



	REPORT NO.: 2020-28
MEETING DATE: JUNE 18, 20212020-06-18	DATE PREPARED: JUNE 2, 2020
SUBJECT: SOCIAL SERVICES RELIEF FUND AND EMERGENCY CHILD CARE UPDATE	

RECOMMENDATION

For information only.

REPORT SUMMARY

To provide The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (the Board) with updated information regarding the Ontario Social Services Relief Fund and the Emergency Child Care program for eligible essential workers in the District of Thunder Bay during the COVID-19 crisis.

BACKGROUND

At the April 16, 2020 meeting, the Board was provided with initial information and plans for both the Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF) and the Emergency Child Care (ECC) program. This information is presented as an update to that report.

The SSRF allows communities to expand a wide range of services and supports for vulnerable populations impacted by COVID-19 and allows Service Managers to assist vulnerable people who are experiencing homelessness, living in community or supportive housing, people with low incomes, those receiving social assistance benefits, or others who require social services supports.

Additionally, the Emergency Discretionary benefit offered through Ontario Works (OW) enables the immediate provision of financial assistance to an applicant in a crisis or an emergency situation. The provision of financial assistance in an emergency may include an amount for basic needs, shelter and benefits. This program complements additional resources provided by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) to directly support individuals and families in financial crisis who are not able to access federal assistance.

On March 17, 2020, the Premier of Ontario declared a state of emergency, and ordered the closure of all licensed childcare centres. Emergency child care was established in response to the closure to ensure that essential services workers would have access to child care during the state of emergency. To facilitate the openings, policies and procedures were developed in partnership with the Thunder Bay District Health Unit and were approved by the Medical Officer of Health. The overall plans for ECC were submitted and approved by the Ministry of Education.

COMMENTS

TBDSSAB has established an Emergency Pandemic Fund to assist organizations by offering housing and related supports to individuals and households dealing with the COVID-19 crisis. Information on this fund has been distributed widely across the District and submissions are reviewed as received. Eligible activities under this funding program include the provision of shelter, food and clothing for those in need, access to cleaning supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE), transportation and other support services related to the impacts of COVID-19. The following table outlines the Emergency Pandemic Fund grants awarded up to June 1, 2020:

Organization	Proposal	Amount (\$)
Salvation Army	Social distancing measures; maintaining good nutrition and hygiene	7,351
Greenstone Harvest Centre	Food security for vulnerable community	3,000
Nipigon Red Rock District High School	Food security for vulnerable community	1,800
Urban Abbey	Provide illness isolation space and support to homeless	32,800
Geraldton Composite High School	Backpack nutrition program	3,200
Marathon Community Collective	Food/clothing/supplies; accommodation; transportation; support services	4,500
Grace Ministries	Provide isolation shelter staffing 24/7 (for the month of May)	24,828
Marjorie House	Food security for vulnerable community (for the month of May)	15,600
Boys and Girls Club	Food security for vulnerable community	5,000
Shkoday Abinojiiwak Obimiwedoan	Food security for vulnerable community	5,150
Peninsula Manor, Seniors Supportive Housing	Offer programming and supports to tenants	672
Grace Ministries	Provide isolation shelter staffing 24/7 (for the month of June)	23,093
Marjorie House	Food security for vulnerable community (for the month of June)	18,900
	Total	\$145,894

Administration is also working with partners including St. Joseph's Care Group, Thunder Bay District Health Unit and Grace Ministries to facilitate an isolation shelter for homeless individuals who require separation from the general population due to possible exposure to the virus or while awaiting test results. There has been an average of 10 individuals staying nightly at the isolation shelter since it opened on April 2, with a high count of 17 and a low count of 3. Meals are provided to those staying in isolation.

To address the needs of those requiring shelter, where the existing emergency shelters are full or where individuals are unable to access the existing shelters, TBDSSAB has established an overflow shelter through arrangements with several hotels. As of June 1, there has been a total of 67 room nights accessed under this emergency shelter initiative.

Administration has reached out to community housing providers to determine the need for cleaning supplies, PPE and requirements for assistance with measures to implement appropriate social distancing and self-isolation. This would include community housing units directly owned by TBDSSAB as well as non-profit housing providers. Based on varied needs and initiatives, a budget of \$25,000 has been established for the first 3 months, with \$8,067 allocated as of June 1. The following table outlines the SSRF expenditures up to June 1, 2020:

	April	May		June/20 - March/21	
	Actuals (\$)	Actuals (\$)	Commitments (\$)	Projected	Total
Community Support Applications	77,481	28,202		100,000	205,683
Isolation Hotel	2,921	43,395	72,492	300,000	418,808
Motel Stays	6,160	19,504	4,170	161,400	191,234
Transportation	626	56	1,000	6,000	7,682
Community Housing Cleaning (Non-Profits)	-	9,325		24,000	33,325
Rent Supports	-	-		122,400	122,400
Internal Resources:					
Communications & Technology	21,017	76	2,964	28,170	52,227
Personal Protective Equipment	12,014	36,670	12,466	10,000	71,150
Security	-	3,732	5,556	25,200	34,488
Additional Cleaning	5,983	4,823	7,693	43,000	61,500
Other					
Administration				116,830	116,830
Total	\$ 126,202	\$ 145,784	\$ 106,341	\$ 937,000	\$ 1,315,326

The projected total of the SSRF expenditures exceeds the current allocation provided by the province by \$147,026, however there are opportunities to revisit the forecasted amounts and realign based on community need. The Administration expense may be revisited and reduced from the current 10% allocation should pressures in other areas be realized. The provincial allocation would not be exceeded without direction from the Board.

MCCSS has initiated additional funding through OW Discretionary Benefits to assist with extraordinary needs due to COVID19. OW clients of TBDSSAB can apply for additional dollars for items such as Personal Protective Equipment (masks, gloves etc.) as well as cleaning supplies. Initially, a single applicant could receive \$50 and a family \$100.

MCCSS has extended the Discretionary Benefit to allow payments of an increased amount of \$100 for a single recipient and \$200 for families into July 2020. These payments have been automatized through the case management software. OW recipients who are in receipt of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) are not entitled to the discretionary emergency benefit.

Emergency child care became operational the week of April 27, 2020 and work continues to expand the number of centres available to offer emergency child care to essential worker families.

Emergency child care locations currently participating in the provision of emergency child care include:

- Algoma Child Care Centre (operated by the City of Thunder Bay – 21 spaces)
- Schoolhouse Playcare (Grey Street, Thunder Bay – 18 spaces)
- Municipality of Greenstone (Geraldton Location – 15 spaces)

The province has announced that child care will be re-opening in phase 2 of the provincial plan to support families who will be heading back to work. The province has been actively engaged with Service Managers to gather information regarding what the reopening of child care should look like in phase 2.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Social Services Relief Fund is a 100% provincially funded program. TBDSSAB is eligible to receive up to \$1,168,300 however 25% (\$292,075) is subject to re-allocation or adjustment by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing as the emergency across the province evolves. Currently, TBDSSAB is projecting to spend the entire allocation by March 31, 2021.

The OW Emergency Discretionary Benefit is also 100% provincially funded. In April \$109,650 was issued directly to clients. In May, \$274,000 was issued.



The province has indicated the cost associated with providing emergency child care will be 100% provincially funded. However, it is unclear if this will be new funding or a reallocation of existing planning envelopes. The estimated cost to provide emergency child care from April 20, 2020 to May 31, 2020 is \$193,300. This covered the cost of preoperational preparations that were required for emergency child care.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that this report provides the Board with information relative to the Social Services Relief Fund and the Emergency Child Care program in the District of Thunder Bay, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

REFERENCE MATERIALS ATTACHED

None

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