

Candidate name: Larry McCabe

Position sought: Stratford City Councillor — re-election

Date: September 29, 2026

1. What do you believe are the most significant gaps in Stratford's current response to homelessness and housing instability, and what role should the City play in addressing them?

The biggest gap is between getting someone safely through tonight and helping them secure a stable home. I support the warming centre as a temporary protection for people with nowhere safe to go, but it should not become our permanent response. Our long-term direction must be permanent housing with appropriate support.

We should examine whether money committed to recurring temporary arrangements could eventually help more people through rent subsidies, housing grants or other assistance that helps people secure and retain suitable homes, including those inadequately housed or at risk of losing housing. We need to compare people served, stability achieved and support required while maintaining emergency protection as housing alternatives are developed.

That is why I have emphasized Erie Street supportive housing and the provincial operating funding needed to make it effective. Some people need help paying rent; others require substantial ongoing care.

In the committee discussion concerning United Housing, I argued that we should explore additional financing for housing projects. A revolving loan approach could support construction and reuse funds as loans are repaid. The City should use its housing, planning and financing tools while coordinating with governments responsible for health and social supports.

2. What do you believe Stratford is doing well — and where do you believe improvements are needed — in supporting youth experiencing homelessness, mental health challenges, trauma, substance use or other barriers?

Stratford has committed people and organizations, including Shelterlink, helping young people find safety, support and belonging. We should recognize that work and listen to young people and frontline workers about what is missing.

We are consistently a generous community and consistently raise significant funds through the Coldest Night of The Year Campaign and that gives me some hope.

My priority is preventing temporary crises from becoming prolonged homelessness through stronger connections among schools, housing services, mental health care and community supports, especially when youth transition to adult services. As an employer, I understand the value of supportive workplaces, opportunity and connection; alongside safe housing and appropriate care, these can contribute to stability.

The City should coordinate the local response and support housing stability. The Province must ensure timely youth mental health and addiction services. Young people should not be left navigating disconnected programs while their circumstances deteriorate. Programming should reflect the best available research and be assessed by whether it improves their lives.

3. What do you believe are the greatest barriers facing women experiencing homelessness, intimate partner violence, addiction or other vulnerabilities in Stratford, and what changes, if any, would you advocate for?

A woman leaving violence needs a safe place to go and a realistic way to remain safe. Housing costs, financial dependence, childcare and concern for children can make leaving extraordinarily difficult. No one should have to choose between an unsafe home and homelessness.

My company has committed \$15,000 to the Emily Murphy Centre's tiny homes campaign to help create tangible housing options for women rebuilding their lives.

Organizations such as Optimism Place and the Emily Murphy Centre are essential partners. I would advocate for more affordable housing for women and families, rent assistance and stronger connections among housing, violence prevention and health services. This also supports my interest in financing tools that help community organizations advance housing projects: building homes and ensuring households can afford them are related priorities.

We should listen directly to women with lived experience and the organizations supporting them, then address barriers to safe, lasting housing.

4. What supports do you believe are currently missing or inadequate for adult men experiencing homelessness, addiction or mental health challenges in Stratford? What would you prioritize?

My principal concern is continuity: whether someone can move from crisis into stable housing with reliable support. Social Services and community providers should identify where men cannot access suitable accommodation, treatment or housing.

Emergency protection, permanent housing and provincial funding for ongoing support are central, with Erie Street supportive housing an important part of that direction.

We also need better coordination when someone leaves hospital, treatment or custody. Housing and ongoing care should be part of the transition; discharging someone into homelessness undermines the work already done.

The Province must take greater responsibility for accessible mental health and addiction services, guided by the best social and scientific research. Housing, treatment and recovery support must work together; local agencies cannot indefinitely compensate for gaps in the wider health system.

5. How should the City respond when behaviours associated with mental health, addiction, trauma or other complex needs put a person's housing at risk?

We should intervene early and determine what support could prevent the loss of housing. Depending on the circumstances, that could include outreach, clinical care, help with daily living, rent assistance or a coordinated plan involving the housing provider and support workers.

Housing First is relevant: people should not have to resolve every health or addiction challenge before receiving stable housing. Housing provides a foundation for care, and support must continue after move-in.

This approach requires clear expectations and attention to the safety of neighbours, staff and residents. Serious threats and violence require an appropriate response. If someone needs a different level of care or housing, the goal should be a supported transition.

That is why operating funding for supportive housing matters. Providers need trained staff and appropriate services to help tenancies succeed. Repeated housing loss and returns to crisis should prompt us to examine what the system is failing to provide.

6. If elected, what specific actions related to homelessness, housing instability, mental health and addiction would you prioritize during your term?

My priorities would build on the positions I have brought to housing discussions:

- **Provide immediate protection while building lasting alternatives.** Support the warming centre as a temporary safety measure while reducing reliance on it as suitable housing becomes available. Examine whether greater investment in rent subsidies and housing assistance could help more people secure or retain homes.
- **Advance Erie Street supportive housing.** Continue pressing for the provincial operating commitment needed to support residents effectively.
- **Expand community housing financing.** Examine a revolving loan fund, with \$3 million as a proposed starting point, subject to financial review, affordability conditions, repayment terms and Council approval.
- **Use existing housing assets thoughtfully.** Explore how Perth and Stratford Housing Corporation land and equity could deliver additional deeply affordable and mixed-income housing while protecting existing obligations.
- **Help people remain housed.** Support housing stabilization and examine rent assistance or portable housing benefits to address the gap between household income and housing costs.
- **Secure coordinated commitments.** Work with regional partners, provincial and federal representatives, and municipal organizations to connect housing investment with reliable care and support funding.

Increasing general housing supply matters, but people experiencing homelessness or requiring intensive support also need specific, adequately funded responses.

7. What do you believe is the appropriate role of the City of Stratford compared with the responsibilities of the provincial and federal governments, Perth County and community agencies?

Coordination is essential. Each government needs a clear role, funding commitment and accountability for delivery.

Stratford administers housing and homelessness services across Stratford, Perth County and St. Marys through its service-manager role. It also has tools involving planning, zoning, infrastructure, municipal land and local housing investment. Perth County and St. Marys must be regional partners, and community agencies must help shape service delivery.

The Province needs a stronger, sustained commitment to mental health and addiction care, income supports and services that make supportive housing effective. Programs should use the best social and scientific evidence and receive dependable funding when they work.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario has called for the Province to work with federal partners on an additional \$11 billion over ten years for homelessness prevention and deeply affordable and supportive housing. Its 2026 recommendations also call for provincial operating funding to unlock federal housing capital. Locally, construction funding and support funding must advance together.

I believe Canada should pursue a coordinated national expansion of Housing First, drawing on Finland's experience and Canadian research and programs. The principle is to provide stable housing and the support needed to sustain it, rather than expecting people to resolve complex challenges while homeless.

The federal government has the financing tools and scale for a sustained national effort more efficiently than municipalities acting separately. Provinces must deliver health and social supports, while municipalities and community providers guide local implementation.

Through my involvement in OSUM and the broader municipal discussion, I will continue advocating for that partnership. Local property taxpayers cannot reasonably carry the full cost of a national housing crisis and gaps in provincial health care.

8. What would meaningful accountability and measurable progress on these issues look like to you over the next term of Council?

Progress means fewer people losing their homes, less time spent homeless and more people remaining successfully housed.

I would support regular public reporting on:

- The number of people experiencing homelessness and the length of time they remain without housing.
- Moves into permanent housing and stability after six and twelve months.
- Results from eviction prevention and housing stabilization assistance.
- Affordable and supportive homes delivered, their affordability and whether necessary services are funded.
- Unmet needs and barriers to accommodation or support.
- Spending, results and outstanding commitments from each government.

We should also assess whether lasting housing is reducing reliance on temporary arrangements, rather than simply reducing emergency capacity.

Council should establish realistic targets with staff and service partners, informed by people with lived experience and reliable data, while protecting individual privacy.

For a revolving loan program, accountability would include homes delivered, affordability secured, financial risk and repayments available for future projects.

We should apply to social policy the same discipline expected elsewhere: use good evidence, fund implementation properly, measure outcomes and change course when necessary. The ultimate measure is whether more people have a safe home and the support to build a stable life.

Thank you again for the opportunity to respond.

Larry McCabe
Stratford City Councillor
Candidate for re-election