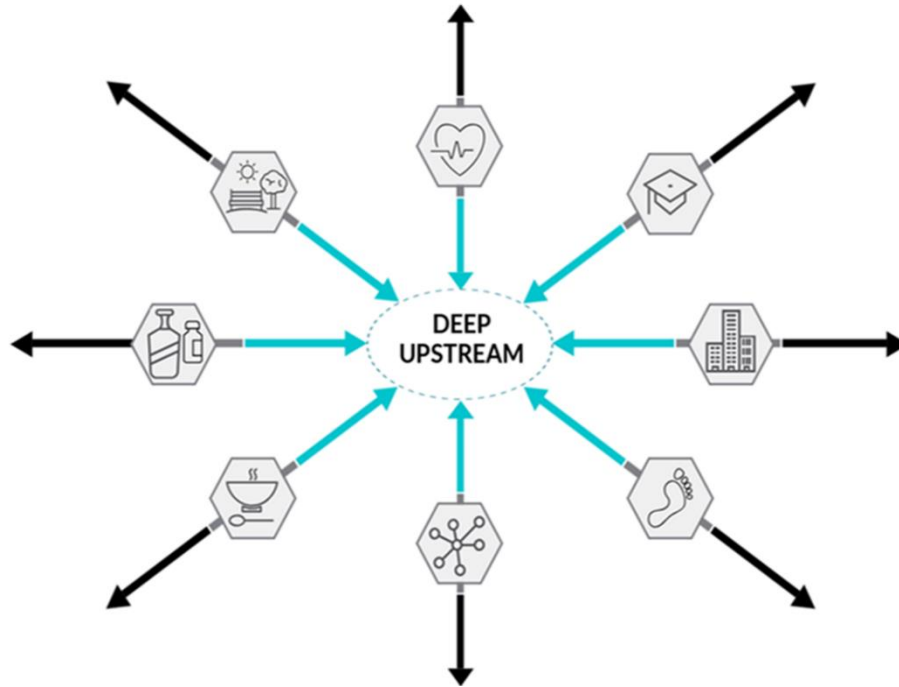
Environmental Quality



Food Security

When we attend to the root causes (or social determinates) in one area this inevitably has a positive impact in other areas because the root causes of social issues are interconnected. This is why we cannot arrest our way out of complex social problems.

The visual below speaks to eight social and community conditions that are interrelated. From the top going clockwise these are: population health, education, housing, transportation and walkability, community connectedness, food security, health services, and parks and recreation.



Visual from upstream campaign at www.preventingcrime.ca

Services tend to work in distance to each other at the outer rim of this wheel. It is only in attending to the root causes at the deep upstream level that it becomes clear just how much social issues and in turn their solutions are connected. Here are some examples: When we provide opportunities for neighbours to connect with each other, they might choose to plant a community garden which in turn contributes to food security. When we provide accessible walking trails, the positive impact will not only be felt in easier access to parks and recreation but will have a positive spill over effect on the health of the population. When we provide free education, the earning capacity of individuals increases and so do their chances to be able to afford housing. When we provide affordable and accessible housing, the mental health of individuals improves as does their capacity to overcome problematic substance use.

CSWB planning cannot proceed in silos. The work is highly dependent on collaborative will and capacity. It is also dependent on moving from debate to dialogue.

What are Community Safety and Well-Being Plans?

Many municipalities across Canada have developed CSWB plans, because they recognize their value in fostering healthier, more resilient communities. CSWB plans act as roadmaps for building smarter, more connected, collaborative, and responsive communities by balancing aspirational goals with actionable steps that are tailored to local needs. Unlike traditional municipal plans, CSWB plans require active collaboration with the community and its key institutions. Municipalities cannot develop such plans in isolation because they rely on a combination of community insights, lived experiences, and data to identify critical areas of need and to drive meaningful change.

A CSWB plan is not a service plan - it is a change plan designed to move municipalities and their communities beyond the status quo by confronting entrenched issues with innovation. As a result, the development and implementation of these plans relies heavily on a municipality's capacity and desire to engage their citizens along the way.

Province of Ontario Mandate to Create CSWB Plans

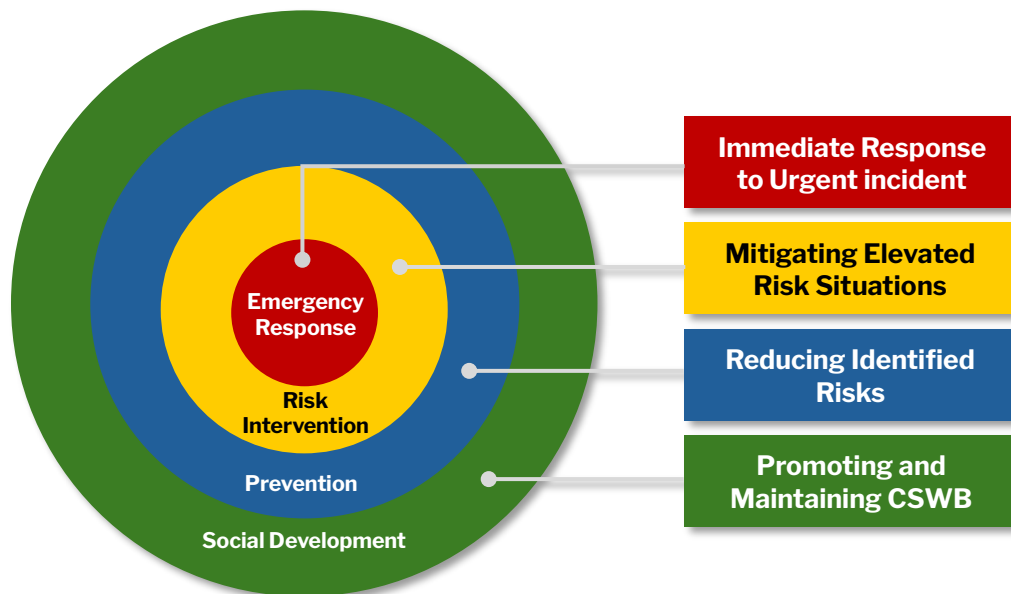
As of January 1, 2019, municipalities in Ontario (single and upper tier) are mandated to prepare and adopt Community Safety and Well-being Plans. The Ontario Community Safety and Policing Act (section 251 A) mandates that the CSWB plans:

- a) identify risk factors that contribute to crime, victimization, drug overdose and suicide;
- b) identify strategies to reduce identified risk factors; and
- c) set out measurable outcomes. The act further allows for other issues that impact community well-being such as homelessness and mental health and discrimination to be addressed in the plan.

The Ministry of the Solicitor General of Ontario suggests that Community Safety and Well-Being Plans are one important mechanism for investing in a safer and healthier future for all by having the potential to affect the following positive outcomes:

- Enhanced communication and collaboration among sectors, agencies, and organizations.
- Stronger families and improved opportunities for healthy child development.
- Healthier, more productive individuals that positively contribute to the community.
- Increased understanding of and focus on priority risks, vulnerable groups, and neighbourhoods.
- Transformation of service delivery, including realignment of resources and responsibilities to better respond to priority risks and needs.

- Increased engagement of community groups, residents and the private sector in local initiatives and networks.
- Enhanced feelings of safety and being cared for, creating an environment that will encourage newcomers to the community.
- Increased awareness, coordination of and access to services for community members and vulnerable groups.
- More effective, seamless service delivery for individuals with complex needs
- New opportunities to share multi-sectoral data and evidence to better understand the community through identifying trends, gaps, priorities, and successes.
- Reduced investment in and reliance on incident response.



A detailed community safety and well-being framework is provided by the Ministry of the Solicitor General of Ontario: [Ontario community safety and well-being framework](#)

The Ministry emphasizes that while municipalities are responsible for facilitating the development of these plans, they must do so in collaboration with key community sectors and citizens. Planning should address all four areas shown in the visual above, however, most investments should focus on **prevention and risk intervention** to reduce the need for incident response. The Ministry further recommends prioritizing preventative over reactive strategies to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness, and long-term sustainability of safety and well-being across Ontario.

Plans should also explore more efficient and effective service delivery methods, particularly for front-line incident response, ensuring that individuals in crisis receive the right support from the most appropriate services. While social development efforts may be included in Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) plans, the Ministry advises that actions in this

area should be limited, as they often do not produce measurable results within a five-year timeframe. In summary, while CSWB plans may include actions in the red and green zones, they should primarily focus on the blue and yellow areas.

“This photo was taken just a two minute walk away from my house. It is amazing how beautiful the sunsets are in Kenora are and how lucky people who live here are to be able to see them.”

- Jordan G.

*(Photo submission from
Photo Voice Project)*



Community Safety and Well-Being Planning in Kenora

Every day in Kenora, individuals take meaningful actions to enhance community safety, well-being, and overall quality of life. Whether through their professions, faith groups, coaching youth in sports and the arts, or simply as parents and neighbours, their efforts help create a stronger, more connected community. While much of this work happens quietly and without recognition, its impact is profound.

This plan is designed to support and build upon these efforts, not replace or overshadow them. It also serves to acknowledge the dedication of those who contribute to Kenora's well-being. To highlight the power of everyday actions, we have included some local stories in the plan that showcase their impact. These have been written by Eric Shih, Community Safety and Well-Being Coordinator, City of Kenora. There are many more stories that could be told.

The History of Community Safety Planning in Kenora

The development of this plan builds on a strong foundation of professional and volunteer community safety efforts in Kenora. In 2009, when the City transitioned from municipal policing to the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), both OPP staff and community members seized the opportunity to assess the state of community safety. This led to a public forum in 2010, where residents shared their experiences and concerns.

Following this, a Community Mobilization Officer was appointed to develop a strategy and establish a task force to oversee its implementation. The plan focused on key issues with drugs, mental health, and homelessness. This initiative evolved into the Kenora Substance Abuse and Mental Health Task Force, which is now disbanded but has a dedicated website and Facebook page to the present day.

Drawing from community input, best practices from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and Ontario's Community Mobilization Model, the plan integrated five key pillars: enforcement, treatment, harm reduction, prevention, and housing. The task force operated largely through the efforts of already busy individuals. Recognizing the need for additional support, in 2014 the Task Force successfully secured a Trillium grant allowing it to hire a coordinator in 2015.

This role focused on updating the previous Integrated Drug Strategy of Kenora to align with emerging provincial standards for community safety and well-being. Further updates were made in 2019 by the Canadian Municipal Network on Crime Prevention. However, the onset of COVID-19 in 2020 halted operations, and regular meetings ceased. It was not until 2023 that City Council renewed its focus on community safety. By then municipalities were mandated to develop formal Community Safety and Well-Being Plans.

This history is essential to recall for two key reasons:

1. The current plan is not starting from scratch. It builds on years of community-driven safety initiatives.
2. The current plan was not developed in response to a crisis. While some challenges create urgency, effective planning happens proactively—not during a crisis.

The Kenora Approach to the Development of the CSWB Plan 2025-2035

Starting in December 2023, the City of Kenora seized the opportunity of the provincial mandate to engage in a comprehensive process that thoroughly explored a wide range of issues. This included creating an Advisory Committee and a dedicated staff position for this work and hiring a consultant to develop a Community Safety and Well-Being Plan. Instead of relying solely on expert advice, the Advisory Committee would guide the development of the plan.

This work included the distribution of a detailed survey with an impressive response rate, an in-depth analysis of available data, and extensive engagement sessions complemented by validation meetings once the actions had been drafted. Their method served a dual purpose:

- understand the experiences and perceptions of residents (full-time, seasonal, and transient) and have these inform the plan;
- use the momentum of creating a plan as a catalyst for signalling that this is not a city or police responsibility but that everybody has a role to play.

This approach served two key purposes:

1. to understand the experiences and perceptions of residents in conjunction with available evidence, and
2. to transform the plan into a mobilizing force, rather than a final destination.

The Crime Prevention and Community Well-Being Advisory Committee (CPCWBAC)

The Advisory Committee was comprised of the following representatives:

- An employee of the municipality
- A member of City Council
- A member of the business community
- A person representing the education sector
- A person representing the health sector
- A person representing the mental health sector
- A person representing the community/social Services sector
- A person representing the children/youth services sector
- A person representing an entity that provides custodial services to children/youth
- A person representing the Police Services Board or a detachment commander.
- A person representing the judicial system
- Members-at-large

Source: Terms of Reference for the CPCWBAC, City of Kenora By-Law 6-2023.

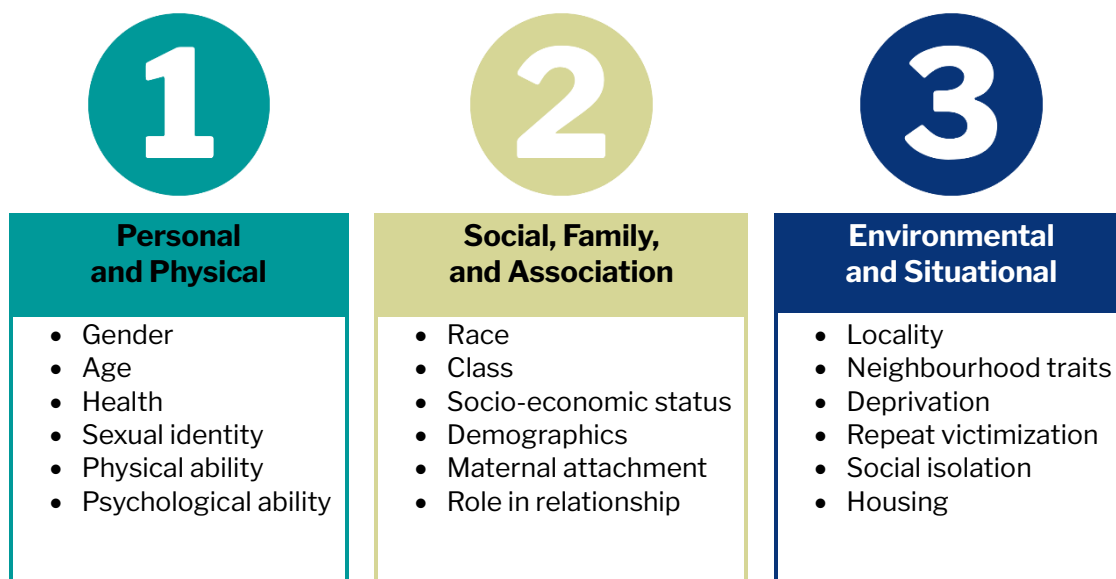
All members were selected by City Council and appointed by resolution.

The Advisory Committee met monthly and mostly in person. Meetings were open to the public. To facilitate a collaborative process the Advisory Committee agreed on the following foundational underpinnings to the plan:

1. A shared vision
2. A theory of change for how to accomplish that vision
3. A description of community safety and well-being
4. A definition of vulnerability
5. Principles of collaboration

What makes us vulnerable?

Many cities, and especially those that develop crime prevention plans, have a working definition of vulnerability. The City of Kenora Crime Prevention and Community Well-Being Advisory Committee consulted key research findings on vulnerability. Commonly this research identifies three dimensions of vulnerability:



These dimensions overlap to increase the chances that someone may come to harm or be at higher risk of harm when compared to the average population. Additionally, research cites five factors that impact vulnerability:

1. **Poverty:** A lack of income limits the resources that a person can draw upon in times of crisis.
2. **Structural Inequalities:** Challenges are increased by discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity.
3. **Personal Limitations:** Physical and mental illnesses/impairments may inhibit a person's ability to respond to challenges.
4. **Physical Location:** Some areas have greater access to resources and support than others and this may impact a person's ability to get help.
5. **Social Networks/Social Support:** The inability to draw upon social support in times of crisis disadvantages a person in trying to cope with challenges.

Sometimes vulnerability is used interchangeably with “disadvantaged.” This is counter productive because when we see persons, groups, and situations only through the eyes of deficits, and “what is wrong with them,” we tend to ignore strengths and resiliencies that can decrease their vulnerabilities. Vulnerability should also not be confused with weakness. Seeing a person or a group as “weak” is stigmatizing and often becomes the reason why persons in need avoid seeking help.

Vulnerability most often arises when essential needs go unmet. Proactively identifying and addressing these needs can help reduce vulnerability. Although at times, the very systems that are designed to provide support can inadvertently worsen the problem. For example, hospitals establish emergency rooms to deliver urgent medical care, yet when access to primary care is limited, more people rely on ERs for non-emergency concerns. This overwhelms the system, leads to longer wait times, strains resources, and produces poorer health outcomes. By increasing access to a service, we can inadvertently create greater dependence on it rather than resolving the root cause of the issue.

Upon review of the research the Advisory Committee asked themselves the following questions:

- Who is vulnerable to crime, victimization, and/or fear of crime in Kenora?
- What makes them vulnerable?
- Which of these factors are open to change?

This led to the realization that, to some extent, everyone is vulnerable and the understanding that it is crucial to distinguish perceived vulnerability from actual vulnerability because they require different approaches. Actual vulnerability stems from identifiable factors. Some of these factors can be changed, while others, like a disability, may require accommodations to reduce risk. The extent to which change is possible depends largely on the willingness and capacity of systems.

Populations that are most vulnerable in Kenora include:

- The young (especially children in care)
- The elderly, especially those that lack access to services
- The unhoused and precariously housed
- People that lack access to safe spaces where they have a sense of control
- Indigenous Peoples
- Children and parents in lone parent households, especially those below the low-income cutoff
- People with limited economic means including those on social benefits
- People with mental health challenges and/or addictions
- People experiencing lateral violence within institutions

Vulnerable populations often experience “intersectionality.” In other words, they are vulnerable because of more than one condition that increases their risks. For example, women are more vulnerable to intimate partner violence than men. This vulnerability increases when women are financially dependent on their partner, come from a history of trauma, have children, have a disability, and so on.

Media, including social media, can increase a sense of vulnerability beyond what conditions would indicate. This sense of vulnerability is often based on stereotypes that do not meet the threshold of evidence. For example, some media have created an association between mental illness and violence, when mental illness is not in fact a root condition for violence.⁴

It's important to recognize that fear of crime and perceived vulnerability can be just as damaging to community well-being as crime itself. Therefore, Community Safety and Well-Being Plans must address not only crime and victimization but also the fear of crime. However, simply sharing data to counter stigmatization is not enough. The most effective way to reduce fear and perceived vulnerability is through understanding and, above all, active engagement. In this context, building positive relationships with local media to promote constructive messaging and challenge negative stereotypes can help reduce perceived vulnerability over time.

Based on these deliberations the Advisory Committee approved the following definition:

Definition of Vulnerability for Kenora

While everyone is vulnerable to crime, victimization and fear of crime, some people share characteristics and circumstances that put them at greater risk of harm when compared to the rest of the population. These characteristics and circumstances are often beyond individual control. The community of Kenora and its institutions have the potential to decrease some of the conditions that put residents at greater risk of harm or fear of harm, thereby minimizing or altogether eliminating these vulnerabilities. This can be accomplished by collaboratively reducing risk and enhancing protective factors and through adjusting services to meet clearly identified needs. Within this work, real risk must always be distinguished from perceived risk.

⁴ [Mental Illness and Violence](#)

Working Together Collaboratively

The success of CSWB plans depends on cross-sector collaboration. In many communities, services often work in competition with each other or even at cross purposes. This is especially true during times of scarcity (whether real or perceived). Lack of cooperation among services creates confusion in the community and diverts resources away from effective service delivery.

Collaboration is often confused with basic information sharing which is the lowest level of collaboration. Collaboration is also mostly seen as a “nice to have” afterthought rather than an essential element of service. For a CSWB plan to succeed, it’s crucial to have a clear understanding of what collaboration is, a shared commitment to its importance, and agreed upon expectations for how to achieve it.

To that end, the Advisory Committee defined thirteen (13) foundational principles of collaboration. These principles, while tailored to Kenora, are informed by research and successful CSWB efforts across Canada. They are aspirational, i.e. intended to guide, not always be perfectly followed. They guided the work of the Advisory Committee and are designed to guide the work of implementation.

They are presented here in alphabetical order because no one principle is more important than another.

*“This [photo] represents
Sunset Country. The
beautiful sunsets are
unforgettable.”*

- Emily P.

*(Photo submission from
Photo Voice Project)*



Foundational Principles of Collaboration for Kenora

1. **Accountability:** We have been appointed to fulfill a mandate that has the potential to impact on our city and our community and we take that responsibility seriously and work hard to achieve it.
2. **Avoiding inertia:** We have an agreed upon plan for keeping up the momentum both in planning for the future and in responding to more immediate needs.
3. **Capacity-oriented:** We commit to being thoughtful about what is possible and to develop a plan that builds on and enhances the capacities of the community and its institutions to drive towards actionable solutions.
4. **Consensus based decision making:** We acknowledge that everyone has wisdom. We therefore commit to listening with an open mind and suspending judgement before making decisions together.
5. **Context-sensitive:** We understand that a solution for some is not a solution for all.
6. **Combined effect:** We know that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and none of us are as smart and capable as all of us together. We receive individual input with respect and knit it together into a collective approach.
7. **Evidence-informed:** As a learning organization we constantly evaluate whether our perspectives align with the evidence and whether they are culturally relevant in acknowledging community wisdom and spirituality.
8. **Integrity:** Integrity means doing the right thing even when no one is watching. We engage in respectful dialogue in the group and when we are away from the group.
9. **Process-oriented:** How we get to outcomes matters. The end does not justify the means. Process is as important as the final product.
10. **Restorative:** We recognize that conflict is normal and at times even necessary for change. How we address conflict can create challenges. Therefore, we commit to handling conflicts in a constructive manner and recognizing the value of all people and their voices.
11. **Solution-focused:** We actively avoid self-interest and organizational interest overriding collective interests by remaining open to and valuing all perspectives while admitting that self-interest is a key motivator for participation in any collective endeavor.
12. **Transparency:** We have a clearly expressed purpose that we communicate openly so that our community can understand us and engage with us.
13. **Trust:** We aim to be a group of people where not only everyone belongs but where belonging matters. Establishing and maintaining trust is central to what we do.

We dream big and we have fun.

"I am always amazed to see the ORNGE helicopter at the hospital helipad. My mom told me it brings patients to Thunder Bay or Winnipeg. This afternoon, I saw it leaving the hospital and I took a picture as it passed the rays of sunlight in the sky. It's not too brightly sunny today. But I love that the sun gives light to the helicopter that's carrying life. Feels like HOPE to me."

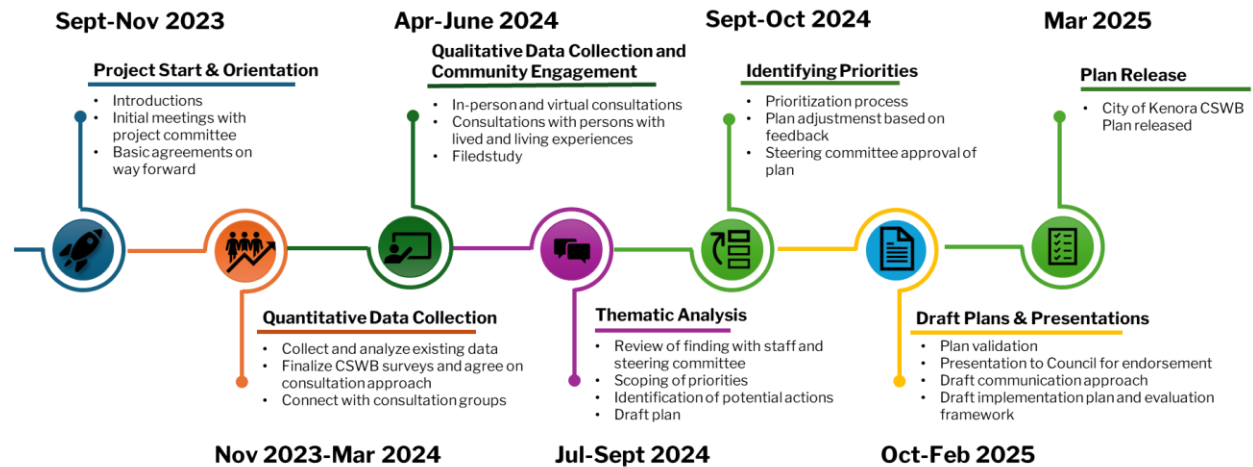
- Jave Saelac D.

*(Photo submission from
Photo Voice Project)*



The Project Timeline

The original timeline saw the development of the plan completed at the end of December 2024 but was revised to March 2025.



It soon became obvious that this was ambitious for three main reasons:

1. the data that the committee had to absorb and interact with was much more extensive than anticipated;
2. many more member of the community wanted to participate in focus groups and interviews than planned;
3. once priorities and actions had been decided upon the committee chose to add a validation process.

The latter was a critical addition because many of the actions involve organizations that are not members of the Advisory Committee, are outside of the control of the City and necessitate the buy-in from key leaders in the community in moving forward with the plan's implementation.

The Community Safety Assessment

Essential Elements of a Community Safety Assessment

Community safety assessments gather data to identify key risks, root causes, safety concerns, as well as available resources at the local level. While research highlights risk factors that are common across communities such as poverty, lack of social supports, and high crime rates, each community faces unique challenges, making localized data collection essential. Understanding these specific issues ensures that the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan is evidence-based and directly addresses local concerns.

A thorough assessment requires input from diverse sources to provide a well-rounded picture of community realities. In Kenora, both quantitative⁵ and qualitative⁶ data were collected from multiple sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of the local situation.

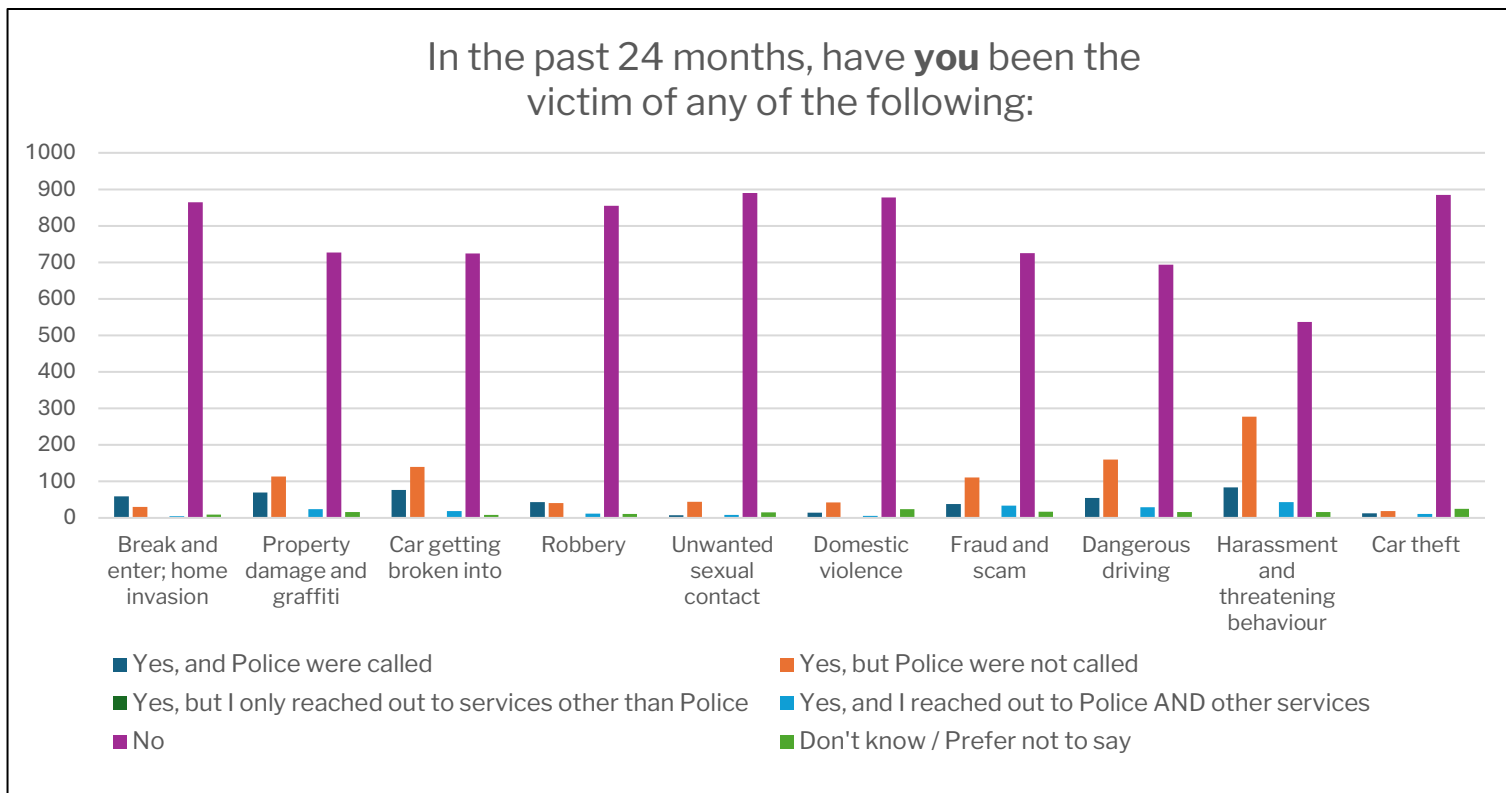
Data Collection Considerations

During the community safety assessment phase multiple groups and individuals were engaged and several data sources were combined to inform the development of the CSWB Plan. This approach is known as triangulation, meaning that we do not rely on one source of data alone to inform the plan. For example, it is tempting to go to crime rates as the main source for understanding community safety and well-being. But crime rates are just one measure to help us understand the reality in a community. We also know that crimes are underreported.

When survey participants were asked whether they themselves had been a victim of crime in the past 24 months by far most respondents reported that they were **not** a victim of crime across all categories. The highest form of victimization reported was for “harassment and threatening behaviour” (N=361) **but less than half called the police**. This pattern of not calling the police was consistent across all categories except for “robbery” and “break and enters”. Kenora is clearly no exception to the reality of crimes being underreported. Nationally, it is estimated that almost half of all crimes committed do not come to the attention of police ([Crime Reporting](#)).

⁵ Quantitative data refers to numerical data (i.e., crime rates), collected through methods like surveys, which help us understand what is happening and how much.

⁶ Qualitative data refers to more in-depth information (i.e., perceptions and experiences), collected through methods like interviews and focus groups, which help us understand how and why things happen.



The reasons for underreporting are complex and differ across populations. For example, young men experiencing peer to peer violence tend to not report their victimization to police because they may not want to be perceived as “weak.” Sexual assaults, which are most often perpetrated by someone known to the victim, also tend to be underreported precisely because there is a pre-existing relationship. Victims might question their own judgement of the situation, feel ashamed, or worry about the reactions from authorities and others. Whatever the motivation may be not to report a crime to police, the survey results show this is an issue in Kenora as it is in other communities.

For that reason alone, crime rates are an inadequate measure for community safety and well-being. Further, well-being is about so much more than the absence of crime. Community well-being refers to the overall health, safety, and quality of life experienced by the members of a community. It encompasses factors such as social connections, access to resources, environmental sustainability, and a sense of belonging.

Data Sources

Throughout the process of data collection, members of the Advisory Committee were heavily involved in developing the most effective way to engage with different community groups and individuals. For example, in the design of the survey, Advisory Committee members provided feedback on the questions to make them applicable to the local context. With each community consultation, advice was obtained regarding how to recruit participants and how

to help ensure that participants felt respected, appreciated, and comfortable during and after the engagement sessions. Members of the committee finally provided data and/or pointed to organizations that should be asked to provide data.

Community Data Profile

To understand the current community safety and well-being landscape in Kenora, existing quantitative data was collected and compiled. This information included demographic details from Statistics Canada (e.g., population, diversity, income, labour force), police data (e.g., crime and overdose rates), as well as information from many other community organizations on a range of aspects affecting safety and well-being Kenora. A full Kenora Data Profile report is provided in a supporting document.

Community Safety and Well-Being Survey

To gauge residents' perceptions of community safety and well-being in the City of Kenora, a city-wide survey was conducted in February 2024. A total of 1,013 residents participated, representing approximately 6 to 7 percent of Kenora's population. While this is an exceptionally high response rate for a survey of this nature, the results should be viewed as a snapshot of current perceptions rather than a definitive reflection of the entire community. The survey covered various aspects of daily life, including health, sense of belonging, perceptions of crime and substance use, community engagement, and access to services. By sharing their experiences, residents provided valuable insights into life in Kenora and helped identify key community priorities. The survey included both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data were generated through open ended questions which resulted in 340 pages of comments. A detailed report on the survey methodology and findings can be found in a supporting document: Final Survey Results.

Community Engagement⁷ Sessions

Community engagement sessions were conducted to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges emerging from the quantitative data and shed light on the experiences of various groups within the community. The qualitative data collected from these consultations provided a richer understanding of what participants saw as positive about Kenora, what they saw as challenges and what solutions they proposed to address these challenges. Consultations were held with many groups and individuals in the community. Appendix 3 provides an overview of these engagement sessions. Care was taken to include individuals and groups whose voices are often overlooked, including the unhoused, Indigenous residents, people who are victims of crime, and children and youth, among others.

Indigenous Sharing Circles

Three sharing circles with First Nations and Métis were completed by the Advisory Committee Indigenous representative in partnership with the Community Safety Monitoring project (CSM). The CSM is a project funded and hosted at the University of Waterloo (UW). As such these consultations were paid for by UW and co-facilitated by one of their staff and a

⁷ The term engagement rather than consultation is used here because members of the public have become cynical about consultations and because engagement unlike traditional consultations seeks active involvement in actions and decision making.

local Indigenous facilitator from Kenora. Participants in the sharing circles, members and the co-facilitator were compensated for their time. These consultations served a dual purpose: (1) to include the voices from First Nations and Métis persons in an update to the indicators by which we nationally measure urban safety, which are often Eurocentric, and need to be adjusted to the Canadian context; (2) to utilize the data to inform the CSWB plan for Kenora.

Sharing Circles with Children

The Keewatin Patricia District School Board engaged a consultant to host sharing circles with children. During the week of September 9-12, 2024, fifty-eight (58) students ages 11-14 participated in this process to share their view about the community. While there were some strong consistencies between the voices of the children and adult participants, the voices of children at times added an upbeat tone.

All detailed data from the sharing circles are provided in the supporting document on the engagement sessions. These data have not been aggregated to ensure that the voices do not get overshadowed by the voices from other engagement sessions.

The Photo Voice Project

The City of Kenora in partnership with FIREFLY hosted a Photo Voice Project, titled 'Youth Photo Contest: My Community, My Lens'. In the spirit of "a picture can be worth a thousand words," youth in Kenora were asked to send in photographs of what they most appreciate about Kenora with an explanation of what the image speaks to. Some of these photos are included throughout the plan. The Advisory Committee felt that this was a more meaningful approach for youth than a focus group. Sixty-two photos were submitted through this project.

Through a combination of all the data sources it became clear that a point of saturation had been achieved. Saturation in the context of research refers to the stage where adding more data or information doesn't significantly improve or change the results or insights. In other words, it's when you've gathered enough data and collecting more doesn't lead to any new discoveries or noticeable improvements in your understanding. Once you reach saturation, more data doesn't add meaningful value to your conclusions.



“This photo is from our New Year’s Eve celebration last year. It shows that Kenora has so much for families to do together, even in the winter. Playing hockey on a homemade rink, drinking hot chocolate in the snow, going ice fishing, snuggling around winter bonfires and roasting marshmallows for an evening snack are some of my favourite memories.

There aren’t many places where you can do all those things on the same night in your own backyard, and it makes me so happy to live where we do.”

- Bentley N.

*(Photo submission from
Photo Voice Project)*



Key Findings

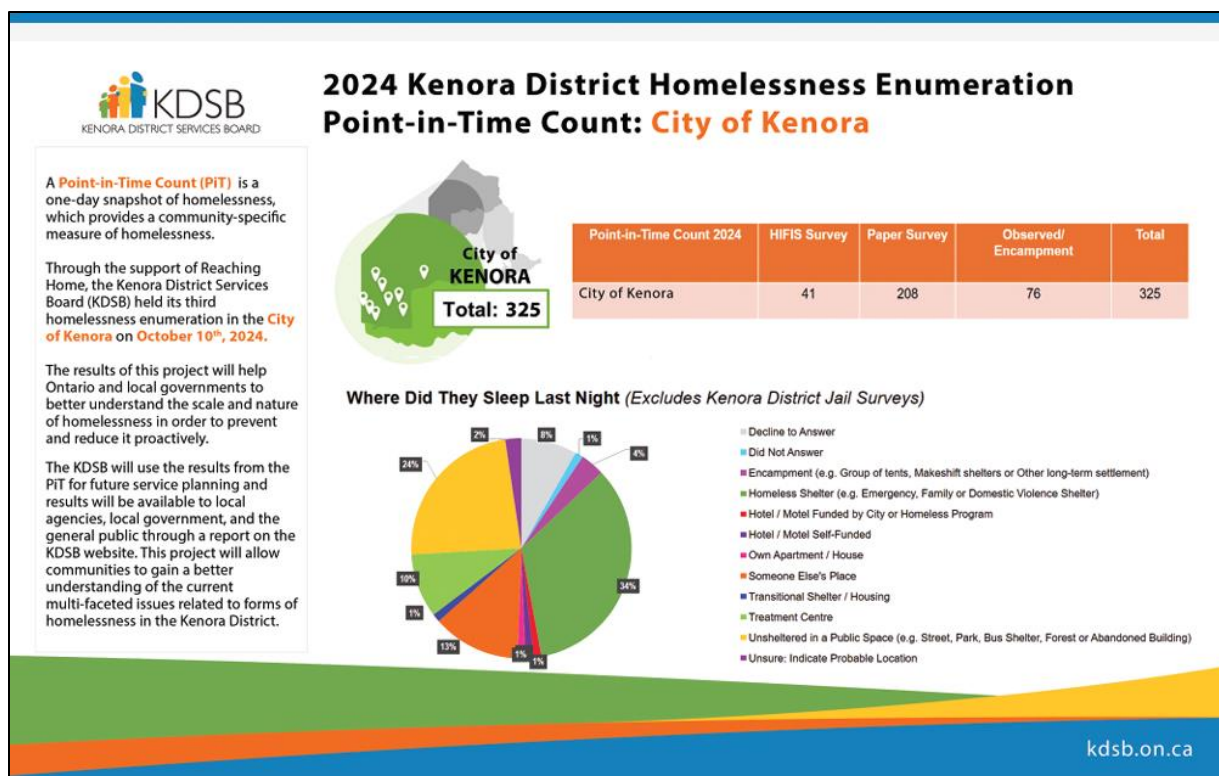
Below are some key findings drawn from all data sources, offering only a glimpse of the extensive analysis conducted. Comprehensive details can be found in the three supporting documents.

A Glance at the Kenora Data Profile

Close to 90 distinct data sources were reviewed in preparing the data profile.

- The City of Kenora has an aging population and between 2016 and 2021 the population decreased by just under 1%. This also led to a decrease in residents in the working age group (15-64).
- Kenora has a low immigration rate when compared to Ontario.
- The Indigenous population according to census Canada is 25% of the total population although some reports place it as high as 45% due to a census undercount.
- 56% of residents over the age of 15 are in a couple relationship.
- The Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) reports the highest rates in the province for:
 - Diabetes mortality
 - ER admissions for self-harm among youth and all age groups
 - ER admissions for conditions attributable to alcohol
- In 2012 homeownership rate was 5% higher than the rest of Ontario.
- 37% of renters spend more than 30% of their income on shelter.
- Kenora's unemployment rate in 2021 was lower than Ontario overall.
- In 2022, Kenora's rate of police reported crime for all violations was three times higher than the rest of Ontario and five times higher for youth charges than in the rest of Ontario.
- The rate for the crime severity index⁸ was more than double that of Ontario.
- Kenora has one of the highest death rates due to homelessness going back to the 1970s.
- The most recent Point in Time count (October 2024) showed that Kenora has a total of 325 individuals who are unhoused.

⁸ The Crime Severity Index (CSI) is a measure that assigns a weight to types of crimes based on their seriousness, with the goal of providing a more accurate reflection of crime trends and their impact on communities.



Visual on the PiT count provided by KDSB.

A Glance at the Results from the Community Survey

1,013 residents completed the survey which is close to 6-7% of the population. Of these 180 respondents identified as Indigenous (First Nation = 70, Métis = 110)

- Close to 80% of respondents described their health (physical, emotional, mental) as good or even very good (which does not match with NWHU data).
- 40% claim their well-being has declined since the pandemic; 35% say their standard of living has declined.
- 23% report feeling unwelcome in the community some of the time and 5% most of the time (skin colour, race and age ranked highest as the reason for this experience).
- There is an almost even split between respondents who tend to trust others and those who believe you cannot be careful enough.
- The community is divided when it comes to a sense of belonging.
- The top three information sources for understanding crime cited by respondents were media, social media and personal experiences.
- Most respondents feel that crime in Kenora has increased and is higher than the rest of Ontario and this result was also true of problematic substance use.

- Over half of the respondents expressed the concern that they might become a victim of crime and within that 260 respondents fear becoming a victim of domestic and intimate partner violence and 560 fear being sexually assaulted.
- 740 respondents shared that fear of crime keeps them from engaging in certain activities.
- Most respondents see community safety as something that needs to be attended to in a balance between police and other services.
- Only sports, recreation activities, and green spaces/parks received the highest rating for being fully accessible in terms of locations. Most other services, including mental health, are mostly seen as somewhat accessible, with housing support, addiction support, and transportation being given the lowest ratings for being accessible in terms of location.
- Housing support, addiction support, transportation, and childcare ranked the highest in being seen as cost prohibitive.
- Disaggregated data show that the experience of Indigenous residents is significantly different to other residents along several lines (belonging, self-reported health, view of police, etc.).
- Respondents with a weak sense of belonging were more likely to report having been a victim of crime. Residents who live downtown are less likely to report a sense of community than all other neighborhoods combined.

"[I love] being able to go fishing right downtown and enjoying the view."

- Jordy K.

*(Photo submission from
Photo Voice Project)*



A Glance at the Results from the Engagement Sessions

229 individuals participated in interviews and focus groups. Of these 33 identified as Indigenous. It would be impossible to summarize the richness of their comments and experiences in any way that can do it justice.

The supporting document on the findings from the engagement sessions contains many quotes and data is presented as close to the original wording as feasible. Nonetheless, here are a few things of note that stood from the comments:

- Overall respondents agreed on the positive attributes of Kenora from nature, which was often described as breathtaking, to culture - “what I love about Kenora is that Kenora tries.”
- Many emphasized the importance of ensuring that children are safe (this was consistent across all populations).
- Safety was described as more than the absence of crime including being connected to people.
- Negative narratives were identified as eroding a sense of safety.
- Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples share many of the same concerns: drugs, sex trafficking, fear of crime, concerns about homelessness, decline of public spaces, etc.
- Children mirrored the experiences of adults. Children are listening when adults speak, and they repeat what they hear. They also shared a lot of excitement about their community.
- Kenora was described as a town of two solitudes along many lines, here are a few quotes from the engagement sessions to illustrate that:

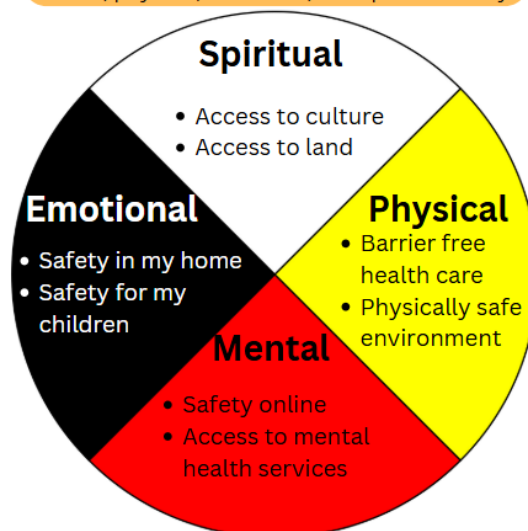
Polarized Views	
The unhoused deserve understanding and compassion.	The unhoused make me feel unsafe.
The fires made the unhoused more visible than before, but they have always been here.	Homelessness has drastically increased in part through people from other communities.
Harm reduction saves lives.	We are enabling people not helping them.
Kenora is no different to other cities.	Kenora has declined so much it is hard to recognize it.
Problematic drug and alcohol use are health issue not a crime.	Open drug and alcohol use make us unsafe and should be criminalized.
We need more services.	

<p>I feel a strong sense of connection to my community.</p> <p>We need to deal with the history of colonization and its impact on today.</p> <p>We need to balance business and services needs.</p> <p>We over-incarcerate especially Indigenous peoples and the unhoused.</p>	<p>We have too many services that overlap and don't collaborate.</p> <p>I have never felt welcome here.</p> <p>It is time to move on from history and forget.</p> <p>Services should leave the downtown so business can thrive.</p> <p>We are too lenient and should jail more people.</p>
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- The year 2020 was described as an instant, hard and visceral turning point in the community both because of the pandemic and because of the fires that displaced people in the downtown
- Austerity measures have led to downloading onto local communities, divisions between services, and finger pointing
- During the Indigenous sharing circles participants agreed on the following as a tool to better understand community safety and well-being

Medicine Wheel Model of Safety

Definition: Safety is...when I feel secure in my mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual safety.



Key Findings

Combining all data from across the community safety assessments led to the following observations:

Positive Aspects

Kenora has many strengths, assets, and positive attributes that are well recognized by its residents and visitors. The following themes emerged in this area:

- Access to spectacular nature
- Collaborative projects
- Diverse and rich cultural heritage
- Great amenities (recreation, parks, library, museum, etc.)
- Many social and health services
- People who care and step up to help
- Small town feel
- Strong economy and business opportunities
- Tourism that is successful

Challenges

Some of the above positive attribute also featured as key challenges alongside additional themes:

- Addiction (both alcohol and drugs) and related social issues (i.e., public drug use, littering of syringes)
- Austerity measures having stretched and eroded services in mental health and addictions
- Confusing services system
- Downtown decline
- Gaps in services while there is overlap in other areas
- Homelessness and lack of accessible and affordable housing
- Increased cost of living
- Intergenerational trauma and loss of Indigenous ways of life
- Justice system failing the community (Justice services are perhaps the most confusing for members of the public. A brief overview of key legal considerations has been provided in Appendix five).
- Lack of attention to some crimes such as hate crimes, domestic and intimate partner violence, and sexual assault
- Lack of collaboration and competition between services
- Lack of meaningful integration of newcomers (immigrants and migrants)

- Lack of transit
- Mistrust in leadership and the accountability of government and services
- Negative media attention including social media
- Neglect and abuse of children
- Polarization
- Racism and discrimination
- Sex trafficking
- Significant health challenges including problematic use of alcohol across the population
- Social disorder, lack of sense of safety, and increased fear of crime

Opportunities for Change

While the themes for the positive attributes of the community and the challenges came from all three data sources, the proposed solutions came entirely from the community survey, engagement sessions and interviews. The proposed actions amounted to over sixteen (16) pages of themes and subthemes. The following is a high-level overview of what participants suggested needs to be part of the solutions to the challenges:

- Act more, plan less
- Collaborate don't compete
- Close the gaps in mental health and addiction services
- Create a more transparent system of accountability
- Focus policing on areas with the highest public insecurity
- Increase housing (from shelters to market housing)
- Look for neighbourhood-based solutions that engage people where they live
- Make the justice system more responsive to community experiences
- Make prevention matter to overcome the high reliance on first responders
- Mobilize an attitudinal/culture shift including addressing the polarization in the community
- Mobilize knowledge more broadly across the community to enhance understanding and involvement
- Provide more inclusive employment and volunteer opportunities
- Put the well-being of children and youth first
- Revitalize the downtown through multi-pronged efforts

It was obvious during the engagement session that the community is divided in terms of what they think will work to counteract the challenges. It was, therefore, the demanding task for the Advisory Committee to sift through these data and select priority areas as well as design actions within them.

Determining Priority Areas and Designing Actions

Advisory committee members came together in a one-day workshop in September to select priorities and design actions. Prior to that day they studied the three data sources and re-familiarized themselves with the mandate for the planning as set out by the province. Several tools were employed to support this task.

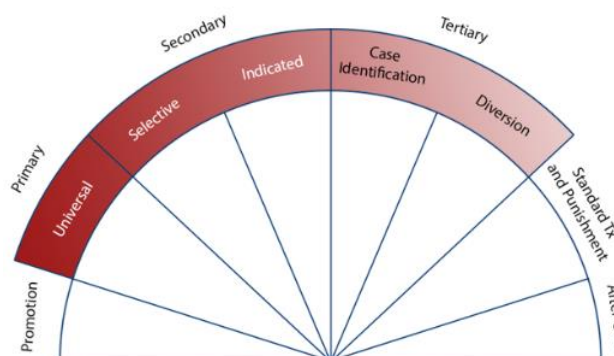
They were reminded of two important planning aspects: (1) to view the plan as an opportunity to affect change, not a way out of a crisis (even if there is a strong sense of urgency in the community); (2) to know that they could only be responsible for the process of developing the plan but that the outcomes depend on many other factors.

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	Crisis	Ideal for Plans
Not Important	Distraction	Time waster

	Good outcome	Bad outcome
Good process	Deserved success	Bad luck
Bad process	Dumb luck	Deserved failure

Additionally three tools were used to assess the efficacy of potential actions:

The first tool supported the assessment of how much effort an action would take and what level of impact one would expect to gain from it. This tool was designed to avoid too many actions falling into the category of high impact and high effort and thereby avoid having too many major projects and not enough quick wins. A second tool assessed where the actions are placed on a prevention continuum. This tool was used to help ensure a balance across the prevention areas with a strong focus on the areas that address known risks (selective and indicated).



Finally, the Advisory Committee had to assess whether actions are within the scope of the plan.



Actions in **Scope One** are the direct responsibility of the City and/or members of the Implementation Committee and can be accomplished through their efforts.



Scope Two actions support community safety and well-being but are at the purview of another organization. These may be monitored during the implementation phase or even supported but they cannot be controlled by the City, or the Implementation Committee.



Scope Three actions are solutions proposed by the community that are essentially out of scope for a plan of this nature. Commonly this includes actions that can only be taken by other orders of government or federal/provincial bodies. While such proposed solutions may lead to advocacy, cities and their communities have little to no control over whether they will be implemented. They are therefore not included in the plan unless they lead to an advocacy effort, but they do appear in the supporting documents.

The Advisory Committee upon occasion also consulted the evidence that is available to discern whether an action is likely to have success. Few areas of public intervention are as fraught with a call for quick fixes as the area of crime prevention.

Perhaps one of the most famous in this regard was the “Just Say No to Drugs” campaign in the 1980s spearheaded by the then First Lady of the USA, Nancy Reagan. The campaign cost millions of dollars but despite it being catchy, it failed because it oversimplified a complex issue and didn’t provide sufficient support to young people using drugs. As the journalist H.L. Mencken reportedly said: “For every complex problem, there is a simple solution that is usually wrong.” As the Advisory Committee reviewed available knowledge, they recognized that their decisions would inevitably run counter to the perspectives of those who strongly advocate for popular, quick-fix solutions.

At the conclusion of the process, the Advisory Committee had identified 117 potential actions—far too many for a CSWB plan. These were then narrowed down to the final proposed actions through two steps: Each committee member independently reviewed every action against four established criteria. Each criterion was evaluated numerically, and the total score was calculated. Actions that fell below a predetermined threshold were excluded from the plan. The criteria used were:

- **Collaborative:** The action increases collaboration and “lifting together” by incorporating multiple diverse approaches.

- **Evidence-informed:** The action is based on good evidence and wisdom. It relates to an actual need/risk and not a perceived one.
- **Doable:** The action can be operationalized and create change, and it fits the concept of a SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timebound) goal.
- **Proactive:** The action advances prevention. It heads upstream by addressing underlying issues including inequities.

This exercise resulted in a significantly reduced list of actions which was then refined and shared with key stakeholders in the community for their input.

The Validation Process

The Advisory Committee decided to add a validation process, in part, because of the number of actions that fall into scope two.

The following organizations were consulted in this process:

- All Nations Health Partners
- Canadian Mental Health Association Kenora
- City of Kenora
- Kenora District Chamber of Commerce
- Kenora Chiefs Advisory
- Kenora District Services Board
- Kenora Association for Community Living
- Northwestern Health Unit
- Victim Services
- Waasegiizhig Nanaandawe'iyewigamig (WNHAC)

Additionally, a meeting with the Chief of the Wauzhushk Onigum Nation provided valuable insights on how to effectively engage with leaders and elders in the First Nations to gain their support.

The validation meetings showed that there is significant buy-in into developing a CSWB plan for Kenora and that many of the designed actions resonated with those that reviewed them. The validation process also led to some important clarifications and changes to the priority actions to facilitate future buy-in. With each step along the way, greater clarity emerged, and the priority action statements became more focused.

Priority Areas, Goals, Recommendations, and Actions

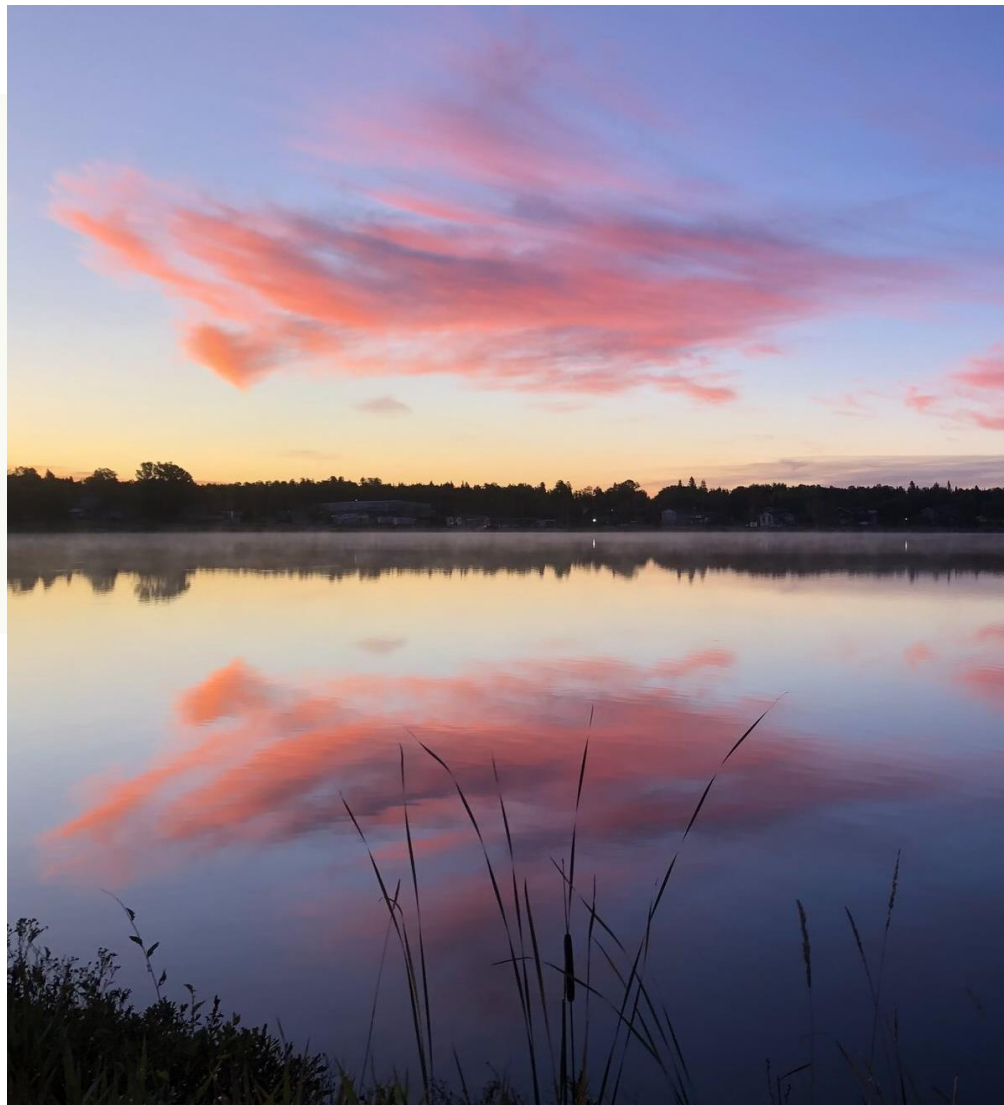
Each priority area includes a goal, recommendations describing the intended outcomes and actions to achieve them. The Advisory Committee developed the goals and actions, while the consultant added recommendations to clarify the goals' intent. Additionally, each priority area is introduced with a narrative that highlights relevant research, insights gained from the community assessment, and, in some cases, emerging best practices.

Certain actions include notes that offer clarifications or background information, and each action is assigned a proposed lead, sometimes along with partners. At the start of the implementation process, all actions will be mapped onto a timeline to ensure they are executed systematically and within capacity.

"In this photo I am at Rabbit Lake where they have the prettiest scenery and the most unfathomable sunsets. This is just one of the many sunsets Kenora has, which I love."

- Jordan G.

(Photo submission from
Photo Voice Project)



Strategic Approaches

No priority can be achieved through a single action alone. As a result, the Advisory Committee assessed a range of strategic approaches to ensure that actions in each area are effectively coordinated and integrated.

The following strategies were considered to help advance the priorities:

- **Advocate:** Actively promote a cause, policy or idea to influence change or raise awareness.
- **Base Actions in Evidence and Knowledge:** Ensure community safety work is guided by evidence and the wisdom of community members for achieving desired outcomes, grounding the work in available data, and considering the historic and current knowledge of the community and its stakeholders.
- **Collaboration, Coordination, and Alignment of Services:** The success of the CSWB plans depend on the collective willingness and ability of system leaders to create change in current service systems, including working beyond conventional silos and in collaboration with others toward a collective vision and mutually agreed upon goals. This may also lead to policy change.
- **Communication:** Obtaining buy-in to address priorities is highly dependent on the communication of desired outcomes and their connections to priority actions. Ongoing communication within and across systems is vital for CSWB plans to succeed. Communication is also key for sustained commitment.
- **Engage the Community in Community interventions/projects:** No CSWB plan can be accomplished solely through the efforts of one organizations or system. Grassroots and community level involvement is critical for its success. All sectors must commit to engaging the community, including people with lived or living experience, in the development and implementation of solutions.
- **Leverage Partnerships:** The CSWB plan is meant to harness existing efforts and build on them, as well as form novel connections between existing approaches. Partnerships are critical for maximizing resources and finding solutions based in multi-disciplinary thinking and practice.

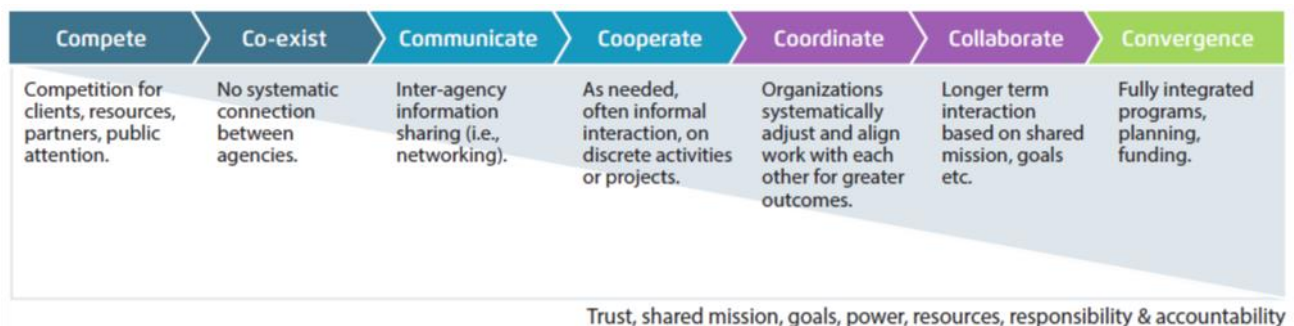


Priority Area One: Collaboration and Communication

The successful implementation of Community Safety and Well-Being Plans hinges on collaboration across all sectors to achieve shared outcomes. While the community of Kenora already benefits from significant collaboration, the plan offers key opportunities to improve upon these. This can include identifying service gaps, distinguishing between duplication and diversification, ensuring that closing gaps does not lead to mission drift, and reallocating or even discontinuing resources from overlapping programs and services. Throughout the planning process, the Advisory Committee emphasized that, whenever possible, the plan should build upon existing efforts that contribute to safety and well-being and strengthen current structures, rather than duplicating or usurping them.

Through the community safety assessment, the Advisory Committee also learned that many community members find Kenora's service landscape confusing and frustrating. Participants raised concerns about resource allocations, specifically the sense that existing capacities are not being used effectively, and that services often compete rather than collaborate. While this perception may not reflect the full reality of service provision, it nonetheless fosters skepticism and sometimes leads to criticism and disengagement from local service providers, impacting individual and community well-being.

Collaboration has become particularly challenging given the long-standing austerity measures many services across the country have faced which has led to a scarcity mindset and a zero-sum mentality which directly conflicts with the spirit of collaboration. The visual from the Canadian Centre for Safer Communities below highlights the stages that community organizations must navigate to reach a place where long-term interactions are grounded in a shared mission and collectively agreed upon goals. The Community Safety and Well-Being plan is a tool that is designed to enhance collaboration by providing a co-created vision for the future. When it comes to crime, victimization, fear of crime, and broader well-being no one system alone has the answer. This realization inevitably leads to reflections on current service approaches and how to improve upon them when indicated.



Within the context of service provision, it is important to acknowledge that every day in Kenora, staff in health and social services, police, educators, business owners, City employees, and everyday citizens take actions that contribute to the quality of life in their community. Additionally, collaboration and communication could have featured across the seven priorities as a strategic approach rather than be a priority in its own right.

The Advisory Committee chose to make it a priority because they wanted to respond to the feedback from the community that there is room for improvement in collaboration as well as in more clearly communicating about the service system. Only by working across multiple sectors and alongside members of the community at large can development of bold solutions to the challenges in community safety and well-being generally and the challenges in communication and collaboration in Kenora more specifically happen. Collaboration is not a thought. It is an action of reciprocity in motion.

In the Spirit of Community

Working Together to Create a Story Worth Telling

For Kenora Association for Community Living's Executive Director, Deb Everley, the story about how service organizations worked together during COVID to help each other better coordinate services is worth sharing widely.

She said it started with First Nations Chiefs finding and sharing testing kits, then the personal protective equipment, when organizations would share whatever extra hand sanitizer, masks, or gowns they had with other agencies.



Photo Credit: Deb Everley

"That was phenomenal because there was nothing," she said.

Then there was the testing protocol. With the hospital creating an expedited path into testing for staff who called in sick for failing the screening instead of just having to wait. All this was critical for her organization, which provides 24-hour care for people who cannot be left unattended.

"I do think this is about the All-Nations Health Partners... working brilliantly well together," said Everley, "if one partner was not OK, then nobody was OK."

**"It's about
relationship versus
partnership."**

"It's about relationship versus partnership," she said, adding that getting resources from others was balanced with giving as well, such as KACL providing a nurse to work in the testing centre.

"[KACL works] in a context of gift theory and in gift theory, a crisis is an acceleration of calling,"

Everley said while recalling the discussion about the Waterview project created to provide a place for the unhoused population during the pandemic.

“They're calling for somebody to operate a hotel, to have people with high behavioural needs and concerns, actively using alcohol in the unhoused population, [with] high emergency service use. They're asking for somebody to take that on,” she said. “[For]

Kenora Association for Community Living. That's our superpower.”

Everley said KACL was positioned to help because for the last 60 years they had supported people who nobody thought could live in community. While working with the unhoused and those dealing with addictions would be new for her organization, they had the experience of supporting people with intellectual disabilities to live successfully in community. “So honestly, I felt like, how on Earth can I not answer that call and say that KACL will step up to take on a massive 24-hour-a-day double-staffed, supervised, managed program that has no staff, no money?”

She gave other examples of how organizations such as KCA, KDSB, WNHAC, the Lake of the Woods District Hospital, FIREFLY, the City of Kenora, and others, each contributed major pieces like securing funding, sharing expertise and staffing during the pandemic.

Everley thinks the reason the story of all this cooperation and coordination isn't more well known is because everything got overwhelmed during the pandemic, plus people were tired. “I think people were allowed limited Christmas vacations in [their] bubble,” she said. “[They] remember the bubble stuff.”

But Everley said this experience resulted in useful lessons learned: The importance of funding, of contributing resources in kind, and of needing to keep momentum going. She points to the new supportive housing building on 9th Street North run by WNHAC as an example of a project having some roots in those previous efforts.

“What we proved is that you can house people who are habituated to being unhoused and that all of the indicators of community wellness, their wellness [go up] and resource demand on all of our systems goes down,” she emphasized; “we did it together in Kenora.”

Priority Area One: Collaboration and Communication

Goal: To foster greater collaboration across the community enhancing engagement and maximizing resources.

Recommendation: Leverage the CSWB plan to enhance collaboration across the service sectors and the community.

Action 1.1 Organize a series of collaboration summit(s) with the following expected outcomes:

- (a) The community of Kenora will have a “No Wrong Door” approach for all health and social services to help ensure effective triaging.
- (b) The community of Kenora will have a community services map that visually represents the available resources and services within the community and provides a transparent and accessible system of accountability where programs and services are clearly linked to measurable outcomes.

Leads

City with community partners

<p>(c) The community of Kenora will establish a Child and Youth Well-Being Alliance to integrate existing roundtables focused on children and youth.</p>	
<p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.1 (a) The "No Wrong Door" approach helps to ensure that individuals seeking help can access the support they need regardless of where they initially entered the system. Instead of being turned away or redirected, they are connected to the appropriate resources and services through collaboration and coordination among agencies. This approach prioritizes accessibility, integration, and a seamless experience for clients. In some cases, memorandums of understanding will need to be created to ensure effective triaging. • 1.1 (b) This work can build on and/or join hands with All Nations' Health Partners (ANHP) service mapping efforts. ANHP has prioritized navigation through the local health care pathways by ensuring that local providers are reflected in the 811 database and that 211 services direct everyone there. To identify gaps and overlaps as well as areas in need of improvement "one source of truth" is needed rather than relying on a disjointed and overly complicated services landscape. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The map from this summit should cover healthcare, housing, food security, education, employment, and social support, highlighting who the service providers are, their locations, contact details, and the specific populations they serve. ○ The map should also help to identify gaps in services, overlaps, and other areas for improvement, thereby serving as a tool for increased coordination and planning. • 1.1 (c) The community of Kenora has numerous round tables focused on the well-being of children and youth. Forming this alliance will help to ensure greater alignment and cross fertilization between these tables. It may ultimately lead to merging some tables or even discontinuing others that could receive attention to their goals through the efforts of the newly formed alliance. The alliance will be organized into focused subgroups based on developmental stages (0-6, 7-12, 13-18, 19-24) and address locally identified priorities, such as child and youth suicide, sex trafficking, and youth aging out of care. 	
<p>Action 1.2 Partner with local funders, such as the Kenora and Lake of the Woods Regional Community Foundation, to endorse the plan's priorities and align their funding criteria with the CSWB plan's recommended actions, supporting local initiatives that advance the plan's vision and goals.</p> <p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the province mandates municipalities to develop CSWB plans, they do not directly provide funding for their 	<p>Leads City with funders</p>

<p>implementation. Some actions can be accomplished through reallocating existing resources within organizations. Some can be done in-kind. Even others may be shared across organizations. And some will lead to funding applications to provincial and federal entities (such as the Building Safer Communities Fund of Public Safety Canada).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This action seeks to mobilize local funders such as a community foundation to contribute to the plan's implementation by developing funding criteria that match with the objectives of the plan. • The more we can align actions across the community the more momentum will be achieved, and funders have a critical role to play in this regard. 	
<p>Recommendation: Keep the community informed about the implementation of the plan and provide opportunities for engagement along the way.</p>	
<p>Action 1.3 Host an annual Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) event that connects the public with local institutions, provides updates on implementation successes and challenges, and offers opportunities for community feedback and engagement.</p>	<p>Leads City with Implementation Committee members</p>
<p>Action 1.4 Develop and enhance access to existing publications and websites that provide the public with a clear understanding of the local service ecosystem including the justice system.</p>	<p>Leads ANHP with partners</p>
<p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This action is designed to make knowledge of the service system easily accessible. It also includes an overview of the justice system, which is perhaps the most confusing for members of the public. • Citizens often erroneously assume that the justice system can accomplish certain outcomes for which it is not designed. Some participants in the survey and focus groups also were unclear about who is responsible for matters of justice and which order of government has jurisdiction over the courts and corrections. • This can put a strain on CSWB plans because desired changes fall outside of the control of local government and community institutions. 	
<p>Action 1.5 Make CSWB work an ongoing priority in the City's communication strategy.</p>	<p>Leads City</p>



Priority Area Two: Children, Youth,⁹ and Families¹⁰

The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes children as individuals with inherent rights, including access to education, healthcare, freedom from exploitation, freedom from violence, and the ability to voice their opinions on matters affecting their lives. All children and youth deserve a nurturing environment in which to live, learn, and thrive. However, some children are excluded from this experience due to challenging life circumstances and histories. Many universal programs—such as those in health, education, and recreation—often overlook the significant barriers faced by some children. This occurs despite research highlighting that early childhood experiences are among the strongest predictors of long-term well-being.

One of the most significant barriers are Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)—such as abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction. ACEs can disrupt a child's sense of safety, leading to toxic stress that harms their developing brain, immune system, and overall health. ACEs are strongly linked to lifelong challenges, including chronic illnesses, mental health issues, substance use, difficulties in relationships and involvement in the justice system. This underscores the critical need for early intervention, resilience-building, and trauma-informed care to promote the healthy development of all children and youth.

Why does this matter in the context of a CSWB plan?

In crime prevention through social development, it has been stated that **a city that is safe for children is safe for anyone**. In that sense the well-being of our children is a measurement for the well-being of the greater community. The International Making Cities Livable Movement (IMCL) and the United Nations, among others, have emphasized the centrality of children and youth in advancing healthy and safe communities. Almost all CSWB plans therefore devote a section to children and youth. However, special attention to children and youth is warranted in plans of this nature not only because of their inherent vulnerabilities but also because the vulnerable child of today may well be the offender of tomorrow. Moreover, 5% of children and youth are responsible for over 55% of all youth crimes.¹¹ This means that attending to these children and youth can lead to significant reductions in youth crime overall.

⁹ Youth are defined here as anyone under the age of 24 as per developmental guidelines.

¹⁰ Family here is broadly defined as a group of individuals connected by relationships that provide mutual support, love, and care. These connections may be based on biological ties, legal arrangements, emotional bonds, or shared commitments. Family includes not only traditional nuclear or extended units but also chosen families formed through friendships, partnerships, or shared life experiences. At its core, family is defined by the sense of belonging, interdependence, and the desire to nurture and uplift one another, regardless of structure, culture, or societal norms. Caretakers are included in this definition. Not all families have the capacity to care.

¹¹ This data was provided by Dr. Irvin Waller during a presentation to the Advisory Committee.

Challenges for Children and Youth

In Kenora some children and youth face some notable challenges as evidenced in the following data:

1. Most referrals to the Human Social Services and Justice Coordinating Committee (HSSJCC) situation table which is hosted by Canadian Mental Health Association Kenora (CMHA-K) are for children and youth aged 12-17.
2. The incidence rate of suicide among 10-24 was 50.8 per 100,000 in the Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) catchment area.
3. Kenora children fall short in four out of five areas as measured by the Early Development Instrument (EDI). In Ontario, five early childhood development measures are collected as a population-based tool to assess the developmental health of young children (typically in senior kindergarten). These measures focus on key areas of development crucial for a child's success at school and beyond. The five domains of the EDI are: physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, and communication skills and general knowledge. In Kenora only language and cognitive development fall below the 10% threshold of concern.
4. Law enforcement and other service providers frequently encounter significant challenges when assisting youth under 18 due to the absence of suitable facilities and services to accommodate them during acute situations. These young individuals are ineligible for adult services, and those aged 16 to 18 often fall outside the primary focus of the child welfare system. Notably, in Ontario, youth aged 16 and 17 can voluntarily disengage from protection services. Consequently, to manage the risks these young people face, authorities have been asked to resort to criminalizing even minor infractions, a measure that should be a last resort under the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) and that has been shown to have long-term negative consequences.

A more comprehensive profile of children and youth in Kenora has been provided in the **Kenora Community Data Profile Report¹²**.

Research demonstrates that early intervention and prevention yield significant long-term benefits, as shown by programs such as the Perry High Scope Program¹³. Additionally, meaningful youth engagement has proven to be a highly effective strategy for preventing crime and victimization. However, supporting children and youth effectively requires addressing the needs of their families and caregivers as well. Participants in the consultation emphasized the pivotal role families play in shaping the success of children and youth. While this is undeniably true, it is equally important to consider the broader context in which families function, including the challenges they face which might stand in the way to providing nurturing support.

Moreover, the factors that place children and youth at risk are well understood, as are the protective factors that can counterbalance these risks. Understanding the dynamic interplay

¹² Supporting document number one found at: kenora.ca/communitysafety

¹³ [Perry Preschool Project](#)

between risk and protective factors is key to fostering resilience and positive outcomes in the face of adversity. Risk factors such as poverty, exposure to violence, or family instability increase the likelihood of negative outcomes. Protective factors such as strong social supports, positive relationships, and access to education help mitigate risks and promote well-being.

While this is not a simple equation, i.e. one protective factor cannot cancel out one risk factor, research on resilience highlights the profound impact of having even one trusted adult in a young person's life, in the face of multiple risks and with benefits that endure over time. The Search Institute emphasizes the importance of close connections through which young people discover who they are, cultivate abilities, and learn how to contribute to the world around them. This can take them from just surviving into thriving and reduces engagement in high-risk behaviors including crime.¹⁴ This also opens the door to everyone having a role to play in advancing the well-being of children and youth. It does indeed “take a village to raise a child.”

There was much agreement among participants in the survey and during the consultations that the wellbeing of children and youth matters greatly. Indigenous teachings suggest that the choices we make today will impact not only the present generation but all those to come thereafter up to seven generations into the future. This principle highlights the importance of foresight and patience in creating change. The children and youth of today are one of the seven generations. Making their well-being and safety a priority and hearing their voices is critical for a plan of this nature.

In the Spirit of Community

Positive Activities, Positive Youth

Seeing a police officer catching air on a BMX bike isn't something you expect—but in Kenora, it's all part of a growing initiative to engage and support at-risk youth.

The Kenora Detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), in partnership with Grand Council Treaty #3 and the non-profit organization Sustainable Indigenous Solutions (SIS), launched the Youth Mentorship Program in 2024. This innovative initiative is designed to empower, mentor, and support at-risk youth and their families by creating a safe and positive space for engagement.

The concept is simple but powerful: every Tuesday and Thursday from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m., the program sets up tents, fires up the BBQ,



Photo Credit: Karl Ranta

and brings sports equipment to a central

¹⁴ [The Search Institute](#)

location accessible to youth. Locations such as the KTMS Skate Park, the Sportsplex, Garrow Park, and the Central Community Centre have

all hosted events. Outreach efforts include local service providers, high school posters, and social media.

At its core, the program offers young people a chance to participate in sports, creative activities, and mentorship—providing positive alternatives to risky behaviors. Popular activities include biking, skateboarding, and hockey, while art and crafts offer creative outlets. The BBQ is also a major draw, addressing food insecurity that many youth and their families face.

The impact has been significant. Since launching, the program has drawn up to 100 youth and families per session. Organizers are committed to consistency, running the program rain, snow, or shine.

Jim Neild, Acting Detachment Commander for the Kenora OPP, shared a moment that reinforced the importance of this reliability. One youth, speaking to a peer, said, “I told you they would be here no matter what.” That sense of trust and consistency is key to building meaningful relationships.

“I told you they
would be here no
matter what.”

The long-term goal is generational change—creating strong, early connections between youth and law enforcement to reduce future encounters with the justice system. The program provides opportunities for restorative justice, allowing young people to make amends and choose a better path instead of being pushed into the criminal justice system. As Neild explains, the program is “a gentle but firm way to encourage accountability and right choices.”

Early data already suggests success: a noticeable reduction in police service calls related to youth.

Beyond law enforcement, the program has become a hub for collaboration with community service providers, including FIREFLY, KACL, Ne-Chee Friendship Centre, childcare agencies, and both local school boards. Youth also play a role in mentorship and program setup, reinforcing leadership skills and personal responsibility.

The program is also sparking career aspirations. Some youth are now considering paths in culinary arts, community work, and even law enforcement. The supportive environment fosters trust, inclusion, and open dialogue—helping youth navigate personal challenges while building resilience.

Neild acknowledges that this approach is unconventional for police service, but the data-driven need for change is clear. With youth interactions on the rise, proactive engagement is a necessary step toward breaking cycles of crisis and intervention.

By investing in mentorship, positive activities, and community partnerships, the OPP Youth Mentorship Program is not just keeping kids active, it's creating a foundation for lifelong success.



Photo Credit: Mike Barclay

Priority Area Two: Children, Youth, and Families

Goal: To reduce the number of children and youth who are at risk of harm to self or others.

Recommendation: Advocate whenever possible to make the safety and well-being of children and youth a priority.

Action 2.1 Call for the development of barrier free (low cost, within easy access to transit and readily available) childcare spaces with quality early years programming.

Leads
KDSB

Notes:

- There are three new childcare centers at various stages of development being built or retrofit and together they will bring close to 1,000 new childcare spaces to the District of Kenora, making Kenora by the end of 2026 a community that has close to universal access to childcare. This recommendation affirms the need for these spaces.

Action 2.2 Engage the Province of Ontario in a collaborative review of funding being provided to young people who are aging out of care especially within the Northern Ontario context.

Leads
Child Welfare Services

Notes:

- Providing funds directly to young people who are aging out of care (as young as 16) can have long-term negative consequences that need further discussion and potentially changes at the level of provincial policy. This current practice may not be well suited to situations outside of major urban centres if in fact it is good practice at all.

Recommendation: Pro-actively and collaboratively address the factors that put children and youth at risk.

Action 2.3 Foster greater collaboration between youth services and adult support services to create comprehensive transition plans, ensuring that young people aging out of care receive the assistance they needed.

Leads
Youth and Adult Services

Notes:

- Youth aging out of care are at high risk of coming into conflict with the law or of harm to self unless the transition is seamless, well managed, and supported. While some efforts in this regard are already under way, especially with youth that have developmental disabilities, these efforts should expand to all youth. Youth that transition out of the child welfare system without strategic supports to make that transition successful have been referred to as cross-over children because they often end up in the justice system. This is an avoidable outcome.

Action 2.4 Foster collaboration among child and youth-serving organizations, school boards, and the police to develop an attendance resolution and engagement approach for children and youth who are currently disconnected from school with the goal of boosting their enrollment and attendance.	Leads School Boards, OPP, and child and youth services
Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduating high school is one of the best predictors of future well-being. Children and youth who are not attending school nor receiving alternate schooling are not only less likely to succeed later in life, but they are also open to exploitation and neglect. • Currently it is unclear who is responsible for some of the school attendance issues. This is compounded by the fact that some children may be registered in other school districts but may be living in Kenora and are therefore not known to local school authorities. Additionally, some children stopped going to school during the Covid-19 pandemic and have never returned. 	
Action 2.5 Identify and provide family-based interventions for children and youth at risk of entering the child welfare system and/or of coming in conflict with the law through the development of a standardized, culturally sensitive and locally applicable risk assessment tool.	Leads Child and Youth Well-Being Alliance (once formed)
Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While there are many available risk assessment tools, they may not be locally relevant and often are not consistent across services. Developing a tool that can make assessments standardized is more likely to lead to proactive identification of children and youth at risk and lead to family interventions that can avoid the involvement of child welfare services. 	
Action 2.6 Enhance and expand upon prenatal and early childhood development programs that promote strong caregiver-child attachment for children aged 0-6 by partnering with existing programs and networks and by leveraging Provincial funding to ensure effective implementation.	Leads KDSB with community partners
Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caregiver-child attachment is a critical predictor of future well-being. Recognizing this, the Province of Ontario has funding available that can be accessed for Kenora. 	
Action 2.7 Broaden access to developmental health programs for all children (0-5) and implement targeted individual support to improve EDI outcomes where needed	Leads KDSB
Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kenora children fall short in four out of five Early Development Instrument measures. Currently in Kenora early years programming to address this is challenge is underutilized. 	

Action 2.8 Develop a case management system for children and youth who are at chronically elevated risk to enable community partners to collaborate effectively in:

- (a) **identifying the children and youth at prolonged risk of harm to self or others**
- (b) **fostering efficient communication within a multidisciplinary team**
- (c) **engaging in problem-solving to address and reduce identified risks, both in the short and long term**
- (d) **ensuring children, youth and their caregivers have timely access to the appropriate services**
- (e) **coordinating swift and effective responses for children and youth at imminent risk of harm to themselves or others, including children and youth who have run away from home**

Leads

Human Services Justice Coordinating Committee (HSJCC), FIREFLY, and other child and youth services

Notes:

- Youth at chronically elevated risk are young individuals who face ongoing and compounded vulnerabilities across multiple domains over an extended period. These youths often grow up in unstable or hazardous environments, such as neighborhoods with high rates of violence, poverty, or family dysfunction. They may also experience persistent social and economic disadvantages, including low socioeconomic status, limited access to education and healthcare, and scarce community resources, which contribute to prolonged stress and reduced opportunities. Additionally, these youths may struggle with mental health issues, problematic substance use, or behavioral problems which if not adequately addressed, put them at further risk.
- Chronic exposure to adverse experiences like trauma, neglect, or abuse can deepen these challenges, while a lack of protective factors, such as supportive relationships or positive role models, exacerbates their vulnerability. As a result, youth at chronically elevated risk face significant obstacles to their safety, development, and well-being, requiring targeted interventions to mitigate the lasting impact of these persistent challenges.
- While Kenora has a "situation table" that addresses individuals at **acute** risk of harm to themselves or others, and while children and youth are supported through this table, some children and youth face long-standing challenges rather than an immediate crisis.
- Coordinating efforts to support these children and youth can help prevent their situations from escalating to an acute level. This approach takes the interventions further upstream and has the capacity to prevent harm and the need for intense interventions (which also tend to be costly).

Action 2.9 Assess the feasibility of implementing programs that promote strong family-school connections in select schools in Kenora (such as the Families and Schools Together (FAST) program), while ensuring alignment with the school boards' strategic plans.	School Boards
Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research shows that caregivers' experiences in school significantly influence their children's academic and social success. Programs that strengthen the connection between the whole family and the schools that their children attend can greatly enhance students' chances of success. However, such programs are resource-intensive, so it is crucial to assess their feasibility before making any commitments. 	
Action 2.10 Coordinate free, culturally inclusive recreational programs for children and youth, particularly between the hours of 3-10 pm.	City with community partners
Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Icelandic model (known as Planet Youth) provides free recreation to all children and youth. This has led to double-digit percentage reductions in crime, problematic substance use, and has increased caregiver-child connections. These outcomes have been sustained over time making it one of the best documented prevention programs with a strong return on investment. This initiative should be a collaboration between the City, child and youth-serving organizations, the Northwestern Health Unit, school boards, and private funders. If implemented this program can significantly reduce risk factors and strengthen protective factors related to mental health, addiction, and involvement with the justice system. 	
Action 2.11 Encourage and support the Kenora Coalition to End Human Trafficking, the OPP, Treaty 3 police and other partners to align and increase their efforts towards ending sex trafficking in Kenora.	Implementation Committee
Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sex trafficking is often viewed as an issue affecting other communities, but Kenora is just as vulnerable as larger urban centers especially with the proximity to the Trans Canada Highway. While the risk factors and prevention strategies are well documented, they are not always widely understood. Local partners in Kenora are working to address this serious form of victimization, which can impact children as young as 12. Ideally, efforts from the OPP, Treaty #3 Police, and the Coalition to End Human Trafficking should be strategically aligned, serving as a catalyst for collaboration among all organizations that have a role in this area. This approach would also help raise public awareness and raising awareness about how to identify the signs of children and youth being recruited into sex trafficking. 	

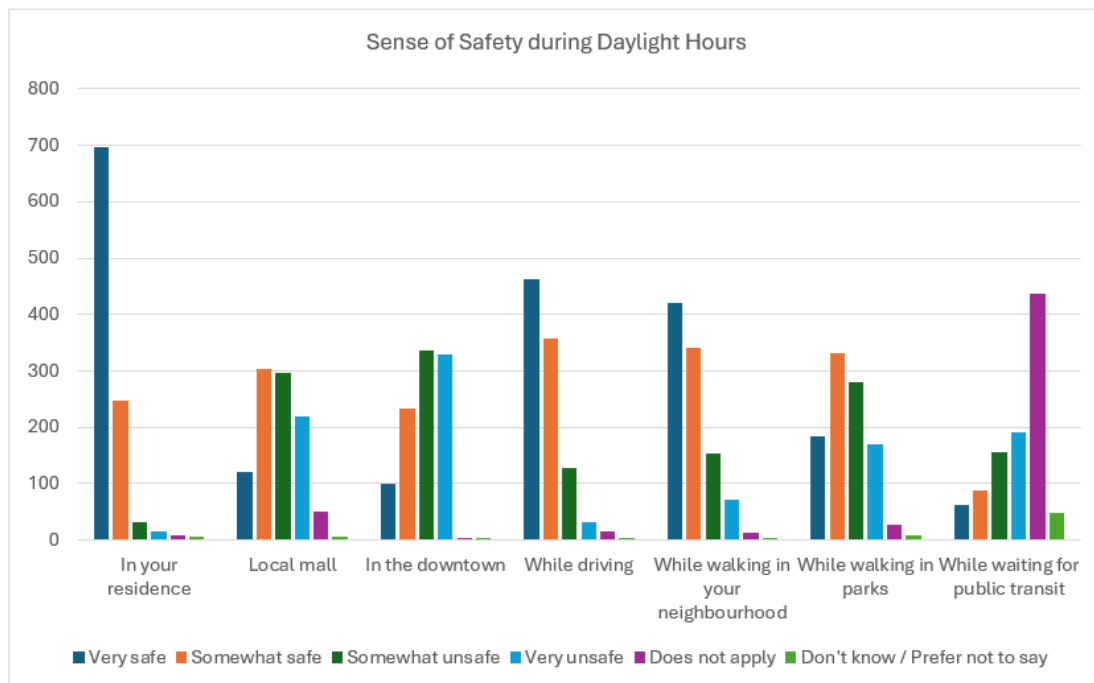
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Several projects such as Chelsea's Choice have been found to be successful in educating parents, teachers, and other significant adults in knowing the signs and knowing how to intervene. 	
Action 2.12 Ensure that children and youth who are experiencing abuse (including sexual abuse) and who feel unseen and unheard know where to go for help and support.	Child Welfare and Youth Justice
Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A newly formed Child and Youth Well-Being Alliance would be ideally placed to develop a communication and outreach mechanism that can reach children and youth safely and help them understand that no form of abuse is acceptable, that they are not alone, and where they can go for support. 	
Action 2.13 Identify and secure sustainable funding sources for early intervention programs such as SNAP (Stop Now and Plan).	FIREFLY and other child service providers
Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SNAP program has been widely implemented across North America and has proven effective in reducing antisocial behavior, improving school performance, and increasing positive social interactions. SNAP (Stop Now and Plan) is a well-established, evidence-based intervention designed to help children aged 6 to 11 who are exhibiting disruptive behavior, such as aggression, impulsiveness, or defiance. It aims to improve self-regulation and problem-solving skills, ultimately reducing antisocial behaviors, and promoting positive outcomes for children and their families. 	



Priority Area Three: Downtown and Community Spaces

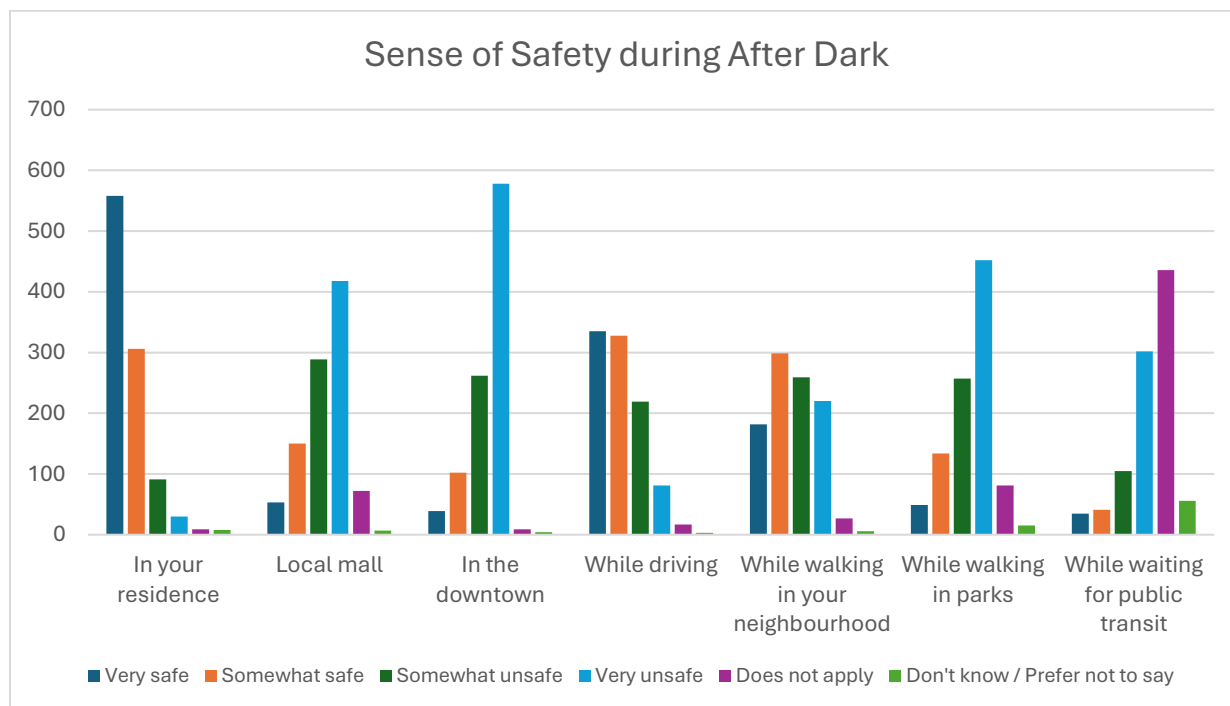
Concerns about the safety and vitality of the downtown area of Kenora featured prominently in all the engagement efforts. At times it was hard to get participants to think beyond the downtown area to include broader community safety and well-being considerations. To a large degree this is very understandable and not uncommon. Downtowns hold a unique position in shaping our perceptions of community safety and well-being. As the cultural, economic, and social center of many cities, they serve as gathering places where diverse groups of people converge. Vibrant downtowns, with their walkable streets, public parks, and bustling businesses, often symbolize the health of the broader community. When well-maintained and thoughtfully designed, they create a sense of order, belonging, and trust that contribute to the collective quality of life. Conversely, when downtown areas are neglected or perceived as unsafe, it can ripple outward, affecting how residents view the City overall.

The downtown areas can serve as a barometer for what we value as a community. Investments in cleanliness, lighting, infrastructure, and services demonstrate a commitment to safety and inclusion. Moreover, downtowns function as vital hubs of connection, fostering social interaction, cultural exchange, and economic vitality, all of which are essential elements of a thriving, secure and vibrant city.



Out of all areas in the City of Kenora the downtown received the most responses that indicated it was perceived as "somewhat unsafe" (N=336) or "very unsafe" (N=329), although a significant number of respondents also described downtown **during daylight** as "safe" (233) or "very safe" (N=99).

The picture changed when asked about the same spaces **after dark**. Safety in their own homes and when driving after dark remained the same after dark as during daylight hours. However, the sense of not being safe downtown after dark went up. Most of the participants (N=840) reported feeling “somewhat unsafe” or “very unsafe” in the downtown after dark.



Kenora, like most urban centers across the country, struggles with maintaining a downtown that can be both a business and a services hub in a way that holds these two needs in balance. The presence of unhoused individuals and visibly discarded syringes from persons using injection drugs have heightened fears that Kenora has reached a tipping point. A tipping point refers to the critical moment when a situation undergoes a rapid and potentially irreversible shift, typically as the result of small, incremental changes building up over time. Tipping points are the threshold where stability gives way to transformation - sometimes for the better, but also at times leading to negative outcomes, such as economic decline, social disorder, or local degradation.

Preventing a tipping point involves recognizing early warning signs and taking proactive measures to address the underlying causes before they escalate. This can include improving infrastructure, fostering community cohesion, or implementing sustainable policies and practices. Regular monitoring of the downtown spaces and open communication about presenting challenges and opportunities are essential for identifying risks proactively and for intervening before they become a lasting problem. By addressing known vulnerabilities and fostering engagement, it's possible to steer away from negative tipping points and move toward a more stable future. In this context it is important to make a clear distinction between what is uncomfortable and what is unsafe, what is social disorder and what is a crime.

In our downtowns polarized views tend to play themselves out most actively. For some participants in the survey and the focus groups downtown Kenora had become an either-or

location. Either you have thriving business or you have services. This is particularly problematic for Kenora which is a hub for the larger region both in business and service provision. Locating services outside of the core would be challenging given the limited transportation options which also featured in many of the comments. However, simply dismissing the fears of residents and business owners as having no grounding in data does not do justice to their experiences. A negative narrative about a downtown area can significantly impact its social, economic, and cultural vitality. When a downtown is portrayed as unsafe, unclean, or poorly managed, it can discourage people from frequenting it, leading to reduced foot traffic for local businesses. Such decline in economic activity can trigger a cycle of disinvestment, where businesses might close, property values might drop, and infrastructure deteriorates, further reinforcing the negative image. Such narratives can also erode community pride and limit opportunities for revitalization. Over time, narratives can marginalize an area bringing perceptions ever closer to becoming a reality.

Negative narratives about downtown shape residents' overall perception of their community, potentially deepening divisions and eroding trust in leadership. Shifting this narrative requires proactive communication, visible improvements, and, most importantly, active community engagement to foster a sense of progress, resilience, and opportunity. Building trust that efforts to improve Kenora's downtown are taken seriously is essential for residents to feel invested in the CSWB plan and its success.

In the Spirit of Community

Investing in Kenora's Future One Paw at a Time

As one of the co-owners of the only veterinary clinic in Kenora, Dr. Celine Ward knows the importance of animal care in the community. The Kenora Veterinary Clinic is preparing for an expansion to bring state of the art veterinary services to the city. The current space is maxed out. "The existing footprint was too small," said Ward. "It can't grow to meet the needs of the area."

"If we're going to do it, let's do it right."

The plan has been in the works for a few years. They purchased the former Frosted Foods building adjacent to the clinic with the idea of expansion. When they discovered the structure had too many issues to be renovated, they knew a new

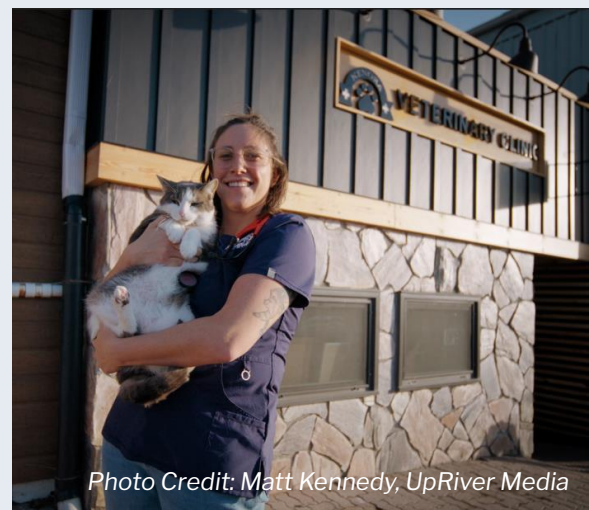


Photo Credit: Matt Kennedy, UpRiver Media

build was needed. "If we're going to do it, let's do it right," she said.

She said the new clinic should put Kenora on the map in terms of veterinary care. The build will include more clinical space. Plans include an underwater treadmill for dog

rehabilitation. The new building will also have a couple of suites on the top floor to house out of town staff, intended to help with housing challenges faced by newcomers to the city. The new clinic will also allow them to create a non-profit organization to expand services for stray or abandoned cats and dogs including spaying and neutering.

If everything stays on track, the project should break ground in the Spring of 2025. Ward said as someone who is also lives in the Downtown area, she knows the

importance of having those services remain in the core and knows this is one way she can contribute to the vitality of the downtown as a business owner.

“Everybody here wants to see the community thrive,” she said, adding that family ties are what brought her to settle in Kenora. Ward knows the community’s strengths are rooted in the people who will shape its future, which is why her business is investing in the area. “There is a lot of potential in the Downtown.”

Priority Area Three: Downtown and Community Spaces

Goal: To enhance safety and inclusivity in the downtown core—the heart of the community—as well as in surrounding neighbourhoods.

Recommendation: Adopt a proactive, integrated approach to addressing downtown challenges and enhancing public safety and security.

Action 3.1 Advocate to the Province of Ontario for funding to hire two Community Safety Outreach/Peace Officers to improve public safety and foster a sense of security in Kenora's downtown area.

Leads
City

Notes:

- Building on a previous funding proposal from the City to the province of Ontario, these peace officers will work collaboratively with the City’s bylaw division and the OPP with a focus on proactive outreach and engagement and diverting challenges from enforcement-based solutions whenever possible.

Action 3.2 Design a comprehensive and integrated approach that is inclusive of all services which provide enforcement and outreach in the downtown area and ensure that this approach is widely known and easily accessible to the community.

Leads
OPP and
CMHA-K

Notes:

- Currently several outreach efforts are under way in the downtown area from OPP patrols to Makwa patrol, Treaty #3 police, the crisis team of CMHA-K, Kenora Moving Forward, among others. Many of these have a mandate to increase social order and/or to support the needs of marginalized individuals. However, beyond interpersonal connections between staff, it is unclear who is working in the downtown area at what time, with which focus and through what approach. In absence of this clarity members of the public over-rely on the OPP for problems which may not be of a policing nature.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSWB plans are designed to deal with this challenge in part because the cost of policing has risen beyond what municipalities can sustain over the long term. Utilizing viable alternatives and potentially increasing them may begin to take the pressure of police for being the only mobile 24/7 service. This action can start by convening applicable outreach services and co-creating an integrated approach as well as design communications about the model so that members of the public can understand whom to call. Outreach partners may need to adjust their service hours and location according to the newly co-designed model. Essentially, this will lead to knowing who is responsible for outreach, when and where and for whom. This will also provide a more streamlined and consistent service to marginalized populations who often end up being criminalized for behaviors resulting from mental health and addiction challenges. 	
Action 3.3 Provide 24-7 access to washrooms.	Leads City with social and health services partners
Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This action is designed to improve access to washrooms for all downtown patrons. But not all the washrooms need to be of a public nature. Some could be provided through services that are open beyond the common 9-5 window. This action could start with the City bringing together the right people, reviewing the existing overview of which washrooms are available when and where, and considering the findings from the public washroom working group. 	
Action 3.4 Co-develop between the City and social services a work readiness program that hires vulnerable people for downtown and park clean-ups, safe disposal of syringes, removal of graffiti etc., and advocate to the Crown's office to dedicate community service hours to this work.	Leads City with social and health services and the crown's office
Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This project could build on previous efforts in this regard with leadership and oversight from the City's Human Resources Department. 	
Action 3.5 To review the recommendations from the Field Study with a view to supporting its implementation wherever possible and appropriate.	Leads City
Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A field study was completed as a complementary effort to the CSWB plan. The focus of this field study was on crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) and placemaking. Leadership needs to come from the City, while 	

communicating about this with the Implementation Committee. Changes in this area will be actively reflected in changes in the Story Map as part of the communication about CSWB efforts.

Action 3.6 Increase efforts to safely dispose of syringes that have been discarded in public spaces.

Leads
NWHU and
ANHP

Notes:

- The presence of needles in public spaces for many members of the community signals neglect of the downtown. It was perhaps one of the most frequently mentioned issue in the focus on public spaces. This led to calls for discontinuing harm reduction altogether supported by a strong narrative that harm reduction is enabling.
- Harm reduction is one of four pillars for dealing with problematic substance use, the others being enforcement, treatment and prevention. An overview of harm reduction is provided in Appendix Four. A CPCWB working group on syringe distribution and disposal has already started.
- Through increased coordination of services and through the provision of additional syringe disposal containers this challenge should be relatively easy to address. It may need to involve a dialogue with injection drug users to better understand the pattern of syringe disposals in public spaces.

Action 3.7 Convene a roundtable of business and social service professionals to increase mutual understanding and collaboration for the downtown.

Leads
City with
Kenora &
District
Chamber of
Commerce

Notes:

- While this may start with the City convening the first meeting, ideally the roundtable should be co-facilitated by a business and downtown social service leader. This action lends itself to a partnership involving KDCC and Harbourtown Biz and City of Kenora Economic Development Team as well as social and health services located in the downtown.

Recommendation: Make improvements to the downtown area an ongoing priority across departments of the City and across sectors.

Action 3.8 Review and enhance the City's Community Improvement Program

Leads
City

Notes:

- The City's Community Improvement Program, especially if sustained over time, has the potential to further mobilize local businesses in promoting restaurants, patios, unique community spaces, etc. in the downtown area.

Action 3.9 Host a one day workshop that brings together diverse stakeholders, community members, decision makers, service providers, business, and urban planners to generate creative ideas and integrate diverse perspectives in achieving a shared vision of what the downtown will look like in ten years, and utilize that vision to guide amendments in the City's official plan, propose rezoning opportunities and to achieve a balance between the needs of business, the public and the services required in the downtown area.

Leads

City with Kenora & District Chamber of Commerce

Recommendation: Continue to support victims of crime, the unhoused, and other marginalized populations.

Action 3.10 Enhance the resources for all shelters, including homeless shelters, women's shelters, and the Fellowship Center, to provide a safe and supportive space throughout the day for individuals who are victims of crime, and/or unhoused and/or presenting with complex needs that makes it hard to engage them.

Leads

KDSB

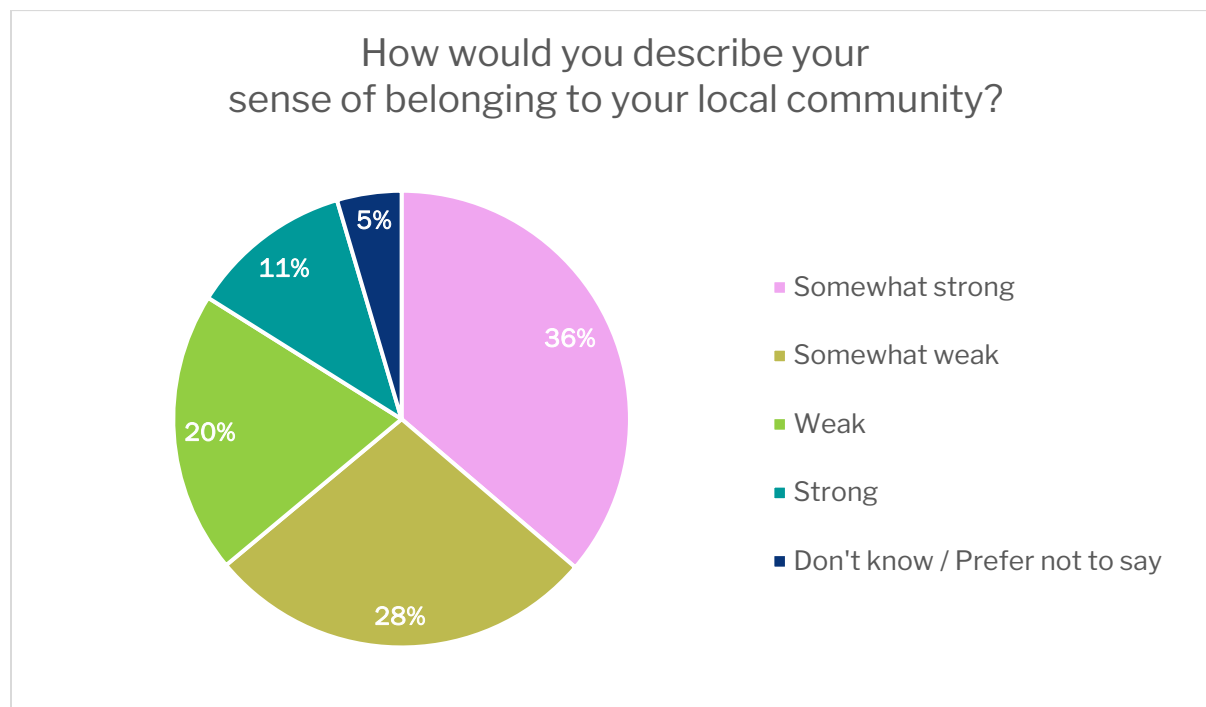
Notes:

- Whenever we try to push people away from one area, they often are simply displaced to another area leaving the issue itself unchanged. Instead, if we can meet the needs of people, they are more likely to succeed in creating sustainable changes to the challenges that they face. For victims of crime, the unhoused, and other marginalized populations this can only be achieved by extending operating hours, expanding activities, and working toward more broadly offering 24/7 services in the future.
- Efforts are already underway by KDSB, with applications for service extensions under development. The focus of these efforts is on the unhoused and people with problematic substance use. This can be expanded to include victims of sexual assault and victims of domestic assault and intimate partner violence. For the latter, KDSB and the implementation committee ideally would form partnerships with the Women's Shelter, Saakaate House and the Kenora Sexual Assault Centre to first assess the needs and capacities before engaging in service changes.



Priority Area Four: Belonging and Engagement

The community of Kenora is divided when it comes to a sense of belonging. Close to half of the community survey respondents report feeling excluded because of various attributes including race and sexual orientation.



A sense of belonging and connection to the places in which we live and the people we share these spaces with -including virtual spaces- has been strongly linked to well-being and even longevity [Connected, the surprising power of our social networks](#). Sense of belonging has also been identified as a key social capital¹⁵ contributing to community safety and well-being overall. Networks and connections more than individual characteristics, define who we are and how we behave. In Kenora, the community appears to be polarized when it comes to the experience of connection and a derived sense of belonging. This is an important consideration in the context of community safety and well-being because being connected has been clearly linked to better health outcomes for individuals and better outcomes for population health overall. Addiction, for example, is often the outcome of being disconnected from a positive sense of self, from family and other fellow human beings, from community, from culture, spirit and land. Increased connection can positively impact healing and recovery.¹⁶

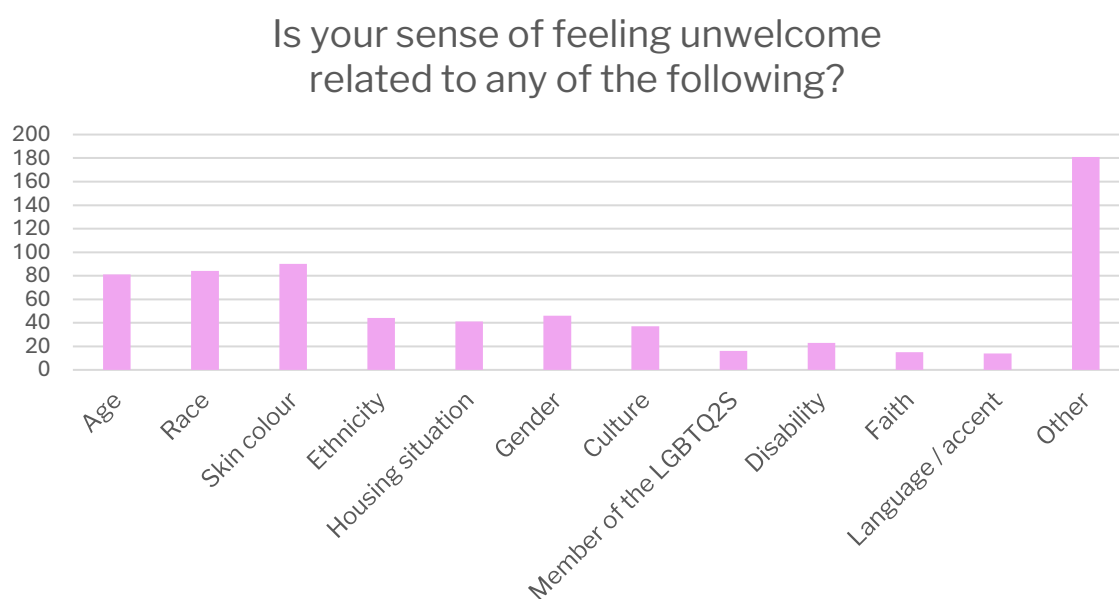
¹⁵ Social capital refers to the networks, relationships, and trust within a community or society that facilitate cooperation and collective action for mutual benefit.

¹⁶ Gabor Mate, In the realm of hungry ghosts

When asked what impacted their sense of belonging the polarity of the community came further into view. The following were cited as leading to a greater sense of belonging:

- Having strong ties with family and friends
- The small-town feel
- Participation in faith-based groups
- Connections to Indigenous culture
- Professional interactions
- Having been born and raised in Kenora

Close to half of the survey respondents did not share the experience of belonging. They described Kenora as “unwelcoming and cliquish,” a sentiment some claimed that was exacerbated by the pandemic. For them, the town was divided along lines including but not limited to rich vs. poor, new vs. long-time residents, homeowners vs. renters, young vs. old, and Indigenous vs. non-Indigenous.



Many participants in the survey linked their sense of belonging to being actively involved in the community.

87% of Kenora residents who completed the survey reported being willing to be engaged in actions that increase the well-being in their neighborhoods. This is a positive result because grassroots volunteer efforts can significantly augment any resources available through services **if that energy is harnessed and directed**. During the consultations it was suggested that Kenora can be the place where the Roots of Empathy¹⁷ is real and can be seen in how

¹⁷ Roots of Empathy is an evidence-based program that reduces bullying and strengthens empathy and caring. The program “develops empathy in children today so they can build the world that they deserve” ([Home - Roots of Empathy](#))

children are raised to be future leaders. It was also noted that feeling a sense of belonging is “a privilege that is not accessible to everyone” and that this acknowledgment should foster empathy towards those who feel excluded. Finally, some participants in the consultations suggested that a community-wide effort to enhance inclusion was necessary for the community safety and well-being of Kenora.

In the Spirit of Community

Planting a Seed of Belonging

The sun is about to set at Kenora's KMTS Skate Park located behind the Moncrief Construction Recreation Centre, as an artist, Nereo Zorro, methodically rolls out a solid block of pale teal paint. The large flat rectangle forms part of a geometric fox head design painted on one of the ramps of the park. The vibrant colors of the eye-catching artwork covering most of the ramps, bowls, and slopes are a key part of a project to refresh the nearly two-decades old skate park.

Nereo is working with local artists and youth to give the park a new visual identity. For about four weeks in early fall, the artists worked around the clock, using all available daylight, to see the project completed. The Winnipeg-based artist said projects like this help empower a community. He compared stewardship of public spaces and taking care of the community to planting a seed: “Maybe the seed is already planted [in Kenora], it just needed a little bit more watering,” Nereo said.

“Maybe the seed is already planted [in Kenora], it just needed a little bit more watering.”

Nereo said the collaboration with local artists was key to ensuring that the Skate

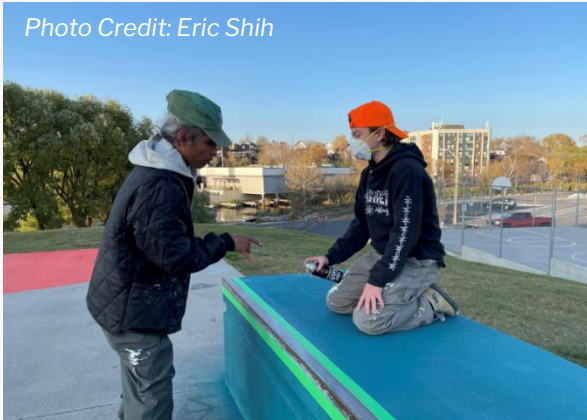


Park's history was preserved and that the art reflected the community. “In order to tell a story, it requires listening,” said Nereo who also describing himself as a storyteller with a brush, “having the chance to connect with some of the people in the community, especially the ones that use this space, watching how they move through this space, listening to their personal stories, I can see how it’s super therapeutic to have this park. Because it’s a place where they can be themselves and feel good.”

Community engagement is a key element of the process, with users of the Skate Park pitching in. Tyson, a grade 10 student, was one of them. Tyson said he basically grew up on a skateboard and heard about the project from Boardanyone, the local Kenora skateboard shop. “I’ve been here at least twice every week, watching the progression of the park, seeing how it’s

turned out,” Tyson said. He finally decided to help in hopes it will reduce vandalism at a place that’s important for him.

Photo Credit: Eric Shih



The simple concept of taking care of an asset like the Skate Park is what led Andrew Smith, General Manager of Recreation and Culture for the City of Kenora, to start planning for this project nearly two years ago. Andrew reached out to Sophie Lavoie, the Curator of the Douglas Family Art Centre, for some suggestions on who might take the lead. Sophie recommended Nereo because of his passion for community. “He’s the type of artist that would [be] happy to involve the community.” Sophie shared that Nereo has a wonderful way of interpreting and perceiving the world and our place in it. “People are important to him and the

projects that he works on are very dear to him.”

Nereo immediately understood that the skatepark attracts a demographic that can be hard to reach. It’s one of the few places in Kenora where teenagers can just hang out for free. Everyone involved pointed out the multiple benefits of this project. This skatepark renewal project is an opportunity to engage local youth and foster pride and a sense of identity in their hometown. Their participation is hands-on experience born from their input, and ideas about designs while receiving training in using different artistic mediums.

“There’s some unwritten rule to respect an artist’s work, whether it’s a graffiti artist, or another artist,” said Sophie. “There are studies that show, 9 times out of 10, when you put artwork on a wall it doesn’t get tagged.” Andrew added.

The hope is that [the work] results in establishing a place that everyone can feel that they belong.

“[It is about] just shifting that energy to something that is more welcoming, less judgmental,” Nereo said. “In that environment, many people thrive.”

Priority Area Four: Belonging and Engagement

Goal: To increase the percentage of residents in Kenora who feel welcome and a sense of belonging by 25% within five years¹⁸

¹⁸ This goal necessitates that parts of the survey be repeated within five years of commencing actions focused on this priority to assess whether a sense of belonging has increased.

Recommendation: Mobilize the significant number of residents in Kenora who want to participate in actions that increase community safety and well-being.

Action 4.1 Leverage local expertise to deliver public education, training, and engagement sessions focused on prevention. These sessions should cover:

- (a) **Effective strategies for addressing and preventing theft, break-ins, vandalism, and harassment**
- (b) **Understanding problematic substance use, including alcohol**
- (c) **Recognizing signs of human and sex trafficking and knowing where to seek help**
- (d) **Increasing awareness of hate crimes and their impact**
- (e) **Preventing and responding to sexual assault**
- (f) **Preventing and supporting victims of domestic and intimate partner violence**
- (g) **Overcoming the bystander effect and encouraging proactive intervention**
- (h) **De-escalating volatile behavior in non-crisis situations**
- (i) **Differentiating between social disorder and crime, and responding appropriately**
- (j) **Addressing discrimination and preventing violence against newcomers, the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, women, and Indigenous Peoples**
- (k) **Understanding child and youth developmental milestones and the concept of resilience**
- (l) **Applying trauma-informed approaches to support individuals**

Leads

Implementation Committee with multiple partnerships

Notes:

- This initiative aims to enhance community safety, foster inclusivity, and equip individuals with the knowledge and skills to prevent and respond to various social challenges. It is also designed to help ensure that community safety and well-being is more broadly understood and receives support from the residents of Kenora.
- These are regular public engagement and training sessions with a very specific focus. Depending on the content of the training, the implementation committee's role may be to ask specific expert organizations or individuals to provide the content and deliver the session. For example, FIREFLY might take the lead in "understanding the developmental milestones of children and youth" and CMHA-K might provide training in "de-escalating volatile behavior in non-crisis situations".
- Specifically, the sessions are designed for the following reasons:
 - **Session b:** Addiction has significant personal health impacts and social consequences. While the opioid crisis has received significant attention in recent years the impact of alcohol is often less well understood if not downplayed.
 - **Session c:** Like many communities, Kenora faces challenges with human and sex trafficking, highlighting the importance of recognizing its signs as a crucial

first step in prevention.

- **Session d:** Hate crime is challenging to classify because it infers that the motivation for a criminal behavior is rooted in the hate of a group that is seen as less worthy than the rest of the population. Education can help to gain greater clarity about hate crime incidents in Kenora.
 - **Session g:** The bystander effect is a well-documented barrier to community action. Recognizing it and having training in how to overcome it effectively and safely can be critical for community safety.
 - **Session i:** While social disorder increases fears and heightens insecurities it is not the same as crime and needs to be dealt with differently for the interventions to be effective. We cannot enforce our way out of social disorder challenges.
 - **Session k:** Research shows that while risk factors in the lives of children and youth can increase the likelihood of harm to themselves or others, strengthening their capacities and building resiliencies serves as a powerful safeguard against negative outcomes.
 - **Session l:** Trauma is both the experiences of and response to an overwhelming negative event or series of events including violence and witnessing violence. It affects many people from first line responders to citizens in environments that are violent or have a history of violence. As a result, many people seeking services in health care, housing, justice and other systems will have histories of violence and trauma. Trauma informed responses don't try to "treat" the trauma but instead try to minimize the potential harm and re-traumatization by providing a sense of resilience and control. Trauma informed services
- For many of the sessions the City might provide support in finding appropriate venues and advertising these opportunities through their communication channels.

Action 4.2 Host events throughout the year that advance belonging and increase civic pride*, such as:

- (a) **events that celebrate all people and cultures**
- (b) **events that highlight the positive attributes of the community and the City**
- (c) **events focused on families**
- (d) **events that feature Indigenous organizations and teachings**

***Whenever possible provide transportation to and from these events and make some of them alcohol free.**

Leads

Implementation Committee and the City

Notes:

- All the proposed belonging events are partnership efforts and depending on the topic areas will necessitate collaboration with different organizations. For example, an event that features Indigenous teachings can be done alongside KCA.

- The City can be responsible for looking into transportation to and from events as well as considering making some of the events alcohol free.

Recommendation: Take meaningful actions that foster a more inclusive and welcoming community.

Action 4.3 Engage all sectors of the community (including those w/lived experience) to develop a coordinated anti-racism strategy to help recognize and reject all forms of racism and to implement this strategy across the community and the City.

Leads
Implementation Committee to decide

Notes:

- Racism affects communities nationwide. Kenora is no exception to this. What characterizes a community, however, is not that racism exists but if and how it is being addressed.
- This action item may necessitate a standalone strategy.

Action 4.4 Create an Indigenous Gathering Space that celebrates local Indigenous culture.

Leads
First Nations and City

Notes:

- This space can be utilized for storytelling, entertainment and events, sacred fire conversations, medicine gardens, knowledge mobilization, opportunities for economic development and revenue generation. The ability to advance this action is fully dependent on First Nations agreement.
- KCA and WNHAC among others might be able to provide the expertise needed to start this action.

Action 4.5 Enhance networking opportunities and foster volunteer welcome efforts for newcomers in the community.

Leads
City with recruiters from local employers

Notes:

- Newcomers to the community may be immigrants or migrants from other parts of Canada. Entering a new community is challenging. Being welcomed should be intentional and not left to chance encounters. Employers, when they recruit staff from out of town have a golden opportunity to advance connections. The City has opportunities to share information with those newly settled in Kenora. Additionally, a welcome wagon could be a simple, effective and inexpensive way of helping newcomers make a smoother transition from their previous home to their newly chosen home.
- An action team comprised of recruiters from diverse employers from across Kenora can design network opportunities and volunteer welcome approaches.



Priority Area Five: Housing Along the Continuum

THE HOUSING CONTINUUM



Lack of housing, whether it is affordable rental or attainable ownership as well as homelessness, was perhaps cited most frequently as one of the most pressing concerns for community safety and well-being in Kenora. This common experience is shared with most municipalities across the country Canada. Between 30,000 and 35,000 people are homeless on any given night in Canada. The figure of homeless people in Canada in any year ranges from 150,000 to 300,000 according to [The Homeless Hub](#). A lot of homelessness also goes unnoticed, and it is fair to say that it is a persistent and growing issue across the country. Kenora lacks housing in all areas of the above continuum. This not only results in a large population of unhoused individuals¹⁹ but also in recruitment challenges for businesses, government, and social and health services.

There are ongoing efforts underway to address this challenge. The City of Kenora has started its Official Plan and Zoning By-law Review Project. As part of that work, population projections for the next twenty years will be completed by the Spring of 2025. Alongside this work, the City is also undertaking a housing needs assessment and a housing strategy for 2025. The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) provides a [glossary of housing terminology](#) to help ensure consistency across disciplines. According to CMHC housing is considered “affordable” if it costs less than 30% of a household income before tax. “Affordable” is a very broad term that includes housing provided by the private, public, and non-profit sectors, it also includes all types of housing: rentals, ownership, and coops as well as temporary and permanent housing. Housing standards are regulated at the provincial level and encompass housing types, density considerations, and the availability of diverse housing options. The KDSB is responsible for most non-market housing (whether it be rentals or for purchase) and the City and KDSB housing plans are both critical for increasing housing in Kenora. There are currently 1736 approved applications for housing. The waiting list for housing has increased 354% since 2011.

¹⁹ The term “unhoused” is often used as a more neutral and respectful way to refer to people experiencing homelessness. It focuses on the lack of housing rather than labeling the person based on their circumstances.

Additionally, KDSB provides the Point-in-Time count for Kenora and area. The Point-in-Time (PiT) count is a coordinated effort to measure homelessness by counting and surveying individuals experiencing homelessness on a single night. It provides data on the extent and nature of homelessness to inform policies, programs, and resource allocation. KDSB provides a PiT count every two years. The most recent count was completed in October 2024. For Kenora 325 (out of 500 total for the district) homeless individuals were recorded. A third of these have always been in the community in which they are currently homeless. Of those that answered the question, a significant number were in foster care or a group home at some time in their lives. Close to 43% reported an acquired brain injury (due to violence, overdose, stroke or cancer) and/or undiagnosed mental illness (depression, PTSD, etc.) and just over 57% reported a problematic substance use issue. Substance use, lack of sufficient income, and incarceration were cited as the top three reasons for becoming unhoused.

While the majority of those that responded to the PiT survey identified as Indigenous, there is a sizable and growing number of non-Indigenous persons (including women) who are unhoused in Kenora and its surrounding areas. In fact, during the consultations, it was reported that 20% of shelter users are non-Indigenous and it was suggested that this narrative is not being heard. Additionally, both the correctional facility and the detox center at times function as de facto shelter for the unhoused. Inevitably this means that the count of 325 is likely significantly below the real number of people that are homeless in Kenora. When asked where they had stayed the night before close to 66% of those surveyed during the PiT count for Kenora and area said they had been in jail. The impact of correctional services on homelessness is important in this context. In Ontario, as many as 79% of incarcerated individuals are there on remand, meaning they have not yet been sentenced. Remand wait-times have increased leading to jails being above capacity and overcrowded.

Remand and homelessness are closely linked. People experiencing homelessness are at higher risk of being remanded, and in turn remand increases their likelihood of homelessness upon release. This cycle disproportionately affects marginalized communities, making it difficult to break free from poverty and the justice system. Additionally, people experiencing homelessness are more likely to be arrested for minor offenses (e.g., trespassing, public intoxication, loitering) due to a lack of stable housing. Without a stable address some are deemed a flight risk and are denied bail. Even short stays in jail can lead to evictions, especially if rent goes unpaid or if housing assistance is cut off. Time in jail disrupts employment, making it harder to afford housing upon release. Finally, many landlords refuse to rent to people with criminal records or recent incarceration, increasing the risk of homelessness.

After reviewing the data on housing and homelessness, the Advisory Committee emphasized the need for actions that both address the immediate needs of the unhoused and support long-term efforts to end homelessness. They also highlighted the preventive impact of accessible and available housing for other populations in Kenora, such as the ability to recruit physicians and nurses.

Priority Area Five: Housing Along the Continuum

Goal: To increase the housing stock across the housing continuum by 2030.

Recommendation: Foster and showcase a united effort in expanding access to housing ranging from shelters to market level options.

Action 5.1 Align the actions in priority area five with the KDSB's ten-year plan on housing and homelessness.

Leads
KDSB

Notes:

- Specifically, the following should be the focus on this alignment:
 - (a) Identifying enablers and barriers in policies and procedures to increasing the housing stock.
 - (b) Developing comprehensive and integrated steps out of homelessness based on the 2025 Point-in-Time count - including assessments of what led to people becoming unhoused, how long they have been unhoused, what their current needs are and (if applicable) what their home community is.
 - (c) Comparing the housing inventory with the housing needs.
 - (d) Setting targets for changes along the continuum.
 - (e) Assessing where harm reduction approaches fit along the housing continuum.
 - (f) Exploring why some of the unhoused turn down housing options and how to accommodate for this (e.g. housing not being pet friendly).

Action 5.2 To regularly and proactively communicate to the public the Kenora the housing situation and the steps that are being taken to improve it.

Leads
City with
KDSB

Notes:

- Since both KDSB and the City have a significant role to play in increasing the housing stock, they could collaborate on an annual open house to ensure that members of the public remain informed. Many of the efforts taken and even successes are not well known leading to members of the public being frustrated and having a sense of inaction. Additional shared communication channels can help to elevate this concern about in action **and** model collaboration.

Action 5.3 Evaluate whether a policy on tiny homes or pallet shelter homes is needed in the City of Kenora.

Leads
City

Recommendation: Attend to the immediate needs arising from homelessness.

Action 5.4 Consolidate the housing wait lists for youth (KACL, AAFS), adults with developmental disabilities (KACL), adults/families (KDSB), and seniors (KDSB, Kenora District Homes for the Aged, WIIGWAS) and to co-develop a waitlist management program.

Leads
KDSB

Notes:

- For those at most acute need for housing, circumstances can lead to additional negative consequences for them and the community. A waitlist management program is a system that is used to track, prioritize, and efficiently allocate limited resources. In the context of homelessness, this program prioritizes individuals based on their vulnerability and connects them to support services rather than continuing only having them on the waitlist. Being unhoused causes significant stresses that impact the health of individuals. While being housed is the ideal response to that stress when that is not possible other methods can be applied to reduce some of the stresses (e.g. providing meals). Kenora has several service providers attend to the unhoused for various needs, but the work appears to be happening in silos.

Action 5.5 Provide warming and cooling centers as a collaborative effort between the City, community organizations, social services, and the Health Unit, as part of emergency management efforts and to mitigate weather-related harm, particularly for the unhoused, during extreme weather conditions.

Leads

City with shelter providers



Priority Area Six: Prevention of Interpersonal Violence

Interpersonal violence refers to violence between individuals or groups to set it apart from war, and broader societal and structural violence. It is perhaps the form of crime most feared by people. This fear is in part due to violence receiving the most news coverage and featuring most prominently in social and entertainment media. Violence also tends to have devastating consequences for victims both in the short and longer term. Most forms of violence (including sexual violence) are perpetrated by someone known to the victim. This is one of the key reasons why violence tends to be underreported. The consequences for violence between persons known to each other go beyond consideration in law and justice to the potential dissolution of relationships. This makes the prevention of and response to interpersonal violence complicated.

In Canada, approximately 144 to 178 women are killed each year, equating to one woman murdered every 2.5 days. These deaths often result from intimate partner violence and disproportionately affect Indigenous women and those living in rural areas. In 2023, there were 205 female homicide victims in Canada. While not all these homicides are due to domestic assault, a significant portion is related to intimate partner violence. In 2022, in Canada 78% of police-reported intimate partner violence were women and girls and there was a total of 117,093 victims aged 12 and older.²⁰

Most violent acts do not result in death, but the trauma they cause is profound, leaving lasting impacts on both victims and the broader community. When violence occurs and becomes known, it erodes the fabric of public safety and security like no other crime. While violence at home is more prevalent than violence perpetrated by strangers, this is not commonly well understood. Victimization due to violence involving a stranger – or peer to peer violence - is more common for men than women. And yet women report consistently a higher sense of fear in public spaces.

Both alcohol and illicit drugs play a significant role in violence because they impair judgment, reduce inhibition, and can increase aggression. Alcohol is generally more closely associated with violence, especially in terms of frequent, everyday incidents of aggression, domestic violence, and public disorder. Illicit drugs can also contribute to violence in specific contexts, particularly in cases involving addiction, drug trafficking, or certain stimulant drugs that heighten aggression. Ultimately, both substances can play significant roles in violence, but in many cases, alcohol has a more direct link to violent behavior. When in the fall of 2024 the LCBOs in Ontario were closed due to a strike all police reported offences including for interpersonal violence in Kenora went down by 40%, as reported by the OPP during an Advisory Committee meeting.

²⁰ [Trends in Domestic Violence in Canada](#)

Domestic violence and intimate partner violence as well as sexual assault were noted as significant concerns in the Kenora CSWB survey. 550 respondents combined reported that they knew someone who had been a victim of domestic violence and/or unwanted sexual contact in the past 24 months (in a multiple-choice question). Additionally, a troubling number of 353 participants in the survey said that they were “extremely concerned” or “concerned” about “unwanted sexual contact” and 173 expressed “extreme concern” or “concern” about becoming a victim of “domestic violence.” That is 35% of those who responded to the question about unwanted sexual contact and 17% of those who responded to the question about domestic violence. It is all too easy to focus research of this nature on the majority and experiences in public spaces and, ignore the fear and victimization of members of the community that experience harms in their own homes.

Both the survey data and conversations during the engagement sessions revealed that obtaining a clear picture of interpersonal violence in Kenora is currently difficult. This is partly due to the perception that community safety efforts are not designed to include experiences that occur in the privacy of homes. And yet, communities play a crucial role in preventing and responding to domestic violence and sexual assault because they provide the support systems, resources, and collective awareness necessary to address these issues effectively. By engaging community members, we create an environment where individuals feel empowered to report incidents, support survivors, and foster a culture of respect and accountability that helps prevent violence from occurring in the first place. In Kenora, the presumed focus of a plan like this on public challenges, particularly in the downtown area, sometimes hindered a broader understanding of interpersonal violence. This is a common dilemma in CSWB planning efforts. Perhaps for that reason the number of actions in this area are small when compared to other priority areas and mostly call for further investigation and awareness raising.

Priority Area Six: Prevention of Interpersonal Violence	
Goal: To reduce interpersonal violence in the community of Kenora by 25% by the year 2035.	
Recommendation: Develop a clearer understanding of the extent and nature of interpersonal violence in Kenora.	
Action 6.1 Conduct a gap analysis to assess what programs are currently available in Kenora for victims and perpetrators of violence, what preventive efforts exist, and utilize that knowledge for program and policy development.	Leads Implementation Committee to decide
Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently Kenora lacks a comprehensive picture of which services are available for victims and perpetrators of crime. Without this knowledge it is hard to know where there may be gaps in victims support and gaps in offender rehabilitation, but also 	

where there may be opportunities for prevention that are being missed. A gap analysis is used to assess the difference between the current state and the desired future state of a system (such as the 25% reduction in inter-personal violence). It identifies areas where improvements are needed and helps determine the actions required to bridge those gaps. As part of this effort, a team of agencies and people with lived experience should be convened specifically with a view to breaking the silence about family violence and sexual assaults.

Action 6.2 Explore whether the evidence-based Glasgow model of violence prevention (or parts thereof) would be value added to the Kenora social and health services system.

Leads

Implementation Committee

Notes:

- The Glasgow Model of Violence Prevention is a public health approach to reducing violence by treating it as an epidemic. It focuses on addressing the root causes of violence through community-wide interventions, such as early intervention, support for at-risk individuals, and strengthening social norms against violence. The model uses data to identify high-risk areas and individuals, then employs a collaborative strategy that involves law enforcement, healthcare (specifically ERs), education, and community organizations to intervene and prevent further violence. It emphasizes long-term, sustainable change by shifting the focus from punishment to prevention and support.
- Through this approach Glasgow experienced a drop in violent crime rates by more than 50% over ten years. Staff from Glasgow have frequently been open to meeting with other communities to share their knowledge and experiences. An invitation could be extended for a virtual meeting with a member of the Glasgow team to explore whether there is interest and capacity in Kenora to emulate this work. This could be done as part of the community of practice of the implementation committee.

Recommendation: Increase efforts to raise awareness about the multiple facets of interpersonal violence and how they can be prevented.

Action 6.3 Collaborate in the creation of public education campaigns focused on preventing interpersonal violence, with particular attention to (but not limited to) women, children, seniors, newcomers, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and others who experience heightened vulnerabilities.

Leads

Leaders in organizations working with victims of interpersonal violence

Notes:

- Many programs have been designed to prevent interpersonal violence. Many of these have been evaluated. These can be found on the website of CCFSC and through connection to other members of the CCFSC. This type of work does not need to reinvent the wheel but rather can adapt programs that have been found to be working well to the Kenora situation.

Action 6.4 Create additional and/or continue current evidence-based programs that challenge perceptions and behaviours which can lead to interpersonal violence such as “Other Ways Now” or “I am a Kind Man.”

Leads

Kenora Sexual Assault Centre

Notes:

- Kenora has existing programs in this priority area that should be supported, while also exploring additional opportunities. However, raising awareness remains the most basic form of public engagement, and its effectiveness in driving behavioral change can typically only be measured through self-reporting—an approach that, in the context of crime, presents significant challenges and limitations. Nonetheless, raising awareness is an essential first step in creating change because it helps inform the public about an issue, bringing attention to its scope and impact. By increasing understanding, it encourages individuals to recognize the problem, challenge harmful norms, and consider their own role in preventing and addressing it, ultimately laying the foundation for more meaningful action.



Priority Area Seven: Mental Health and Problematic Substance Use (including Alcohol)

People facing mental health challenges, addiction issues, or dual diagnoses often encounter law enforcement, putting a significant strain on police resources. In many cases, other services are better equipped to handle these situations, particularly when there is no immediate threat of violence. Outreach programs that provide compassionate support can be essential in preventing these issues from escalating into broader community concerns. Unfortunately, mental health and addiction clients and the people who support them experience significant stigma.

Here are some common misconceptions surrounding mental health and addictions clarified:

- Individuals with mental health challenges are no more likely to perpetrate violence than the general population, yet they are often unfairly perceived as such.
- Not all persons with mental health issues also have addiction issues although they are at higher risk of developing them than the rest of the population. This is in part so because mental illness can lead to becoming disconnect from family and community.
- Addiction is a health issue, not a crime, though certain actions related to it, such as trafficking, are criminal offenses.
- No all-substance use is problematic. We need to distinguish between recreational use and habitual and addicted use. This is as much true of alcohol as of other substances.
- Alcohol has a significant impact on health, and while its risks may sometimes be downplayed compared to other drugs, it can be just as harmful, if not more so, due to its widespread use and legal status. Alcohol consumption is linked to a wide range of health issues and chronic alcohol use is also associated with mental health disorders, including depression and anxiety, and it plays a major role in accidents, injuries, and violence. Compared to other drugs, alcohol is unique in that it is both legal and socially accepted in many cultures, which can make its harms less visible or underestimated. However, the long-term consequences of alcohol abuse often rival or exceed those of illicit drugs in terms of physical and mental health damage, social impact, and economic cost.
- A large population who struggles with mental health and addiction issues are not Indigenous even though it is often assumed otherwise.

The stigma around addictions and mental health is so strong that it stops some Kenora residents from accessing services for fear of exposure.

According to the most recent PiT count by KDSB, many of the unhoused in Kenora struggle with their mental health and/or with problematic substance use. This reality prompted some participants in the engagement sessions to suggest that the community of Kenora needs to direct attention away from what is visible to get to the underlying causes. Moreover, some suggested that equal attention should be paid to what is **not** visible but equally impacts community safety and well-being (such as alcohol use and its connection to violence).

Finally, it is crucial to distinguish between actual crime, fear of crime, and concerns related to social disorder or discomfort, as each requires a different approach to effectively address the underlying causes. While crime involves unlawful acts that require police and legal intervention, fear of crime can be driven by perceptions, media influence, or past experiences, which may not mirror the actual safety of a community. Similarly, social disorder or discomfort can impact community well-being but might not necessarily be tied to criminal activity. By clearly making these distinctions, we can ensure that the actions taken are targeted at the right issues, allowing for more effective solutions that can address both the reality and the perception of safety in a community. Making such distinctions is nowhere more important than at the intersection of mental health, addictions, and community safety.

In the Spirit of Community

Every Little Thing Helps

For years Louise has made it a personal mission to provide meals to those who are living rough. Without fanfare, she prepares upwards of 60 meals each week and coordinates with Kenora community groups to help distribute the meals. She typically makes hamburgers, but she will also make dishes like chicken with vegetables and rice or chili with macaroni. “Something I can prepare at home, pack up and bring out,” she said.

“It doesn’t hurt me to share. I’m no better than most people.”

Louise, who is in her mid 70s, said she sold her house in Toronto moved to Kenora nearly 30 years ago for a new adventure. She said she remembers what being hungry feels like from her childhood and



Photo Credit: Elauna Boutwell

that providing a meal helps her give back. “It doesn’t hurt me to share,” she said. “I’m no better than most people.”

Louise said she started providing these meals a few years back when she asked an organization how she could help. She said at that time there was no supper provided on Thursday nights, so she started providing meals on that night for the duration of the winter. She said she made stew. When asked why she would do that for people she didn't even know, she replied: "Because they are hungry".

Louise said she can't provide meals all the time, but when she can, she knows it helps, "People need food, they need shelter." She added its also important to find better housing solutions and give people some dignity. "I don't think you can feel like a human being without being able to lay down [somewhere safe]."

"It's as simple as that," she said.

Priority Area Seven: Mental Health and Problematic Substance Use (including Alcohol)

Goal: To strengthen individual and community well-being in the areas of mental health and addictions.

Recommendation: Engage key stakeholders in establishing the connection between problematic substance abuse, the prevention of crime and victimization, fear of crime, and overall community well-being.

Action 7.1 Advocate to the federal and provincial governments for Kenora to receive funds beyond the per capita allocation.

Leads
City, KDSB,
ANHP

Notes:

- As a social and health services hub that supports people from other communities Kenora is in a challenging position. Many of the demands on Kenora services go beyond the capacity of any one community. This action needs improved collaboration with surrounding communities to share in the tasks of meeting presenting needs. However, because of its central location and breadth of services Kenora is likely to continue to be the place where people in need receive supports. This unique position of Kenora in the services landscape needs to be recognized in funding allocation by federal and provincial entities. It is the most obvious way in which these orders of government can support the implementation of this plan.

Action 7.2 Work with provincial and federal orders of government in applying a comprehensive approach to addressing the harms of problematic substance use including alcohol.

Leads
NWHU in partnership with the City

Notes:

- A comprehensive approach should encompass regulatory measures, healthy public policies, and the creation of supportive environments. It should also support the NWHU in advancing communication and application of harm reduction and prevention methods.
- While Kenora previously had an Integrated Drugs Strategy, developing or renewing such a strategy is a complex undertaking that doesn't fall squarely within any single mandate. This work resides at the intersection of the NWHU, ANHP, the OPP, and the City. It is also highly dependent on provincial and federal policies and legislation. The action is designed to take more immediate steps in using the evidence to work across governments and across community sectors to proactively deal with the harms resulting from substance use. These harms may be felt at the individual level (e.g. impact on personal health) or the community level (e.g. public substance use impacting sense of safety).

Recommendation: Build upon, expand, and strengthen current efforts to improve mental health and addiction support, particularly at the intersection of community safety.

Action 7.3 Engage with and support the ANHP and their partners in closing the gaps in comprehensive treatment and rehabilitation options for persons with problematic substance use disorders (including alcohol).

Leads
ANHP

Notes:

- ANHP recently engaged consultants to assess the challenges in addressing treatment and rehabilitation needs in mental health and addictions in Kenora and to provide recommendations for improving the current situation. This assessment included a review of key areas such as intake processes, coordinated care, crisis response, and prevention. The report, scheduled for release in early 2025 to the Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder working group of ANHP, can serve as a starting point for this action. It can further help to align the efforts of the CSWB initiative with ANHP's strategic directions. The consultants engaged both with ANHP and in the CSWB work met to exchange notes and uncovered striking similarities in experiences with the complexity of systems in Kenora and in trying to address complex problems.
- Within the context of this action many participants strongly recommended to include land-based healing options.

Action 7.4 Partner with the ANHP in developing a wait list management program for mental health and addiction services.	Leads ANHP
<p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MH and substance use disorder working group is looking to develop coordinated access in terms of data and communication that can inform a central wait list management approach. A waitlist management approach in mental health and addictions can help ensure that individuals waiting for services receive timely support and care. By prioritizing needs based on urgency, maintaining transparent communication with clients about expected wait times, and providing interim resources or referrals, this approach can reduce the negative impact of delays, prevent worsening conditions, and enhance the overall experience of those waiting for services. It also helps streamline service delivery and allows providers to allocate resources more efficiently, ensuring that individuals are not left without support during critical periods. Kenora has several wait lists that are utilized simultaneously in this line of work and could benefit from a more coordinated approach. 	
Action 7.5 Support the creation of a comprehensive and widely accessible resources list about mental health and substance use services.	Leads ANHP and City
<p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building on resources lists created by ANHP and others, a community friendly, easily accessible, and current list of available resources to attend to persons with mental health and addiction issues whose behaviours might be troubling to members of the community should be publicly shared. This list should especially be provided to all downtown business. It should further clearly distinguish crisis from non-crisis interventions. The knowledge of available resources can significantly reduce unnecessary calls to emergency services in non-emergency situations. It can also reduce the criminalization of non-criminal behaviour. 	
Action 7.6 Establish a 24/7 crisis center model to divert persons with acute mental health and addiction issues from hospital admissions.	Leads CMHA-K
<p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A mental health and addictions crisis center can significantly divert person in need of support from the hospital's ER and from the need to engage the OPP. A crisis centre can either be offered through a co-location of current services or the creation of a new space. The centre could augment mobile crisis services that are deployed for wellness checks. Crisis centres provide 24/7 walk-in support for individuals experiencing mental health and/or addictions crises who do not require emergency medical attention. They can receive: Immediate assistance for crisis situations, connections to ongoing services, including treatment, case management, life skills development, vocational and housing supports, and withdrawal management. Anyone 	

experiencing a mental health or addictions crisis can available themselves to the services of such a centre.

- Centres of this nature exist throughout Canada, and many have been well evaluated. Kenora could greatly benefit from a centre of this nature.

“Normally, the Northern Lights aren't easy to see,, but this picture was taken right in my backyard. I've only seen the Northern Lights a couple of times, but I know I'll never get tired of watching them. The beauty and magic of the Northern Lights can't be put into words. It amazes me that nature can produce something like this. I know people travel far distances to see the lights, but here in Kenora, we're lucky enough to see them right outside our own homes. It's just one more reason to love where we live.”

- Bentley N.

*(Photo submission from
Photo Voice Project)*



Implementation Considerations

Key Elements of Successful Implementation

The International Center for the Prevention of Crime (ICPC), and the Safer Cities Program of UN-Habitat, among others, have repeatedly identified key elements that must be in place for the implementation of plans in community safety to be successful. These are:

- A permanent CSWB office
(Examples in the Canadian context can be found in the [REACH Edmonton Council for Safe Communities](#), the [Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council](#), [Crime Prevention Ottawa](#), and the [Thunder Bay Crime Prevention Council](#).)
- Adequate and sustained funding
- Standards and training
- Evidence and good information
- A community safety assessment
- A plan
- Public support and engagement
- Champions
- Multi-sector partnerships (to accomplish collective impact)

Kenora has many of the elements. The plan is, therefore, ideally placed to advance what is known as a collective impact agenda. There are five core conditions that must be met for a collective impact framework:

1. **An agreed upon agenda:** The CSWB plan is the common agenda. It was co-created by numerous organizations with significant input from diverse community representatives. The plan contains foundational principles and agreements alongside priorities and identified actions to accomplish these priorities.
2. **A shared measurement:** The CSWB plan includes select key performance indicators (KPI). Agreeing on the shared measurements to understand progress should be one of the first tasks for the implementation committee.
3. **Mutually reinforcing activities:** The CSWB recommended actions are not meant to be standalone efforts in addition to current actions being taken by the community and its organization. Rather, these are designed to align and augment existing efforts, close gaps, institute novel approaches to collectively identified challenges and, overall, improve upon the current service landscape through a collaborative process. As such, the CSWB plan serves as a vehicle for changes within and between systems.

4. **Engaging continuously:** Through the comprehensive development process of the CSWB plan numerous governmental and non-governmental organizations and community members were engaged. Thoughtful and deliberate recruitment to the action tables by the implementation committee with support from the City of Kenora CSWB office will help to ensure their ongoing engagement.
5. **Providing a “backbone” to move the work forward:** The CSWB plan will benefit from the collective commitment and contributions of the organizational members of the implementation committee and beyond. Providing coordination to facilitate clarity and help navigate through the complexity will make accountability more possible.

The Kenora CSWB plan is grounded in data including data obtained through the focused engagement of many organizations and individuals. Specific attention has been paid to include voices from priority populations because the experience of marginalization is a vital component of actual and perceived safety. Plans of this nature have the capacity to galvanize large sectors of the community and can lead to significant momentum for change from the grassroots to the highest level of decision making. Therefore, it is critically important that a committee be established to oversee, guide, and monitor how the plan is put into action.

Governance

Municipalities are the places where the prevention of crime and the advancement of community safety occur in the most concrete ways. While other orders of government may make laws, develop policies and programs, and hold most of the funding, it is at the level of community that crime, victimization, and fear of crime are most acutely felt. Municipalities, as the order of government closest to the community, often take the lead in developing partnerships for community safety that bring together local government with community organizations, and citizens. In doing so it is critical that the plan implementation be supported by a clear and sound governance approach.

A government-community partnership that incorporates collective impact principles is well suited for the successful implementation of the Kenora plan. Such partnerships include:

- Bringing government and community together to share decision making.
- Recognizing that while (at least initially) the municipality might provide the core resources, partnerships leverage organizational and citizen in-kind supports, which often more than match the government investment over time.
- Collectively, all partners at the implementation committee share resources, generate new funding and look for system change opportunities that can result in better use of existing resources. For that reason, the implementation committee ideally includes key decision makers from within the community.
- Members of the implementation committee represent a sector that is needed to advance the plan. Sector representatives are selected for their expertise, connections, capacity to influence change, and their credibility.

The Implementation Committee

The committee to steer the implementation of the plan ideally should be a multi-sector roundtable comprised of continuing Advisory Committee members as well as select representatives that have a stake in the plan's proposed actions. The key responsibilities of the implementation committee are to:

- Guide the plan implementation.
- Be ambassadors for the plan's vision.
- Communicate the plan priorities within their own organizations and align it with their plans whenever indicated.
- Report on public progress.
- Seek out novel or align existing resources to support implementation.
- Facilitate connections to existing efforts that align with the plan priorities.
- Be a support, sounding board and provide oversight to action teams that have been established to deal with specific actions.
- Stay informed of and share knowledge regarding developments relevant to the CSWB work in Kenora and beyond.
- Develop policies and programs to accomplish the plan objectives.
- Lead priority area action teams as applicable.

Action Teams

Action teams are responsible for enacting specific actions or initiatives from the plan. Action teams broaden the membership of the initiative beyond the implementation committee to include other organizations and/or community members. While this increases resources, more importantly it enables community-based participation and ensures that subject matter expertise is focused on areas where implementation happens.

Ideally, action teams are co-led by a member of the implementation committee. Action teams tend to be smaller and meet more frequently than the implementation committee with a limited mandate. As objectives are accomplished, action teams likely sunset and other action priorities can be started. Not all action teams should start at the same time.

Evaluation and Monitoring

Evaluations answer two simple questions: did you do what you said you were going to do and how successful was?

Developmental Evaluation

Developmental Evaluation (DE) is an evaluation approach designed to adapt to the evolving and dynamic realities of complex environments, such as community safety and well-being. It involves the continuous collection and analysis of real-time data, enabling informed and timely decision-making throughout the implementation process. DE offers valuable insights for stakeholders into the context and provides real-time feedback on how an initiative, program, or innovation should be adjusted to meet changing conditions, while also capturing what is being learned along the way. This approach allows for course corrections during implementation, rather than waiting years to assess success or lack thereof. DE requires an ongoing, engaged monitoring process, best achieved through multidisciplinary methods that incorporate both routine data collected as part of organizational operations and specific data used to track the progress of the plan, such as a CSWB survey.

Key Performance Indicators

Information and data that help to monitor and evaluate the achievement of goals and objectives are called [key performance indicators](#) or KPIs. These data provide tangible, measurable insights that demonstrate the extent to which specific outcomes are being achieved. Indicators are typically used to track outputs and identify the changes they generate. They can be quantitative, such as percentages or statistics (e.g., the proportion of the population reporting experiences of violence), or qualitative, such as subjective assessments or perceptions (e.g., how effective CSWB actions are perceived to be in driving change). It is important to distinguish outputs from outcomes. Outputs refer to the immediate, tangible products or activities resulting from an initiative or program, such as the number of workshops held, or materials distributed. Outcomes, on the other hand, reflect the longer-term changes or impacts that occur because of these outputs, such as improved community safety or enhanced well-being. While outputs measure what is done, outcomes assess the effect or transformation that those actions have achieved.

KPIs can also measure changes at several different levels including individual, family, neighbourhood, community, and district. In this regard, having a broad range of performance indicators is important to manage expectations regarding progress and results. Improving perceptions of safety and preventing harm are complex issues that take time. Broad impacts facilitated by a CSWB plan will not be measurable within the first year of implementation. However, other changes at the individual and neighbourhood level may be measurable within the first few years, such as the community's sense of belonging and connectedness. Often when measuring CSWB plans members of the public look to changes in crime data. But community safety and well-being is about way more than the absence of crime. CSWB work is about experiences, perceptions, changes in social efforts and their impact, and more. Additionally, as already established, crime data are underreported and capturing them is only ever as good as the members of the public calling police as well as how police record the event.

For instance, graffiti featuring racial slurs could be perceived as a hate crime. However, it might actually be an expression of anger from a person who doesn't fully grasp the implications, simply repeating something they've heard. How this incident is classified may vary across communities, despite provincial guidelines. Therefore, when assessing CSWB efforts, it's crucial to look beyond crime itself and focus on the underlying risks that contribute to crime and public insecurity in the first place. Measuring changes in these risks provides a much clearer indicator of whether the actions taken are leading to the desired outcomes.

Below is an initial list of high-level indicators related to community safety and well-being that can inform the monitoring and evaluation of the Kenora implementation process. This list is not exhaustive; additional indicators may be identified throughout the implementation phase. Many data are also available through federal and provincial sources (such as the Canada General Social Survey). Not all these data are helpful at the level of the city but at times they can be accessed at a more local level by request to the government departments that generate them.

Performance Indicators	Potential Sources of Data
Social Indicators and Measures	
Number of people experiencing homelessness	PiT count; reports from local organizations working with the unhoused; shelter data; field observations;
Housing availability and affordability	City; KDSB
Percentage of the population that feels a sense of belonging and feeling welcome	CSWB survey questions about belonging and inclusion repeated preferably bi-annually; survey data after community events asking for feedback and resident experiences; interviews with newcomers through a focus group effort;
Number of children taken into care	Child welfare data (aggregated); compare over time;
Number of illicit drug toxicity deaths	NWHU and OPP
Population Health data including self reported data	NWHU and CSWB survey questions about self-reported mental and physical health;
Crime and Victimization	
Number of police-reported incidents of domestic violence & intimate partner violence	OPP and Treaty Three Police; shelter occupancy data;
Call for services to police	OPP: crime category, number of incidents, time of day,
Response time for first responders	OPP, fire, ambulance

Percentage of residents who indicate a strong sense of belonging with their neighbourhood.	CSWB survey question repeated with focus on neighbourhood (providing opportunity to identify where respondents live); event evaluations after neighbourhood-based interventions;
Percentage of residents that have experienced a crime within the last year	Self-reported victimization survey question modelled on the General Social Survey of Statistics Canada
Percentage of crime victims who reported to police	CSWB survey question repeated; OPP; Treaty Three Police;
Community Perceptions and Experiences	
Percentage of the population that reports positive perceptions of their community	CSWB survey questions repeated;
Percentage of the population that rates their quality of life as very good or good	City surveys (e.g. tourism, business); CSWB survey repeated;
Percentage of residents that report feeling very safe or somewhat safe in their neighbourhood (day and night)	CSWB survey; evaluation surveys at neighbourhood-based events; number of residents that report leaving their home unlocked; percentage of children reporting safety in their schools (school board surveys);
Percentage of people who feel uncomfortable or out of place in their neighbourhood because of factors including ethnicity, culture, skin colour, language, accent, gender, sexual orientation, or religion	CSWB survey question repeated; focus groups with marginalized populations
Percentage of residents who feel happy about their relationships with neighbours	CSWB question repeated
Percentage of people reporting addiction and mental health challenges;	NWHU and CSWB survey
Community and Services Capacity	
Substance use recovery and treatment	number of detox beds; number of treatment beds; hospital admissions due to drugs or alcohol
Victim support (culturally appropriated)	shelter beds; counseling availability for victims of crime; human trafficking; sexual assaults, etc.
Restorative Justice	number of diversion programs; numbers diverted; RJ attendance and impact data (Justice Centre and OPP);

Indigenous led RJ programs	availability; utilization;
Pre-trial detention	Kenora Jail; Provincial and Federal Crown prosecutor; courts;
Availability and use of community supervision (Probation and Parole)	Province of Ontario and Government of Canada
Recreational program availability	City; neighbourhood groups;
Child and Youth Well-Being	
Changes in EDI scores	KDSB
Child and youth suicide	NWU
Highschool graduation	School boards
Student reintegration	School boards and OPP
Utilization of recreational programs	City; schools; OPP; neighbourhood groups
Downtown Safety (real and perceived)	
Calls to bylaw	Bylaw: nature of calls; intervention needed; time of day and location
Police recorded interventions	OPP
Service reports	DT services experiences with clients (survey; informal reporting)
Business retention, turn-over and patron experiences	KDCC; survey questions repeated; city economic development department;
DT foot traffic	field observations at different times of year and day
Placemaking efforts	Number of actions taken with clear goals and measured outcomes

Once key performance indicators have been selected as part of the implementation process, they ideally should be measured on an ongoing basis and can also be utilized to:

- Establish baseline measures
- Set reasonable targets and percentage reduction expected through an output
- Expand upon existing data sources to broaden the knowledge about community safety and well-being and how it interrelates
- Agree on frequency or measurement and data collection process and who is responsible for sharing which data (this may need to be expressed in memorandums of understanding).
- Be selective and ensure that you can get cooperation in accessing these data.
- Ensure the selection matches the priority actions.

The Canadian Centre for Safer Communities of which the City of Kenora is a member has information on evaluations that are best suited to community safety and wellbeing work. Additionally, information on developmental evaluation processes as well as target reductions in community safety and well-being are readily available online. Ideally a dashboard which

speaks to the timing of rolling out the implementation plan will also include how the proposed actions will be measured over time.

Issue Selection Process

As the plan was being developed, events within the community required the Advisory Committee to focus on immediate concerns rather than solely looking ahead. This dynamic is likely to carry over into the implementation phase. To manage this shift in focus, the committee created a process for prioritizing which issues should take precedence. This approach should continue to be used, as day-to-day events can easily overshadow the implementation efforts. Like many municipalities, Kenora often faces a constant sense of urgency, making it easy to become distracted by immediate matters, which can detract from the priorities outlined in the plan. This is often why so many plans gather dust.

At times, the tendency to jump from one urgent issue to another, in part, may stem from a fear of failing in the implementation process. The stewardship of the implementation committee is critical in this regard. Managing expectations during plan implementation is crucial, as the process often involves navigating challenges and adapting to unexpected circumstances. It is important to stay focused on the goals, understanding that progress may take time and not always follow a straight path. While setbacks may arise, maintaining a positive outlook and remaining committed to the plan's vision can help keep momentum going.

Nonetheless, from time-to-time issues will arise in the community that require focused and strategic attention. At these times, the committee needs to have the opportunity to carefully engage in a process of selecting which issues they will attend to, and which are outside of the scope and capacity of their mandate.

This CSWB plan implementation will be the core function of the committee starting in 2025. During that time the committee needs to maximize its resources, including the time of the CSWB coordinator and focus energy on the delivery of the strategic directions. However, the committee recognizes that the community will at times experience situations that need support now and to defer action could lead to disengagement and lack of trust. The issues selection process is meant to guide the committee through a fair and transparent process in selecting one issue over another in times of multiple demands.

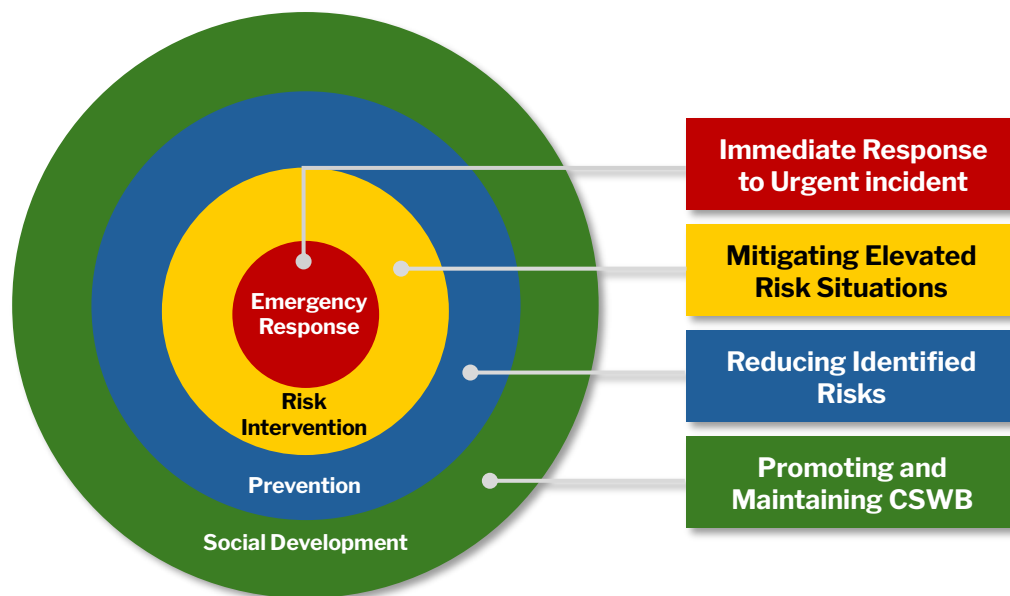
What is meant by "Issue"?

The term "issue" is reserved for items which:

- Impact community safety and well-being in the here and now.
- May or may not feature in the Community Safety and Well-Being plan
- Require attention and problem-solving
- May lead to the formation of a CSWB working group
- Are or reasonably can be seen to be of a time sensitive nature

Any issues that will receive the attention of the Crime Prevention and Community Well-Being Advisory Committee:

- Should be of a social/community nature (not enforcement)
- Should fall within the area of Risk Intervention and Prevention as per the Ontario Government Framework.



The Selection Approach

Selection will be based on a series of questions. This tool will guide the work of the committee and will be made available to members of the public that are expressing concerns about a community safety and well-being matter. If a working group is created to attend to issues this group will work in short succession on problem solving and sunset upon completion. Working groups are commonly comprised of the CSWB coordinator and at least one member of the implementation committee.

The Criteria

1. Does the request meet the committee's mandate?
2. Will the request help the committee to achieve its mandate?
3. Does acting on the issue have the potential to significantly impact the safety and vitality of the community?
4. What type of action is requested or necessitated?
 - How urgent a response is needed?
 - What is the likely duration for the committee's working group involvement?
 - Can it be accomplished with current resources?
 - How will attention to this issue impact on other committee work?
 - Does it have the potential to detract from the Committee's mandate to create a CSWB Plan?
5. Could Committee attention to this issue negatively impact any one sector represented at the Committee table? If so, how can this be resolved?

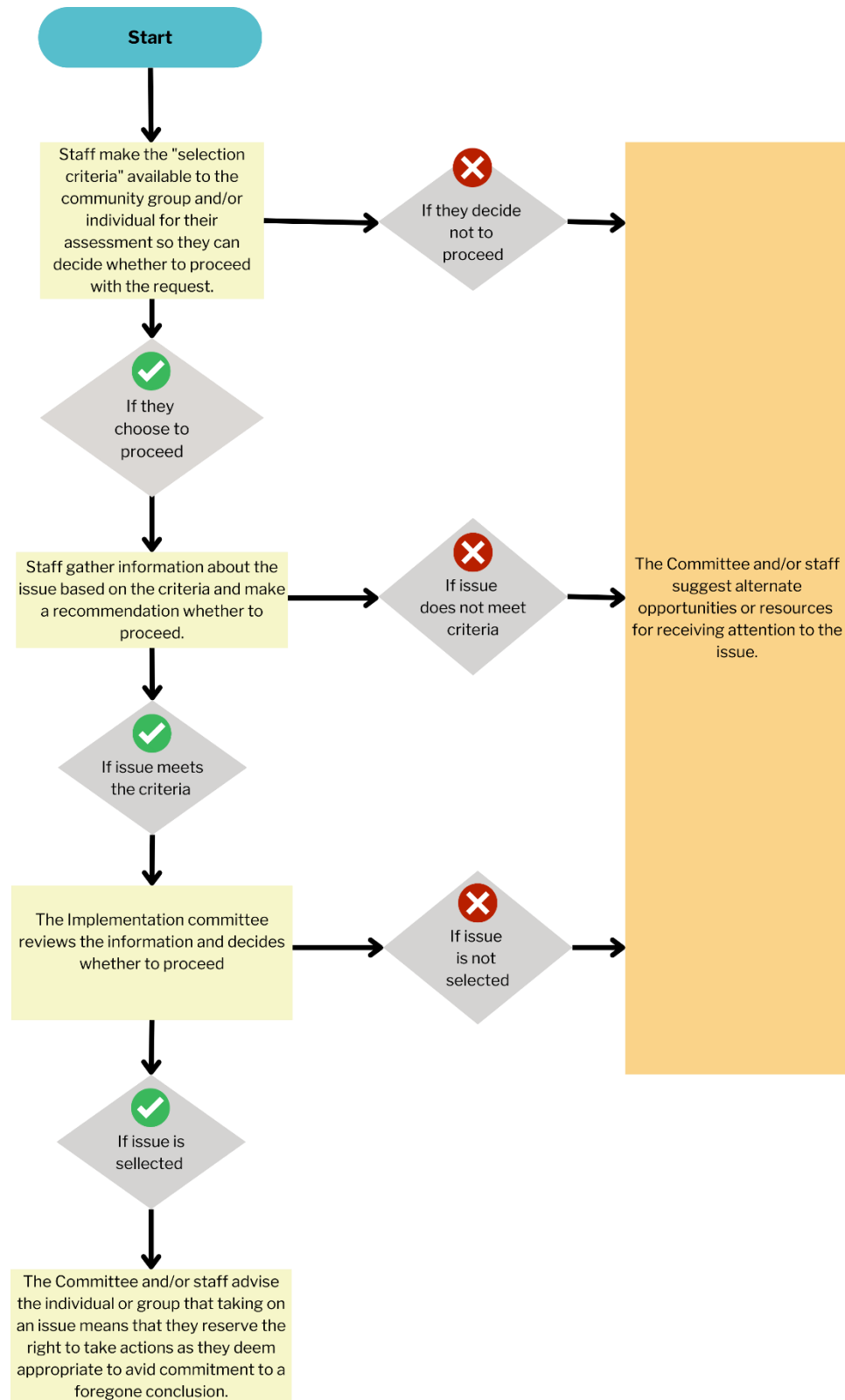
"This photo represents the beauty of our community."

- Alyah L.

*(Photo submission from
Photo Voice Project)*



The Selection Flow



Appendices

Appendix One: Risk and Protective Factors

★ Star symbol indicates risk factors identified as most prevalent for Kenora by the Advisory Committee.

Societal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Intergenerational trauma ★ Large number of people living in poverty High level of inequity ★ Significant prevalence of discrimination, stigmatization, and oppression such as racism ★ Lack of affordable, appropriate, and safe housing ★ Lack of adequate services (social, physical health, mental health, addictions, etc.) High unemployment
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Presence of and human/sex trafficking Presence of organized crime (and human trafficking) Repeated negative media attention ★ Availability of street level drugs Availability of street level weapons (including firearms) ★ High level of fear of social disorder (e.g., visible homelessness, public drug use) High transience in neighborhoods Lack of adequate services (cultural, recreational) Large number of residents reporting feeling unsafe in their neighborhood Neighborhoods that show neglect and lack of sense of ownership and pride Food insecurity
School	<p>School Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of dedicated educational support to students with special needs Lack of attention to bullying (including cyber bullying) High number of suspensions and expulsions Negative labelling by teachers ★ Undiagnosed learning disabilities Access to street level drugs within the school Presence of gangs in school <p>Relationship to School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Low attachment to school Low educational aspirations Consistent underperformance

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Chronic absenteeism
Peer Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friends with problematic substance use issues Peers that are in conflict with the law Lack of meaningful peer connections ★ Tolerance of violence in peer groups (including emotional violence and bullying) ★ Discrimination of peers due to their race, sexual orientation, gender, faith, country of origin Pre-teen exposure to high stress
Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Intimate partner and family violence (including elder abuse) ★ Erratic or overly laissez-faire or punitive parenting ★ Tolerance of problematic substance use ★ Abuse and neglect of children ★ Inadequate supervision Violence between siblings ★ Criminalized or incarcerated parents or family members ★ Lone parent household with limited economic means ★ Anti-social behavior within the home
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) Prior delinquency and criminalization ★ Low sense of belonging ★ Problematic alcohol and drug use Addiction to gambling ★ Lack of attention to trauma Frequent displays of aggression and violence (including verbal violence) Early sexualization ★ Unattended to mental health challenges ★ History of victimization Isolation, boredom ★ Low sense of self

Level	Protective Factors
Societal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to resources to meet basic needs including stable housing Strong social safety net High level of equity in all regards Adherence to human rights Commitment to Truth and Reconciliation Visibly valuing children and having a commitment to the future
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High level of community engagement

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level of volunteerism • High level of trust in public institutions including police • Access to and participation in traditional healing and cultural activities • Availability of barrier free recreation • Strong neighborhood network • Strong leadership (both elected officials and “natural” leaders) • Investment in community safety through social development
School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective connections between school and home environment • Clear behavioral expectations and follow-through on infractions • Attention to context in which the school exists • School-neighbourhood collaborations • Knowledge and utilization of asset-based teaching • Availability of diverse extracurricular activities • High number of students that graduate • Availability of cultural education including First Nations • School engagement of family
Peer Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive and sustained peer relations • Connections to peers who are actively engaged in the community in positive ways • High level of intolerance towards violence and problematic substance use • Involvement in afterschool activities • Peers that are engaged in recreational activities
Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents that are present and consistent • Availability of family dialogue on challenging topics • Shared activities between members of the family • Parents modeling involvement in recreation • Parents whose needs are met and who feel supported in the larger community. • Multiple and healthy connections to the wider community • Sense of agency
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive self-regard • Strong sense of belonging • Regular positive acknowledgement from peers and family • Conflict resolution skills • Intolerance towards violence and coming into conflict with the law. • Success in one or more significant areas of life (school, recreation, social connections) • Access to one significant other outside of the family • Financial stability • Stable employment

Appendix Two: Horizontal Vertical Level Integration

Horizontal-Vertical Level Integration for Community Safety and Well-Being Planning What is Horizontal-Vertical Level Integration about?

When we engage in community safety and well-being efforts on the ground, we frequently stumble across barriers that are not of community-making and these speak to issues created through approaches at provincial and federal levels. At times, we also learn that larger systems (police, local government departments, child welfare, etc.) unintentionally create barriers to successfully implement community safety and well-being approaches. The visual below is about trying to see where the efforts of community (horizontal) have the potential to interphase with larger system decision-makers (vertical) such that barriers to successful interventions can be reduced now and going forward.

Multi-sector collaboratives for community safety and well-being are ideally situated to have dialogues about this horizontal-vertical level opportunity for integration. The purpose of this would be to create a more fertile ground for future projects/grassroots efforts by having changed policies, funding approaches, reporting guidelines, etc. such that the focus remains on the population to be served rather than system needs. This provides an opportunity to deal with ongoing frustration on the ground when direct service staff and volunteers feel hindered in providing the best service as a result of system barriers. Systems frequently are unaware of these challenges and a discussion about how their approaches potentially negatively impact horizontal level success can go a long way towards greater integration.



How does Horizontal-Vertical Level Integration work?

The visual shows common approaches taken by communities and grassroots organizations to reduce and prevent crime, victimization, and fear of crime at the horizontal level. Each semi-circle below the horizontal line represents a set of potential actions taken on the ground. Each semi-circle above the horizontal line represents the opportunities that larger systems and decision-makers have to actively support and advance community-level efforts.

For example, a child welfare agency is part of a collaborative roundtable for community safety and well-being and the roundtable has received funding to work in a facilitative capacity in diverse neighbourhoods in their community. Residents frequently report a sense of fear and alienation from their child welfare agency which gravely hinders project staff to include a focus on child well-being in their approaches. At the roundtable, the child welfare agency becomes aware of this challenge and decides to decentralize their services such that child welfare prevention workers are present on a full-time basis in community centres, rather than being housed at their home agency. This approach allows them to build relationships with residents and proactively intervene with risks that might otherwise lead to the abuse and neglect of children. It, additionally, provides valuable information to the child welfare agency in their operational planning.

What does this mean for you?

Collaborative roundtables are a real opportunity to create change at the level of systems such that prevention becomes more possible through a reduction in barriers that put community-level efforts and the people they serve at risk. Collaborative roundtables are also a resource-intensive venture and this approach helps ensure that the dialogue at the table is focused not only on the here and now (e.g., projects) but also opens the door for critical reflection and system consciousness. Rather than seeing horizontal level experiences and feedback as irritating, these dialogues can lead to improvements at the level of policy, legislation, communication to the public, funding, guidelines, etc.

For example, the Hub Model, also known as Situation Tables, brings service providers together to support people at imminent risk of harm to self or others. In the process of developing a case management approach, services frequently learn about larger challenges that put individuals, their family, and community at risk in the first place. Rather than attempt to deal with these issues ongoingly, on a one-by-one basis, horizontal-vertical integration dialogues will point to change opportunities both on the ground and within larger systems. Without these adjustments, the Hub Model, like other case management approaches, while helpful to individuals, leaves the contexts in which they live unaltered resulting in a great chance that they will need to return as a result of being, yet again, at risk.



Appendix Three: Overview of Consultations (focus groups and partner conversations)

Consultation	Format	Number of Participants
Focus Groups		
2SLGBTQIA+	In person	6
Business	Virtual	16
Business	In person	13
City of Kenora Staff	In person	25
DelArt Recovery Home staff	In person DIY ²¹	7
First Nations And Métis sharing circles	In person through CSM project	Three circles with a total of 16 participants
Fellowship Center	In person	10 (9 Indigenous)
KACL	In person	3
District of Kenora Homes and Community Support Services	Virtual DIY	3
Kenora Ministerial Consultation	In person DIY	6
Kenora Moving Forward staff and volunteers	Virtual	5
Lake of the Woods District Hospital staff	In person DIY	5
Mental Health Recovery Group staff	In person DIY	5
Mental Health Counsellors	In person DIY	9
Multi-cultural association	In person DIY	6
OPP	In person	10
Sexual Assault Centre	In person	3
Seasonal Residents	In person	11
Social Service Providers	In person	16
St Albans unhoused	In person	8 (Indigenous number unknown)
Victim Services – post custody	In person DIY	6
Women’s crisis services	In person DIY	9
WNHAC	Virtual	4
Total focus group participation		N=202

²¹ DIY = Do it yourself

Stakeholder Interviews		
Catholic School Board	In person	
CMHA-K	Virtual	
KDSB	Virtual	
Mayor and Members of Council	Virtual	6 individual interviews
Committee members Interviews	Virtual	14
KCA staff	In person – virtual	2 individual interviews
MP	In person	
NWHU	Virtual	
Overall total stakeholder consultations		N=229 (First Nations and Métis = 33 ²²) Professional Capacities: 149 Persons with lived and living experiences: 40 Seasonal residents: 11 Business: 29 Plus 58 children

²² This number is approximate including staff and persons with lived and living experiences from all consultations that we are aware having identified as First Nations or Métis

Appendix Four: Harm Reduction Resources Explained

Harm Reduction

Provincial health units in Ontario are funded and responsible to provide prevention services and harm reduction for substance use. Harm reduction refers to policies, programs, and practices that aim to reduce the adverse health, social, and economic effects related to the use of regulated and unregulated substances without necessarily reducing use. Harm reduction interventions respect the rights of people who use substances, increase awareness regarding lower-risk use, and address risk and protective factors related to harms ([OPHS, 2021](#)).

- [Harm Reduction \(cmha.ca\)](#)
- [A Harm Reduction Approach from Alberta Health Services](#)
- [Harm Reduction Fundamentals: A toolkit for service providers](#)
- [Best Practice Recommendations for Canadian Harm Reduction Programs | CATIE - Canada's source for HIV and hepatitis C information](#)
- [Understanding harm reduction: Substance use | HealthLink BC](#)

Needle Distribution Program (NDP)

The needle distribution program (NDP) is designed to provide sterile needles and other substance use supplies to people who use drugs, aims to prevent the spread of bloodborne infections such as HIV and Hepatitis C, and connect individuals to healthcare services. NWHU is mandated to provide, directly or through partnerships, sterile needles and syringes, as well as other substance use-related supplies (e.g., single-use inhalation/smoking supplies) currently funded and provided through the Ontario Harm Reduction Distribution Program, to people who use substances. The health unit also provides sharps containers to organizations and training for picking up needles safely ([OPHS, 2021](#)).

In Kenora, these organizations also provide NDP services: Morning Star Detox Centre, Ontario Addiction Treatment Centre, and RAAM Mobile outreach.

- [Understanding Needle Syringe Programs CAMH](#)
- [Distribution vs Exchange](#)

What is the Naloxone Program?

Naloxone is a fast-acting drug that temporarily reverses the effects of opioid overdoses. NWHU is mandated to provide Naloxone kits to community partners and those who may have family/ friends who are at risk of overdose. NWHU also is mandated to provide training to those who are provided the kits, so they understand what to do when someone overdoses ([OPHS, 2021](#)). Naloxone is also available to members of the public through local pharmacies.

- [Naloxone FAQ](#)
- [Good Samaritan Act Poster](#)

Safe Supply

Safe supply refers to providing prescribed medications as a safer alternative to the toxic illegal drug supply to people who are at high risk of overdose. Safer supply services can help prevent overdoses, save lives, and connect people who use drugs to other health and social services.

Safer supply services build on existing approaches that provide medications to treat substance use disorder. However, they are often more flexible and do not necessarily focus on stopping drug use. Instead, they focus on meeting the existing needs of people who use drugs, reducing the risk of overdose by helping people to be less reliant on the toxic illegal drug supply, and providing connections to health and social services where possible and appropriate ([Health Canada, 2024](#)).

NWHU is not mandated to and does not provide safe supply services.

- [Safer supply: Prescribed medications as a safer alternative to toxic illegal drugs - Canada.ca](#)
- [Safe Opioid Supply CMHA](#)

Opioid Agonist Therapy (OAT)

Opioid agonist therapy (OAT) can be an effective treatment for addiction to opioid drugs such as heroin, oxycodone, hydromorphone (Dilaudid), fentanyl and Percocet. The therapy involves taking opioid agonists called methadone (Methadone) or buprenorphine (Suboxone). These medications work to prevent withdrawal and reduce cravings for opioid drugs. People who are addicted to opioid drugs can take OAT to help stabilize their lives and to reduce the harms related to their drug use (CAMH).

NWHU is not mandated to and does not provide opioid agonist therapy, but partners with agencies who do offer this therapy to support client referrals.

- [Opioid agonist therapy from Centre for Addiction and Mental Health \(CAMH\)](#)
- [Opioid use disorder and treatment - Canada.ca](#)

What is decriminalization?

Decriminalization of people who use drugs is the process of removing criminal penalties for the possession of small amounts of some illegal substances for personal use. Decriminalization is intended to reduce the stigma and criminalization that can prevent people who use drugs from accessing health and social services, and drive people to use alone where there is nobody to respond in the event of a drug poisoning event.

Decriminalization is something that would be decided on through Health Canada and Federal/ Provincial Governments, and not through public health.

- [Decriminalizing people who use drugs in B.C. - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/mental_health/substance_use/addiction/decriminalizing_people_who_use_drugs_in_bc.htm)
- [Decriminalization in B.C. \(bccdc.ca\)](https://www.bccdc.ca/health-topics/substance-use/decriminalization)

Appendix Five: Understanding the Justice System

Understanding "Catch and Release": Judicial System and Public Safety

In Kenora, the term "catch and release" frequently arises in discussions about public safety, reflecting a public perception that the judiciary system inadequately addresses criminal behavior by releasing offenders prematurely. This analysis explores the judiciary system's role and the multifaceted factors contributing to this perception, highlighting the intricate balance between individual rights and public safety.

Judiciary System Structure and Dynamics

The judiciary system operates through a tripartite structure:

1. **Judicial Officials:** These officials make decisions regarding crimes and provincial offences.
2. **Prosecution:** The prosecution is responsible for presenting comprehensive accusations to secure appropriate convictions.
3. **Defence:** Defence lawyers represent the accused, presenting their case, raising concerns, and offering legal defences.

This separation of roles ensures a system of checks and balances, preventing judicial overreach and preserving democratic integrity. Each component of the system operates within strict procedural boundaries to maintain fairness and uphold the rule of law.

Critical Elements Influencing "Catch and Release" Perception

Bail System

The bail system is designed to balance the presumption of innocence with public safety concerns. According to the Supreme Court of Canada, bail is the standard, with detention being the exception. This principle, underscored in cases like **R. v. St-Cloud** and **R. v. Zora**, ensures that individuals are not unjustly deprived of their liberty before a fair trial.

Bail Decision Process: Justices of the peace and provincial judges assess whether an accused person poses a risk to public safety, is likely to attend their court date, and will not interfere with the administration of justice. The Criminal Code provides a framework that guides these decisions, ensuring a thorough evaluation of each case. Factors such as the nature of the offence, the accused's criminal history, and community ties are considered to make an informed judgment.

Supreme Court Guidelines: The Supreme Court emphasizes that pre-trial detention should be reserved for exceptional cases. In **R. v. St-Cloud**, the Court stated, "in Canadian law, the release of accused persons is the cardinal rule and detention, the exception." In **R. v. Zora**, it reiterated that "release on bail at the earliest reasonable opportunity with minimal conditions

is the default position." These guidelines reflect a commitment to the principle of presumed innocence, ensuring that individuals are not penalized before a fair trial.

Sentencing Principles

Sentencing involves a delicate balance between deterrence, punishment, and rehabilitation. Judges must weigh mitigating and aggravating factors unique to each case, aiming to impose sentences that are just and appropriate. The sentencing framework prioritizes alternatives to imprisonment, reserving incarceration as a last resort.

Deterrence and Punishment: Sentences aim to deter the individual and the public from committing crimes while delivering punishment proportionate to the offence. Judges consider the severity of the crime, the offender's intent, and the impact on victims and society.

Rehabilitation: Rehabilitation focuses on addressing the underlying causes of criminal behavior, promoting the offender's reintegration into society. Sentencing options such as community service, probation, and treatment programs are designed to support this goal.

Judicial Discretion: Judicial discretion allows judges to tailor sentences based on the specific circumstances of each case. This flexibility is crucial for achieving fair outcomes but also contributes to the perception of inconsistency in sentencing.

Gladue Principles: In *R. v. Gladue*, the Supreme Court recognized the over-representation of Indigenous individuals in the criminal justice system and established principles for considering their unique circumstances during sentencing. Judges are required to take into account factors such as systemic discrimination, historical trauma, and social and economic disadvantages faced by Indigenous offenders. These principles promote restorative justice and aim to reduce Indigenous over-incarceration.

Role of the Crown's Office

The Crown's Office plays a pivotal role in the prosecution of criminal offences. Crown Counsel must ensure a fair trial by presenting evidence accurately, calling witnesses, and maintaining the integrity of the justice process. Their duty extends beyond seeking convictions to upholding justice and due process.

Fair Trial Commitment: Crown Counsel's primary responsibility is not to secure a conviction at any cost but to present a thorough and accurate case, ensuring the accused receives a fair trial. They must disclose all relevant evidence, including information that may be favorable to the defence.

Prosecutorial Discretion: Crown Counsel has the discretion to decide whether to proceed with charges, negotiate plea agreements, and determine the appropriate level of prosecution for hybrid offences. Hybrid offences can be prosecuted as either summary or indictable, depending on the case's circumstances and the accused's background.

Hybrid Offences: Hybrid offences, defined in the Criminal Code, provide flexibility in prosecution. Crown Counsel can choose to proceed summarily, which is quicker and less

severe, or by indictment for more serious cases. This discretion allows the Crown to manage resources effectively and focus on more serious offences.

Federal and Provincial Interplay in Judiciary Operations

The judiciary system in Canada operates under a shared responsibility model between federal and provincial governments. The federal government enacts criminal laws, while provinces administer justice and conduct prosecutions. This dual structure ensures that the judiciary remains independent and operates uniformly across different jurisdictions. The interplay between federal legislation and provincial administration requires continuous alignment to address evolving legal standards and societal expectations.

Conclusion

The "catch and release" perception in Kenora arises from the complex interplay of legal principles, judicial processes, and public expectations. The judiciary system, through its structured and principled approach, strives to balance individual rights with public safety. Bail decisions, sentencing guidelines, and the Crown's prosecutorial discretion are all governed by a framework that seeks justice and fairness. Understanding these dynamics provides a more nuanced perspective on the judiciary's role in promoting public safety and maintaining the rule of law in a democratic society.

By examining the judicial system's structure, the principles guiding bail and sentencing decisions, and the Crown's role, we can appreciate the complexities involved in balancing public safety with individual rights. The judiciary's commitment to due process, the presumption of innocence, and fair trials underscores its essential role in fostering a just and safe society.

Bail

- **R. v. Zora:** R. v. Zora, 2020 SCC 14, [2020] 2 S.C.R. 3.
- **Fact Sheet: The Bail Process.**

Gladue Overview

- **Spotlight on Gladue:** Challenges, Experiences, and Possibilities in Canada's Criminal Justice System.
- **R. v. Gladue:** R. v. Gladue, [1999] 1 S.C.R. 688.
- **Criminal Code:** Criminal Code (R.S.C., 1985, c. C-46), s. 718.2(e).
- **Gladue Principles:** Gladue Rights.

Summary Offences

- **Summary vs. Indictable Offences:** [Summary vs. Indictable Offences]
<https://littlelegal.ca/summary-versus-indictable-offences>

Prosecutorial Discretion

- **Prosecutorial Discretion:** Prosecutorial Discretion.
- **The Role of the Crown Prosecutor**
- **Role of the Crown Prosecutor:** Understanding the Justice System: The Role of the Crown Prosecutor in a Criminal Case in Canada.

Appendix Six: Acronyms

Not all of these appear in the plan but may have feature in the supporting documents.

2SLGBTQIA+	Two-Spirit people, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, considers sex characteristics beyond sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, Inclusive of people who identify as part of sexual and gender diverse communities, who use additional terminologies.
AAFS	Anishinaabe Abinoojii Family Services https://www.aafs.ca/
ANHP	All Nations Health Partners (Kenora's Ontario Health Team) https://www.anhp.net/
CCFSC	Canadian Centre for Safer Communities https://ccfsc-cccs.ca/
CMHA-K	Canadian Mental Health Association Kenora Branch https://www.cmhak.on.ca/
CPCWB	Crime Prevention and Community Well-Being Advisory Committee
CSWB	Community Safety and Well-Being
EDI	Early Development Instrument, a questionnaire completed by teachers for each student in senior kindergarten measuring physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, and communication skills and general knowledge. Designed for use with whole populations based on geographical or administrative boundaries.
FAST	Families and Schools Together Program
FIREFLY	A multi-service, non-profit organization providing a wide range of services for children, youth, and families in communities across Northwestern Ontario https://fireflynw.ca/
GCT3	Grand Council Treaty #3 https://gct3.ca/
HSSJCC	Human Social Services and Justice Coordinating Committee
KACL	Kenora Association for Community Living https://www.kacl.ca/
KCA	Kenora Chiefs Advisory https://www.kenorachiefs.org/
KCDSB	Kenora Catholic District School Board https://www.kcdsb.on.ca/
KDCC	Kenora & District Chamber of Commerce https://www.kenorachamber.com/
KDSB	Kenora District Services Board https://kdsb.on.ca/
KPDSB	Keewatin Patricia District School Board https://www.kpdsb.ca/
KSAC	Kenora Sexual Assault Centre https://kenoralsexualassaultcentre.ca/
LWDH	Lake of the Woods District Hospital http://www.lwdh.on.ca/index.php

MAG	Ministry of the Attorney General, Province of Ontario
MCCSS	The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, Province of Ontario
Morningstar	The Morningstar Centre Detoxification Centre, Lake of the Woods District Hospital
NWHU	Northwestern Health Unit https://www.nwhu.on.ca/
OPP	Ontario Provincial Police https://www.opp.ca/
RAAM	Rapid Access Addiction Medicine & Community Partners Across the Kenora Area https://nworaam.ca/rainy-river-district-raam-1
SOLGEN	Ministry of the Solicitor General, Province of Ontario
T3PS	Treaty Three Police Service https://www.t3ps.ca/
WNHAC	Waasegiizhig Nanaandawe'iyewigamig - An organization offering primary health care and preventative services combining traditional and contemporary approaches to health and healing. https://www.wnhac.org/

Notes:



Notes:

A tall flagpole stands in the foreground, flying the Canadian flag. The background features a sunset over Lake of the Woods, with a paved walkway and trees in the mid-ground.

*This photo represents my love
for our Canadian heritage while
also showing a gorgeous sunset
over Lake of the Woods. Not
only that, but it is also taken at
our lovely Discovery Centre, this
location is an amazing place for
kids and families to learn more
about nature and history.*

*- Kinley M.
(Photo submission from
Photo Voice Project)*