

THUNDER BAY DISTRICT
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD

Ontario Works Service Plan

2010-2011

Board Approved: September 23, 2010

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Section 1: Ontario Works Vision and Mandate

TBDSSAB Ontario Works Vision

To facilitate improved employment outcomes for Ontario Works participants by providing opportunities to increase individual employability with the goals of increased financial independence and sustainable employment.

Mandate

To provide employment assistance and temporary financial assistance to people in financial need. The Ontario Works program:

- recognizes individual responsibility and promotes self-reliance through employment;
- provides temporary financial assistance to those in need while they meet obligations to become and stay employed;
- effectively serves people needing assistance; and
- is accountable to the taxpayers of Ontario.

Section 2: Environmental Scan

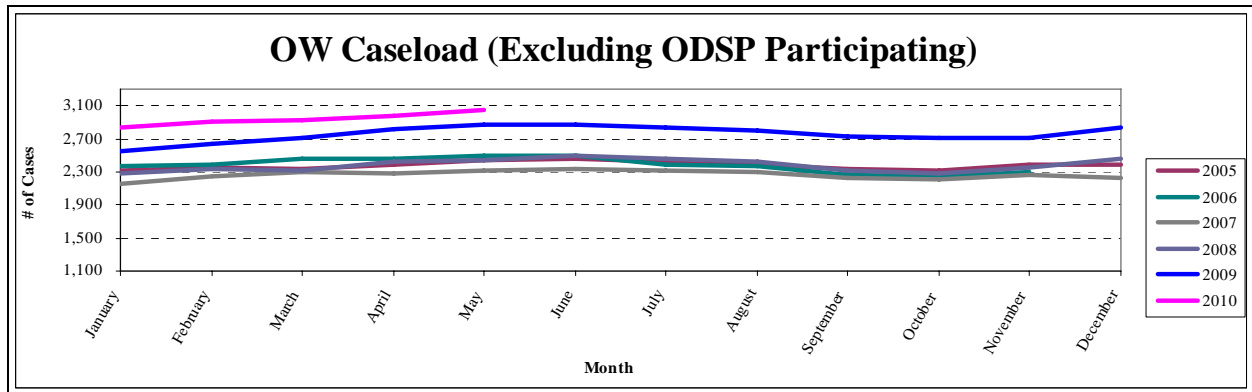
Analysis of Previous Planning Cycle

Delivering the Ontario Works (OW) program during the 2008 – 2009 planning cycle was particularly challenging primarily due to the significant rise in applications and caseload coupled with an insufficient level of staffing. In addition, since the inception of OW an increasing number of provincial initiatives have been implemented placing greater demands upon Service Managers. A total of 15, 49 and 60 ad hoc reports were received in each of the years 2007, 2008, and 2009 respectively. This represents a 300% increase over 2007 in the number of ad hoc reports requiring action in 2009. The number of initiatives coupled with a provincial funding allocation for cost of administration that had been frozen at 2003 levels was having a negative impact upon delivery of the program. In 2009 the TBDSSAB welcomed the opportunity to cost share on additional provincial funding that the province advises would be available for the years 2009 and 2010 while the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) reviews its OW cost of administration funding allocations across the province. However, concern remains regarding the level of funding that will be available following the review and the impact that any reduction in current funding levels would have upon program delivery particularly in light a 26% increase in the caseload between December 31, 2007 and December 31, 2009, increasing trend experienced in the number of initiatives/ad hoc reports requiring action, and rising costs of service delivery which includes but is not limited to the cost of purchased municipal services to achieve economies of scale and a significant increase in OMERs contributions announced for the next three years.

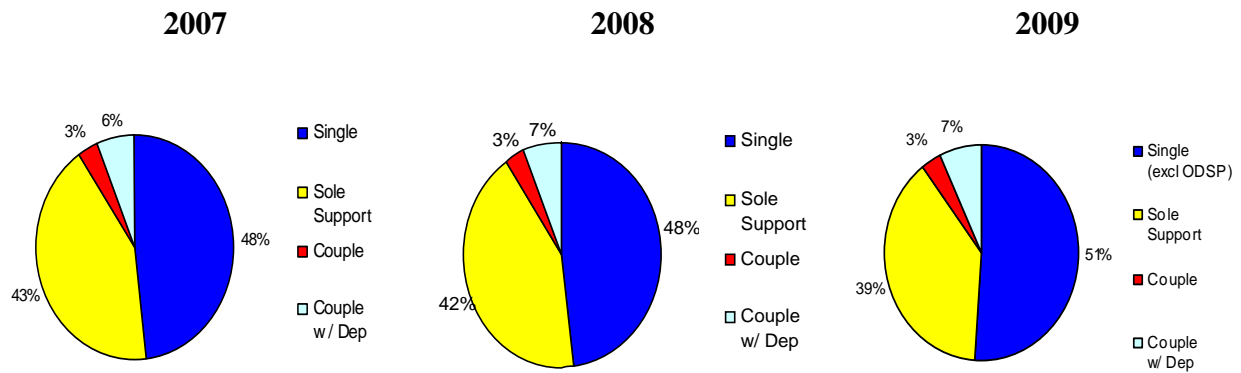
Although there were challenges delivering the OW program during the last service cycle, the OW Division is comprised of dedicated, hard working staff that achieved notable service delivery outcomes as illustrated throughout this service plan.

CASELOAD DESCRIPTION¹

During the 2008-09 service cycle, the caseload increased by 11% between December 31, 2007 (i.e., 2,226) and December 31, 2008 (i.e., 2,463), and a further 15% increase between December 31, 2008 and December 31, 2009 (i.e., 2,829). Between 2008 and 2009 the TBDSSAB caseload experienced a decrease in the number of sole support families and an increase in the number of single recipients.



OW Caseload Composition



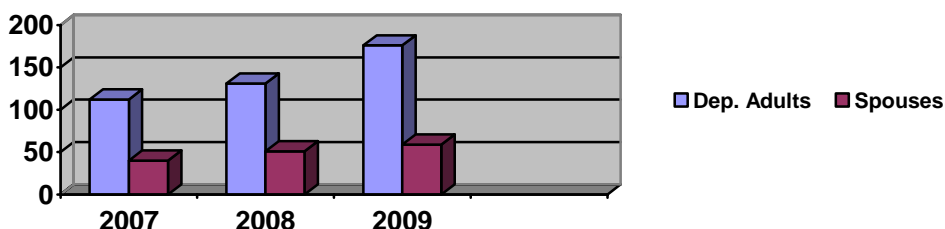
Local caseload statistical reporting was changed starting January 2010 to exclude non disabled spouses and dependent adult beneficiaries of the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) who participate in the OW Employment Program from the regular OW caseload reports to bring locals statistics in line with those of the province. Consequently ODSP beneficiaries participating in the OW Employment Program are now locally reported separately as “ODSP participating”.

OW employment services continue to be provided for a growing ODSP participating caseload. In 2007 OW employment services were providing to 152 ODSP participating clients which number

¹ See Appendix 1 for more detailed description of the caseload.

grew to 182 in 2008 and further to 235 participants in 2009. This represents a notable 55% increase in the number of non disabled spouses and dependent adult beneficiaries of the ODSP program who participate in OW employment programming.

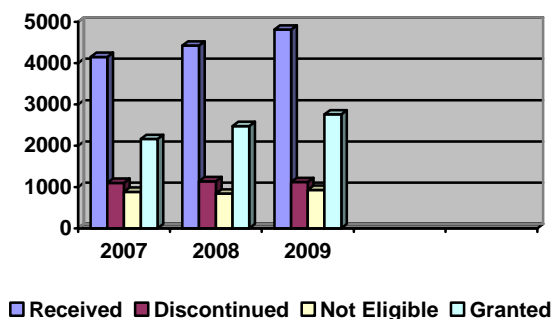
Non Disabled ODSP Participating In OW Employment Services



OUTCOMES

Applications

In 2008 the number of applications received was 4,423 representing a 7% increase over those received in 2007. Of the application received, 1,106 applicants chose to discontinue, 840 applicants were deemed not eligible and 2,477 applications were granted. In 2009 the number of applications received rose by another 13% with 4,809 applications being received of which 1,119 applicants chose to discontinue, 931 were found ineligible and 2,759 determined eligible.



Enhanced Family Support Initiative (EFSI)

The 2008-09 service cycle continued to be busy for Family Support Workers (2.5 FTEs) delivering EFSI. While reductions were experienced in the number of cases with support in pay and the total support dollars in pay, a contributing factor was a 5% reduction in the number of sole support parent cases. Overall a slight increase of \$3.35 was observed in the average amount of support in pay.

	2008	2009
No. of Referrals	657	867
No. of Sole Support Parent Cases	2,050	1,947
Total Number of Cases with Support in Pay	264	242
Total Support in Pay (\$)	65,803.46	60,992.91

Average Support in Pay (\$)

Year	Target (\$)	Actual (\$)
2008	214.74	256.53
2009	215.27	254.71

Consolidated Verification Process (CVP)

The consolidated verification process is an annual review to verify entitlement of clients to benefits in respect of the benefits issued. During the 2009 service year the number of staff (2.5 FTE) performing CVP was reduced to address the increasing demands of applications for assistance in accordance with service delivery strategies authorized by the Director of Ontario Works, MCSS.

Year	Target ²	Actual
2008	1,057	1,264
2009	1,059	1,210

Eligibility Review (ER)

The occurrence of fraud amongst the TBDSSAB caseload is relatively small in number and the total restitution ordered ranged from .1% to .3% of the total client allowances and benefits budgeted over the last service cycle. Similarly the total amount of overpayments represented .5% and .02% of the budgeted client allowances and benefits for the service years 2008 and 2009 respectively.

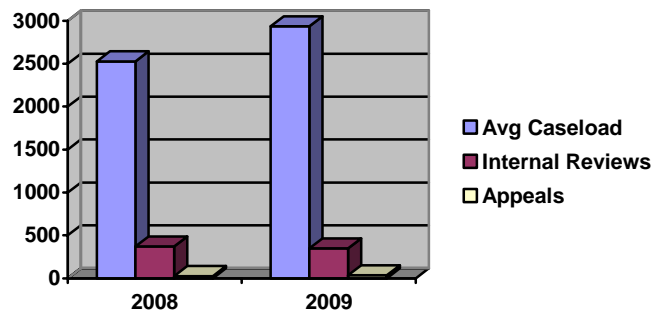
	2008	2009
Allegations	150	157
Investigations	136	106
Charges	19	9
Convictions	11	2
Overpayments (\$)	105,182	36,356
Number of Restitution Orders	6	6
Restitution Orders (\$)	26,709	77,401
Average Restitution Ordered (\$)	4,452	12,900

The number of restitution orders in any given year will not match the number of convictions as restitution orders are carried forward from year to year. Further, a variance between the number of charges and convictions results when charges are withdrawn by the Crown due to payment of full restitution (2008:2), charges remain outstanding in the court system pending resolution (2008:5, 2009:2), and also when cases have yet to be tried and warrants have been issued because the accused fails to appear in court.

² Represents the minimum number of cases to be eligible for incentive funding.

Internal Reviews & Appeals

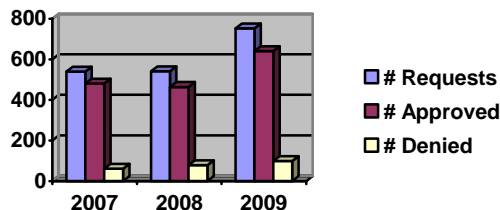
Despite an increasing caseload, the number of requests for internal review received in 2009 was less than received in 2008 (i.e., 347 and 369 respectively). The number of appeals rose slightly in 2009 to 36 representing a 38% increase over the 26 appeals received in 2008. However, the overall number of internal reviews and appeals is nominal in respect of the number of decisions made each year. Although reviews and appeals are made relative to eligibility decisions other than applications for assistance, statistics concerning the number of decision made are not available through the Service Delivery Model Technology (SDMT). Thus, conservatively the number of appeals represents 1.1% of all applications granted which is low and indicate that staff are making decisions consistent with the legislation. When eligibility decisions are upheld during the internal review process the client will often be referred to the legal clinic for assistance should they wish to appeal decision not related to discretionary benefits which cannot be appealed.



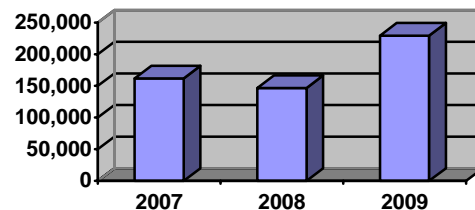
ODSP Discretionary Benefits

As of December 3, 2009, the annual number of discretionary benefits services administered by the OW Division to ODSP recipients increased 39% between 2007 and 2009 (i.e., from 540 to 752) accompanied by a 42% increase in the annual cost (i.e., from \$161,830 to \$229,587).

ODSP Discretionary Services



ODSP Discretionary Expenditures



HOMELESSNESS & HOMELESS PREVENTION PROGRAMS

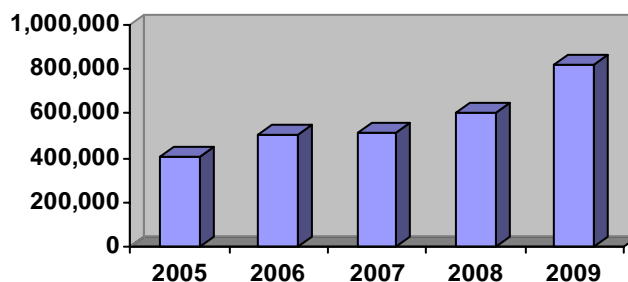
Emergency Hostel Per Diems

Since 2007 the cost of shelter bed per diems has risen exponentially. Absence of a sufficient stock of safe, affordable one bedroom units is having an impact upon emergency hostel bed utilization. Moreover amongst the shelter residents exists an increasing population of individuals who are chronic consumers due to untreated medical and/or mental health conditions and thus unable to live independently in absence of supportive housing and connectivity to medical and/or mental health services. This population is very vulnerable often being victims of abuse or violence and, in some cases may be perpetrators of harm to self or others given their health conditions are not under control.

The increasing cost of shelter per diems illustrates the need for concentrated multi-level government attention to the various social factors underlying homelessness to develop and implement effective strategies to reduce the level of homelessness within the City of Thunder Bay. Currently services to address homelessness in the City of Thunder Bay are largely fragmented and often provided through one-time funding leading to inconsistency in services. Concentrated attention and investment in solutions would present the opportunity to effectively stabilize the health conditions and appropriately address housing needs of chronic shelter bed consumers and other low income singles shelter bed consumers would intuitively not only reduce the cost of shelter bed per diems but would also serve to reduce the costs associated with emergency room visits, ambulance, fire and police services, court services, corrections, as well as probation and parole.

Between 2007 and 2009 the increased use of shelter has resulted in a 60% increase in the annual cost of shelter per diems (i.e., from \$511,864 to \$818,112). The cost of shelter per diems for one month (30 days) is \$1,401 being 285% greater than the maximum monthly shelter allowance of \$364 for a single adult OW recipient, and 140% greater than the combined maximum monthly allowance of \$585 for shelter allowance and basic needs.

Annual Cost of Shelter Bed Per Diems



Consolidated Homeless Prevention Programs (CHPP)

The CHPP is a 100% provincially funded program. Through purchase of service agreements the TBDSSAB partners with three community agencies to provide daily supports to living for vulnerable persons with mental health issues as well as outreach services to assist persons who

are homeless to find housing. The following chart illustrates the outcomes achieved in 2007 together with those achieved during the 2008 – 2009 service cycle.

CHPP Homelessness Prevention Program Outcomes & Performance Measures		2007	2008	2009
Housing Loss Prevention	Outcome: Households at imminent risk of homelessness remain housed			
	# households at imminent risk of homelessness served	132	63	408
	# households at imminent risk of homelessness served that remained housed (through the crisis)	72	49	359
	Performance Measure			
	% of households at imminent risk of homelessness that remained housed (through the crisis)	54.5	77.8	88
	Outcome: Households at risk of homelessness stabilized			
	# households at risk of homelessness served	857	784	1027
	# households at risk of homelessness served that have been provided personal support services	830	784	1027
	Performance Measure			
	% households at risk of homelessness served that have been provided personal support services	96.8	100	100
Households Experiencing Homelessness Obtain Housing	Outcome: Households experiencing homelessness obtain housing			
	# households experiencing homelessness served	290	193	316
	# households living on the street served	38	12	3
	# households living on the street served that moved to temporary accommodation	22	5	0
	# households living on the street that moved to permanent housing	11	1	0
	# of households living in temporary accommodation served	252	181	313
	# households living in temporary accommodation served that moved to permanent housing	67	76	133
	Performance Measures			
	# households experiencing homelessness served	290	193	316
	% of households living on the street served that moved to temporary accommodation	57.9	41.7	0
	% of households living on the street served that moved to permanent housing	28.9	8.3	0
	% of households living in temporary accommodation served that moved to permanent housing	26.6	42.	42.5

In addition, the TBDSSAB budgets the administrative funding associated with this program to partially fund the costs of our Emergency Hostel Outreach Worker with the balance of the staff's salary being paid by the TBDSSAB.

Energy Emergency Fund

In accordance with provincial guidelines and local policy, one-time assistance is provided to low-income households to assist with energy arrears, deposits and reconnections to prevent homelessness. The following table illustrates EEF expenditures from 2004 – 2009.

Year	Applications Rec'd (#)	Applications Granted (#)	EEF Allocation (\$)	EEF Expenditures		Balance (\$)
				Benefits	Administration (10%)	
2004	0	0	33,630	0	0	33,630
2005	174	62	33,630	29,415	0	37,845
2006	161	63	46,667	60,635	10,026	13,851 ^a
2007	128	65	40,777 ^b	49,183	5,445	0
2008	52	44	33,630 ^b	30,267	3,363	0
2009	60 ^c	48	33,630	30,698	2,932	0
Total	515	282	221,964	200,198	21,766	0

^a carried over and spent in 2007; ^b January 1 to April 30; ^c to March 10, 2009

The EEF funding received has been insufficient to meet demand since 2007. During the last service cycle TBDSSAB requests to the Ministry for additional EEF funding have not been successful. In 2010 business cases were submitted to MCSS Regional Office requesting additional funds for CHPP and EEF, unfortunately OW Administration was again advised that the province was unable to meet the TBDSSAB's request.

ONTARIO WORKS EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS & SERVICES

Employment Outcomes

Performance based funding was implemented by the province in 2006 with full implementation for the planning cycle 2008 – 2009. In order to maintain employment funding envelopes Service Managers must earn a total of 2,000 points during the two year planning cycle. Points are earned via achievement of weighted performance targets. Should circumstances exist that compromise a Service Manager's ability to achieve the targets, the Service Manager is provided opportunity to bring the contributing factors to the attention of the MCSS program supervisor for renegotiation of baselines and targets.

In response to the provincial June 2008 OW employment outcomes report, OW Administration renegotiated the baselines and targets for measures 1(B) and 2(A) believing that the significant decrease in reported outcomes reported was potentially a dramatic reflection of the economic recession. However from later reports it appears that there may have been a problem with the SDMT data collection and reporting during the second quarter as the third quarter demonstrated significant recovery. During the service year 2009 the TBDSSAB opted to engage only four measures [i.e., 1(A), 1(B), 2(A) and 2(B)] within its planning cycle resulting in the chosen four measures being weighted more heavily than in 2008. Although the target 2(B) was not achieved in 2009, sufficient points were earned in 2008 and 2009 to avert any loss in employment funding.

Previous employment incentive funding models elicited placement of clients into programs that while beneficial to increasing employability may not have been the best fit with client employment goals. At an individual service level, since 2005 employment services have and

will continue to be focused upon the individual needs of the client for increasing their employability and achieving their goals for sustainable employment. With the enduring economic downturn in the Northwest, the job opportunities for our clients are limited and considerable economic development is needed to open doors to sustainable employment opportunities for clients. Entry level positions almost always require a minimum high school diploma and increasingly often require post secondary education. While we optimistically await greater job opportunities through economic development, including development and implementation of strategies under the Northern Growth Plan, our program delivery strategy is to prepare clients for employment either now or in the future depending upon where they are at with their employment skills and in consideration of the job market. This strategy resonates throughout employment services delivered by TBDSSAB and later described in this plan.

Measure	2008			2009		
	Base Avg	Target Avg	Achievement	Base Avg	Target Avg	Achievement
1(A) Avg Earnings (\$)	628.42	634.70	707.22	635.59	641.95	722.66
1(B) Avg Employment Earnings at Exit (\$)	619 ³	625 ⁴	929.94	817.75	825.92	967.03
2(A) % of Caseload with Employment Income	9.5 ⁵	9.51 ⁶	10.90	9.81	9.91	9.36
2(B) % of Caseload Exiting to Employment	17.46	17.66	20.13	18.34	18.53	18.64
2(C) Job Retentions Rate (Avg # Months to Re-entry)	6.98	7.06	9.65	n/a	n/a	n/a
2(D) Job Retention Rate % Exit & Return	10.31	10.21	9.24	n/a	n/a	n/a
2(E) Av. Length of Time to Employment (Months)	12.44	12.32	10.75	n/a	n/a	n/a

Despite the negative influence of economic factors upon the ability of social assistance recipients to obtain and maintain employment, the overall average number of months (i.e., 14) that the TBDSSAB's OW caseload is on assistance continues to be below the provincial average of 18 months.

ODSP Participating

During the 2008 service year employment services were provided to 182 non disabled recipients of ODSP participating in OW programming during which period 20 exited from social assistance due to earnings, 14 moved and were removed from ODSP, 8 separated from their spouses and

³ Adjusted from \$965 November 12, 2008 based on MCSS Outcomes Report June 2008

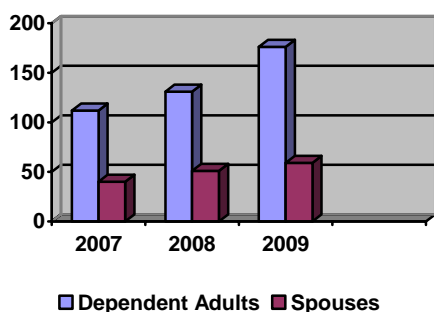
⁴ Adjusted from \$974.65 November 12, 2008 based on MCSS Outcomes Report June 2008

⁵ Adjusted from 10% November 12, 2008 based on MCSS Outcomes Report June 2008

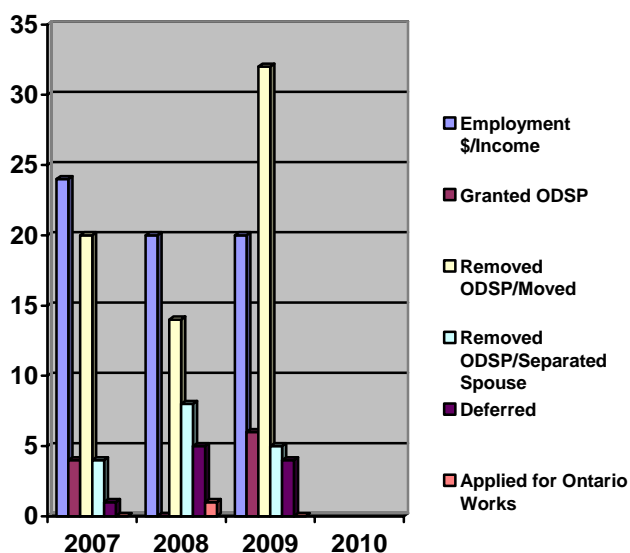
⁶ Adjusted from 10.01% November 12, 2008 based on MCSS Outcomes Report June 2008

were removed from ODSP, 5 were deferred and one dependent adult moved from ODSP to OW. In 2009 the number of individuals provided services increased to 235 and 67 exits were experienced for the following reasons: 32 moved or were removed from ODSP, 20 exited social assistance due to employment earnings or income, 6 were granted ODSP in their own right, 5 separated from their spouses and were removed from ODSP, and 4 were deferred from participating.

ODSP Participating



Exit Outcomes



One-Time Employment Funding

In 2008 TBDSSAB was able to access one-time employment funding through the sharing of costs with the province. With these funds OW partnered with the Ontario March of Dimes and the Canadian Mental Health Association to develop and pilot an Employment Training and Internship Program. The program provided training and intensive supports to clients including vulnerable and/or at risk persons who faced challenges in obtaining employment. Participants could include persons with diagnosed and undiagnosed disabilities including physical, mental health and/or substance addictions, persons of various ages and cultural backgrounds, and persons who had seemingly complex barriers to employment by virtue of their time in need of assistance. Participants and sponsoring employers were matched for a four week internship during which time the participant would obtain and develop on-the-job skills and be provided an opportunity to demonstrate abilities to the employer and potentially obtain employment or an employer reference. Those who completed the program but were not hired by the sponsoring employer either obtained employment on their own or were found a placement through the OW employment placement program. Some participants who completed the program together with other participants who did not pursued academic upgrading or continued to build their employment skills through OW and community programming. Both participants and sponsoring employers were supported through this process including learning job retention strategies that

could endure beyond the scope of the program. Due to limited funding the program was only able to run between March and December 2008 during which time 69 clients participated. The following reflect a few of the positive outcomes of the program:

- the number of employers participating in the program grew by 75% (i.e., from 5 to 20)
- 49% of all participants entering the program gained employment with the majority (76%) obtaining full-time employment either with the participating employer or a non participating employer.
- 52% of participants completing the internship were hired by their sponsoring employer.
- a 49% job retention rate was observed amongst participants who entered the program and obtained employment which exceeds the employment retention rates experienced by the Ontario March of Dimes with ODSP applicants.

With the availability of additional one-time employment funding from the province for 2009 and 2010, the Employment Training & Internship Program was resurrected for delivery in the City in late 2009 to be delivered through into the 2010-2011 service cycle.

OW Employment Resource Centre located in the City of Thunder Bay had 13,466 visitors in 2008 and 20,446 visitors in 2009. Manual statistics reflect that in-house employment programming was provided to 3,575 OW participants in 2008 and to 3,705 participants in 2009.

Unfortunately SDMT does not have the capability to provide detailed reporting on participation activities. Consequently the TBDSSAB is unable to provide statistics concerning the type and number of programs that participants engaged in within the District of Thunder Bay.

Addictions Services Initiative (ASI)

In 2002 TBDSSAB commenced delivering ASI and with input of a locally established ASI Advisory Group the local program evolved into a community borne model which best meets the needs of OW participants who have an addiction to alcohol and/or other drugs that pose a barrier to employment. Our ASI program is delivered through collaborative efforts of OW ASI staff, Thunder Bay Counselling Centre (designated lead Addiction Service Agency by the ASI Advisory Group), and the Ontario March of Dimes. The foundation of the local ASI program is intensive case management including outreach services to assess, refer and support client connectivity with services in the addictions services continuum and elsewhere in the community that meets their individual service needs.

In 2007 the MCSS advised TBDSSAB that the provincial funding allocation for the ASI program would be reduced by 36% from \$962,260 to \$614,144. The province subsequently advised of an amended reduced allocation of \$623,356 in accordance with the scheduled uploading of social assistance costs from municipalities to the province. This 35% reduction to the provincial ASI funding allocation is scheduled to take effect in 2011. In response to the pending funding reduction the Board commissioned a third party review of its Addiction Services program to:

- assess the current impact, efficacy and role of the program
- gauge the possible impacts of a funding reduction for the program; and

- make program restructuring recommendations to minimize the adverse effects of the funding reduction.

The findings of the evaluation were largely positive speaking to importance of the ASI program to participants and the District of Thunder Bay as a whole.

Relative to the efficacy of program in respect of utilization of public funding, the Reviewer's found that the TBDSSAB's ASI program is providing an estimated 675% return on investment. Further, that a proportionate reduction in ASI services would come at a social cost through an increased strain on ambulance and fire services, utilization of hospital emergency room services, other health care and social service providers, police, the criminal justice system, probation and parole service and child and family services. The consultant's found that the total cost of substance use in the District of Thunder Bay is estimated to be \$151.9 million or almost 3% of the total economy of the District in respect of variables of quantifiable monetary value. They estimated that conservatively, the TBDSSAB's ASI program is making a \$7.6 million contribution annually and, that if the program was reduced by \$358,000 or 32% through a proportionate reduction in programming and services the social costs of addiction in the District of Thunder Bay would increase by approximately \$3.42 million.

Relative to the efficacy of the program in assisting clients with their addiction, client surveys and interviews found that the TBDSSAB's ASI program has been effective in reducing substance use, improving mental health, social skills, basic needs and relationships, which are necessary to finding and maintaining employment, thus reducing the need for social assistance. For example, client surveys revealed an 83% reduction in arrests, 77% reduction in the use of detox services, 52% reduction of in-patient hospitalization, 36% reduction in visits to the hospital emergency room and 24% reduction in use of 911 services. Many felt that the ASI program helped them to identify potential mental health issues and facilitated access to appropriate services. All clients surveyed reported they were using substances less frequently since engaging the program and some have abstained for over a year. All clients either agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the help being provided through ASI. In addition, that the ASI program was helping them address their addiction and related barriers to employment and, that they would return to ASI in the future if they needed help. Clients felt the program should be expanded to a 24/7 operation.

In addition, the following mental health and substance use data reported by the Northwest Local Health Integration Network⁷ illustrates the gravity of substance abuse issues in Northwestern Ontario. This information further supports the need for wraparound supports and the maintenance of TBDSSAB's ASI program and services which plays a significant role in appropriately servicing persons with addictions or concurrent disorders who are in receipt of OW financial assistance.

- 10% of Ontario's substance abuse and problem gambling clients reside in Northwestern Ontario versus 2% of the province's total population
- Mental health inpatients are more highly represented in substance-related disorders than provincially (36.7% vs. 15.1%)

⁷ North West LHIN. Integrated Health Services Plan, 2010-2013, p. 13

- Challenges with access to mental health services have been identified for clients in crisis and for those requiring specialized care, transitional care, supportive housing, and work-in services
- More than half (56.1%) of clients requiring addiction services are unemployed or their employment status is unknown (vs. 35.3% in Ontario)
- The suicide rate is nearly double that of the provincial average (15.2 per 100,000 vs. 7.7 per 100,000)

In summary the ASI program is an excellent example of how the financial investment and shared goals of MCSS and TBDSSAB have facilitated development of a cost effective and efficient program that demonstrates notable benefits to clients, the community and tax payers. The TBDSSAB is currently in the process of sharing the findings of the review with the provincial government and is requesting reconsideration of the pending reduction.

Applications to the Ontario Disability Support Program

Ontario Works is frequently the first point of access to financial social assistance for citizens in need, who have diagnosed and undiagnosed disabilities. Each year OW staff assists many recipients of OW assistance to access medical or mental health professional services to obtain necessary medical information and apply for assistance through ODSP and/or the Canada Pension Plan – Disability program. In 2008 there were 311 OW recipients who were granted ODSP assistance and a further 329 OW recipients in 2009.

INFLUENCING ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

INTERNAL

Changes in the funding model were taken into account during comprehensive restructuring of the City's OW service delivery model in December 2006. At that time the City OW delivery site converted to a hybrid service delivery model with the majority of participants having two caseworkers, one to provide financial assistance and the other employment assistance. Centralized booking of appointments was implemented and has proven to be successful in many regards. While the 2008 statistical evaluations revealed notable improvements in service delivery and client outcomes between December 2006 and December 2008, the subsequent significant increase in the caseload, additional initiative/ad hoc reports requiring action and limited human resources during the 2008 – 2009 service cycle placed the TBDSSAB's OW program in a constant state of response to client financial need. These challenges have negative impacts on the delivery of employment services. Consequently the service delivery model for the City delivery site was reviewed in early 2010 and changes are planned for implementation in the fall which entail largely reverting to a generalist service delivery model where in a caseworker will perform both the financial and employment aspects of service delivery. In-house employment programming and partnerships with community educational institutions and agencies will continue to be utilized to support the needs of clients in their employment activities.

Service delivery models of the OW delivery sites vary in that they were originally designed by the previous municipal delivery agents to meet the respective community's unique servicing needs. Given the TBDSSAB's large geographic area of service, considerable resources are expended to deliver basic OW services to persons and families in need. The District delivery sites in particular continue to face the challenge of geographic distances coupled with fewer or an absence of services in the community to refer clients to for training. Continuing job losses of higher paying positions within the District of Thunder Bay and fluctuating entry level positions continues to be a significant challenge for clients striving for self sufficiency through employment.

During the 2008 – 2009 service cycle challenges were experienced in meeting the 4-day turn around between the date the application was received and the application - verification interview. Contributing factors include a significant increase in the number of applications received coupled with an increase in absences of caseworker staff. In addition, during any given calendar year the OW experiences frequent influxes in applications and the City delivery site no longer has sufficient intake human resources to meet the demand for application and verification interviews and perform case management activities with an increasing number of harder-to-serve clients that are struggling with low education levels, complex social issues contributing mental and physical health issues and low functioning.

The provincial 50% contribution to the Cost of Administration had been frozen since 2003 despite increases in costs of delivery and a loss of provincial funding was further experienced when the intake screening units were closed. Although one-time, addition provincial funding allocations were welcomed and received during the 2008-2009 service cycle however sufficient core funding is needed for stability of service delivery. Provincial funding for a designated application team is required to achieve regulated requirements or alternatively, amendments to legislated time requirements and corresponding eligibility determination needs to become significantly more simplified to achieve time efficiency. However policy changes will have little to no effect upon the urgency of persons in need. A designated application team would enable staff that has case management responsibilities to better engage clients in wrap-around community servicing to remove barriers to employment. The functionality of the service delivery model in the City delivery site would be improved through sufficient provincial funding for a dedicated application team as well as sufficient front-line staff to provide ongoing case management and employment supports to our higher caseload.

The three announced increases to the cost of OMERS contributions that are scheduled to begin in 2011 will pose a significant challenge upon future service delivery if sufficient cost of administration funding allocations is not provided to address the increasing cost of service delivery. In absence of sufficient funding, cost containment measures would be required including a reduction of staffing and services, which would cripple the TBDSSAB's ability to provide effective services to a growing caseload.

EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

POLITICAL

Provincial

The implementation of the Administrator's Group during the last service cycle has resulted in some improvement in communication between the province and Service Managers. Unfortunately discussions tend to be of a confidential nature resulting in a limited flow of information to program management. The timing for implementation of provincial changes in policy in absence of sufficient discussion with/notice to OW Managers continues to be problematic for integrating into local delivery procedures. *Recommendation:* The provincial planning and implementation process for changes includes OW Managers at an earlier stage to facilitate achievable implementation dates and positive outcomes for clients and front line staff.

Local

In accordance with the *District Social Services Administration Boards Act*, the TBDSSAB represents 15 member municipalities and the unincorporated areas. At any given time the Board is comprised of six elected officials from the City of Thunder Bay, five elected officials from District municipalities, and one elected member representing the unincorporated areas. Board members are subject to change every four years with respect to changes arising through municipal elections. Representation on the Board by the Townships of Schreiber and Terrace Bay alternates every two years and, representation amongst other municipalities in the district alternates every four years. Consequently the structure of DSSAB's and alternating municipal representation brings unique Northern dynamics in decision-making that would not otherwise be experienced by Consolidated Municipal Service Managers who deal with municipal councils that may be more static in composition and meet more frequently.

On December 31, 2008 the TBDSSAB ended its service contracts with four member municipalities (i.e., City of Thunder Bay, Greenstone, Manitouwadge and Schreiber) who had been contracted to deliver the OW program within the District of Thunder Bay (excluding First Nation reserves). Effective January 1, 2009 the Board became the employer of all former municipal staff involved in the delivery of the OW program. Thus considerable administrative work was accomplished during the 2008 – 2009 service planning cycle and numerous changes had and continue to be made to policies and procedures to achieve integration of service delivery for all sites. As a result of the changes in the organization, OW staff now fall under one of three different collective agreements. Negotiations are in progress with CUPE with the shared objective of one collective agreement for TBDSSAB bargaining unit staff currently falling under the three collective agreements. Despite the TBDSSAB becoming the employer to achieve economies of scale the TBDSSAB must purchase previously in-kind municipal services in excess of \$130,000 to deliver programs throughout the District of Thunder Bay. The Board had been previously advised that municipalities could no longer afford to continue to provide in-kind services and consequently that services would need to be purchased regardless of the TBDSSAB's decision whether or not to become the employer.

ADMINISTRATIVE

Ministry of Community and Social Services

While some improvements have been observed, communication from the Ministry continues to flow from many sources relative to changes, transition directives, Q & A's, etc. which poses challenges in having the most current protocols readily available. In addition, SDMT directives and help information is not current. Overall the communication flow continues to be perceived as disjointed and frustrated by information being housed on different locations. Directive updates are overdue and when significant changes are made there is not advance time for staff review, training of frontline staff where applicable, or time to seek necessary clarification prior to implementation of change. Provincial staff requests to meet are often on short notice, requiring travel, and do not take into consideration other meetings or conferences that may have already been scheduled with other provincial staff or, local work, activities and meetings that have already been scheduled well in advance. When unable to participate in meetings due to short notice, those who are unable to attend tend not to be apprised of the information coming out of the meetings. *Recommendation:* (1) The Ministry establish a single stream of communication to Administrators and OW Program Managers as well as one web-based location for easy access to all current information as well as historical information for reference where clarification is required concerning changes in the Directives and the timing of changes relative to file and program reviews; (2) better communication and collaborative planning by the Ministry with all OW Program Managers is needed to facilitate achievable implementation dates and positive outcomes for clients and front line staff when implementing changes in social assistance benefits and services, directives, initiatives, etc.; (3) When scheduling meetings, that the Ministry staff operate from one shared calendar to prevent conflicting scheduling of meetings and work collaboratively with Service Managers in arranging mutually convenient times for meetings. Further, that regardless of attendance at the meetings for Ministry staff to provide Service Managers with a copy of the minutes of the meetings together with background or collateral information distributed at the meetings if not previously shared.

SOCIAL

Service Managers rely upon census data on the development and evaluation of programming. More current Census data is necessary to determine any changes in population numbers, characteristics and trends resulting from the economic downturn and immigration of district residents and residents of First Nations to larger centers (e.g., City) within the District. Of great concern is the federal announcement to cease mandatory collection of the long form census and upon learning of this change TBDSSAB has advocated that the mandatory long-form census be maintained.

Demographic Shifts in Population

The TBDSSAB's service area covers a geographic area of 103,368 km² (excluding First Nation reserves) which holds a population of approximately 149,063 persons.⁸ Over the last 15 years,

⁸ Canada Census 2006

the population of Thunder Bay has decreased by 6.1% while the rest of Ontario's population has increased by 20.6%⁹. According to 2006 Census data, Thunder Bay's population declined by 4.2% between 1996 and 2001, while the population of Ontario at the time grew by 6%. Dr. Moazzami predicts that without economic intervention, the population of the city could decline to about 94,000 people by 2015 because of out-migration. Overall he estimates that Northwestern Ontario's population will decline by approximately 0.97% per year during 2001-2015.¹⁰

Comparison of the 2001 and 2006 Census Data indicates the population of the City grew slightly by 0.1%, while the overall District saw its population rate decline by 1.2%. Census information reaffirms an aging population for the North. The percentage of the population aged 65 in Ontario increased to 13.6% an increase of 0.7% in 2006, while in Northern Ontario this population increased to 15.8%, an increase of 2.2% higher than Ontario. In the Thunder Bay District the portion of the population aged 65 and above increased from 13.9% in 2001 to 15.2% in 2006, while for the City this percentage increased from 15.7% to 16.5%.¹¹ The slight increase in the City's population of 0.1% likely resulted from the relocation of people who lived in surrounding communities affected by forest industry related plant closures.¹² The significance of the changes in population is that there will be an impact on the Region's dependency ratio.¹³ The decline in population within the District of Thunder Bay together with an increasing number and proportion of older citizens will have a profound effect on demand for services related to health care and social services. The demographic shift will have an effect on labour force growth rates, participation patterns, and sources of revenue.

Although the population in Northwestern Ontario is decreasing, the Aboriginal population is increasing and is younger than the overall population in the district and represents a considerable percentage of Northwestern Ontario's population. The Aboriginal population represents 10.5% of the entire district population¹⁴. About 58% of Northwestern Ontario's Aboriginal population is under the age of 30¹⁵. Dr. Moazzami estimates that the Aboriginal population of Northwestern Ontario will increase by 26.85% by the year 2015, at an average growth rate of 1.92% annually. An increase in the number of Aboriginal applicants is anticipated due to the continuing high migration of persons from First Nation reserves into the City, ongoing local labour market challenges, and other social issues.

⁹ Service Canada, Population Characteristics for Northwestern Ontario, Economic Region 595, Census 2001, November 24, 2004.

¹⁰ Dr. B. Moazzami, Department of Economics, Lakehead University: Thunder Bay Economic Development: A Roadmap to Success, 2005.

¹¹ Aging Population Trends in Northern Ontario: 2001 to 2006, Dr. Southcott C., Lakehead University, 2007).

¹² Government of Canada, Labour Market Bulletin: September 2007.

¹³ Service Canada, Population Characteristics for Northwestern Ontario, Economic Region 595, Census 2001, November 24, 2004. The dependency ratio is a measure of the potential human resources available (the working age population) to assist those most likely in need of social supports.

¹⁴ District of Thunder Bay Labour Market Inventory, North Superior Workforce Planning Board: November 2009.

¹⁵ Trends, Opportunities and Priorities, North Superior Training Board, A Community Action Plan: January 2006.

In the district of Thunder Bay out-migration of youth and professionals is of continuing concern. By 2003, Thunder Bay had a high youth out-migration rate of 12.4%¹⁶. In Northern Ontario the 15 to 29 year old age group has had the largest decrease in population size. In Northern Ontario there was a 10.5% decline in the number of people between the ages of 15 and 29 in 2001 and who now are between 20 and 34 years of age. Further, in comparison with Ontario and Canada, this age group (20 -34) increased in size; Ontario by 5.2% and Canada by 3%.¹⁷ Northern Ontario has a lower percentage of professional service industries. As a result, youth and professionals are leaving Thunder Bay to pursue their careers in larger cities offering more professional service employment opportunities.

Education

On average, the education levels of Northern Ontario residents are lower than Ontario residents as a whole and the variance is increasing. Northern Ontario residents have a higher percentage of people with less than a high school diploma and a lower percentage of people with a university degree. Only 18.3% of people in Thunder Bay have a university degree, compared to 23.7% of people within Ontario¹⁸. Given the increasing pool of persons looking for work, there is a high tendency for employers to look beyond basic qualifications (i.e., basic to intermediate-level literacy) when making hiring decisions by choosing applicants with higher educational attributes. People without basic education have limited opportunities and face the greatest challenges and barriers to accessing the work force as a high school diploma continues to be a prerequisite for many jobs. It is projected that most new jobs in the future might require a postsecondary education. The fastest growing occupations in Northern Ontario require a university education.

In 2004 the national unemployment rate for people aged 25 to 44 years who did not complete high school was 12.2%, while those who's highest level of education was a high school diploma had an unemployment rate of 6.8%¹⁹. The rate of employment is significantly higher for individuals who have a high school diploma. Individuals with less than a high school diploma have relatively low labour force participation rates and high unemployment rates.²⁰ Rural areas of the country tend to have higher drop-out rates than urban parts of Canada. In the comparison of school dropout rates for young men and young women, the rate of dropout for males was 12.2% in 2004-2005 and for females was 7.2%. According to Statistic Canada's "Youth in Transition Survey", male dropouts cited the desire to earn money as a main reason of quitting high school; while 15.9% of female dropouts cited pregnancy or taking care of a child as key factors for dropping out before completing high school.

Many employers are looking for applicants who possess a high school diploma or post secondary education. The percentage of people without a high school diploma in Northwestern Ontario at the time of the 2001 census was 33.5% compared to 29.7% for Ontario as a whole. Given the significant loss of major industry and jobs in the North that historically did not require a high

¹⁶ Youth Out-Migration in Northern Ontario, 2001 Census Research Paper Series: Report #2, October 31, 2002.

¹⁷ Southcott, Chris (2007) *Youth Out-migration in Northern Ontario: 2001 to 2006*. Lakehead University.

¹⁸ Trends, Opportunities and Priorities, North Superior Training Board, A Community Action Plan: January 2006.

¹⁹ Statistics Canada, Provincial Drop-out rates – Trends and Consequences (2005).

²⁰ Education Indicators in Canada, PCEIP (2005, 2006)

school diploma, it is speculated that the percentage of unemployed people without a high school diploma is significantly higher now than would have been at the time of the 2001 and 2006 census. The labour market rewards those with an education. High school drop-outs have a harder time finding a job as employers are looking for employees who have “soft skills” and have proven that they can learn and work. The youth unemployment rate is higher in Northern Ontario than in the province as a whole. Since some of the recipients of OW are high school drop-outs, there is a need for them to obtain the education and social and job skills to be able to find sustainable employment. As a result, at the City delivery site we continue to partner with the Lakehead Board of Education and Confederation College to assist clients in obtaining their high school diploma or equivalency and/or obtain basic to intermediate computer skills. Within the District, clients are referred to the nearest education or literacy program as appropriate.

Crime

In 2009, McLean’s magazine has ranked Thunder Bay as 14 out of the 100 most dangerous Canadian cities based on violent crime statistics. Police Chief Herman reports the City is taking steps to address its violent crime rate and that most of the violence can be traced to high levels of drug and alcohol abuse in Thunder Bay. As previously mentioned there is considerable concern regarding the pending reduction to provincial funding of the OW ASI program and consequentially the service levels and services it provides. A reduction in ASI services will negatively result in fewer residents addressing their drug and alcohol abuse and potentially facilitate an increase in violent crimes in the community and social cost for prosecution, incarceration, parole and eventually promote long-term dependence on social assistance due to significant challenges in obtaining employment with a criminal record. Challenges in obtaining employment are significant for those with criminal records and this challenge is compounded by the presents of substance abuse issues or concurrent disorders which may be accompanied by brain injury.

Health

We have found that many of our OW clients are underserved by the health, mental health, addictions, and developmental services systems and consequently struggle to maintain OW eligibility. Psychological assessments obtained over the last few years to assist with determination of appropriate employment participation activities reveal many OW clients have undiagnosed mental illnesses, addictions, undiagnosed and unsupported developmental delays, FAS/FAE, and undiagnosed neurological problems. Severe, unmanaged, unsupported, or undiagnosed health problems, and particularly mental health problems, can make it much more difficult (and at times impossible) for social assistance recipients to both attain independence and even to maintain eligibility for social service programs. Participation in OW in particular requires a basic level of ‘health’ or functional ability to complete mandatory program activities as outlined by legislation and clients’ participation agreements. Over the 2008 -2009 service cycle there were 76 participants of OW in 2008 and 105 in 2009 that applied for ODSP financial assistance on the basis of diagnoses in their assessment reports and were determined eligible for ODSP assistance.

The assumption is generally made that persons in receipt of social assistance are capable of independent living; however we have found many clients have fallen through cracks in the health care system and are struggling to cope with basic activities of daily living which further result in

barriers to employment. Providing much needed services to this harder-to-serve clientele places significant demands upon existing caseworker staff time. Services and the effectiveness of service suffer when caseloads are high and staffing resources are thinly spread.

The social service system relies upon the health care system to address medical conditions which may present a functional barrier to independence, and by extension participation in social service programs geared towards achieving and maintaining independence. TBDSSAB understands that it is the mandate of the health care system to identify persons with non-remediable medical conditions which prevent independent living with or without supports, and to make arrangements for long-term care and treatment. When the health care system (physical and mental health) does not function in this expected sense, the difficulties created for social service clients and systems are significant.

Many of our OW clients do not have family physicians. Family physicians act as the entry point to most specialized and supportive health services which would assist our clients to function independently and maintain or improve their quality of life. The shortage of family physicians in the District of Thunder Bay is well documented; it is estimated that up to one-third of the residents of Thunder Bay do not have a family physician and that the proportion of OW clients without one is much higher.

Maintaining or achieving oral health continues to be a struggle for recipients of social assistance. While basic mandatory dental benefits are available for children and emergency dental assistance the current levels for adults are insufficient to support overall health. Recipients of social assistance in the North continue to experience difficulty accessing dental services as dental professionals are choosing not to service this clientele due to lower remuneration and/or high rates of missed appointments.

Social assistance recipients live in poverty, are under nourished and face significant challenges in accessing nutritional, healthy foods. Recipients are preoccupied with obtaining their basic needs (daily food, obtaining & maintaining affordable housing, clean and presentable clothing) and this often creates barriers to learning and being able to focus on employment. Absence of nutritional food results in poorer overall health and creates greater need of other social and health systems. In 2009 the TBDSSAB made municipally funded contributions to food banks in the District of Thunder Bay for perishable food items as well as infant and toddler food and related items. The Board has similarly approved contributions for 2010.

ECONOMIC

Economic Indicators

*Canada*²¹

Employment rose by 21,000 in February 2010, with large gains in full-time work slightly offset by losses in part time employment. The unemployment rate decreased 0.1 percentage points to 8.2% in February 2010. Employment rates have been on an upward trend since July 2009 (+159,000). This contrasts with the drastic decrease of 417,000 between the peak in

²¹ From <http://www.statcan.ca/english/Subjects/Labour/LFS/lfs-en.htm>

October 2008 and July 2009. Employment increases in February occurred in accommodation and food services; business, building and other support services; manufacturing; health care and social assistance; and natural resources. These gains were partially offset by losses in retail and wholesale trade; finance, insurance, real estate and leasing; and "other services."

Ontario and Northern Ontario

The labour force in Northwestern Ontario has been on a general decline since 2003 with the labour force decreasing from 124,500 to 111,400 through 2008. Full-time employment has been on a noticeable decline during this period, standing at 79,200 in 2008 compared to 90,400 in 2003.

The District of Thunder Bay experienced a 58.8% employment rate for the total population aged 15 years and over in 2008, compared to the 63.6% employment rate in Ontario. The overall unemployment rate of the District reported in the 2006 Census was 8.1%. The highest unemployment rate in the District of Thunder Bay is amongst the 15 to 24 age cohort at 16%, compared to the population aged 24 and over at 6.5%.

Within the District of Thunder Bay, knowledge based industries make up the largest percentage of employment (20.5%), including the following industries: information, culture and recreation (3.9%), education services (9.3%), professional, scientific and technical services (4.2%), and finance, insurance, real estate and leasing (3.1%). Manufacturing makes up the next largest percentage of employment (7.4%), followed by transportation and warehousing (6.2%), construction (5.9%), and forestry, fishing, mining, oil, and gas (3.2%). These statistics demonstrate the decreasing reliance of the local economy on primary industry and the increasing reliance on tertiary industry.²²

Table 1: Northwestern Ontario Employment by Industry (in Thousands), 2003-2008²³

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Good-producing sector	30.0	27.7	24.5	23.6	21.5	20.4
Agriculture	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0
Forestry, fishing, mining, oil and gas	6.0	4.9	5.2	5.2	3.0	3.3
Utilities	0.0	0.0	1.8	1.5	2.1	0.0
Construction	6.9	7.2	4.4	5.4	5.5	6.1
Manufacturing	15.4	14.1	12.1	11.0	10.4	7.6
Services-producing sector	87.1	84.1	83.4	81.0	84.3	82.2
Trade	17.1	16.3	17.7	15.9	16.0	15.8
Transportation and warehousing	6.7	7.2	7.3	7.0	7.3	6.4
Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing	4.7	5.1	3.8	4.1	3.6	3.2
Professional, scientific and technical services	3.6	4.2	3.0	3.5	3.1	4.3
Business, building and other support services	3.5	3.1	3.1	4.1	3.4	3.0
Educational services	9.2	8.5	9.0	9.4	9.5	9.5
Health care and social services	15.9	13.9	16.3	15.5	16.7	17.7
Information, culture and recreation	5.1	4.5	4.6	3.2	5.0	4.0
Accommodation and food services	9.3	9.7	8.2	6.9	7.2	7.8
Other services	5.1	4.0	3.7	4.4	4.4	4.0
Public administration	6.9	7.6	6.7	7.1	8.2	6.5
Total Employment	117.1	111.8	107.9	104.7	105.8	102.6

²² District of Thunder Bay Labour Market Inventory, North Superior Workforce Planning Board: November 2009.

²³ Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey 2003-2008

Thunder Bay and Area

Thunder Bay District has been hard hit by the forest industry crisis. For many years, forestry had been the main industry driving the District of Thunder Bay's primary productive engine, making up as much as 14.9% of total employment in the area. According to the Northwestern Ontario Forest Council, the industry has traditionally spent about \$3.653 billion per year in Northwestern Ontario, resulting in substantial indirect employment in the region. Therefore, the viability of the District of Thunder Bay's economy has been greatly dependent on the health of the forestry industry. Over the last seven years employment in forestry, logging, and support has declined by 46.2%. Between 2003 and 2009, the total job loss total was up to 7,066 in the forestry industry. In Northwestern Ontario job losses have been evenly split between full- and part-time jobs. Poor market conditions have affected the area sawmills which are facing indefinite closures and reduced production.²⁴

Northwestern Ontario had 15,300 direct jobs in the forest industry and an additional 19,100 indirect jobs connected to the industry²⁵. Approximately 75% of jobs in some of the Northwestern Ontario communities depended on the forestry sector. Given the dependency in this sector, the forestry crises have severely impacted these communities with no foreseeable economic recovery in sight.

Over the last few years a number of mills have closed down in the District of Thunder Bay with only one mills remaining open with significantly reduced staff. Thunder Bay continues to face serious economic challenges as the strain on its resource-dependent economies increase. Downsizing and closures over the last few years has occurred at Cascade Fine papers, Sturgeon Timber, Abitibi-Consolidated, Buchanan Forest Products, Great West Timber and Northern Hardwoods, Norampac, Sturgeon Timber, and Golden Giant Mine.

There is little confidence that the forestry sector will recover to previous employment levels, thereby creating the need to rely more heavily on other sectors of the economy for job growth.

Aboriginal Workforce

The Aboriginal population of Thunder Bay grew by 22% from 2001 to 2006, according to the 2006 census. Even though Aboriginal numbers are growing, Aboriginal labour force participation and employment rate are historically lower than the region as a whole. The average income of Aboriginal persons in the region of Northern Ontario is lower than both the regional and provincial averages²⁶.

Income Levels

The average income level of individuals in Northern Ontario is lower than the provincial average. In 2000, the average income in Northern Ontario was 16.3% less than the Ontario

²⁴ District of Thunder Bay Labour Market Inventory, North Superior Workforce Planning Board: November 2009.

²⁵ Forestry Job Crisis, Northwestern Ontario Associated Chamber of Commerce, www.noacc.com.

²⁶ Trends, Opportunities and Priorities, North Superior Training Board, A Community Action Plan: January 2006

average.²⁷ This disparity is expanding as the forestry crises in Northern Ontario continues with more people being laid off from high paying jobs due to downsizing and closures and Employment Insurance benefits running out. Northern Ontario has a significantly lower percentage of high income earners compared to the rest of Ontario and it has a higher percentage of low income earners. Low paying jobs with little or no benefits make it more difficult for OW clients to earn enough wages to exit from social assistance and remain independent from social assistance. Consequently earners in Northern Ontario will not earn as much as other residents in Ontario. For part-time employment, Northern Ontario has a higher percentage of part-time income earners. Given that Northern Ontario has a higher percentage of part-time employment recipients of social assistance continue to face significant challenges earning a sustainable income on part-time hours.

Local Labour Market

Thunder Bay and Northwestern Ontario labour markets increasingly reflect the negative impact of the on-going forestry crisis and the continuing uncertainty in the region's traditional employment areas. Labour market conditions in Thunder Bay's Census Metropolitan Areas became worse in 2006 and the labour force declined more than 5%.²⁸ Small business owners in Thunder Bay have reported a growing concern with a negative economic growth climate and question the sustainability of their businesses in the near future.²⁹

Declines in the forestry, manufacturing and mining sectors are being offset by growth in the knowledge-based sector. A large number of employers in this sector have added to their workforce in recent years and are planning additional hiring. However these positions require specific post secondary education which the majority of OW recipients do not possess. The construction sector has remained active by diversifying into areas such as municipal servicing infrastructure, government buildings, road works, schools and other areas. In absence of trade certifications access to construction jobs for OW recipients is limited.

According to the recently released Manpower Employment Outlook Survey, Thunder Bay employers expect a fair hiring climate for the second quarter of 2010. With seasonal variations taken into account, the Net Employment Outlook of seven per cent indicates that employers anticipate a modest hiring climate for the upcoming quarter. This forecast is a three percentage point decrease from the previous quarter when employers reported a seasonally adjusted Net Employment Outlook of 10 per cent. However, the Outlook has increased by six percentage points from the same time last year.³⁰

TNS Canadian Facts, Young Americans, Bell, and most recently StarTek closed down their call centres in Thunder Bay resulting in over 600 employees losing their jobs. These closures reflect the loss of basic entry positions previously accessed by OW participants.

²⁷ Income levels in Northern Ontario, 2003.

²⁸ TOPS, North of Superior Training Board, 2007.

²⁹ Trends, Opportunities and Priorities, North Superior Training Board, A Community Action Plan: January 2006.

³⁰ Manpower Employment Outlook Survey, Canada, Second Quarter, 2010.

Potential Job Opportunities

Bombardier has officially signed a \$548 million contract with the Toronto Transit Commission to build subway vehicles. This is positive news for the Thunder Bay plant and area as an estimated 300 employees may be hired. Bombardier has also won a \$113 million contract to build 34 rapid-transit vehicles for Vancouver SkyTrain system.³¹ Given previous significant layoffs and union call back rights, it is anticipated that limited opportunities will be available for OW participants. Of note is that the OW program did not experience an increase in caseload at the time when Employment Insurance benefits were expiring for Bombardier workers following massive layoffs which suggest that the majority of workers obtained work elsewhere.

The City is in need of police officers. The Thunder Bay police chief has recommended that the City apply to the provincial government for 100% funding for eight new police officers. Limited education and/or criminal records may pose barriers to many OW participants accessing policing job opportunities that may arise.

The sustainable employment opportunities in Thunder Bay are in professional fields. The majority of social assistance recipients would not possess the qualifications for these positions which require high literacy levels and varying years of post secondary education and certifications. The vast majority of social assistance clients have multiple barriers to employment, including but not limited to learning disabilities, physical and mental health issues, low literacy levels and limited education. Any new job opportunities for unskilled workers will attract many experienced laid-off mill and mine workers and post secondary graduates, making it difficult for OW clients to compete for positions.

Skills Development Needs

In order to increase the employability of OW clients, there is a significant need to enhance some of our participants' literacy skills and education levels. The following chart shows the education level of our OW applicants as of March 15, 2010.

The tables below illustrate that 62% of OW participants have less than a grade 12 education. Given that entry level employment predominantly requires a minimum qualification of the high school diploma, employment services over the next service cycle includes a continued focus on facilitating high school credit or equivalency educational opportunities.

OW Participants

Education Level	Applicants	Spouses	Dependent Adults	Totals	% of Participants
Less than Grade 7	36	2	0	38	1.25
Grade 7 - 8	240	34	2	276	9.04
Grade 9-11	1404	140	37	1,581	51.80
Grade 12	589	64	4	657	21.53
Grade 13/OAC	11	1	0	12	.39
Post Secondary	450	27	0	477	15.63
Unknown/No Education	6	4	1	11	.36
Total	2,736	272	44	3,052	100.00

³¹ TOPS, North of Superior Training Board, January 2007.

ODSP Participating

Education Level	Number Participants	% of Participants
Less than Grade 7	4	1.83
Grade 7 - 8	11	5.05
Grade 9-11	112	51.38
Grade 12	58	26.60
Grade 13/OAC	-	-
Post Secondary	32	14.68
Unknown/No Education	1	0.45
Total	218	100

Given the increasing pool of individuals looking for employment, there is a high tendency for employers to look beyond basic qualifications (i.e., basic to intermediate-level literacy) when making hiring decisions and ultimately choosing applicants with higher educational attributes. People without basic education have limited opportunities and face the greatest challenges and barriers to accessing the work force as high school diploma continues to be a prerequisite for many jobs. The fastest growing occupations in Northern Ontario require a university education. The above charts provide insight into the education level of our participants as of March 15, 2010 indicating the majority of our clients have not completed Grade 12. In order to address the limited literacy skills of our clients, OW in partnership with Colleges, School Boards and various literacy organizations in the community have developed specific skills upgrading and literacy programs tailored to meet the unique needs of these individuals. Ontario Works recognizes education as an essential component of employment. It is our goal to build and maintain partnerships and work towards enhancing education and literacy opportunities for our clients.

High School Drop-Out

Many employers are looking for potential employees who have a high school diploma. High school drop-outs have a harder time finding a job as employers are looking for employees who have “soft skills” and have proven that they can learn and work. The youth unemployment rate is higher in Northern Ontario than in Ontario as a whole. Since some of the recipients of OW are high school drop-outs, there is a need for them to obtain the education and needed skills to be able to find sustainable employment.

Occupational Training Requirements

As indicated above, educational levels of our caseload is below what would be required to access a professional occupation and often pose challenges to opportunities for basic entry positions. To try and address this gap and raise the awareness of the importance of higher education in accessing stable employment, our Caseworkers and Employment Resource Centre (ERC) is placing a greater focus on assisting OW participants to obtain their high school diploma or equivalency and encouraging them to go on to post secondary training. Those whose goals are not to pursue post-secondary training are supported to engage in work related training through the ERC or other education and training programs available in the community.

Community Engagement

Ontario Works has many partnerships within the community that facilitate referrals from OW staff members to community services that meet the identified needs of clients. Ontario Works endeavours to increase opportunities for OW participants by working with different agencies and organizations to meet both client and agency employment and skill development needs. OW administration strives to establish and maintain linkages which eliminate duplication of services, utilize best practices and builds upon existing community capacity.

Partnerships with Related Initiatives, Programs and Services

Ontario Works staff participates in various committees within the District of Thunder Bay. The committees undertake to share information and work together in improving our communities, and the services available to its members.

OW administration works directly with available community partners to develop services, and community and employment opportunities for clients. Employment resource services are provided directly by delivery sites according to client identified need. Due to the economic crises being experienced within the District, TBDSSAB staff has, and continues where still active, participated in the Community Adjustment Committees in the Greenstone, Manitouwadge, Nipigon, Red Rock, Schreiber and Terrace Bay areas. While opportunities are being sought out for clients within the District, until the economic situation improves the availability of services and limited opportunities mainly exists within the City of Thunder Bay which is likewise experiencing economic challenges as previously identified.

Prior to December 31, 2005, the City of Thunder Bay OW office utilized enhanced funding to provide educational services (structured learning) for OW recipients onsite at its ERC. Our partnership with the Lakehead Board of Education continues to be successful in providing an on-site teacher to facilitate structured learning for OW participants working on credits for their high school diploma. Our partnership established with Confederation College has also been very successful. We continue to collaborate with community partners and where possible expand upon educational and skill training services available to OW clients at the ERC.

The TBDSSAB contracts with the Ontario March of Dimes to provide employment development and placement services for OW participants including extension of services to provide specialized training and employment placement services for participants in Addiction Services who are ready for employment. In 2008 the TBDSSAB was a fortunate recipient of surplus employment funding which enabled it to partner with the Ontario March of Dimes and Canadian Mental Health Association to pilot the Training and Employment Internship Program with five larger employers in the City of Thunder Bay as previously mentioned. Ontario Works participants were provided with a range of skills and training to meet anticipated needs of host employer. Many participants for this program were drawn directly from completion of existing in-house or community based training and existing OW employment resources staff was used to facilitate this process. After training the participant enters a 4-week internship with the host employer during which time the participant and employer are provided with intensive employment supports including counselling and modeling of job retention strategies to support sustainability of an employee-employer relationship after the internship has ended. If the OW intern was successful in the internship s/he may receive an offer of employment from the host

employer. If they are not offered a position, the Ontario March of Dimes assisted the OW participant to draw upon the skills learned as well as experience and references obtained to acquire employment placement elsewhere or return for further training if social and employment skills continued to pose a barrier to employment. Both OW participants and host employers are provided with incentives to participate and develop positive working relationships.

The TBDSSAB has numerous partnerships with community agencies throughout the District to provide community placement opportunities, services for LEAP participants, literacy and training, addiction assessment and treatment services, participant supportive services, mental health assessments, referrals to health services, among many other services for clients. Client needs are assessed on an ongoing basis to determine appropriate service needs. The TBDSSAB has enhanced its relationships with community agencies in the District improving connectivity to existing education and employment skills training since it became the employer of the staff delivering the OW program in January 2009.

Strategies to Coordinate

Ontario Works administration and staff participate on various committees and attend meetings and provide presentations on OW services to agencies within the community. As well, staff members are frequently educated by community agencies on changes to their programming. As mentioned earlier, the TBDSSAB has increased its connectivity with District community agencies providing services to clients. District caseworkers keep current on various community agencies on a one-to-one basis and through updates from their supervisor, whereas the City delivery site has caseworker meetings where representatives from various community agencies are invited as guest speakers. The sessions include an overview of the guest agency's programs, referral criteria, program goals and objectives, and a question and answer period for staff. The goal of these sessions is to ensure that staff is familiar with the variety of programs available throughout the community. The information sessions and one-to-one contacts encourage networking and partnerships between the TBDSSAB and participating community agencies.

Staff has established long-standing working relationships with many agencies. Meetings occur with representatives from different agencies to discuss possible strategies for improved service and to address issues within the community. Cooperative planning, development, and delivery of service have become an established practice of OW staff.

Ontario Works ERC has a working relationship with the Tourism and Economic Development Division at the City of Thunder Bay. In instances where new companies are looking at establishing themselves in the city, we have held job fairs, collect resumes, conduct pre-screening of potential employees and scheduled interviews on their behalf. Similarly district staff has participated in information – job fairs when requested in the District.

Literacy and Basic Skills Training Providers

Literacy services are provided by Literacy Northwest which supports and promotes adult literacy through the Ontario Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) program. The LBS program assists adults to develop basic skills in reading, math, communication and computer skills. The program includes information and referrals, a literacy assessment, training plan development, training and a follow-up. Other providers of literacy programming to OW clients include Alpha Thunder

Bay, Anishnawbe Skills Development Program, Confederation College, Contact North Offices (Terrace Bay and Nipigon), Northern Lifeskills and Literacy Program, Adult Learning Centre (Schreiber/Terrace Bay), Superior North Literacy (Nipigon/Red Rock), and the Thunder Bay Literacy Group.

Community Placement Sponsors

Historically TBDSSAB has partnered with over 100 non-profit and public organizations through formal community placement agreements. Over the last two years OW participants have been focusing more on formal education and employment skills training which has resulted in a reduction in community placement participation. However, both formal and informal community placements continue to be a valuable resource for OW participants when appropriate. Community Placements give OW recipients an opportunity to volunteer at a community service activity in a non-profit or public sector agency or organization. Aside from gaining valuable work experience through on-the-job training, participants are given financial assistance for child care, transportation, placement-related training and special clothing and equipment in order to cover costs that are associated with obtaining placements.

Employment Placement Services

As mentioned earlier the employment broker that mainly finds placements for our OW caseload is the Ontario March of Dimes. Many other employment programs in the community will refer participants to the OW Employment Placement Program if that the client they have been working with is an OW recipient and passes eligibility criteria for the program. However, many community agencies have access to higher wage subsidies that participants can qualify for, therefore those programs are usually accessed first as they are financially more appealing for employers. The Training and Employment Internship Program pilot demonstrated the value of creative, flexible programs that provide incentives to clients and employers that facilitate employer-employee connectivity. It is hoped that additional annual employment funding will be available to TBDSSAB to maintain the program as well as potentially have the program delivered in the District where feasible.

Employment Resource Services

Within the District, employment resource services are provided directly by delivery sites and/or referral to community partners. Within the City delivery site, the OW ERC offers a wide range of services such access to computers, fax, and photocopier, along with job boards, workshops and training opportunities, Community Placement and Employment Placement opportunities, telephone use and client voicemail for employers. Since the beginning of 2009, the Supervisor – District Services has been connecting with community agencies in the district to forge better connections for clients to their services.

The public libraries allow access to computers for job search. YES Employment Services, Confederation College, Nipigon Chamber of Commerce, Superior Training Employment Program, (STEP), and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada have resource centres for clients with access to computers in order for clients to perform job searches.

Financial/Audit Planning

Financial and Audit Planning services are available to participants by the Thunder Bay Counselling Centre which provides counselling and third party intervention for budget, money and debt problems. They have credit counsellors who help OW clients get out of debt by assessing their financial concerns; developing a personalized spending plan; setting up a repayment plan with creditors; and determining their financial goals. They also provide information and resources on money management, budgeting and financial fitness as well as offering credit clinics. Additionally, they can make referrals to other community resources. The TBDSSAB's experience with the OW caseload has demonstrated that due to the limited income social assistance recipients receive, that budgeting workshops can offer little to assist clients address their debts.

The OW ERC also provides a budgeting workshop to the ASI participants and specialized client groups on an as needed basis. While the Thunder Bay Counselling Centre focuses upon counselling and intervention once debt problems occur, budgeting workshops as debt prevention is a job retention strategy provided through the ERC.

The Schreiber/Terrace Bay Adult Learning Centre, Marjorie House Outreach, the Public Library and the Local Health Unit have provided seminars for financial planning in the District.

Collaborative Community Servicing

A variety of social challenges being experienced by OW participants can result in significant barriers to employment that appear to be less recognized or understood by levels of government which are not directly involved in service delivery. Consequently with proper client consents in place, the TBDSSAB sees the value in collaborative work between front line staff and community agencies to assist shared clients towards addressing these challenges, achieving a better quality of life for themselves and their families, and removing the barrier to employment.

Child Welfare

Child welfare services are provided by Dilico Anishinabek Family Care and by the Children's Aid Society. OW caseworkers work in collaboration with child welfare workers where clients are shared and appropriate consents are obtained. The TBDSSAB has recently formalized information sharing and service protocols with each of the two child welfare agencies.

Family Violence

Services in the District of Thunder Bay dealing with family violence issues are offered through Beendigan Inc., Children's Aid Society, Faye Peterson Transition House, Marjorie House, Food Bank, OPP and the Thunder Bay Sexual Assault/Sexual Abuse Counselling and Crisis Centre. OW delivery sites work in collaboration with violence against women service agencies in meeting the needs of shared clients. These agencies provide a wide range of services to provide support and education (parenting, alcohol and drug assessment and services, child witness counselling and support, transition supports, referrals, emergency shelter and clothing, outreach, etc.)

Housing

The housing programs provide affordable housing for people with low and moderate incomes. The TBDSSAB is responsible for the administration of social housing within its service area. It is the sole shareholder of the Thunder Bay District Housing Corporation (TBDHC). All 27 non-profit social housing providers have a direct reporting relationship with TBDSSAB through the Housing Services Division which administers over 10 different housing programs. Ontario Works clients have access to the social housing programs for which they are eligible according to the protocols established for each program. OW caseworkers collaborate with the Housing Services Division's Coordinated Access Services as well as social housing providers to assist client placement into social housing. Waitlists for housing exist resulting in challenges for OW recipients to access affordable housing, particularly single bedroom units. Supportive housing is not administered by the TBDSSAB and is greatly needed. Accessibility to a sufficient number of affordable supportive housing units is needed by social assistance recipients so that they can obtain or maintain independent living and work towards employability where they are physically and psychologically capable.

The OW and Housing Services Divisions work in partnership to administer the Emergency Rent Program and the Energy Emergency Fund. These homelessness prevention programs promote housing stability and prevent homelessness by assisting low-to-moderate income tenants to avoid eviction by funding rent arrears and prevent disconnection or facilitate reconnection of energy services through assistance with client energy arrears. The TBDSSAB has unsuccessfully requested additional energy emergency funds (EEF) as the annual allocation has been insufficient to meet the needs of low-income families in the Board's service area. This is particularly disconcerting as the cold winters in the North can pose health and safety issues for households without heat. Additional provincial EEF funding is required to meet the needs of low-income households in the District of Thunder Bay who are facing eviction or disconnection of energy services.

Access to affordable housing within the limitation of the maximum shelter allowances continues to pose a significant barrier to clean, affordable and safe housing for a significant number of social assistance recipients. There are lengthy waitlists for affordable housing and the absence of sufficient supportive housing continues to pose significant barriers to employment for clients who are preoccupied with trying to meet the most basic needs. As previously mentioned multi-level government strategic planning and implementation is needed to address the growing homeless situation in Thunder Bay.

Mental Health

Within the City of Thunder Bay and some district areas, the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)³² offers mental health services for OW clients. In the District services can be accessed through North of Superior Programs and the Mental Illness Support Network. Some of the programs of the CMHA include:

³² Canadian Mental Health Association, February 2, 2006. www.cmha-tb.on.ca.

- The New Foundations Clubhouse program provides opportunities for the psychiatrically disabled to enhance their mental health and live to their fullest potential through activities jointly shared by members and staff. Participants join in activities to attain employment and housing as well as for social recreation.
- The Rehabilitation Action Program helps people improve their social skills while they are recovering from mental illness. It helps people enhance their social and relationship skills and build social networks.
- The Steps to Employment Program is made to increase the employability of people who live with a mental illness. The program is designed to help people obtain and keep employment in order to live a full life. Participants of the program are given training before finding employment so that they can be employment ready. The training includes vocational life skills training, training placements, and job coaching.

In addition to the CMHA, there are a number of agencies within the community who provide mental health services however experience has demonstrated that there are a large number of clients who require services but either have not been able to connect or maintain their connection with mental health services. The challenging reality is that many persons are living in the community who have undiagnosed mental health disorders or who have been diagnosed but are not taking the medication or are not under medical care as they do not have a family physician. Consequently there are many citizens unable to make informed decisions for initial and continual engagement of services.

Utilization of emergency shelters has significantly increased due to the inability of persons with mental health issues to maintain independent living in absence of supportive housing. The availability of affordable supportive housing would serve to reduce the significant number of persons with physical and/or mental health issues utilizing emergency shelters and the associated nightly bed per diems. Supportive housing would provide a stepping stone to further stabilization and connection or reconnection with health services and treatment as supportive interaction would be ongoing. Intuitively affordable supportive housing and engagement with health services and treatment would serve to help the person stabilize and thereafter promote opportunity to explore and assist with other barriers to employment and service needs. In summary, clients with untreated physical and/or mental health conditions require multi-disciplinary services to meet their individual needs coupled with intensive case management to facilitate opportunities for positive personal and community outcomes.

Addiction Treatment

Ontario Works clients seeking addiction treatment may do so through to community addiction services continue or the TBDSSAB's Addictions Services employment program. Ontario Works participants eligible for the ASI program are provided with services through specialized OW Addiction Counsellors and in partnership with the Thunder Bay Counselling Centre who has been contracted by the TBDSSAB to provide assessment and outreach treatment/support services in the City. ASI participants in the District are provided services through the OW District Addiction Counsellor and potentially North of Superior Programs. District clients who are not participating in ASI may access services through North of Superior Programs.

Since implementing the ASI program the TBDSSAB has observed that the need of OW participants for this program is constantly high and that current capacity is unable to meet client need to address substance addictions that are posing a barrier to employment. In 2009, the TBDSSAB ASI program served 294 unique participants and maintained an average active caseload of 204 participants. The reduction in caseload was carried out in anticipation of the reduction of funding that was scheduled for 2010 but has been delayed by the province until 2011. Addictions are a significant and are contributing to an increase in social problem within the District of Thunder Bay. If implemented, the announced reduction in provincial funding would significant negative impact the services provided in the District of Thunder Bay and TBDSSAB's ability to deliver the critical services and supports needed by OW participants with addictions to address this barrier to employment.

The foundation for the ASI program is the provision of intensive case management that is specialized to the clients' needs. Case conferencing with community partners occurs to ensure that clients are obtaining the services needed and are moving through the addiction treatment services to remove addictions as a barrier to employment. Due to the co-occurring disorders often present with addictions, outreach intensive case management services are available for higher need participants experiencing mental health issues, women's issues, youth and clients requiring stabilization. Ontario Works Addiction Counsellors intensively case manage ASI participants who appear to have control of their addiction and are at a stage of change where increasing employability is appropriate. In addition, OW Addiction Counsellors manage the participation agreements for all ASI participants, employment related expense issuances. One OW Caseworker manages the financial services in the City delivery site and in the District financial services are provided by each of the District Caseworkers.

In the city, OW Addiction Counsellors work with our ERC staff and community partner relative to the development of employment skills and placement opportunities for ASI participants. In the District, the OW Addiction Counsellor works with District Caseworkers and community agencies to facilitate participation in employment related activities as appropriate. The need for services from the Addiction Counsellor in the District has been constant over the last number of years. The District of Thunder Bay communities have been experiencing increased substance abuse making this a program essential to promote community wellness. Existing methadone clinics are full with limited case management supports and there are OW clients waiting to engage in the ASI program. Due to the absence of medical detoxification services, the majority of ASI participants attending residential treatment are required to be sent outside of the community for treatment.

ASI staff has developed several programs to address substance use issues which are currently not available in the community and they work collaboratively with addiction services agencies to facilitate ASI participants in obtaining the services they need to address their barriers to employment.

- St. Joseph's Care Group is a key addiction agency that provides alcohol and drug dependency treatment services for both youth and adults at the Sister Margaret Smith Centre and detoxification at the Balmoral Centre.
- The Sister Margaret Smith Centre provides gender and culturally sensitive individual and group counselling through residential and out-patient treatment.

- Addiction treatment services are also provided by the Thunder Bay Counselling Centre and the Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre which provides complete substance abuse assessment, referral and support. A variety of treatment and/or rehabilitation counselling and support services are provided by a number of other agencies in the City of Thunder Bay.
- Three C's Reintroduction Centre is a 12-bed facility for males ages 16 and over with problems related to drugs and alcohol that have already been through a treatment program.
- Thunder Bay Seaway Non-profit Housing Corporation has 15 housing units (nine (9) one bedroom and six (6) two bedroom shared accommodation) for recovered adult substance abusers who must be in Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous and have come out of treatment or a recovery home. These adults must be in school or the equivalent to school.
- Crossroads Centre Incorporated is a 40-bed recovery home for male and females 18 years of age and over who suffer from substance abuse disorders.
- Dilico Ojibway Treatment Centre is a continuing care, short term residential treatment centre offering services in Ojibway and English. Services are delivered to First Nations people who reside on and off Reserve in the City and District of Thunder Bay.
- Ka-na-chi-hih Specialized Solvent Abuse Treatment Centre is a long term residential treatment centre for chronic solvent-abusing Aboriginal clients 16-25 years of age.
- New Experiences is an outpatient agency which offers a dual disorder program providing substance abuse and mental health programming for youth.
- Northwestern Ontario Concurrent Disorders Program is an outpatient program which offers assessment, psychiatric care, assertive community treatment and case management of clients with concurrent disorders.
- North of Superior Programs is an assessment, continuing care and family intervention agency which offers counselling, referral and follow up services for individuals suffering from the effects of chemical abuse and problem gambling issues. The program is located in Longlac, Manitouwadge, Marathon, Nipigon, Terrace Bay and Geraldton.

Demand for services, absence of a medical detoxification program, and the need for appropriate addiction treatment which is often only available out of town all pose challenges for the TBDSSAB and its valued community partners in providing a sufficient level of services to meet the high needs and thus service demand of this extremely vulnerable population.

Health

Participation in OW in particular requires a basic level of 'health' or functional ability to complete mandatory program activities as outlined by legislation and clients' participation agreements. The assumption is generally made that persons in receipt of social assistance are capable of independent living; however we have found many clients have fallen through cracks in the health care system and are struggling to cope with basic activities of daily living which further result in barriers to employment. Providing services to this harder-to-serve clientele places significant demands upon existing caseworker staff time. For OW clients to be successful it is necessary for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and Local Health Integrated

Networks (LHIN) to ensure that health care services are accessible to OW participants in a timely manner. A number of staff participates on various committees made up of community agencies who deliberate upon the challenges, however provincial and LHIN leadership is essential to address the gaps in services within the District of Thunder Bay.

Criminal Justice/Corrections

A large number of services in the community are connected to criminal justice and corrections. The following are a few of the many organizations that provide criminal justice and corrections services: Legal Aide, Corrections and Parole, John Howard Society and Salvation Army. Where possible, the TBDSSAB works in collaboration with these forms of agencies in assisting clients to obtain services within the community to remove barriers to employment.

Child Care

Communities Together for Children is a community agency which provides information, support and resources for parents seeking child care as well as child care givers. Child care is offered by TBDSSAB to OW participants through formal (licensed child care) and informal (financial assistance with the cost of babysitting fees) assistance to remove child care as a barrier to employment.

District Servicing

District caseworkers endeavour to provide holistic servicing however it is not without significant challenges. Within the District, access to services and transportation are major challenges due to geographic location and limited services and resources within the communities. Similarly OW participants who reside outside in municipalities serviced by the City delivery site have expressed challenges with the limited transportation assistance as there is no accessible public transportation. Increased financial supports for transportation are needed by OW recipients residing in Northern Ontario so that they can meet their participation requirements.

Section 3: Program Management

Service Delivery Rationale and Analysis of Resources

Ontario Works Delivery Sites

The TBDSSAB has a vast geographic service area of 103,368 km² comprising of 15 member municipalities and unorganized areas. Prior to December 31, 2008 the Board contracted with four member municipalities to delivery services on its behalf. The four delivery agents: City of Thunder Bay, Municipality of Greenstone, Township of Manitouwadge and Township of Schreiber service the regions of designated member municipalities and unorganized areas through five main offices and a number of satellite offices.

When the TBDSSAB became the employer of former municipal staff who delivered the OW program in January 2009, a supervisor of District Services was hired to manage delivery of OW as well as income testing for children's services through five main district delivery sites: Geraldton, Manitouwadge, Marathon, Schreiber and Nipigon. The five district delivery sites service the regions of member municipalities and designated unorganized areas through the main office as well as a number of satellite offices in outlying communities.

Due to the vast service area the TBDSSAB is unable to access economies of scale in service delivery as would CMSMs and thus service delivery within the District of Thunder Bay is more demanding upon human and financial resources. To achieve economies the TBDSSAB needs to purchase some services from the City of Thunder Bay (e.g., archiving, IT, HR, etc.) The OW Division is still in transition concerning opportunities for standardization amongst all delivery sites to achieve higher consistency in service delivery. Previously each of the four delivery agents utilized a service delivery model that best meets the needs of the municipality for their respective service areas.

In March 2010 OW Administration consulted with City OW delivery site staff concerning the benefits and challenges of the service delivery model implemented in December 2006 as they relate to the current caseload environment. Division staff were requested to provide input from both a staffing and client perspective based on information they have heard from their clients. This information was reviewed by the OW Management Team and a decision was made to revert to a generalist caseworker model however with existing clerical supports and centralized appointment scheduling that was not a part of the previous generalist model. Implementation of changes will commence in the fall of 2010 in an attempt to better streamline services and respond to our changing caseload. These changes are anticipated to have both positive and negative impacts with respect to client services.

Reverting to a generalist model will not have an impact upon the caseload to caseworker ratios and staff will be required to keep up-to-date on all aspects of service delivery as they did before December 2006. However, the change will reduce the number of persons involved in the delivery of services by one thereby simplifying the system. Caseworkers will continue to be assisted by clerical supports to facilitate the delivery of services to the needs of higher caseloads. The application screening process is currently performed by three Caseworker Assistants (in addition to numerous other tasks) will undergo changes to a process that is better described as application intake process. The TBDSSAB will be increasing the number of Scheduling Clerks from 1 to 3 in order to pilot the application intake process. In addition to centralized appointment scheduling, Scheduling Clerks will perform the application intake process by populating information received from applicants in SDMT. Given that the Scheduling Clerks position does not have the qualifications or authority to make eligibility decisions considerably less information concerning eligibility will be supplied during the application intake process than what is currently provided in the screening process by Caseworker Assistants who have the knowledge and authority to determine eligibility. The information provided by Scheduling Clerks will be largely limited to advising of the maximum asset level as set out in the legislation and what the SDMT eligibility engine relays when required information has been entered. While there are disadvantages of this change at the initial point of contact, this change when implemented will facilitate reassignment of Caseworker Assistants' time currently spent on application screening to assist Caseworkers with verification (application) interviews which are in high demand. This change will better utilize the competencies and authority of human resources in a cost efficient manner. OW Administration will be subsequently reviewing the impact of these changes upon the service delivery.

Delivery of Language Services (including French Language Services)

Although there are infrequent requests for services in a language other than English, the TBDSSAB facilitates services to a number of persons for whom English is not their first language. Given the infrequent number of requests TBDSSAB languages services are provided in a manner that provides services to clients in a cost effective manner. The TBDSSAB's ability to provide services in languages other than English is influenced by funding, service agreement requirements for competent staff, the availability of competent potential employees, collective agreements and community resources. For example an applicant who speaks French and/or Ojibway but does not hold a minimum diploma in social service work could not be hired for a Caseworker position because s/he would not possess the qualifications and competencies to deliver caseworker services to the vulnerable population which Ontario Works serves. To knowingly hire an unqualified person would increase the risk of liability issues for Service Managers.

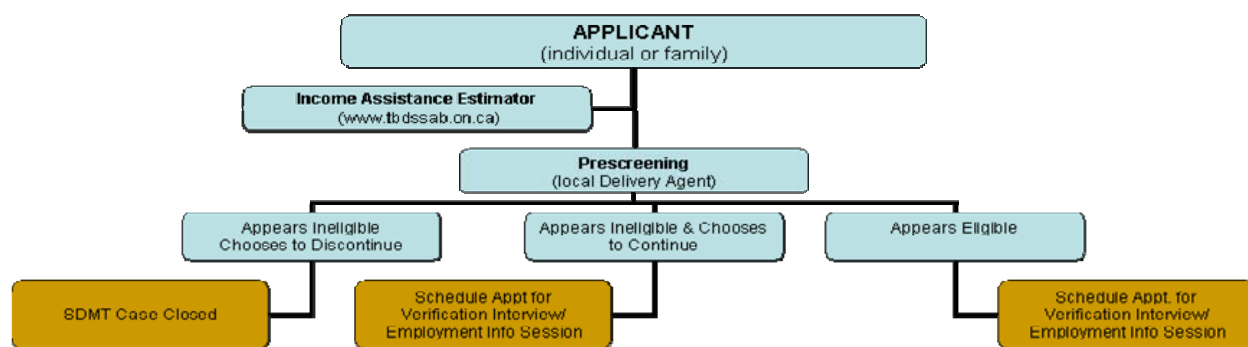
Relative to service delivery, TBDSSAB has experienced challenges in finding qualified and appropriate staff to deliver OW services in a complex, fast paced, ever changing and frequently crisis driven environment. This challenge increases when staffing caseworker vacancies in the District delivery sites where communities may not possess qualified applicants and moving to remote, rural sites may not be a desire of potential applicants residing in the City. These challenges become significantly increased when trying to recruit qualified appropriate staff that can provide bi-lingual or multi-lingual services. Applications are encouraged from persons meeting the position qualifications who also possess language skills in addition to English as well as from minority groups.

While TBDSSAB service areas designated under the French Language Services Act include Longlac, Geraldton, Marathon, Manitouwadge, Beardmore, Nakina and Terrace Bay, despite active recruitment when vacancies arise the number of qualified applicants who are able to communicate in French ranges from nominal to non existent. When language services cannot be delivered directly by staff, formal translation services are purchased from appropriate community agencies where service is required in a language other than English, particularly as services relate to understanding the rights and responsibilities of participating in OW. In cases of appointments where legal documents are not involved, clients may choose to bring a trusted family member to translate for them or request that an interpreter be provided. French language services are rarely requested in TBDSSAB services areas even when French speaking employees are on site making the purchase of interpreter services a feasible option for service delivery. As mentioned earlier, the ability of TBDSSAB to provide services languages other than English is dependent upon provincial funding to implement long-term strategies, the ability to address issues within collective bargaining, the availability of qualified human resources in the communities which they are needed, and the language services available by urban and rural community agencies.

Local Screening

Clients calling to apply for OW Assistance call a local telephone number and are screened by local office staff. Most applicants are able to proceed with telephone screening and the non attendance for verification appointments has declined. Clients who are inappropriate for telephone screening are booked into a Verification Interview, thus by-passing the screening

process. Each of the TBDSSAB's OW delivery sites currently has their own process for booking appointments. To facilitate streamlined booking designated staff that perform the screening function schedule the verification interview appointments for the City delivery site. Related thereto, the designated staff administer a centralized appointment booking system for appointments for counselling, participation agreement updates, consolidation verification process, family support, etc. Within the City delivery site centralized booking is a proven best practice for service delivery through maximizing the use of interview rooms and staffing resources .

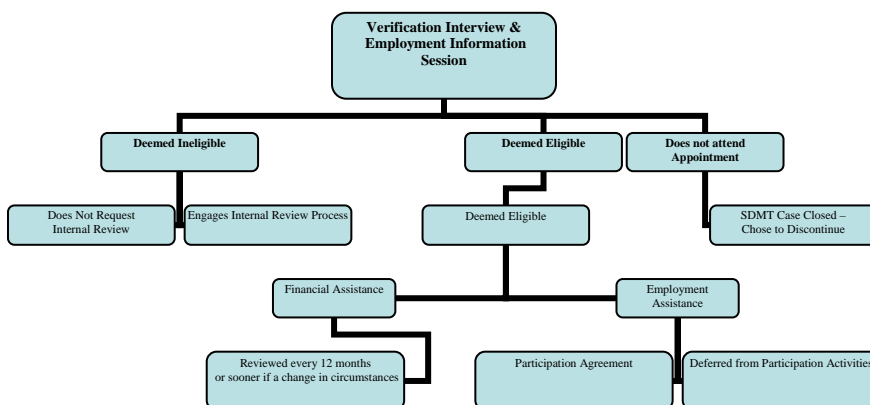


The frequency of application screening and verification interviews is creating significant pressure on staffing resources in the City delivery site due to the combination of these responsibilities together with case management and other tasks. Within the City there are three FTE Caseworker Assistants currently assigned to the screening function as well as emergency hostels, emergency assistance, reinstatements, eligibility determination for the Emergency Rent and Energy Fund, assistance with arrears (rent & energy) as well as other administrative responsibilities. The application screening process is scheduled for change to an application intake process starting fall 2010 as previously noted.

Applications

The TBDSSAB endeavours to process requests for OW assistance within four days of the screening interview as set out in the Provincial-Municipal Joint Protocol however due to large influxes of applications and harder-to-serve client demands upon staff time this target is becoming increasingly difficult to meet. Recidivism rates of social assistance applications are high (approximately 75%) however SDMT needs to be updated and information verified as per the regulations. The limited availability of SDMT after hours adds to the challenge of meeting increased need. As applications are approaching the 4-day turnaround action is required to redirect resources to application appointments. This may result in additional cost for staff overtime and backlog in other areas such as employment servicing including Participation Agreement updates. Collective Agreements provide for staff time off in lieu of overtime which then further negatively impacts service delivery when to accommodate the time off as it is unrealistic to go through the expense of hiring and expending resources to training temporary staff on a sporadic basis given the high frequency that these temporary staff would quickly move on to other employment. The TBDSSAB needs the Provincial government to understand the unique challenges the Board faces as a Northern Delivery Agent and to provide adequate

provincial funding for service delivery including staffing a dedicated application team to meet the needs of citizens assisted within the Board’s vast geographic service area.



The frequency of applications within the District is more manageable, however due to geographic distances these resources cannot be engaged to assist during months of high applications and reinstatements in the City.

Intake and Emergency Assistance

Support expedited intake for victims of family violence

Support for victims of family violence is expedited as assessment occurs at the local level while the initial telephone intake is completed. Any situation deemed to be an emergency will be dealt with by designated qualified staff.

Access to Services Other than Ontario Works

Persons in need of information and referral to services other than OW may be referred to appropriate agencies by local office staff. Every effort is made to provide assistance at initial point of contact. In many cases, callers are referred to the local Lakehead Social Planning Council, which is responsible for the Community Information & Referral to other services through the 211 service protocol.

Community Resources to Provide Emergency Help

The OW office co-ordinates community services to provide emergency help through partnerships with the Salvation Army, Emergency Shelter, Women Shelters and the Ontario Provincial Police. Staff from OW communicates with the agencies on a near daily basis to ensure that the emergency needs of applicants are met. Service agreements are in place to ensure that basic needs are provided for and where appropriate, applicants are fast-tracked to the OW office. In situations where transients are passing through, basic needs are met pursuant to agreements with the OW office to authorize per diem payment. In some situations and under extenuating circumstances, transportation is provided to move the transient to another municipality. A protocol is in place with the Ontario Provincial Police should the individual present themselves in the community after-hours. The TBDSSAB contracts with emergency shelters within the City

of Thunder Bay to provide emergency shelter services. On a daily basis staff is in contact with the emergency shelters for daily bed lists and verification of shelter services. An Emergency Hostel Outreach Worker also attends at each of the emergency shelters to provide onsite application servicing and specialized case management and supports as later described.

The TBDSSAB is involved with community action to consolidate the distribution of food bank services in the District. The Board approved funds for transportation costs relating to bulk purchases of foods and one-time funding for coordination of food distribution amongst the various food banks. There is a tremendous growth in need and dependence in the community and reliance on food banks both within the rural and urban areas. In 2009 the Board provided approximately \$200,000 for food transportation, distribution coordination, perishable foods and food and related items for infants and toddlers through the CSRFP.

Where emergencies exist as a consequence of fire, OW staff link and/or refer victims to available services within the community for additional assistance. The Red Cross, Salvation Army, March of Dimes and food banks provides assistance in obtaining temporary shelter in hotel, replacement of clothing and food, as well as provision of recycled/refurbished furniture and household items. Information and referral services are provided to assist victims in applying for social housing.

Analysis of Resources

Access information and resources to support effective participation planning

Previously each Delivery Agent managed appointment scheduling in a manner that fits within their municipal service delivery. The appointment scheduling procedures remain largely unchanged amongst the delivery sites. Appointments with City OW front line staff for applications, counselling, participation agreement updates, consolidation verification process, family support, etc are booked through designated staff utilizing a centralized appointment booking system that has been proven to better maximize the utilization of interview rooms and human resources leading to improved client servicing.

Ontario Works staff are well versed in the availability of community resources and accessing information to support effective participation planning. Although governed via different and at times conflicting legislation, efforts are made to coordinate services available through Ontario Works, Children's Services and Housing Services. Staff access resources to assist the client in obtaining more holistic services to meet their needs and thus facilitate removal of barriers to employment or applications to the ODSP where applicable.

Ontario Works Financial Assistance is issued for basic needs, shelter, and emergency assistance. Financial assistance is available to families and individuals in need who meet eligibility requirements in Ontario. The cost of prescription medication is provided for all members of the OW benefit unit. In addition, basic dental care and vision care benefits are available for dependent children of OW recipients. A variety of discretionary benefits may be available to adult recipients based on need (e.g., emergency dental, dentures, prescription glasses, etc.)

As previously indicated TBDSSAB requires provincial investment in a dedicated application team and sufficient staffing to perform OW financial and employment case management activities.

Internal Review and Appeal Services: Applicants and recipients of OW wishing to challenge decisions of ineligibility for mandatory benefits may request an internal review and further appeal to the Social Benefit Tribunal (SBT) if they continue to disagree with the decision. An independent Internal Review/Case Presenting Officer (1 FTE) performs the internal reviews and represents the OW Administrator at SBT hearings.

Consolidated Verification Process (CVP): The consolidated verification process is an annual review to verify entitlement of clients to benefits in respect of the benefits issued. This service is performed by 3 FTEs one of which also case manages a caseload under the homemaking program and performs OW applications outside of the office with the exception of those at the emergency shelters. The need for a CVP review is identified through SDMT reporting and augmented by local review of the caseload.

Family Support (FS): assists OW recipients, who are custodial parents of dependent children, pursue financial support to which they may be entitled, including preparation of support agreements when support obligations are not contested. The TBDSSAB currently has 2.5 FTE Family Support Workers delivering the EFSI, one of which performs the duties of both Family Support Worker and Eligibility Review Officer for the District.

Eligibility Review (ER): 1.5 Eligibility Review Officers investigate allegations of fraud pertaining to the TBDSSAB caseload. When an investigation determines the elements of fraud are present, a Crown Brief is prepared and forwarded to the relevant police service for review. The police determine whether the case has the necessary elements required for a charge under the Criminal Code of Canada and if so, the Crown Attorney's office determines whether there is sufficient evidence to proceed with prosecution. The .5 FTE also performs Family Support Work in the District.

Employment assistance is available to assist OW recipients in securing employment and becoming self-sufficient. OW administers regulated employment financial benefits as well as offers a range of employment programs and servicing. The types and availability of servicing varies across the District of Thunder Bay as a result of the availability or unavailability of community partners and resources. Increase in the annualized employment funding provided the TBDSSAB with the opportunity to offset some of the increasing costs in administration by allocation of staff time associated with employment activities to the employment budget. For example, one caseworker position provides supports to community placements as well as intensive case management and outreach services for OW recipients who have significant health barriers who need assistance in obtaining the medical information required to apply for ODSP. Another caseworker provides employment supports and case management services to dependent adults and non disabled spouses of ODSP applicants. Increased employment funding also provided opportunity for the TBDSSAB to implement a training assistance program through 2009 which provided financial assistance with the cost of training programs that were not accessible with the previous employment funding envelope or through any other income assistance (e.g., OSAP) by clients. Due to fiscal pressures, this form of assistance is being provided on an exception basis in 2010 where there is a high probability of employment following completion of the course or training workshop. Absence of sufficient funding for sufficient staff to deliver services to the OW caseload will impact the TBDSSAB's ability to provide services to beneficiaries of ODSP.

The *Community Placement Program* is administered by all Delivery sites matching a participant's skills and employment goals with a community agency or organization. Participants placed in agencies are able to gain valuable work experience through "on-the-job training". Financial support is available for transportation, child care, placement-related training and special clothing or equipment. The majority of participants self-initiate their placements, finding their own volunteer work with non-profit, public, or charitable organizations. Ontario Works has also designed community placements for the hard-to-serve participant group.

The *Enhanced Employment Placement Program* assists job-ready participants into paid employment by offsetting employer hiring and training costs. Participants are provided with training and financial assistance as they seek out employment opportunities within private and public sectors or within not-for-profit organizations. Financial support is available for transportation, child care, and other employment expenses to assist in the job search process and maintain employment secured through this program. The TBDSSAB has entered into formal employment placement agreements with three agencies that assist participants to find jobs with employers in the community.

Employment Supports training and counselling services are provided to participants of OW. Counselling supports include one-to-one assistance with self employment activities, preparation of resumes, cover letters, and interviewing skills to name but a few. Training includes but is not limited to WHMIS, Smart Serve as well as hospitality, customer service, janitorial and computer training. In the District caseworkers assist clients directly or with access community training including, but not limited to, WHMIS, Smart Serve, computer, literacy, education, etc. Financial assistance may include the cost of travel, registration fees, safety equipment, and clothing necessary to obtain employment. With the end to enhanced funding, the TBDSSAB entered into creative and mutually beneficial partnerships with educational and community agencies to provide on-site servicing for participants at the OW ERC located in the City. In many of these arrangements the TBDSSAB provides the space and supports to clients, where the partner provides or participates in direct programming and covers all or some of the external costs for teachers, instruction and equipment.

The *Learning, Earning and Parenting Program (LEAP)* provides intensive case management assistance to young parents aged sixteen to twenty-one years who have not finished high school and are receiving financial assistance through OW or ODSP. LEAP provides supports and incentives and promotes the completion of high school, participation in school co-op programs, apprenticeship programs, work experience programs, summer job experience, and community participation towards the attainment of employment skills. LEAP also promotes learning about parenting and child development through participation in parenting or child development programs within the community. Upon successful completion of the three components of the LEAP program, participants are given a \$500 bursary towards post secondary education for themselves or their child. On average, seventy young parents participate in the program each month. At the City delivery site there are 2 FTEs who case manage the LEAP caseload and applicants less than 18 years of age. In the district this clientele is case managed by District Caseworkers.

The *Addiction Services Initiative (ASI)* assists participants of OW who have an addiction to alcohol or other drugs that poses a barrier to employment. Two specialized OW Addiction

Counsellors managed a caseload of 204 clients in 2009 and work with a community agency based outreach team that provide persistent outreach to approximately 135 of the ASI participants. In 2009 the total number of unique individuals served was 294. Through considerable travel one specialized OW Addiction Counsellor delivers ASI services to a caseload of 25 scattered throughout the District. Our key commitment is to provide a high level of service to ASI participants in order to enable them to deal successfully with their addiction(s) and move back into the work force. The TBDSSAB's service delivery model was developed in collaboration with an Advisory Group of addictions treatment and service agencies and later extended to Child Welfare agencies, probation and parole and other important stakeholders. The model was developed to best respond within the confines of budget to the needs of OW participants and address gaps in the addiction service system within which our clients were being lost. Intensive case management and persistent outreach services are proven necessities in keeping clients with addictions engaged in addiction treatment and support services so that they can address their substance addictions as barriers to employment. As mentioned previously, provincial funding for the TBDSSAB's service delivery of the ASI program has been slated for significant reduction in 2011 which will have a negative impact upon clients and District of Thunder Bay communities. The current ASI funding level is a necessity in responding to the continuing demand for service from OW clients needing to remove this barrier to employment and facilitate achievement of their self potential including employment outcomes. A reduction in ASI funding will intuitively result in long-term increases in social assistance payments and dependency as the addictions remain untreated and consequently other social and health care systems will experience increased financial costs. The ASI program alleviates loss of life and, reduction to servicing under this program may undermine the existing deterrent nature that accompanies connection with services.

The *Literacy screening and training program* was established to assist OW participants who cannot obtain or retain employment because they do not have basic reading, writing, and math skills. The program connects participants with training providers based on the individual needs of the client. Screening is done during verification interviews however, under certain circumstances, participants may be exempt from the literacy program.

Child Care assistance is provided in partnership with the Children's Services Division. Ontario Works participants may access either informal child care through their OW caseworker or formal child care with fee subsidy through the Children's Services Division. In 2008, the TBDSSAB assisted 185 families (240 children) with formal child care, and 7 families (11 children) with informal childcare. In 2009, 205 families (269 children) were assisted with formal child care and 6 families (6 children) with informal child care. Ontario Works District Caseworkers perform child care fee subsidy income testing and track attendance. Informal child care is direct funding for OW participants and from an administrative perspective the inclusion of this funding with the Children's Services Division budget (which is separate and apart from the OW Division and budgets) is inefficient. A streamlined approach for informal child care benefit would be to include funding for this benefit within the OW client benefits budget and remove it from the Children's Services Budget. Funding for OW clients for formal child care remains appropriate for inclusion within the Children's Services Budget as they are administering fee subsidy and other programs for licensed child care.

ODSP Discretionary Benefits: as of December 3, 2009 OW staff reviewed in excess of 750 requests and approved 640 requests totalling approximately \$230,000.

The MCSS has advised of their benchmark that OW Service Managers should with the realms of their cost of administration funding provide services to ODSP recipients in an amount equal to 10% of the ODSP caseload. In 2009 the understated number³³ of services TBDSSAB provided exceeds 10% of the reported December 2009 ODSP caseload of 5,061 by nearly 50%. Moreover, the Ministry's cessation of incentive funding from savings achieved through the provision of OW employment services to non disabled spouses and dependent adult beneficiaries of the ODSP was unexpected and creates further challenges in delivery of these services to this ODSP population as the funding was used for the provision of a staff for that purpose. As a result the contract position services the ODSP non disabled spouses and dependent adults was terminated and an OW Caseworker position normally assigned to case manage a portion of the OW caseload had to be assigned to the role resulting in increased pressures in delivery of the OW program to OW recipients. As previously mentioned this caseload has significantly risen by 55% during the 2008 – 2009 service cycle.

In absence of sufficient provincial funding a review of the type and number of services provided by TBDSSAB to ODSP recipients will be undertaken during the 2010- 2011 service cycle given the high demand and pressures on existing human resources delivering services to an increased OW caseload.

Emergency Hostel Outreach is partially funded through the use of cost of administration allocation from CHPP and the CSR. This one FTE regularly attends at the emergency shelters in Thunder Bay each week to take applications for OW onsite. This position is also responsible for engaging with shelter residents to assess barriers to homelessness, assessing the presence of addiction, mental health and concurrent disorder issues, provide interim counselling in an effort to assist the person stabilize their condition and collaboratively work relevant community agencies in an effort to involve the resident in holistic services to address barriers to housing.

Energy Emergency Fund is a program that is funded at 100% by the province. As previously mentioned the fund has been unable to meet community need over the last few years and requests for additional funding have been unsuccessful. Amendments have been made to local policy to exclude social assistance recipients from eligibility to increase the capacity of the EEF program to assist low income families who are not in receipt of social assistance. Consequently, social assistance recipients in need of assistance with energy arrears must seek assistance from their respective social assistance program.

One-time Employment Funded Projects

One-time employment funding was created for 2010 through cost-share contributions of the province and TBDSSAB. With this funding the Board and its community service partners developed six projects to address barriers and enhanced the employability of clients within the District of Thunder Bay.

³³ Statistics exclude requests processed and approved expenditures between December 4 – 31, 2009.

Lakehead Adult Education Centre

The OW Learning Centre at ERC operates in partnership with the Lakehead Adult Education Centre. The program offers a classroom like setting for participants of OW to work on achieving their high school credits with the support and assistance of a teacher that is on site Monday to Thursday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Students have individualized time tables for completion of credits. The additional one-time funding is being used to enhance existing learning supports through the expansion of teacher availability and classroom hours to allow students more time in the day to complete assignments in a location that provides teacher support.

Employment Training and Internship Program

As previously mentioned the TBDSSAB had success with the City pilot program delivered in 2008 that provided comprehensive training and supported internship opportunities for a limited number of OW participants. The program assists vulnerable persons in receipt of social assistance with services and supports to learn from and potentially move to employment with employers that have agreed to participate in this program. Participants are provided with training and a four week internship during which the participants will obtain transferable skills, work experience and an opportunity to demonstrate their work abilities to participating employers and potentially gain sustainable employment. Both participants and employers are provided with supports by the service provider to facilitate a successful outcome as well as educate and facilitate job retention strategies that can be used beyond the scope of this project. Nominal stipends are provided to participating employers and honorariums to participants who successfully complete the program. With one-time employment funding TBDSSAB is piloting this program in the Nipigon/Red Rock area through a new partnership with Youth Employment Services (YES).

Nipigon District Memorial Hospital

Over the past 10-12 years the Nipigon District Memorial Hospital has assumed financial responsibilities regarding the operations of the Community Handi Van to provide safe, wheelchair accessible transportation to the citizens of Nipigon, Red Rock, and Dorion/Hurkett. Seniors and individuals who do not have transportation to attend medical appointments and basic living needs have utilized the services. Utilization of the Handi Van has been minimal making it financially challenging for the Hospital to continue to provide this much needed service. Transportation for clients within the District is a significant barrier to engagement in employment and/or employment related activities. The one-time employment funding provided TBDSSAB with the opportunity for a creative partnership with the Hospital to support the continuation of their existing services through a temporary expansion of transportation services to OW participants to access educational opportunities, attend employment training workshops, and participate in other employment related activities such as the Training and Internship Program noted above.

S100 Firefighting Certification Training

The S100 is a firefighting training program that also includes chain saw training and certification, as well as WHMIS and first aid/CPR training. Certification for all four components is then provided at the end of the week-long training. Using one-time employment funding the Board purchased the delivery of this training program for OW participants, including

participating ODSP dependent adults and non disabled spouses currently receiving OW employment services within the City of Thunder Bay. In order for participants to enrol in the training program they are first screened for blood pressure by VON Canada (PARmedX physical activity readiness medical examination) to ensure that individuals participating in this physically demanding training is not put at risk. In addition, funding is available to eligible OW participants in the TBDSSAB's District delivery sites for the purchase of \$100 firefighting training services from appropriate community agencies.

Lakehead District School Board – SAM/MISOL

Lakehead District School Board provides alternative education for pregnant teens and young mothers. The Single Adolescent Mothers' (SAM) program offers pregnant teens an opportunity to get their credits along with a variety of ongoing programs, i.e., parenting, pre-natal, nutrition and budgeting. Individualized timetables are set for each student. The Mothers in Search of Learning (MISOL) program assists young mothers in their return to school and to provide an opportunity for them to obtain their Ontario Secondary School Diploma. The SAM/MISOL programs in the City are supported by TBDSSAB through the provision of child care subsidies as well as through OW LEAP/Student Caseworkers relative to shared clients. This OW client group can be described as high need due to the complex issues that they face. One-time employment funds are being used to support clients enrolled in the SAM/MISOL programs with the services of a half time social worker who will collaborate with existing staff and community agencies to provide and promote various health, crisis management, abuse, housing and well-being issues of the students and children. Assisting clients in these areas will facilitate learning and increase their employability.

Thunderbird Friendship Centre

The Thunderbird Friendship Centre is a non-profit organization which aims to improve the quality of life for Aboriginal people living in the Greenstone area while operating with an open-door policy to foster a mutual understanding and respect between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal. Culturally appropriate programming and services are offered by the centres 14 programs: as well as, special events, services and initiatives that reach people of all ages and interests. Ontario Works recipients frequent the programs and services of the Thunderbird Friendship Centre. The Centre is open on a drop-in basis and offers social, recreational, educational, and cultural programs for all ages. Through one-time funding a new partnership with Thunderbird Friendship Centre was developed to purchase a specific variety of skills training and transportation services for OW participants served out of the Greenstone delivery site to increase their employment skills.

Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program funding is funded by the Province at 100 percent. The TBDSSAB distributes funding to agencies within the District who assist individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in a variety of ways be it supports to daily living for persons with health issues or a homeless outreach program to assist harder to serve low income persons navigate through systems to access housing. Over the last two years TBDSSAB has been receiving and had to decline an increasing number of requests from community agencies for funding to provide services to the at risk and homeless populations. The Board submitted a business case to the MCSS Regional Office in early 2010 requesting additional funds and was advised that further funds were not available.

Emergency Energy Fund is provided at 100% provincial dollars however the current amount of funding is insufficient to address the needs of low-income citizens in the District of Thunder Bay. In 2009, the funds were exhausted in early March; much earlier than the previous three years when the funds were typically exhausted before the end of April. In 2009, 37 households were granted funding through EEF (13 low-income, 22 O.W., and 2 E.I.). The TBDSSAB currently receives \$33,630 annually and has repeatedly requested more funding from the province without success. Moreover, the 10% allowance from administration fees is insufficient to pay for the human resources needed to administer this initiative. The TBDSSAB continues to urge the province to increase this funding as absence of utilities within the Northern winter extreme condition can result in life threatening situations, as well as promotes eviction and increased homelessness as well as applications for OW financial assistance.

National Child Benefit Reinvestment Funds (NCBRF) program had historically been administered directly through OW and in partnership with community agencies to deliver services to alleviate the effects of child poverty. Ontario Works had also been issuing assistance for extraordinary needs and a single annual payments directly to recipients of OW and the ODSP. Partnerships with community agencies were developed to deliver breakfast and other nutritional programs, provide family poverty prevention initiatives to urban aboriginal low income families, as well as basic recreational opportunities for children amongst many other services. Given the restructuring of social assistance in Ontario and impact upon the NCBRF, TBDSSAB changed the name of its program to the *Community Social Reinvestment Program (CSRP)* so that the program name can be maintained even when funding sources change. Through CSRP the TBDSSAB continues to provide assistance families either directly or through partnerships with community agencies. The majority of CSRP agency beneficiaries were carried over from the NCBRF. At the time of the restructuring and for a period thereafter insufficient communications were provided concerning the amount of reinvestments (either through NCB or social assistance restructuring savings) which would be eligible for consideration under the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund (OMPF). In 2009 the \$656,000 was budgeted for the CSRP and \$655,400 for 2010. It is currently the TBDSSAB's understanding that the maximum amount of reinvestments that will be considered under OMPF is equivalent to the amount of NCB savings in 2007 (i.e., \$655,400). Over the last two years TBDSSAB has received and had to decline an increasing number of community agencies requests for assistance with funding of homeless and homeless prevention initiatives.

Overview of Learning Supports

Staff Training and Development

The TBDSSAB continues to support OW staff through the provision of contracted training to meet identified individual and Divisional needs including through provincial training initiatives such as SAIL. OW staff is provided through a combination of training administered in the TBDSSAB main office in the city or within the delivery sites by the Supervisor – District Services, or through purchase of service arrangements. Over the next few years the training program will continue to be refined and extended to other positions within OW. A balance between training opportunities and servicing clients and appropriate timing of training is imperative to facilitating timely delivery of services to clients. Backlogs occur as a result of training and it is often difficult to catch up in a timely manner due to the limitation of hours of

SDMT, hours of operation under collective agreements, and the financial and servicing costs resulting from overtime.

Business Practices

The service delivery model of the City delivery site which services the majority of TBDSSAB OW clients has undergone extensive review and changes. Minor refinements occur from time to time, however due to the significant increase in caseload after consultation with staff the decision has been made to revert to a generalist caseworker model of service delivery. Despite having an overall very good Division attendance record, due to issues affecting human resources and the rise in caseload, the City delivery site was unfortunately not able to experience the full potential of the specialized employment – finance delivery model. Transition to a generalist caseworker deliver model will commence in the fall of 2010.

Relative to business practices effecting employment servicing, the TBDSSAB strives to utilize the cost-shared employment funding in a manner that maximizes the budget to provide a breadth of services, training opportunities, and financial employment supports for participants. Accordingly, over the next service planning cycle the TBDSSAB plans to continue to deliver responsive employment programming in a manner that meets the needs of participants and employers and maximizes capacity through productive partnerships with community agencies and businesses. Ontario Works Administration currently waits to learn of more specific strategies to be identified through the Northern Growth Plan and once known will look to identify areas to partner and incorporate those strategies as appropriate to local service delivery.

The TBDSSAB is in the final stages of completing the development of stand alone employment assessment and case management software which will be used to better assist front line OW staff in assessment of client barriers to employment as well as perform a variety of administrative functions to assist Administration with service planning that meets the changing needs of the caseload. This software has minimal overlap with SDMT information and is anticipated to be implemented in the fall-winter of 2010 however will take time before it is fully populated and functional with existing client information due to limited resources to meet with existing clients to perform the assessments and populate the software.

The TBDSSAB is interested in working with the province in development of software that permits the collection of tombstone application data for population into SDMT or replacement technology, the Ontario Child Care Management System and Yardi so that shared clients with proper consents only have to provide their basic information once to apply for assistance from one or more of the programs. Should this be accomplished future changes to the delivery model will be made to better integrate the application processes for Ontario Works, Child Care and Housing Services.

Section 4: Outcome Strategies

Service Strategy Rationale

Within existing limited staffing resources and relative to demands of time of various client groups, OW caseworkers must ensure to achieve an equitable balance of services delivered

amongst benefit units with varying levels of educational achievement. This equitable balance will facilitate a steady flow of client achievement to maintain employment funding levels. Given the low education levels of the majority of the caseload together with other barriers to employment amongst the educated population currently more attention needs to be focused upon increasing employability through removal of barriers. Intuitively increasing one's employability is expected to progress to employment earnings and exits to employment in absence of crisis and further barriers arising when a positive labour market exists. Ontario Works staff deliver grassroots social services by providing individualized assistance to clients to overcome barriers and assist them with their educational and employment needs as best as possible within the confines of the legislation, provincial policy, funding and labour market.

Caseloads in the district have grown significantly, particularly in the Nipigon and Red Rock areas giving rise to the necessity of a delivery site in that area. Currently, the Nipigon and Red Rock areas are serviced through the Schreiber office but the caseload has become too large for one staff FTE to manage given the need for travel. The TBDSSAB has partnered with the Nipigon Hospital for office space and is currently recruiting a permanent, part-time caseworker to deliver services from that office. There is currently sufficient staff in the remaining District delivery sites to manage changes in their respective caseloads. The case to caseload ratio amongst the District caseworkers range based upon the size of the caseload, the amount of child care fee subsidy work they perform and the amount of travel required. The TBDSSAB has a relatively few number of caseworkers who do not have full case management responsibilities (i.e., 3 CVP, or who have unique assignment of case management (i.e., 1 ASI caseworker with a case ratio 190:1 – this caseworker performs financial aspect only working with addiction counsellors who deliver ASI services and other Employment Resource staff who assist with employment servicing; 2 LEAP/Student workers with caseload ratios of 65:1 due to the high need for intensive case management for this population; 1 intensive case management caseworker who does not maintain a caseload but provides intensive services and outreach to applicable clients in the caseload assisting disabled OW participants apply for ODSP and CPP-D; and one caseworker assigned to providing employment case management to the ODSP non disabled spouses and dependent adults which do not form part of the regular OW caseload – caseload ratio 235:1. When adjusting the general caseload in respect of the assignments above and the caseworker pool in respect of the staff performing those assignments, a caseload of 2,615 remains to be serviced by 20 caseworker staff. In respect of the increasing caseload the case to caseworker ratios have risen from 95:1 to 130:1 over the last two years. Amendments to provincial regulations impacting the time requirements for delivery of certain services and/or an appropriate standards for case to caseworkers with case management ratios and appropriate funding need to be undertaken by the MCSS to ensure that Service Delivery Managers can achieve provincial legislative and policy requirements.

Depending upon funding availability, existing skills programming and services will largely continue to be provided to OW participants so long as funding and community partner resources remain unchanged. Skills and services currently being provided through one-time funding will be reviewed and potentially considered again should additional funding become available. Given the OW participants low education levels, focus and support to clients in achieving their high school diploma is a priority. Sustainable employment in the North most often requires post secondary education and staff are encouraging clients to make use of whatever resource may be to their avail to engage in opportunities to achieve a better quality of life and independence from

social assistance. The TBDSSAB currently has strong partnerships with community agencies and offers a wide range of services in response to client and employer needs. Over the next two years the TBDSSAB will continue to offer and market existing services as well as potentially develop or facilitate access to other programming as needs and funding resources are identified.

Should the province proceed with the funding reduction to the ASI program, the caseload and services provided will have to be reduced to bring costs within budget. Such a reduction would impact contractual arrangements with current service providers and have a negative impact upon the regular OW caseload and potentially long-term cost of social assistance with longer waitlists for ASI services in addition to the significant social costs on the community as previously identified.

Relative to the provision of OW employment services to non disabled spouses and dependent adults of the ODSP program and the current challenges with funding and serving a rising caseload, a review is underway to determine an appropriate caseload for the assigned FTE and the caseload will be capped. In addition, a review will be undertaken concerning the resources required to continue to deliver discretionary benefits to ODSP recipients in light of the pressures on OW resources to deliver the OW program. In 2009 the total number of services provided by TBDSSAB to ODSP recipients equated to approximately 20% of the 2009 ODSP caseload.

Linking of Strategies to Outcome Measures including Increased Employability Strategies

As identified earlier, our service strategy is the provision of fundamental grassroots social services which provides individualized assistance to OW participants addressing their barriers to employment through a combination of in-house and community agency programs and services.

Applying humanistic theory and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs within the milieu of employment servicing, we endeavour to provide a continuum of more holistic services to assist OW participants overcome their barriers to employment. Increasing employability equates to removal of barriers which may range from assisting participants towards meeting their basic needs and employment supports within the financial confines of the legislation, referral to other community resources to access services and supports to address health and other social barriers to employment, provision of ASI services, in-house education, skills and training programs as available depending upon the delivery site, community education, skills and training programs and workshops, community and employment placements and supports which provide opportunities for skill building, work experience and job references.

Removal of barriers is the key towards removal of life challenges thus promoting a higher quality of life which includes assisting clients who are physically able to work to increase in their employability, obtain and maintain employment and financial independence. For OW clients who are physically unable to work and wish to apply for ODSP assistance, again depending upon the geographic location and availability of services in the community we provide varying degrees of assistance (depending upon functioning and complexity of the client's situation) ranging from assistance with completion of the client portions of the ODSP application form through to assistance in navigating the system including accessing a physician if they don't have a family doctor and providing outreach type supports to assist them attend medical appointments and obtain the medical information required. Our continuum of services is flexible in that

depending upon the client's current individual needs they may access services at any point along the continuum that corresponds with outcome measures.

Action Steps and Resources

Employment

Given that the TBDSSAB maximizes the employment funding envelope to maximize capacity and service delivery, in absence of further provincial funding it must stay on course to continue to maintain relationships and strategies in place. Monitoring and evaluation of existing services is an essential ongoing process to ensure that service delivery responds to client need and delivers the program within budget and service requirements.

The TBDSSAB will train staff in the locally developed employment assessment software during the 2010 – 2011 service cycle. Additional one-time employment funding in 2010-2011 would assist the TBDSSAB to obtain temporary staff to perform the assessments and populate data into the software as valuable service planning data and front line staff time efficiencies will be garnered once the software is fully operational and populated.

Ontario Works Administration strives to employ qualified and suitable staff to provide quality services. As a whole Division staff has consistently demonstrated their dedication to ensuring services are delivered to our vulnerable clientele. All positions within the Division make an essential contribution to service delivery. Qualifications for each of the positions reflect the competencies required for performing the responsibilities of positions. For example, caseworker staff either possesses a diploma in social service work or a degree in social work; Addiction Counsellors of the ASI program possess special qualifications and expertise in the area of substance addictions; and the Emergency Hostel Outreach Worker position requires special qualifications and expertise in the area of substance addictions and mental health. The TBDSSAB requires that community partners employ qualified and competent staff in the delivery of contracted services.

Ontario Works Staff will continue to maintain and build partnerships for additional servicing as capacity allows in response to the need for services.

Administration

The TBDSSAB is accountable for public funding and thus ensures that the OW program is delivered in accordance with legislative requirements a cost effective manner. This is not only true of accountability to the province through MCSS but also to the Member Municipalities who are financially struggling with their tax revenues due to a loss of their business tax base with the closing of large industry employers. The cost of service delivery rises and TBDSSAB needs the province to ensure that cost of administration funding requests are approved so that services can be delivered in accordance with the legislation and be responsive to needs of clients in the community. In addition to the annual budget requests, the TBDSSAB foresees the need for provincial cost-sharing on administrative costs in 2011 which include the OMERS scheduled increase and coverage of purchased municipal service costs to achieve economies of scale, as well as financial assistance for addressing the service gap relative to applications and meeting the four day turn around.

Stakeholder Linkages

The TBDSSAB and other OW Service Managers have been working within the new funding model over the last few years. Existing Stakeholder relationships/linkages have been redeveloped and new linkages have been established and currently exist in manner that leverages support to employment outcomes for clients who are physically and psychologically able to work. As previously indicated OW Administration and Staff are actively engaged with stakeholders and strategies have been implemented to provide a continuum of services that are responsive to stakeholder needs within the confines of the legislation and funding envelopes.

The TBDSSAB is interested in developing a stronger partnership with the Ministry to maintain existing program funding for all employment programs and support for new strategies that support financial independence and a higher quality of life for OW recipients, reduce the need for shelter per diems, and support homelessness initiatives.

Addressing Service Gaps

The following service gaps have been identified within this plan followed by information concerning the TBDSSAB and OW staff's role and recommendations for addressing same:

- **Safe, Affordable Housing** – inadequate social assistance rates in particularly shelter allowance rates and availability of safe, affordable housing including a high need for supportive housing, remains a significant barriers to employment and financial independence for OW participants including/or shelter residents. This very basic needs gap results in a preoccupation with meeting basic needs (e.g., attending food banks, free clothing agencies, looking for more affordable housing, etc..) and an inability to engage in employment related activities which increase knowledge and skill. **Recommendation:** that shelter allowance rates be increased closer to market rent rates or the development/procurement of a sufficient affordable single unit housing stock and supportive housing to address long wait lists and the need of shelter residents. This would be a positive step towards reduction of child and family poverty and would increase the quality of life for our most vulnerable and at risk citizens, thus allowing them to refocus on increasing their employability and accessing job opportunity that promote financial independence from social assistance.
- **Transportation** issues due to geographic challenges. Ontario Works staff provides financial assistance for transportation and employment supports as provided in the legislation and provincial directives. **Recommendation:** that in recognition of the distances that must be traveled that the province make changes to allow for additional transportation assistance for OW recipients who reside in areas that do not have access to public transportation.
- **Application Intake** delays and inability to meet applicant need and the four-day requirement within the City delivery site occurs frequently each calendar year and more so with the rise in caseload. **Recommendation:** either that provincial and municipal funding be provided to staff a dedicated application team to meet applicant needs, regulated requirements, and produce greater efficiency in service delivery or the province implements an amendment to the legislative and policy time requirements for delivery of services, or a combination of both strategies. As the environmental scan and Statistics Canada information demonstrate more and more residents of the District areas are moving to the City of Thunder Bay for services. Further, that the migration of aboriginal peoples from reserves to the City of Thunder Bay is

occurring at a steady rate. It is estimated that between 50 – 70% of the TBDSSAB's caseload is of aboriginal ethnicity. A dedicated application team that includes qualified aboriginal staff would support to provision of culturally sensitive services at entry to the system.

- ***Child Care for Ontario Works Sole Support Recipients who require hospitalization or addiction treatment*** is not readily available on a 24 hour basis. Although infrequent yet still problematic sole support recipients face significant challenges when needing to enter hospital for medical procedures requiring one or more overnight stays. ***Recommendation:*** that the Directives be amended to provide financial assistance for 24 hour child care in such exceptional circumstances. Alternatively, such families may be faced with Child Welfare Agencies taking temporary care of these children at a higher expense than the direct provision of financial assistance.
- ***Counselling Support for Students in the SAM (Single Adolescent Mothers)/MISOL (Mothers in Search of Learning) programs and for High School Students overall*** would facilitate the achievement of higher education and thus reduce current high drop out rates and potential future need for social assistance. In the past using Enhanced Funding the TBDSSAB provided intensive support (beyond the LEAP program) to students attending the SAM/MISOL program as well as students in the Structured Learning centre of the Employment Resource Centre. This intensive service supported positive outcomes (i.e., attainment of high school diplomas) for an increasing number of independent learners. Absence of this intensive case management has demonstrated negative outcomes in student attendance due to challenges in coping with crisis as well as parenting challenges. ***Recommendation:*** that provincial government develop a comprehensive strategy to support maintenance and post secondary education for low income families through the provision of education grants to low-income families, exclusion of educational loans relative to tuition and books as income relative to social assistance benefits, and for funding to be allocated to Educational Boards for the provision of social workers for students in all high schools and adult learning locations with youth to promote attainment of education and encouragement of post secondary education, provide counselling and support on pregnancy prevention, and supports to single adolescent parents thus promoting higher quality of life and prevention of high school drop out and future need for social assistance.
- ***Service Delivery Model Technology*** that supports both the financial and employment service delivery and provides functionality to manage housing and child care programs in an efficient and effective manner is needed. The TBDSSAB is responding to the gap in service relative to adequate employment servicing technology through the current development of employment service delivery software. ***Recommendation:*** that the provincial government consider service delivery technology that incorporates the integration of technologies for social service programs to facilitate long-term cost and service efficiencies.
- ***Dental care*** assistance through OW for adults is insufficient to meet recipient needs. Social assistance recipients in the North are continuing to face difficulties accessing dental services as dental professionals are choosing not to service this clientele due to lower remuneration and high no show rates. ***Recommendation:*** that the Ministry review the approved dental rates and services to expand services to OW adult recipients to include access to certain maintenance dental services (beyond emergencies) to reduce costs of dentures and extensive

emergency dental work and negotiate reasonable rates for remuneration for dental services to increase accessibility to dental services.

- ***Insufficient trained resources to provide service delivery during staff training programs exceeding one day in length*** resulting in backlog of service delivery and not meeting regulatory time requirements. ***Recommendation:*** that the timing, training location, cost and impact of service delivery be taken into consideration when providing staff training opportunities, i.e., that sufficient and adequate financial and human resources and timing be afforded to Service Managers to facilitate provincial training initiatives..
- ***Types and availability of services within smaller district communities varies*** resulting in gaps to accessing needed services. Currently OW staff in the District has linkages with existing community partners to maximize educational, skills, community and employment placement opportunities among other services for OW participants. ***Recommendation:*** The provision of additional financial assistance for transportation, accommodation and child care would assist to bridge the gap by facilitating access to services in the nearest municipal location with agencies providing the needed service.
- ***Addiction Services*** required by OW participants are in high demand however current staffing levels in OW and with our partners are insufficient to quickly respond to the large demand. This program is currently slated for reduction in provincial funding which if proceeds will increase this gap in service for OW participants resulting in less OW participants who have addictions as a barrier to employment will be assisted and continued long-term dependence upon social assistance will result in the midst of further physical and mental health deterioration at greater cost to other social and health care systems. ***Recommendation:*** that the province continues to invest the current funding levels with regular funding increases in respect of inflation for the continuation of this highly demanded program and prevention of increased social costs in other areas (e.g., ambulance, fire, police, hospital emergency rooms, court system, correctional institutions, probation and parole, child welfare, etc.)
- ***Energy Emergency Fund*** provides critical financial assistance to low-income families to address energy arrears, maintain a healthy environment, and prevent eviction, homelessness and greater demand upon other social services. A service gap exists in that the provincial annual allocation of \$33,630 is insufficient and the TBDSSAB has repeatedly requested more funding from the province without success. The 10% allowance from administration fees is insufficient to pay for the human resources needed to administer this initiative. ***Recommendation:*** that the provincial government increase its annual energy emergency fund allocation to meet the needs of Northern residents residing in the TBDSSAB's geographic service area thereby further preventing eviction and increased homelessness as well as applications for OW financial assistance.

In addition, this service plan has identified a number of service gaps within the community that are outside of the TBDSSAB's mandate or control that pose challenges for OW participants thus creating barriers to employment. Provincial government leaderships and commitment is needed to address these gaps:

- ***Economic and job opportunities*** within the District of Thunder Bay require enhancement to realize sustainable employment opportunities for social assistance recipients. While OW

staff engage with Economic Development and Tourism stakeholders to facilitate employment opportunities for clients, leadership and assistance to municipalities is required by higher levels of government to facilitate business staying in or coming to the North.

Recommendation: that the provincial and federal governments initiate economic incentives for business to stay in or move to the North and provide mandatory full-time permanent employment with benefits to residents of the North. Further, that both provincial and federal government creates sustainable employment opportunities for Northern residents by relocating government offices to Northern municipalities. That promotion and incentives be provided to support employment opportunities for aboriginal peoples and youth given that according to Statistics Canada Census that this population is under employed and has lower employment income levels.

- **Conflicting legislation** and separate service delivery technology for OW, Child Care and Social Housing programs creates inefficiencies in client services and promotes gaps in service. **Recommendation:** that the province undertake legislative amendments so that eligibility requirements correspond and regulatory changes to not create challenges in accessibility to services.
- **Health Care** and the inadequate levels of physicians and specialists in the North is resulting in gaps in the health care system which impact upon OW participant's abilities to overcome barriers to employment. The social service system relies upon the health care system to address medical conditions which may present a functional barrier to independence, and by extension, participation in social service programs geared towards achieving or maintaining independence. **Recommendation:** that the provincial government and Local Integrated Health Networks address the current service gaps in the District of Thunder Bay and Northern Ontario.
- **Medical Detoxification Services** are desperately needed in the District of Thunder Bay given the increasing addiction related challenges facing Northern communities. Currently through the ASI program the TBDSSAB assists OW participants in accessing these specialized services through transportation at great expense to services located outside of the community. **Recommendation:** that a medical detoxification facility and services be located in the City of Thunder Bay to provided services to Northern Ontario residents and other residents of Ontario who require these services.
- **Housing**, in particular access to safe and affordable housing within the current maximum shelter allowance rates for OW participants continues to be a gap in service, particularly relative to the need for one bedroom units. Moreover, insufficient support housing continues to pose significant barriers to employment for OW participants who are able physically able and desire to work, however require supportive services to maintain independent living. Ontario Works staff works in partnership with community agencies, Housing Services and Housing Providers in an attempt to bridge this service gap within their limited capacity. **Recommendation:** that shelter allowance rates be increased closer to market rent rates or the development/procurement of a sufficient affordable single unit housing stock and supportive housing to address long wait lists and the need of shelter residents. This would be a positive step towards reduction of child and family poverty and would increase the quality of life for our most vulnerable and at risk citizens, thus allowing them to refocus on increasing their

employability and accessing job opportunity that promote financial independence from social assistance.

Monitoring Service Strategies

While accountability to taxpayers for service costs is a recognized necessity in the delivery of public services, the potential attachment of funding for servicing future clients to the achievements of existing clients is inappropriate. Under the current funding framework OW Service Managers must rely upon the province for accurate and timely statistical information on outcomes as well as the ability to renegotiate baselines in response to economic and social conditions impacting successful employment achievements of clients. When determining baselines and outcome performance targets the OW Administration relies heavily upon provincially provided statistical data and researches external economic and environmental data to estimate potential trends in service needs and employment outcomes. Provincial reports are reviewed on a regular basis to monitor outcomes relative to performance targets and take appropriate action if needed. Where possible the TBDSSAB has been utilizing trend analysis within its service planning, however this at times proves to be challenging as the source of statistical information changes resulting in non comparable data.

SECTION 5 – ENHANCED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES for Vulnerable Persons (EES)

Enhanced Employment Services Strategies

One-time 100% funding allocations offered by the province were welcomed by TBDSSAB to provide Enhanced Employment Services within the District of Thunder Bay during the provinces 2009-10 and 2010-11 fiscal years. With this funding, TBDSSAB has resurrected a former pilot project that had demonstrated success in training and facilitating employment outcomes as well as created a new temporary program to better service clients who have been in receipt of OW assistance for greater than two years as well as clients who are presenting with behaviours often associated with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

Due to time constraints surrounding the availability of EES funding, strategically the TBDSSAB needed to quickly develop programming that would address needs of clients at both spectrums of the caseload dynamics (i.e., those with significant barriers to employment and those who appear near employment ready). Given that the recruitment process for hiring staff is lengthy, programs that required the hiring of temporary positions within the OW Division were kept minimal.

Participant Enhanced Supportive Services (PESS)

Although many participants within the OW caseload have not been diagnosed with a physical or mental health disorder our experience is that the OW caseload comprises of many individuals who possess undiagnosed mental health issues. As such, these vulnerable individuals face unique challenges in both obtaining and retaining employment. This EES project will provide more comprehensive wraparound supportive services for participants of OW including ODSP dependent adults and ODSP non disabled spouses currently receiving OW employment services who have been determined to be a vulnerable population by virtue of their receiving continuous

financial assistance for a period of two or more years as well as for those presenting with characteristics or behaviours often observed with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. This project involves a partnership between OW caseworkers and staff of the Ontario March of Dimes to provide intensive case management supports to the target populations. The purpose of the intensive case management supports is to assess the barriers to employment and assist clients in overcoming the barriers where possible (increase employability) within the means of available/existing OW in-house and community programs.

Employment Training and Internship Program

As previously mentioned this resurrected program delivered through partnership of OW and the Ontario March of Dimes will provide comprehensive training and supported internship opportunities for a limited number of individuals comprising of OW participants with and without disabilities, as well as ODSP dependent adults and ODSP non disabled spouses currently receiving OW employment services. The program assists vulnerable persons in receipt of social assistance with services and supports to learn from and potentially move to employment with employers that have agreed to participate in this program. Participants will be provided with training and a four week internship during which the participants will obtain transferable skills, work experience and an opportunity to demonstrate their work abilities to participating employers to gain sustainable employment. Both participants and employers are provided with supports by the service provider to facilitate a successful outcome as well as educate and facilitate job retention strategies that can be used beyond the scope of this project. One temporary FTE was hired within the OW Division to administer this program in collaboration with service provider staff.

Appendix 1 - Caseload

Caseload Profile	Source(s)	Prior Year Actuals	Year 1 Forecast	Year 2 Forecast
Average monthly number of applicants	Delivery Agent	401	424	454
Average monthly caseload (including temp care, excluding ODSP)	Benefit Unit Summary Report	2,753	2,891	3,036
Average monthly number of Ontario Works participants with participation requirements	Benefit Unit Summary Report (less deferred below)	1,757	1,845	1,937
Average monthly number of Ontario Works participants with deferred participation requirements	Expenditure Detail Report	1,390	1,432	1,474
Average participant to worker ratio	Delivery Agent	130:1	130:1 ³⁴	130:1 ³⁵
Average monthly number of ODSP participants	BUS Report	182	235	235
Percentage of cases on assistance less than 4 months	Data Resource Guide	28%	25%	25%
Percentage of cases on assistance between 4 months and less than 1 year	Data Resource Guide	37%	38%	38%
Percentage of cases on assistance between 1 year and less than 2 years	Data Resource Guide	19%	20%	20%
Percentage of cases on assistance 2 years or more	Data Resource Guide	16%	17%	17%
Percentage of caseload with earnings from employment	Employment Outcome Data Report	9%	8%	8%
Percentage of cases exiting employment	Employment Outcome Data Report	19%	17%	17%
Average monthly number of sole support parents	Benefit Unit Summary Report	1,064	1,152	1,209
Average monthly number of 16 and 17 year old parents without high school	Data Resource Guide	9	9	9
Average monthly number of 18 to 21 year old parents without high school	Data Resource Guide	303	303	303
Average monthly number of LEAP participants	Data Resource Guide	63	65	65
Total number of LEAP graduates	YTD Report	3	6	6
Percentage of participants provided with FTEB/OEEAAB	Data Resource Guide	16%	15%	15%
Percentage of participants provided with an advance child care payment	Data Resource Guide	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%
Percentage of participants receiving Ontario Works child care and/or regular child care subsidies (DNA)	Child Care Management System	3.5%	3.5%	3.5%

³⁴ Is currently based upon and constrained by funding levels. The ratio is subject to change as is dependent upon provincial funding allocations and any changes thereto arising out of the current provincial review of Cost of Administration funding and thereafter in terms of service delivery need relative to caseload. In general, challenges with meeting legislative requirements in service delivery are experienced when case to worker ratios exceed 100:1.

³⁵ idem