



	REPORT No.: 2020-32
MEETING DATE: JULY 16, 2020	DATE PREPARED: JUNE 30, 2020
SUBJECT: SOCIAL SERVICES RELIEF FUND AND CHILD CARE UPDATE	

RECOMMENDATION

For information only.

REPORT SUMMARY

To provide The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB or the Board) with updated information regarding the Ontario Social Services Relief Fund, the completion of the Emergency Child Care program for eligible essential workers and the re-opening of child care centres 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. Updated information was provided at the June 18, 2020 meeting and this report provides the most current information.

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.

The Emergency Discretionary benefit offered through Ontario Works (OW) enables the immediate provision of financial assistance to an applicant in a crisis or 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.

With the declaration of a state of emergency by the Premier of Ontario on March 17, 2020, all licensed childcare centres in the province were closed. 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. Emergency Child Care was ended by the province on June 26, 2020, with the announcement that the child care centres could reopen under new guidelines and requirements.

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, rent supports, food and clothing, 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 July 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 (May/June)	47,923
Marjorie House	Food security for vulnerable community (May/June)	34,500
Boys and Girls Club	Food security for vulnerable community	5,000
Salvation Army	Enhanced screening and security at shelter	2,430
Shkoday Abinojiiwak Obimiwedoan	Food security for vulnerable community	4,500
North of Superior Healthcare Group	Offer programming and supports to tenants	1,344
	Total	\$148,348

Administration is also working with partners 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. From April 2 through May 31, there was an average of 10 individuals staying nightly at the isolation shelter in Thunder Bay; periodically there have been isolation hotel stays required in Greenstone and Manitouwadge. Through the month of June, the nightly average in

Thunder Bay has increased to 19 individuals, mainly due to increased testing and contact tracing among the vulnerable population. 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 July 1, there has been a total of 447 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 identified, a total of \$79,065 has been expended through July 1, 2020.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, it became increasingly apparent that many of our tenants and clients were lacking in technological supports. In response to this issue TBDSSAB partnered with Tbaytel to provide 66 phones to be distributed to clients and tenants in the District of Thunder Bay. Tbaytel provided the devices and service at no cost through June 30, 2020. Based on feedback from those who received the devices, TBDSSAB will continue providing the service to these individuals through September 30, 2020 or longer, funded through the SSRF.

The following table outlines the actual and committed SSRF expenditures up to July 1, 2020:

Organization	March-June Actuals	July-March 2021 Projected	Total
Community Support Applications	148,348	60,000	208,348
Isolation Hotel	223,528	255,451	478,979
Motel Stays	61,931	65,320	127,251
Transportation	2,922	-	2,922
Community Housing Cleaning (Non- Profits)	9,325	-	9,325
Phone Services	-	23,766	23,766
Rent Supports	-	122,400	122,400
Internal Resources:			
Communications & Technology	23,769	-	23,769
Personal Protective Equipment	59,601	10,000	69,601
Security	32,800	12,600	45,400

Additional Cleaning	20,663	38,700	59,363
Other			-
Administration		116,830	116,830
Total	\$582,887	\$705,067	\$1,287,954

The projected total of the SSRF expenditures exceeds the current allocation provided by the province by \$119,654, 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 COVID-19. OW clients of TBDDSAB can apply for additional dollars for items such as Personal Protective Equipment (masks, gloves etc..) as well 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 automated 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.

Training for OW participants has resumed and was offered in June through a virtual platform. TBDDSAB staff attended training to learn how to create and deliver online training for clients. In June, 10 participants completed the Soft Skills Training delivered remotely through Zoom. Another remote session is being offered in July along with Essential Skills online training facilitated by Confederation College. Both programs are offered to all clients throughout the District of Thunder Bay.

Emergency child care became operational the week of April 27, 2020 and the Premier announced that it would come to an end on June 26th, along with the announcement that child care centres would be able to re-open starting June 12th.

Child care locations that participated in the provision of emergency child care included:

- 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)

With the announcement that child care would re-open to support families heading back to work, Administration has reached out to child care operators to share the requirements and re-opening protocols, and to determine the timing required to have centres operational. As of this date, 5 centres have re-opened, with the remaining planning on opening in August or September.

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, with the June amount totalling \$277,100.



The province has indicated the cost associated with providing emergency child care will be 100% provincially funded. This funding arrangement has yet to be finalized. The estimated cost to provide emergency child care from April 20, 2020 through June 26, 2020 is \$275,373. This includes the costs related to preoperational preparations, cleaning and staff training 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, the completion of the Emergency Child Care program and re-opening of child care centres in the District of Thunder Bay, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

REFERENCE MATERIALS ATTACHED

None

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