



**TOWNSHIP OF ESSA
HEALTHY, ACCESSIBLE COMMUNITY AND PARKS COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

**THURSDAY JANUARY 15, 2025
Meeting Conducted via Zoom**

In Attendance:

**Patricia Foster, Member
Clarisse Estebar, Member
Stephanie McCann
Deputy Mayor Michael Smith
Sarah Orr-Shaw, SMDHU Representative**

Staff:

**Sarah Corbett, Deputy Clerk, Recording Secretary
Glenda Newbatt, Essa Public Library
Abbey McClinton, Parks and Recreation-Booking**

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

The Recording Secretary, opened the meeting at 3:02 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Resolution No: HACPC01-202 Moved by: P. Foster Seconded by: M. Smith

Be it resolved that the agenda as presented be approved.

----Carried-----

3. DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

None.

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolution No: HACPC02-2026 Moved by: M. Smith Seconded by: S. McCann

Be it resolved that the minutes of the Healthy Community Committee dated October 16, 2025, be received.

----Carried-----

5. BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING / OUTSTANDING ITEMS

5.1 Workplan Update – Verbal Update

6. NEW BUSINESS

6.1 Resignation of Chair

Resolution No: HACPC03-2026 Moved by: S. McCann Seconded by: M. Smith

Be it resolved that the resignation of Chair, Cheryl Jackson, be received.

----Carried-----

6.2 Selection of Chair

Resolution No: HACPC04-2026 Moved by: S. McCann Seconded by: C. Estebar

Be it resolved that the Patricia Foster has been nominated as the HACPC Committee Chair for the remainder of the 2022-2026 term.

----Carried-----

7. CORRESPONDENCE / INFORMATION ITEMS

None.

8. OTHER BUSINESS/ ROUND TABLE

8.1 Essa Public Library

Glenda Newbatt, Essa Public Library provided an update regarding chair yoga, and the accessible gardens programs.

8.2 Parks and Recreation

Abby McClinton, Parks and Recreation provided an update on the asphalt leading to the baseball park in Thornton. She also provided an update on the renewing of municipal parks and the addition of shade installations in the Spring of 2026.

8.3 Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

Sarah Orr, SMDHU provided an update on the Health Status Summary for the Township of Essa.

9. ESTABLISH DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

9.1 The next committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday April 16, 2026 at 3:00 p.m. via Zoom.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Resolution No: HACPC05-202 Moved by: S. McCann Seconded by: M. Smith

Be it resolved that this meeting of the Healthy, Accessible Community and Parks Committee of the Township of Essa adjourn at 3:20 p.m.

----Carried-----

Patricia Foster, Chair

Sarah Corbett, Acting Clerk

Assessment and Analysis
Town of Essa
October 10, 2025

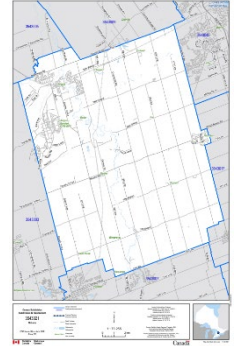
Demographics

Assessment/Analysis

Essa Township is located in Simcoe County, southwest of Barrie. Known for its agricultural roots—particularly potato farming—it includes communities such as Angus, Thornton, Baxter, and Utopia.⁽¹⁾

According to [2021 Statistics Canada](#) Census data:

- **Population:** [22,970](#)
- **Population Growth (2016–2021):** [9%](#)
- **Average Age:** [37.9](#) years
- **Age Distribution:**
 - 0–14 years: 20.2%
 - 15–64 years: [68%](#)
 - 65+: 11.9%
- **Indigenous Identity:** 3.6% self-identify as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit
- **Immigrant Population:** [11.8%](#)



Lone-Parent Families:

- **13.8%** of census families in Essa were **one-parent families**.
- This includes families where one parent lives with one or more children without a spouse or partner present.
- **68.0%** were married couples
- **18.1%** were common-law couples

Based on Simcoe Muskoka HealthSTATS:

- Estimated below Simcoe County average of 31%; majority led by women (76%)

Housing

Assessment/Analysis

According to [2021 Statistics Canada](#) Census data:

- Home Ownership Rate: 85.7%
- Renter Households: 14.3%
- Households Spending 30%+ on Shelter: 24.2%
- Average Rent (2023): \$1,828
- Dwelling Types: Predominantly single-detached homes

Marginalization Index: High marginalization in household and dwelling dimensions in several areas, indicating instability and housing vulnerability [Ontario Marginalization Index Map \(arcgis.com\)](#)

Homelessness Rate

- Essa Township accounted for **8%** of Simcoe County's homelessness in the 2022 enumeration.
- 722 individuals were counted county-wide, with 70% experiencing chronic homelessness.
- 30% identified as Indigenous, and 61% had substance use issues. [simcoe.ca](#)

Subsidized Housing Availability

- Simcoe County operates 1,292 rent-geared-to-income (RGI) units and 360 affordable units.
- A centralized waitlist is maintained; applications are currently closed due to high demand.
- Barrier-free units are included in new builds. [\[simcoe.ca\]](http://simcoe.ca)
- While Essa may not host a large number of subsidized units, its residents are served by county-wide programs and nearby housing supports. This makes subsidized housing accessible, though not necessarily locally abundant. [\[simcoe.ca\]](http://simcoe.ca)

Education

Assessment/Analysis

- No High School Diploma (25–64 years): 11.9%
- Post-secondary Attainment (25–64 years): 58.5%
- Youth (18–24) in Postsecondary Education: 41.8%
- School Performance (2021–2022):
 - Grade 3 Math scores range from 40% to 71%
 - Grade 6 Math scores range from 14% to 59%
 - Reading and writing scores generally higher
 - 5–10% of students live in lower-income households

Ontario Ministry of Education School Search-Essa School year 2021-2022	Grade 3: Percentage of students achieving the provincial standard			Grade 6: Percentage of students achieving the provincial standard			Percentage of School-Age Children who Live in Lower-income households
	Reading	Writing	Math	Reading	Writing	Math	
Angus Morrison Elementary School	67%	55%	53%	81%	67%	42%	10%
Baxter Central Public School	56%	58%	49%	86%	64%	36%	10%
Cookstown Central Public School	74%	62%	71%	87%	86%	59%	8%
Our Lady of Grace School	63%	55%	44%	68%	78%	14%	10%
Pine River Elementary School	63%	50%	53%	64%	50%	28%	5%
EEC Marguerite-Bourgeois-Borden	65%	45%	40%	88%	71%	41%	5%

Employment and Income

Assessment/Analysis

According to 2021 Statistics Canada Census data:

- **Unemployment Rate:**
 - Men: 12.8%
 - Women: 12.4%
- **Casual/Seasonal/Short-Term Employment:** 8.4%

Essa Township – Labour Force by Age Group

Youth (15–24 years):	Adults (25–64 years):	Seniors (65+ years):
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Total: 2,425• In Labour Force: 1,555• Employed: 1,190• Unemployed: 360• Not in Labour Force: 875• Participation Rate: 64.1%• Employment Rate: 49.1%• Unemployment Rate: 23.2%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Total: 13,020• In Labour Force: 10,745• Employed: 9,790• Unemployed: 955• Not in Labour Force: 2,275• Participation Rate: 82.5%• Employment Rate: 75.2%• Unemployment Rate: 8.9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Total: 2,725• In Labour Force: 505• Employed: 455• Unemployed: 50• Not in Labour Force: 2,215• Participation Rate: 18.5%• Employment Rate: 16.7%• Unemployment Rate: 9.9%

Transfer Payment Recipients

- While specific counts for Essa are not published, Simcoe County data shows:
 - OW and ODSP recipients are increasing.
 - 26% of food bank users rely on OW, and 28% on ODSP.
- Essa's vulnerable populations likely reflect similar trends. [\[feedontario.ca\]](https://www.feedontario.ca)

Low Income Measure After Tax (LIM-AT)

- Essa's median after-tax household income: \$93,000.
- LIM-AT thresholds vary by household size; individuals earning less than 50% of the median are considered low-income.
- Essa has pockets of material deprivation, suggesting LIM-AT relevance.

Based on regional estimates and income distribution data:

- Estimated LIM-AT Rate: Approximately 7.5% of Essa residents live below the Low Income Measure After Tax.
- Key Groups Affected: Lone-parent families, renters, and seniors on fixed incomes.
- Comparison: Lower than Simcoe Muskoka average (~10.3%), but pockets of material deprivation exist, especially in areas with high housing costs and limited employment opportunities.

Median Income by Gender

- Men (25–59 years): Median employment income: \$67,500
- Women (25–59 years): Median employment income: \$42,800
- Gender income gap: \$24,700 [\[www12.statcan.gc.ca\]](https://www12.statcan.gc.ca)

Income Distribution – Bottom 40%

- 1,390 individuals earn under \$10,000.
- 3,200+ individuals earn under \$30,000.
- This suggests a significant bottom 40% income share, relevant for equity analysis.

Based on the Ontario Marginalization Index Map:

- **Material Deprivation**
Present in parts of Essa, especially where income and employment challenges exist. Linked to limited access to housing, food, education, and health services.
- **Residential Instability**
Moderate levels due to a relatively low renter population (14.3%) and high homeownership (85.7%).
Some areas show vulnerability due to housing affordability pressures.
- **Dependency**
Reflects a moderate proportion of non-working populations (children, seniors, and people with disabilities).
- **Ethnic Concentration**
Essa has lower ethnic concentration compared to urban centres.
[Ontario Marginalization Index Map \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com)

Compared to Simcoe County, Essa Township generally shows lower marginalization than more urbanized or economically challenged areas. However, pockets of vulnerability exist, particularly related to housing affordability and income inequality.

Living Wage Region for Essa Township

- Essa Township is part of Simcoe County, and Simcoe County is grouped under the “Grey Bruce Perth Huron Simcoe” region by the Ontario Living Wage Network (OLWN).
- This regional grouping is used for living wage calculations, not for political or administrative boundaries.
- The 2025 living wage for this region is \$24.60/hr, which applies to Essa Township residents for the purposes of wage adequacy assessments. ontariolivingwage.ca
- No certified living wage employers currently listed in Essa Township.

Top Industries:

- Public Administration
- Manufacturing
- Retail Trade
- Healthcare & Social Assistance
- Construction simcoe.ca

Top Occupations:

- Sales & Service (31.8%)
- Trades & Transport (18.5%)
- Business & Administration (13.5%) city-data.com

Commute Patterns:

- **Commuting Destinations:**
 - Within Essa: 2,775 people
 - To other Simcoe municipalities: 4,565
 - Outside Simcoe County: 1,610

- **Commute Duration:**
 - Under 15 min: 2,780
 - 15–29 min: 4,025
 - 30–44 min: 1,435
 - 45–59 min: 725
 - 60+ min: 1,470 [\[simcoe.ca\]](http://simcoe.ca)

Access to Subsidized Child Care

- Simcoe County oversees child care fee subsidies, including for Essa residents.
- Simcare Childcare Services supports families in Angus and surrounding areas.
- Eligibility is income-based and includes licensed home and centre-based care. [\[simcarechildcare.ca\]](http://simcarechildcare.ca)

Culture

Assessment/Analysis

- A small but present Indigenous community, slightly above the provincial average and reflects the presence of Indigenous families and cultural heritage in the region.
- The township has a predominantly English-speaking population, with limited representation from visible minority groups.
- Essa includes EEC Marguerite-Bourgeois-Borden, a French-language Catholic school, indicating a Francophone presence.
- Cultural diversity is increasing, though below provincial averages.

Household Food Insecurity

Assessment/Analysis

Essa Township likely experiences moderate levels of household food insecurity, especially among:

- Lone-parent families
- Renters
- Low-income and unemployed residents
- Targeted supports such as affordable housing, income assistance, and community food programs can help mitigate these risks.

Food Bank Usage

While Essa does not have a dedicated food bank, residents access services through:

- Angus Food Bank (Angus Food Bank Society)
- Barrie Food Bank (for overflow and emergency referrals)
- Estimated Usage: Approximately 5% of households in Essa may rely on food bank services annually.
- Demographics Most Affected: Lone-parent families, ODSP/OW recipients, and seniors.

Health and Wellbeing

Assessment/Analysis

Mental Health & Addictions

- Essa is part of Simcoe County’s Community Safety and Well-Being Plan, which identifies mental health and addictions as priority areas.
- Rural communities like Essa may face barriers to accessing mental health services, including transportation, stigma, and limited local providers.
- Youth and seniors are particularly vulnerable to isolation and mental health challenges.

Healthcare Access

- Stevenson Memorial Hospital in Alliston serves Essa residents.
- Average ER wait time for initial physician assessment: 1–3 hours.
- Essa Township contributed \$8,450 toward hospital redevelopment in 2024, reflecting community investment in healthcare infrastructure.
- Primary care access may be limited for some residents, especially those without transportation or living in outlying areas.

Residents Without a Primary Health Care Provider

- Essa residents without a family doctor or nurse practitioner can register with Health Care Connect.
- Simcoe County is designated as a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA), indicating limited access in rural areas like Essa. [\[ruralhealthinfo.org\]](https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org)

Chronic Disease & Risk Factors

- Simcoe Muskoka region reports high rates of chronic conditions such as:
 - Cardiovascular disease
 - Diabetes
 - Respiratory illnesses
- Risk factors include:
 - Poor nutrition
 - Physical inactivity
 - Tobacco and substance use
 - Food insecurity

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

- Children in low-income or unstable households are at increased risk of ACEs.
- Lone-parent families (13.8% in Essa) and households facing housing insecurity are more likely to experience stressors that impact child development.

Marginalization & Health Equity

- The **Ontario** Marginalization Index shows pockets of material deprivation and residential instability in Essa.
- These factors are linked to poorer health outcomes and reduced access to services.
- Vulnerable populations include:
 - Seniors
 - Indigenous residents
 - Low-income families
 - People with disabilities

Community Strengths

- Essa benefits from:
 - Strong community networks
 - Local recreation programs
 - Access to nature and outdoor spaces
- These assets support mental wellness, physical activity, and social connection.

Environment

Assessment/Analysis

Natural Environment

- Essa Township spans 279.92 km² of primarily rural and agricultural land.
- The area includes forests, rivers (notably the Nottawasaga River), and farmland, contributing to biodiversity and ecological health.

Climate & Heat Vulnerability

- According to HealthyDesign.city, rural communities like Essa may experience heat vulnerability due to:
 - Limited tree canopy in some residential areas
 - Older housing stock with poor insulation
 - Lower access to cooling infrastructure (e.g., air conditioning, shaded public spaces)
- Vulnerable populations include seniors, children, and low-income households, who may be more exposed to heat stress during extreme weather events.

Tree Canopy & Green Space

- While Essa has significant natural areas, tree canopy coverage varies across neighbourhoods.
- Estimated average tree canopy coverage ~28%
- Higher in rural areas, lower in subdivisions

Maintaining and expanding tree cover is important for:

- Reducing urban heat island effects
- Supporting mental health and physical activity
- Enhancing air quality and stormwater management

Parks & Recreation

- Essa offers a range of outdoor amenities:
 - 4 fishing parks along the Nottawasaga River
 - Trails, splash pads, sports fields, and playgrounds
 - Community events: Farmers markets, Salmon Festival
 - Commemorative bench program and community gardens
- These assets promote active living, social connection, and mental wellbeing.

Environmental Planning

- Essa participates in regional planning efforts through Simcoe County, including:
 - Climate change adaptation strategies
 - Land use and conservation policies
 - Waste management and water protection initiatives

Older Adults

Assessment/Analysis

Older Adults in Essa Township – Key Insights

Demographics & Participation

- Older adults (65+) make up 12% of Essa's population.
- The Age-Friendly Simcoe County 2023 Community Survey had 68 respondents from Essa, primarily aged 65–84, with some 85+ participants.
- Respondents included retirees, caregivers, and concerned citizens, offering diverse perspectives.

Top Aspirations Among Older Adults

- 66% look forward to enjoying hobbies and interests.
- 53% anticipate spending more time with loved ones.
- 38% hope to travel.
- 35% want to engage in physical and cultural activities.

Top Concerns for the Future

- 71% worry about declining physical health.
- 46% fear losing independence.
- 43% are concerned about mobility and transportation.
- 41% are concerned about declining mental health.
- Other concerns include aging alone, falling/injury, financial insecurity, and end-of-life care.

Housing Needs

- 20% of older adults require home modifications to age in place.
- Awareness of housing support programs is low:
 - Only 10% knew about the Age-Friendly Housing Grant.
 - Only 12% were aware of Seniors Village Campuses.
- There is a strong desire for affordable, accessible housing, such as bungalow condos and one-floor homes with gardens.

Transportation Challenges

- No respondents reported using public transit; reliance is primarily on personal vehicles or private transport.
- Rural isolation and nighttime driving concerns are significant barriers.
- There is demand for expanded services, especially between Angus and Alliston, and better awareness of LINX and CT Link services.

Social Inclusion & Participation

- Only 48% feel respected and valued by their community.
- 38% say there are insufficient opportunities to engage in community programs.
- 27% feel community decisions don't adequately consider aging adults.
- Barriers to social participation include distance, cost, health, and lack of information.

Health & Community Support

- 72% rate their physical health as good to excellent.
- 77% rate their mental health similarly.

- Noted improvements include:
 - Community paramedicine
 - Senior daycare programs
 - Exercise programs and park upgrades
 - Pickleball at the arena
- Needs include:
 - In-home care
 - Rehabilitation facilities
 - Meal preparation and house cleaning support

Affordability & Accessibility

- Top affordability issues:
 - Automobile expenses
 - Food
 - Home repairs
- Top accessibility issues:
 - Public transportation
 - Home repairs
 - Community transportation services

Summary

Essa Township is a resilient and evolving rural community with a young population and strong agricultural roots. While most residents own their homes and live in stable family structures, pockets of vulnerability exist—particularly among lone-parent families, renters, and low-income households. Key challenges include housing affordability, educational attainment, employment stability, food insecurity, and access to health services. Moderate levels of marginalization are present, with some areas experiencing material deprivation and residential instability.

Despite these challenges, Essa benefits from strong community networks, natural assets, and investments in healthcare, recreation, and public infrastructure. Cultural diversity is increasing, and the township is well-positioned to support inclusive growth and wellbeing. Older adults, who represent a growing segment of the population, face specific barriers related to transportation, housing accessibility, and affordability. Addressing these needs—alongside continued focus on health, housing, education, and inclusion—will support a thriving and equitable future for all residents.

References

Demographics, Families, and Lone-Parent Data

1. Statistics Canada – Census Profile, 2021: Essa Township
2. Statistics Canada – Focus on Geography Series, 2021: Essa Township

Housing

3. Statistics Canada – Housing Profile, 2021: Essa Township
4. Simcoe County – Housing Needs Assessment (2023)
5. Simcoe County – Affordable Housing Dashboard
6. Simcoe County – Housing Programs
7. Simcoe County – Homelessness Enumeration

Education

8. Statistics Canada – Education Profile, 2021: Essa Township
9. Simcoe Muskoka HealthSTATS – Education Indicators
10. Ontario Ministry of Education – School Information Finder

Employment and Income

11. Statistics Canada – Labour Force Survey, June 2025
12. Statistics Canada – Canadian Income Survey, 2023
13. Simcoe Muskoka HealthSTATS – Income Inequality
14. [Ontario Living Wage Network – Living Wage Regions](#)
15. Statistics Canada – Census Profile: Income & Employment
16. Simcoe County – Child Care Services
17. Maytree – Social Assistance Summaries
18. Statistics Canada – Commuting Patterns

Health and Wellbeing

18. Simcoe Muskoka HealthSTATS – Opioid Surveillance Report
19. Simcoe County – Community Safety and Well-Being Plan
20. [Stevenson Memorial Hospital – Emergency Department](#)
21. Ontario Health – Find a Doctor or Nurse Practitioner

Food Insecurity

22. PROOF – Household Food Insecurity in Canada
23. Simcoe Muskoka HealthSTATS – Food Insecurity
24. Feed Ontario – Hunger Report

Environment and Parks

25. HealthyDesign.city – HealthyPlace.City Tool
26. [Essa Township – Parks and Recreation](#)
27. HealthyDesign.city – Air Quality and Urban Heat Islands

Older Adults Insights

29. Age-Friendly Simcoe County. (2023). [Community Survey Results. Simcoe County.](#)