



**THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD**

MEDIA RELEASE

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board Wins Provincial Award for High Needs Homelessness Initiative

June 7, 2018 – The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) has been awarded the [*Local Municipal Champions Award*](#) from the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA). TBDSSAB won the award for its High Needs Homelessness Initiative as a great example of human service integration and teamwork.

TBDSSAB staff involved with the High Needs Homelessness Initiative received the award at the OMSSA Spring Leadership Symposium held in Windsor Ontario on May 27-29, 2018.

Bill Bradica, TBDSSAB Chief Administrative Officer, is extremely proud of staff involved in the program, “Everyone has done a beautiful job of implementing it as a team which has led to many people in our District being housed who may have fallen through the cracks.”

Since 2014, the two emergency shelters located in the City of Thunder Bay have been in a chronic state of overcapacity. To address this situation, TBDSSAB established the High-Needs Homeless Initiative in the fall of 2016. The integrated process involves Housing Services, Ontario Works, Intake, and Data Analysts to identify the chronically homeless and to rapidly house these individuals with adequate supports in place.

TBDSSAB added a 'High Needs Homeless' (HNH) priority category within its centralized housing wait list. The Transitional Outreach and Support Worker (TOSW) has partnered with an Ontario Works program caseworker. The TOSW contacts individuals off-site at the emergency shelters in Thunder Bay and in other communities via Skype or telephone. The TOSW completes a Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT) with a participant who identifies as homeless. The tool assesses the ability to obtain and retain housing without intervention. The caseworker completes the application for OW and is responsible for the financial eligibility of the participant.

If the ranking of the SPDAT tool is assessed at a locally defined need, the participant is assisted to complete the housing application, and the Intake Team processes the housing application, and the individual is placed on the HNH list. The TOSW will work with community partners to align services such as mental and physical health management, addictions assistance, and financial literacy.

Once a participant has been housed and there are appropriate community supports in place, the TOSW will reassess the individual using the SPDAT tool to ensure the risk has lessened. If the risk has lessened, the TOSW will discharge the participant back to a caseworker with regular OW case management duties. TBDSSAB Tenant Support Coordinators then continue to support the individuals, helping to ensure a successful tenancy. They assist the tenant in addressing needs, providing community agency referrals and integrating the individual into the community. This ongoing support is key to maintaining the tenant relationship.

The team works closely with Data & Research Analysts who receive reports from the two emergency shelters and analyze them to find chronically homeless shelter users.

Since the launch of the High-Needs Homeless Initiative, 68 participants have been placed on the Rent-Geared-to-Income HNH housing wait list with 52 of those people successfully housed with zero evictions.

The TOSW team is being expanded to include expanded to clients who receive Ontario Disability Support Program and Non-Social Assistance Recipients who present as homeless in the District of Thunder Bay.

For questions or more information,

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