



2023

# Vital Signs®

MUSKOKA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

## Table of Contents

- Introduction..... 3
- Environment..... 4
- Economic Health & Income Security ..... 6
- Housing and Homelessness ..... 8
- Food Insecurity ..... 10
- When in Need..... 12
- Health and Wellness & Mental Health ..... 14
- Intersections ..... 16
- A Call For Action..... 17
- Partners and Contributors..... 18
- Muskoka Vital Signs® - Team ..... 19

Front Cover Credit: Gravenhurst High School's 2023 Visual Art Class – Ms. Aimee Bulloch

### Chair’s Message – Glen Norton



This report is the result of a lot of hard work and dedication by many people. I would like to express the appreciation of the Board of the Foundation to our Executive Director Lynn DeCaro, as well as the agencies, partners and volunteers who bring this important document together. I would also like to thank my fellow Board members for their time and commitment to the good work of the Foundation. I would be remiss if I did not thank the generous individuals and families who have chosen to create a legacy of giving in Muskoka: without you there would be no Foundation. As you will note as you read the report, the need for philanthropy continues to grow in Muskoka, and it is our privilege to serve as the conduit between those who wish to give and those in need of a helping hand. We invite you to connect with us to learn more about the current needs in Muskoka

### Executive Director’s Message – Lynn DeCaro



The Muskoka Community Foundation is pleased to present the 2023 Muskoka Vital Signs® Report. We hope that you will find this report an informative and inspiring snapshot of what is happening in Muskoka and that it will spark conversation, action and ways to engage with local issues. Since our first report in 2018 we have been thrilled to learn that local schools, service clubs and charities use this document to support their teaching, awareness-raising efforts and to convey the seriousness of the issues impacting Muskoka. This year’s cover was created by students in Ms. Bulloch’s visual art class at Gravenhurst High School. Each student worked on individual pieces and then collectively put their efforts together to create

this iconic Muskoka scene. Their creative process reminds me of how our community comes together during challenging times, finds innovative ways to support those in need. Muskoka benefits as a result of the many selfless contributions made by volunteers, charities, front line workers and service providers. Please share the 2023 Muskoka Vital Signs® Report widely with your friends, family colleagues and community. Together we will continue to build a healthy, vibrant, inclusive and caring Muskoka

## Land Acknowledgement

The Muskoka Community Foundation would like to acknowledge that the District Municipality of Muskoka sits on land that has been inhabited by Indigenous Peoples from the beginning. In particular we acknowledge the traditional territories of the Ojibway, the Chippewa, the Algonquin and the Odawa. Today Muskoka is home to three sovereign nations: Wahta Mohawks First Nations, Moose Deer Point First Nation and the Moon River Métis. These lands are covered by the Williams Treaty of 1923, the Robinson Huron Treaty of 1850 and the J. Collins land purchase of 1785.

## What is a Vital Signs® Report

Vital Signs® is a community check-up that Community Foundations across Canada participate in to measure the health and vitality of our communities. Vital Signs® Reports identify significant trends in a range of sectors and areas that are critical to quality of life and maintaining smart and caring communities. Vital Signs® is coordinated nationally by the Community Foundations of Canada. Special thanks to the Toronto Foundation for developing and sharing the Vital Signs® concept.

For more information visit [VitalSignsCanada.ca](http://VitalSignsCanada.ca).

The Vital Signs® trademark is used with permission from Community Foundations of Canada.

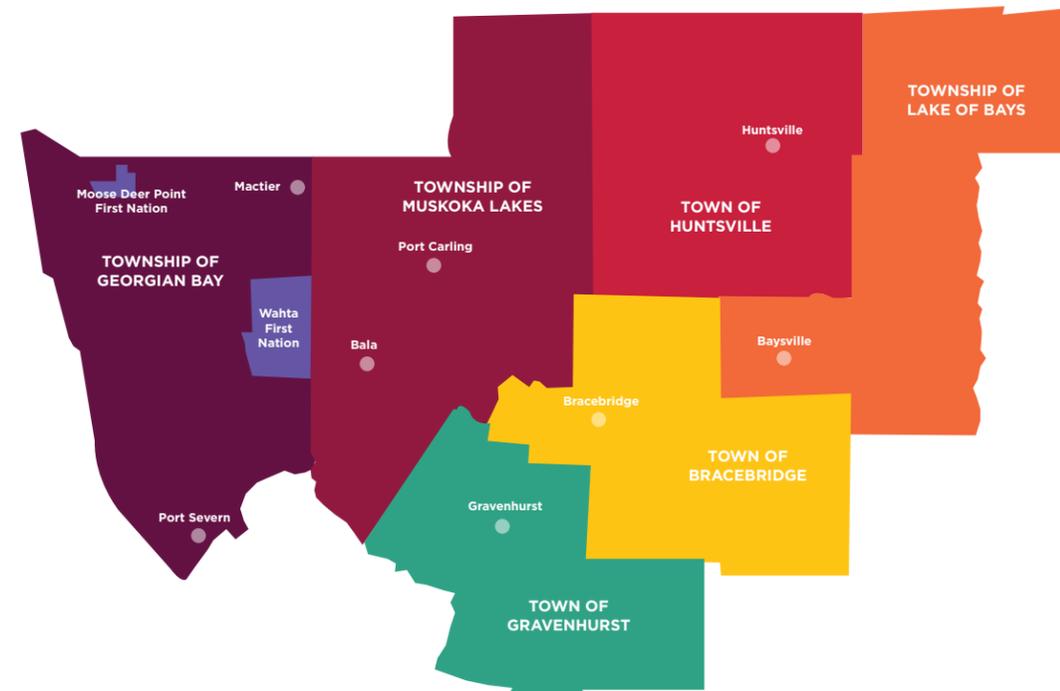
## Methodology

The Muskoka Community Foundation continues to work with local community partners to identify and incorporate updated information. Where possible the report will identify trends emerging since the release of the 2018 and 2021 report.

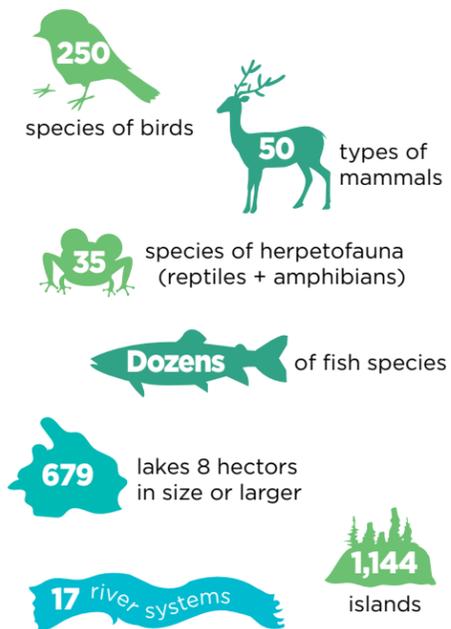
## Our Region

Area	Permanent Population	Seasonal Population
4,765 sq km	2016 = 60,599 2021 = 66,674	2016 = 81,907 2022 = 81,452

(Source: 2019 District of Muskoka Growth Strategy)



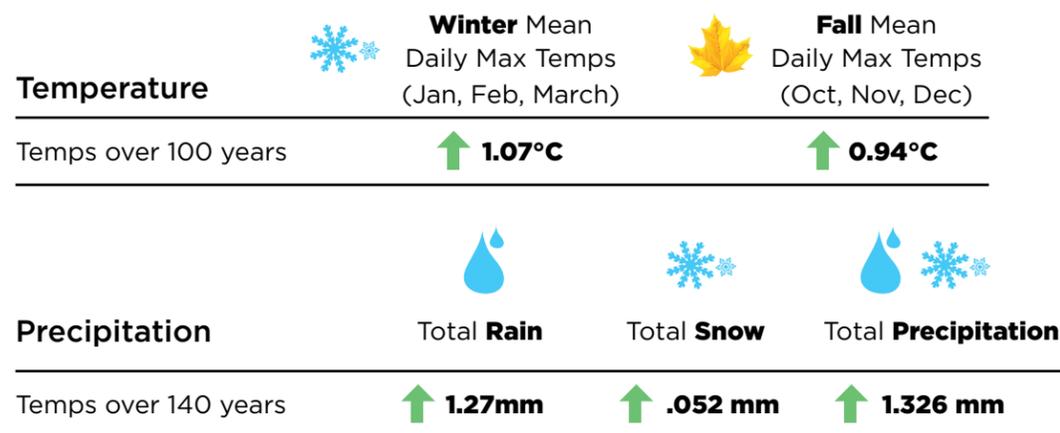
Muskoka is known for its natural environment that includes a mix of rocks, trees and water. With over 1000 lakes, 10 provincial parks, 10 conservation areas and 1 national park, Muskoka has a bounty of scenic beauty. Our environment supports an economy built on tourism and outdoor recreation and contributes to the local economy. It is also important to acknowledge the ways in which the natural environment impacts and enriches our lives. This section will highlight several areas that residents and visitors alike must consider to keep Muskoka's environment healthy. A detailed understanding of the health of Muskoka's environment can be found in the 2023 Muskoka Watershed Report Card produced by the Muskoka Watershed Council. To read the full report please go to [www.muskokawatershed.org/programs/report-card/](http://www.muskokawatershed.org/programs/report-card/)



<b>Total Area of District of Muskoka</b> 4765 sq km	<b>Area of Lakes</b> 939 sq km	<b>Area of Wetlands</b> 483 sq km	<b>Area of Land</b> 3343 sq km
--	-----------------------------------	--------------------------------------	-----------------------------------

### Climate Change in Muskoka

The effects of climate change in Muskoka are being identified and are already having significant impacts on Muskoka. Trends such as the duration of winter ice cover on lakes, changes in air temperature, patterns of precipitation, and the link between storms and floods are an indicator of climate change. While these changes seem small, over a long period of time, without significant interventions the impacts on Muskoka's environment will be severe.



As temperatures and precipitation continue to increase in Muskoka, so does the number of severe storms and spring flooding. Spring flooding in Muskoka is the result of a combination of a heavy snowpack, rapid melting and subsequent heavy rain can lead to the release of excess water into the watershed impacting the capacity of the lakes and rivers to contain it. To learn more visit [muskokawatershed.org](http://muskokawatershed.org).

**Species at Risk** include plants and animals that fall into the following categories: threatened with extinction, extirpation, or endangerment in a region. These species are at risk because of various natural and human-induced threats. Currently 48 species are listed as at risk in Muskoka that include:



For a complete list read the 2023 Muskoka Watershed Report Card at [muskokawatershed.org](http://muskokawatershed.org)

**Invasive Species** are non-native species that have been introduced to a region. In Muskoka there are 9 species impacting the environment that are proving difficult to eradicate. Each of these species can be found across Muskoka. Understanding the true extent of their foothold in the region is challenging as recording their locations is largely dependent on citizens reporting sightings. The following are some of the 9 invasive species found in Muskoka:



For a complete list read the 2023 Muskoka Watershed Report Card at [muskokawatershed.org](http://muskokawatershed.org)

### Muskoka's Forests

Keeping Muskoka's forests intact is key to supporting diverse wildlife, biodiversity, and CO2 storage. Muskoka's natural cover faces increased pressure from development and tourism activity that may result in habitat loss and a fragmented landscape.

Patches of habitat become smaller due to development activities such as building new roads, recreational trails, hydro corridors or when large natural area are broken into smaller pieces.

It is important to conserve Muskoka's forests to protect wildlife habitat, diverse wildlife populations, as well as the water quality of lakes and rivers. In addition, a healthy forest is essential to support the local tourism sector that is tied to the natural landscape. To learn more visit [muskokawatershed.org](http://muskokawatershed.org)

### Muskoka's Lakes and Rivers

According to the 2023 Muskoka Watershed Report Card - Muskoka area lakes continue to have excellent water quality, however there are areas of concern. As Muskoka experiences the effects of climate change local waterways become more vulnerable to multiple stressors that include invading species, changes in precipitation, temperature, runoff, and evaporation. There has also been an increase in reported algal blooms, including potentially toxic blue-green varieties. These stressors can impact a number of sectors within Muskoka's economy as well as the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors. To learn more visit [muskokawatershed.org](http://muskokawatershed.org)

As reported in previous Muskoka Vital Signs® Reports, Muskoka's economy has faced many challenges, most recently the impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic. Barriers affecting the local economy and labour participation include labour shortages, transportation, non-standard employment, lack of affordable housing, transportation, and access to childcare. Issues impacting Muskoka's economy are also directly connected to social issues such as health and wellness, food insecurity and the inability to secure safe and sustainable housing.

### Living Wage in Muskoka

A living wage is the hourly wage a worker needs to earn to cover their basic needs and participate in their community. This is different than the legislated minimum wage. A living wage helps to combat working poverty by making sure that people can make ends meet.

#### Living Wage Rates



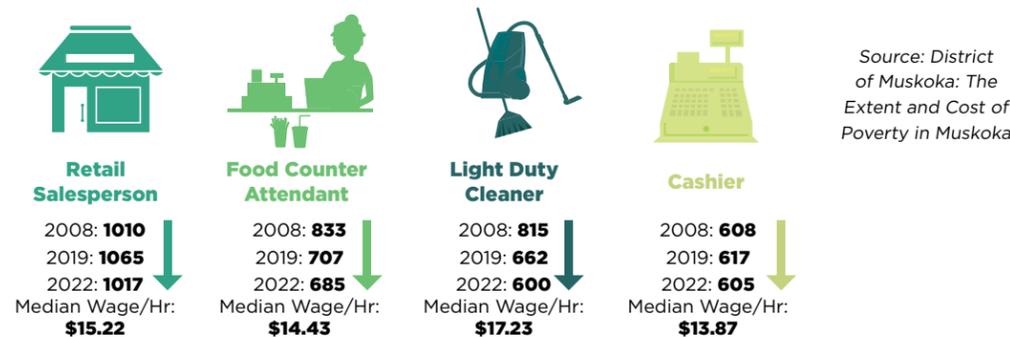
In 2023, Living Wage Ontario transitioned from reporting by community to reporting by region. The living wage calculation includes costs such as food, shelter, clothing, transportation, medical expenses and childcare. To learn more visit [ontariolivingwage.ca](http://ontariolivingwage.ca)

#### Ontario

Minimum Wage	Oct - Dec, 2021	Jan - Sept, 2022	Oct 2022 - Sept 2023
General Minimum Wage / per hour	\$14.35	\$15.00	\$15.50
Student Minimum Wage / per hour	\$13.50	\$14.10	\$14.60

Source: [ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-0/minimum-wage](http://ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-0/minimum-wage)

#### Occupations in Muskoka



### Muskoka's Labour Market

Muskoka's labour market includes high rates of seasonal employment, part-time employment and a significant number of individuals who are self-employed with no paid employees. According to Statistics Canada's Job Quality Index those working in Muskoka's largest occupations listed below are more likely to have non-standard employment arrangements and lack access to benefits, paid leave and a suitable work environment. Just under 50% of those employed in Muskoka are employed either part-time or for part of the year.

#### Main Industry Sectors in Muskoka



### Income Security

The Ontario Works program is designed to provide temporary support to those in need while they work towards becoming and staying employed. However, based on the high rates of seasonal and part-time employment, finding adequate employment is challenging. Those who are ready to seek employment face barriers such as transportation, shelter, food insecurity and access to childcare.

The Ontario Disability Support Program is intended to support individuals who have a substantial mental or physical impairment that is continuous or recurrent and is expected to last one year or more. Those receiving social assistance support face limited access to essential health services, have a reduced life expectancy, more likely to suffer from multiple chronic physical and mental health conditions and are vulnerable to homelessness.

The District of Muskoka has completed a comprehensive analysis on the extent of poverty in Muskoka as well as the cost associated with this complex issue. To learn more read The Extent and Cost of Poverty in Muskoka by visiting [muskoka.civicweb.net/filepro/documents/39100/?preview=39124](http://muskoka.civicweb.net/filepro/documents/39100/?preview=39124)

### Poverty in Muskoka

In 2021, almost 10% of Muskoka's total permanent population (66,674) is living with low income.

Age Group	# of persons - LIM-AT
0-17	960
18-64	3,485
65+	1,905
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,350</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

### Social Assistance Individuals Receiving:



Source: District of Muskoka -The Extent and Cost of Poverty in Muskoka

### Amounts allotted for basic needs and shelter as of September 2022

Households receiving Ontario Works have not seen an increase in their shelter and basic needs amounts since 2018. Those with children have received a small increase of the Ontario Child Benefit. Recipients of the Ontario Disability Support Program have seen the same increase as noted above as well as a 5% increase linked to the rate of inflation.

	Ontario Works	Ontario Disability Support Program
Single person	\$733.00	\$1,228.00
Single parent - 1 child	\$1,127.75	\$1,795.75
Single parent -2 children	\$1,308.50	\$1,989.50
Couple	\$1,136.00	\$1,839.00
Couple - 1 child	\$1,316.75	\$1,936.75
Couple - 2 Children	\$1,501.50	\$2,233.50

Source: Income Security Advocacy Centre

### Muskoka's Economic Snapshot

#### Median Employment Income 2020

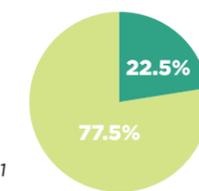
Muskoka \$32,000  
Ontario \$38,000

#### Employment Rate

2020 12.1%  
2021 10.8%

#### Class of Worker

Self Employed  
Employee



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population

Once thought to be primarily an urban issue, homelessness has been on the rise in smaller rural communities across Ontario. There are many contributing factors that lead to homelessness in Muskoka including the cost-of-living outpacing household incomes, irregular employment, the increase non-waterfront home prices and the lack of affordable housing stock.

**Average Monthly Shelter Costs in Muskoka**



Source: Statistics Canada 2021

**Housing Continuum**

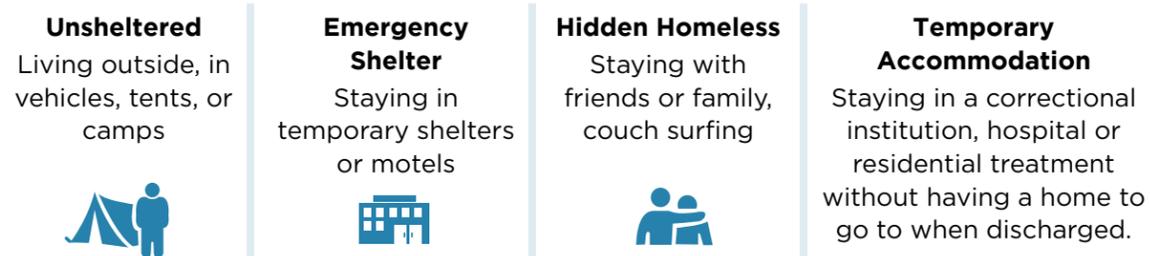


Source: The District of Muskoka

**Homelessness in Muskoka**

In 2021 the District of Muskoka, along with community partners, conducted the second bi-annual Homeless Enumeration and Point-In Time Count. While these surveys only represent a small subset of those served through the District of Muskoka’s housing and homelessness prevention program the results demonstrate the stark reality of those facing homelessness in Muskoka.

**Over a three-day period in October 2021 the District of Muskoka conducted a Homeless Enumeration to determine who in Muskoka is experiencing homelessness.**



**Average length of time that people in Muskoka experienced homelessness - 282.74 days or 8.14 month**

Of the individuals surveyed (150 people + 11 children) in the **2021 Homeless Enumeration**

- 53%** reported experiencing chronic homelessness
- 9%** reported staying in make-shift shelters, vehicles or places not meant for human habitation
- 40%** reported having a chronic/acute medical condition
- 67%** reported having a mental health concern/illness

It is important to note that the number of people enumerated represent a small subset of those served through the District of Muskoka housing and homelessness prevention program.

Source: 2021 Homelessness Enumeration Report

Households that experience longer periods of homelessness are at greater risk of increased trauma, have more complex needs and require more intensive supports to return to a state of housing stability.



- Adequate
- Appropriate
- Affordable
- Accessible
- Available

**Attainable Housing**

The more pieces that are missing, the more unstable housing becomes.

**Supportive Housing**

The District of Muskoka owns, manages or subsidizes



The District of Muskoka owns and manages



In 2022 there were more than **600 households** on the waitlist for various forms of supportive Housing

Source: District of Muskoka 2023 Housing and Homelessness Report

**Emergency Shelter Solutions** - The District of Muskoka provides short term stays (1-2 nights) in motels and/or campgrounds when households experiencing homelessness are unable to stay with friends/family or make alternative arrangements.

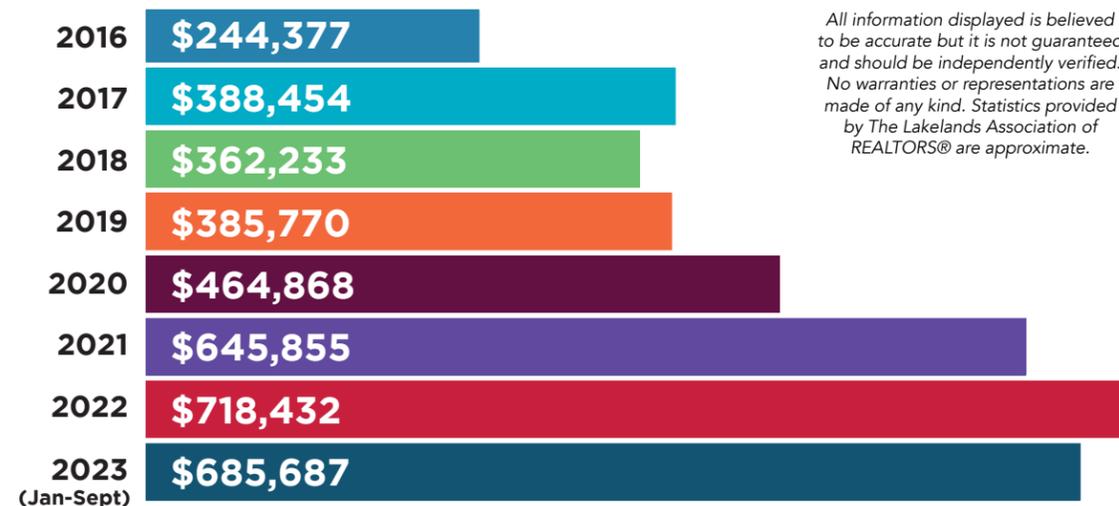
**Rental Market**

Muskoka Average Market Rent, May 2022



**Home Ownership**

Average Price of a Non-Waterfront Home in Muskoka



All information displayed is believed to be accurate but it is not guaranteed and should be independently verified. No warranties or representations are made of any kind. Statistics provided by The Lakelands Association of REALTORS® are approximate.

In previous reports this section was titled Food Security. Moving forward, this section will be referred to as Food Insecurity. It is important to make this distinction as food security refers to healthy food systems that can be impacted by supply chain issues and environmental changes. Food insecurity refers to inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints. PROOF uses the following levels to measure household food insecurity <https://proof.utoronto.ca/2023/new-data-on-household-food-insecurity-in-2022/>.

**Marginal:**

Worrying about running out of food and/or limiting food selection because of lack of money for food.

**Moderate:**

Compromising in quality and/or quantity of food due to a lack of money for food.

**Severe:**

Missing meals, reducing food intake, and at the most extreme going without food.

**Nutritional Food Basket**

In past reports we provided an annual comparison of the Nutritious Food Basket results for Muskoka. This is another area of the report where you will notice changes. Health Units across the Province have revised the way this information is collected, therefore making it difficult to compare data from previous years.



The Ontario Nutritious Food Basket is a standardized survey tool used by Ontario's local public health units to monitor accessibility and affordability of foods by relating the cost of food to individual and family incomes. It is not meant to reflect individual budget amounts for specific individuals, families, or specific regions.

**Nutritious Food Basket Survey Results**

Monthly	Family of Four 2 adults/ 2 children under 14	Single Parent with 2 children under 14	One Person Household under 50 years/age	Two Person Household under 50 years/age
2022	\$1,191	\$872	\$432	\$712
2023	\$1,269	\$933	\$456	\$758

Source: Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

Other sections of the Vital Signs Report will show that the combinations of rent and income will make it very difficult for many households in Muskoka to prioritize healthy food and put many at risk of living in food-insecure households.

**Impacts of Food Insecurity**

Many families in Muskoka do not have enough money to afford basic expenses and put healthy food on the table and must decide between food and other necessary expenses such as rent, utilities, transportation, childcare and medications.



Not having enough money for food can lead to:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Physical health issues such as poor oral health, diabetes and heart disease

Of the 11 food banks listed, 5 of them serve the more rural communities within Muskoka. Some of these organizations operate seasonally, often from September to April, while others are open regularly. Gaining access to healthy and affordable food can be a challenge for many rural residents. Access to food may be limited by financial constraints or other factors, such as transportation challenges. Rural shoppers may have to rely on more expensive and less nutritious food, such as those found at convenience stores or gas stations.

**Muskoka Food Banks**

**Huntsville**

- Table Soup Kitchen Foundation
- Salvation Army Huntsville

**Bracebridge**

- Manna Food Bank
- Salvation Army Bracebridge

**Gravenhurst**

- G.A.P
- Salvation Army Gravenhurst

**Muskoka Lakes**

- West Muskoka Food Bank

**Lake of Bays**

- Dwight Winter Pantry
- Winter Pantry Dorset and Baysville

**Georgian Bay Township**

- Port Severn Food Bank
- MacTier Food Bank

It is important to note that there are additional food programs serving individuals throughout Muskoka such as Out of the Cold, Food 4 Kids Muskoka, The Door. Many community service organizations also have food programs that support their clients.

**Stresses on Food Banks**

The rising cost of food also impact food banks and their ability to keep shelves stocked with adequate food. This coupled with a drop in annual donations results in many operational challenges for food banks. In addition, many food banks across Muskoka have seen an increase, in the number of households relying on their services. According to the Hunger Counts 2023 Report by Food Banks Canada, food bank visits across Canada have increased coinciding with the highest rates of general inflation in 40 years and the cost of essentials such as food, shelter, and transportation. As the purchasing power of households continues to drop, more households, including those in higher income brackets, are experiencing food insecurity.



Muskoka's first responders and dedicated community service organizations are ready at a moment's notice to help serve and protect Muskoka's residents and visitors. Muskoka's vast geographic area and fluctuating population in the summer months present some unique challenges. Knowing who to call when in need and how to best prepare for unexpected emergencies is important when potentially life-changing events occur.

## First Responders



### Police

Police services in Muskoka are provided by the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) on a fee-for-service basis. Police services are a financial responsibility of The District Municipality of Muskoka, funded through property tax revenue.

There are two OPP detachments in Muskoka - one in Bracebridge and one in Huntsville. The Midland detachment serves the Township of Georgian Bay.



### Paramedics

Since 2001 the District of Muskoka has assumed operational responsibility for the delivery of the Paramedic Services in Muskoka. Muskoka Paramedic Services provide professional emergency and non-urgent medical care to the residents and visitors of Muskoka. Currently there are five Paramedic Stations located across Muskoka: Bracebridge, Gravenhurst, Huntsville, MacTier and Port Carling.



### Fire Fighters

#### Bracebridge

Bracebridge Fire Department is made up of full time and paid on-call firefighters operating out of two fire stations, one in the Town of Bracebridge and one on Hwy 118 East.

#### Gravenhurst

The Gravenhurst Fire Department has 5 full time staff and over 50 paid on-call volunteers operating out of three fire stations located in Gravenhurst, Barkway Road and Kilworthy Road.

#### Huntsville/Lake of Bays

Huntsville/Lake of Bays Fire Department operates out of five stations with headquarters located at Station 1 in Huntsville. Each fire station is operated by a group of dedicated personnel that respond to emergencies through a 24/7 paging system

#### Georgian Bay Township

Over 45 dedicated volunteer firefighters assist the full-time Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chief. The municipality has fire stations in Honey Harbour, MacTier and Port Severn to quickly respond to crises in all three communities.

#### Muskoka Lakes

The fire department consists of four full time employees: one Fire Chief, one Deputy Fire Chief, one Fire Prevention Officer and an Administrative Assistant. 130 Part-time Fire Fighters operate from 10 fire stations located throughout the Township of Muskoka Lakes. Foot's Bay, Glen Orchard, Bala, Torrance, Walker's Point, Minett, Port Carling, Raymond, Windemere, Milford Bay.

## Emergency Preparedness

Residents and visitors have an important role to play in preparing for an emergency and are encouraged to know the potential risks and hazards, and to plan ahead. To learn more about emergency preparedness in your community review your Municipalities emergency plan.

Know the Risks

Make a Plan

Prepare an Emergency Kit

To learn more about how to prepare for an emergency visit:

[www.muskoka.on.ca/en/health-and-emergency-services/emergency\\_management](http://www.muskoka.on.ca/en/health-and-emergency-services/emergency_management)

The Muskoka Emergency Response Committee (MERC) is comprised of representatives from Muskoka's six area municipalities, Moose Deer Point First Nations, Wahta Mohawk First Nations and the District of Muskoka. The group collaborates to protect the health and safety of residents and visitors to Muskoka in times of emergency.

## Community Service Organizations

### Muskoka Victim Services

MVS utilizes trained volunteers and staff to provide immediate safety and support to victims of crime or tragic circumstances. As a confidential service MVS connects people to on-going support to build resilience. To learn more visit <https://muskokavs.ca>

### Community Mental Health Association Muskoka Parry Sound (CMHAMPS)

CMHAMPS offers services supporting individuals requiring counselling, crisis intervention and case management services.

Mental health programming for Indigenous individuals is available through B'Saanibamaadsiwin Aboriginal Mental Health Program. To learn more about the services available visit [www.mps.cmha.ca](http://www.mps.cmha.ca)

### MiND AID

MiND-AID is a needs-based, client-centered, cost-free local service, providing navigation assistance and support to young persons, who are looking for help on their journey to mental wellness. To learn more visit [www.mindaidmuskoka.com](http://www.mindaidmuskoka.com)

### Muskoka Parry Sound Sexual Assault Services (MPSSAS)

MPSSAS offers a number of services that support survivors including an online crisis chat services, counselling, and a 24-hour crisis support help line. To learn more visit [www.mpssas.org](http://www.mpssas.org)

### Muskoka Women's Shelters and Services (MWAG)

Muskoka Women's Shelters and Services/Muskoka Women's Advocacy Group (MWAG) operates two 24-hour anti-violence crisis shelters for abused women and their children. Muskoka Interval House is located in Bracebridge and Chrysalis in Huntsville. Chrysalis also offers supportive transitional housing units for vulnerable women. To learn more visit [www.mwag.ca](http://www.mwag.ca)

### District of Muskoka

The District of Muskoka offers several community services and support programs that include financial supports such as the Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support programs, social housing, emergency shelters, and emergency assistance. To learn more visit [www.muskoka.on.ca/en/community-services-and-support/community-services-and-support-directory.aspx](http://www.muskoka.on.ca/en/community-services-and-support/community-services-and-support-directory.aspx)

Health Care professionals in Muskoka strive to meet the unique needs of the local population as well as those visiting the District. Several factors contribute to the overall health of a community. This includes access to health care professionals, as well as appropriate and timely health care interventions. Muskoka’s vast geography can pose challenges to delivering effective and sustainable health care. During peak tourist season in July and August, on average there is a 25% increase in calls to the Muskoka Paramedic Services.

### Impacts on Health in Muskoka

When discussing health, it is important to consider the multiple factors that impact overall wellness.



### Healthcare in Muskoka and Area

	Hospital Admissions	June - September Emergency Visits	Total Emergency Visits
<b>2021-2021</b>	<b>4,850</b>	<b>21,506</b>	<b>41,305</b>
<b>2022-2023</b>	<b>4,562</b>	<b>21,254</b>	<b>43,514</b>

According to the Muskoka and Area Ontario Health Team Strategic Plan, the catchment area for the Muskoka and area health care services covers more than 5,000 square kilometers, encompassing communities in Muskoka and East Parry Sound with an estimated permanent population at just over 81,500 (see map on page 15). Access to care is impacted by the lack of transportation, fluctuating seasonal populations and the number of rural communities beyond the more populated centers in Muskoka.

Waitlists for primary care providers in Muskoka and area are long. Many families and individuals wait several years for access to ongoing primary care services. While the actual number of unattached patients is unknown, it is clear that the current primary care resources are insufficient to meet the demands of the population. Muskoka requires additional primary care providers and support to the primary care teams that will ensure that primary care can work effectively, addressing health concerns early and reducing the unnecessary use of hospital services. Predicted population growth and upcoming retirement of primary care providers will result in the further growth of the waitlist and perpetuate the challenges this is presenting. Primary care retention and recruitment in Muskoka are critical priorities.

The growing population of seniors presents an additional stress on the health care system, due to presenting conditions that could be treated outside of the hospital setting with appropriate community care support. Currently, the waitlists for long-term care beds in the area is more than 1,500 individuals. With only 492 beds in Muskoka and area, the waitlist for every long-term care bed corresponds to 3 people waiting up to 5 years

To learn more about health care in the Muskoka area visit [www.maoht.ca](http://www.maoht.ca)



### Spotlight on Muskoka’s Opioid Crisis

The chart below highlights the number of recorded deaths and emergency department visits related to opioid poisoning in Muskoka. Emergency Department (ED) visits for opioid poisonings among Muskoka residents increased significantly since the start of the pandemic. The 2022 rate of ED visits was the highest recorded since the start of the opioid crisis. The 2021-2022 rate of opioid deaths in Muskoka was above the provincial average.

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Deaths	12	19	9	19	18
Emergency Department Visits	45	38	54	57	69

\* It is important to note that the data for 2022 is still considered preliminary and could change as the Office of the Chief Coroner finalize records.

Source: Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

### Muskoka Drug Strategy

The Muskoka Drug Strategy (MDS) is a group of community partners, agencies and individuals that have been working together since 2010 to:

- Facilitate collaborative partnerships within the community.
- Develop and implement strategies and resources for a variety of target groups and the general population that will prevent and reduce harms.

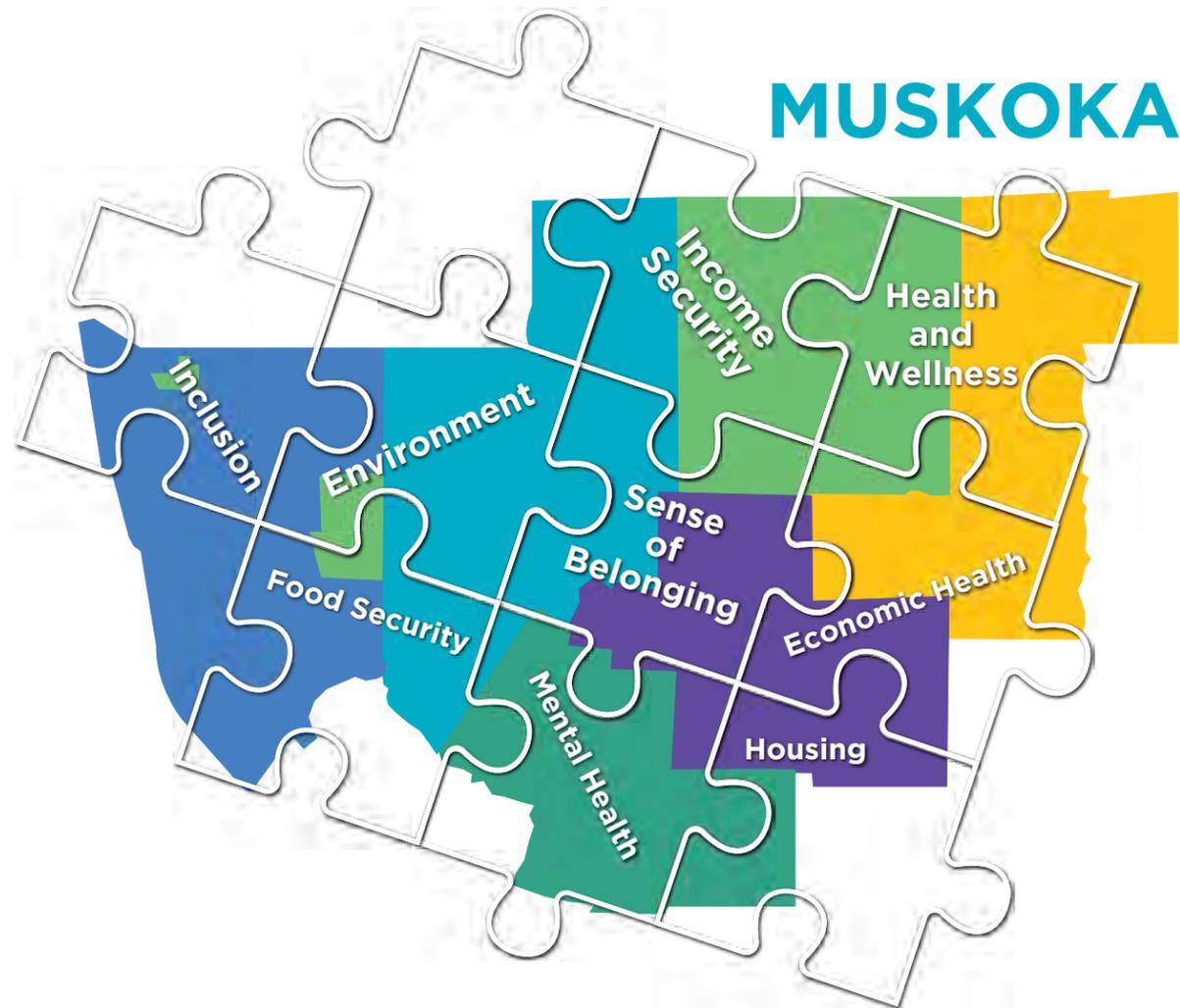
- Reduce stigma surrounding addiction and treatment.
- Promote local harm reduction resources.
- Build community capacity to support individuals with addiction and mental health.

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit is also the core site for the Ontario Naloxone Program (ONP) and the Needle Exchange Program (NEP) distribution for the District.

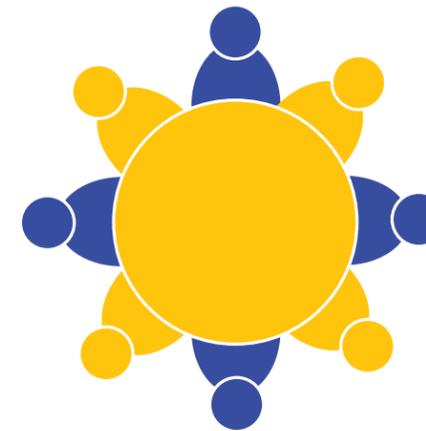
In order to explore each of the topics in greater depth, the report has been divided into distinct themes. It is important to note that the issues identified in specific themes cannot be truly understood in isolation. Throughout the report we have highlighted where different issues, topics and themes intersect.

For example, how the prevalence of non-standard employment in Muskoka (page 6) impacts the ability to attain safe and sustainable housing (page 8) and the increased reliance on food insecurity programs (page 10). Similarly, how a healthy environment (page 4) is closely linked to a robust Muskoka economy (page 8).

These are but a few examples of how topics in this report are interconnected. Devising strategies to improve the health and vitality of Muskoka, will require us to engage with these various complexities.



We acknowledge that this report does not provide a comprehensive overview of all of the issues that need to be considered when assessing the overall health and vitality of the Muskoka community. This report presents a snapshot of Muskoka at a specific point in time, as it relates to the themes highlighted in the report. Rather than presenting the final word, the goal of this report is to begin a dialogue and encourage discussion about what needs to be done to strengthen the well-being of Muskoka.



This is especially important as many of us continue to grapple with the ongoing effects of COVID 19. The lasting impacts of the pandemic resulted in many individuals in Muskoka being at greater risk of continued food scarcity, isolation, housing insecurity, and barriers to timely access to primary health care.

The release of the next report is planned for the fall of 2025. The Muskoka Community Foundation will continue to work with community partners to identify Muskoka specific data when possible. We are thankful for the contributions and dedication of local governments, social service agencies, charities, not-for-profits, service clubs and volunteers. As our community continues to deal with uncertainty, these partners work to find innovative ways to provide much needed services and support.

**Thank You!**

Muskoka Vital Signs® Partners



Muskoka Vital Signs® Key Sources

**Front Cover:**  
Gravenhurst High School's 2023 Visual Art Class – Ms. Aimee Bulloch

**2023 Muskoka Watershed Report Card:**  
[muskokawatershed.org/programs/report-card](https://muskokawatershed.org/programs/report-card)

**Ontario Living Wage Network:** [ontariolivingwage.ca](https://ontariolivingwage.ca)

**Employment Standards Act:**  
[ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-0/minimum-wage](https://ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-0/minimum-wage)

**Income Security Advocacy Centre:** [incomesecurity.org](https://incomesecurity.org)

**Statistics Canada 2021 Census of Population**

**Lakelands Association of Realtors**

**University of Toronto Proof:**  
[proof.utoronto.ca/2023/new-data-on-household-food-insecurity-in-2022](https://proof.utoronto.ca/2023/new-data-on-household-food-insecurity-in-2022)

**Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit:** [simcoemuskokahealth.org](https://simcoemuskokahealth.org)

**Muskoka Algonquin Health Care**

**Muskoka Area Ontario Health Team**

**The District of Muskoka**

- **The Extent and Cost of Poverty in Muskoka:** CPS-18-2022-2
- **District of Muskoka 2023 Housing and Homelessness Report:** CPS-1-2023
- **Emergency Preparedness:** [muskoka.on.ca/en/health-and-emergency-services/emergency\\_management.aspx](https://muskoka.on.ca/en/health-and-emergency-services/emergency_management.aspx)
- **2023 Muskoka Second Home Study:** <https://www.muskoka.on.ca/en/business-planning-development/Planning-Docs-Forms/2023-SHS-Final-Report.pdf>



Muskoka Vital Signs® Report Team

Board of Directors

- Glen Norton – Chair
- Bill Fee – Past Chair
- Tina Kilbourne – Vice Chair
- Ruth Nishikawa – Secretary
- Bob Collins – Treasurer
- Kim Doughty – Director
- Marilyn Jeffrey – Director
- Coel Balmer – Director
- Val Fleck – Director
- Richard Hay – Director
- Stu MacKinnon – Director

Staff

Lynn DeCaro – Executive Director

Design and Printing

Kim Knight – Knight Design  
Smellies Copy & Print Shop

Social Media Support

Rachel Crawford

Thank you to everyone who assisted with the 2023 Muskoka Vital Signs® Report



**Muskoka  
Community  
Foundation**

705-646-1220

PO Box 35, Bracebridge ON, P1L 1T5

[info@muskokacommunityfoundation.ca](mailto:info@muskokacommunityfoundation.ca)

[muskokacommunityfoundation.ca](http://muskokacommunityfoundation.ca)