



	REPORT No.: 2020-36
MEETING DATE: SEPTEMBER 17, 2020	DATE PREPARED: AUGUST 27, 2020
SUBJECT: SOCIAL SERVICES RELIEF FUND, EMERGENCY DISCRETIONARY BENEFITS 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, Emergency Discretionary Benefits and the re-opening of child care centres and the EarlyON programs in the District of Thunder Bay during the COVID-19 pandemic.

BACKGROUND

At the April 16, 2020 meeting, the Board was provided with initial information and plans for both the Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF), Emergency Discretionary Benefits and the Emergency Child Care (ECC) program. Updated information was provided at the June 18, 2020 and at the July 16, 2020 meetings 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.

Emergency child care became operational the week of April 27, 2020. The Premier announced that it would end on June 26, 2020 and that child care centres would be able to re-open on June 12, 2020. Through July and August, 22 child care centres were operational, servicing 199 children in July and 412 children in August.

COMMENTS

TBDSSAB established an Emergency Pandemic Fund to assist organizations by offering housing and related supports to individuals and households dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. 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 August 31, 2020:

Table 1:

Organization	Proposal	Communities Served	Amount
Salvation Army	Social distancing measures, enhanced screening, maintaining good nutrition and hygiene	Thunder Bay	\$ 9,781
Greenstone Harvest Centre	Food security for vulnerable community	Greenstone	3,000
Nipigon Red Rock District High School	Food security for vulnerable community	Nipigon/Red Rock	1,800
Urban Abbey	Provide illness isolation space and support to homeless	Thunder Bay	40,960
Geraldton Composite High School	Backpack nutrition program	Greenstone	3,200
Marathon Community Collective	Food/clothing/supplies; accommodation; transportation; support services	Marathon	4,500
Grace Ministries	Provide isolation shelter staffing 24/7	Thunder Bay	47,923
Marjorie House	Food security for vulnerable community	Marathon	52,100,
Boys and Girls Club	Food security for vulnerable community	Thunder Bay	5,000

Organization	Proposal	Communities Served	Amount
Shkoday Abinojiwak Obimiwedoon	Food security for vulnerable community	Thunder Bay	4,500
North of Superior Healthcare Group	Offer programming and supports to tenants	Marathon	1,344
	Total:		\$174,108

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 August 31 there was an average of 15 individuals staying nightly at the isolation shelter in Thunder Bay; periodically there have been isolation hotel stays required in Greenstone and Manitouwadge, and facilities have been established in other communities to be accessed as required. 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 August 31, 2020 there has been a total of 593 room nights accessed under this emergency shelter initiative.

Administration has continued to reach 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 includes non-profit housing providers along with community housing units directly owned by TBDSSAB. Based on varied needs and initiatives identified, a total of \$160,558 has been expended through August 31, 2020.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, it became increasingly apparent that many TBDSSAB 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. TBDSSAB has continued to provide connection service to these individuals, planned through March 2021, funded through the SSRF.

The following table outlines the actual and committed SSRF expenditures up to August 31, 2020:

Table 2:

Organization	March 2020 - August 2020 Actuals	September 2020 - March 2021 Committed/ Projected	Total
Community Support Applications (total from Table 1)	\$174,108	\$ 11,040	\$ 185,148
Isolation Hotel	338,526	122,420	460,946
Motel Stays	91,448	4,680	96,128
Transportation	1,205	-	1,205
Community Housing Cleaning (Non- Profits)	25,558	-	25,558
Phone Services	5,402	18,907	24,309
Rent Supports	-	122,400	122,400
Internal Resources:			
Communications & Technology	9,248	-	9,248
Personal Protective Equipment	60,000	15,000	75,000
Security	45,400		45,400
Additional Cleaning	29,900	30,100	60,000
Other			-
Administration	48,700	68,130	116,830
Total:	\$829,495	\$392,677	\$1,222,172

The projected total of the SSRF expenditures exceeds the current allocation provided by the province by \$53,052, however there are opportunities to revisit the forecasted amount 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 recipients can apply for additional funds 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 an increased amount of \$100 for a single recipient and \$200 for families into July 2020. The province announced that effective July 31, 2020, this Emergency Discretionary Benefit would be discontinued. OW recipients

who were in receipt of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) were not entitled to the discretionary emergency benefit.

The following table outlines the Emergency OW Discretionary funding issued:

Table 3:

Month	Amount
March	\$ 400
April	109,650
May	274,000
June	277,100
July	253,300
Total:	\$ 914,450

Training for OW participants has resumed and was offered in June through a virtual platform. TBDSSAB 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 Soft Skills Training session was completed in July. Confederation College offered an Essential Skills online training in July. Both programs are offered to all clients throughout the District of Thunder Bay.

With the announcement that child care centres would be able to re-open starting June 12, 2020 following strict provincial guidance requirements, 9 centres resumed operations in July with another 13 centres opening in August.

In July, the Premier announced that all child care and EarlyON centres would be allowed to resume operations with normal capacity, subject to revised provincial guidance requirements.

In August, updated guidance documents regarding the re-opening of child care centres were received from the province. Child care programs will operate at full capacity where physical space allows.

Additionally, guidance documents for EarlyON Child and Family Centres were received. Administration will be working with the Thunder Bay District Health Unit to ensure that all required policies and procedures are developed and shared with programs. EarlyON Child and Family Centers can re-open as of September 1, 2020. Administration is working with programs to provide guidance and support in the re-opening process.

On August 12, 2020, the province announced that a second phase of SSRF funding was being made available. TBDSSAB received notification that it is eligible to receive an initial planning allocation of \$1,840,459, though actual funding is based on a business case submission. Administration has prepared and submitted a business case for the full eligible amount.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Social Services Relief Fund is a 100% provincially funded program. TBDSSAB was eligible to receive up to \$1,168,300 and received confirmation from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing on August 12, 2020 that it would receive the full allocation. TBDSSAB is projecting to spend the entire allocation by March 31, 2021.

The OW Emergency Discretionary Benefit is also 100% provincially funded.



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 was \$275,373. This includes the costs related to preoperational preparations, cleaning and staff training that were required for emergency child care. Funding for the re-opening of child care and EarlyON centres will be determined based on existing formulas and identified pressures.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that this report provides the Board with information relative to the Social Services Relief Fund, the Emergency Discretionary Benefits program and the re-opening of child care centres and the EarlyON programs in the District of Thunder Bay during the COVID-19 pandemic.

REFERENCE MATERIALS ATTACHED

None

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