



	REPORT No.: 2021-06
MEETING DATE: FEBRUARY 18, 2021	DATE PREPARED: FEBRUARY 9, 2021
SUBJECT: SOCIAL SERVICES RELIEF FUND 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 during the COVID-19 pandemic.

BACKGROUND

At the April 16, 2020 meeting, the Board was provided with initial information and plans for the Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF). 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. TBDSSAB's initial SSRF funding allocation was \$1,168,300 to be used for operational needs.

On August 12, 2020, TBDSSAB received notice that the province was initiating the SSRF Phase II to allow the continuation of support for current efforts to address the COVID-19 pandemic and to address new priority challenges. Under SSRF Phase 2, TBDSSAB received an additional \$1,840,459 that was allocated between operational and capital expenditures.

On December 15, 2020, TBDSSAB received further notice of the release of the SSRF Phase II holdback funds and the allocation of an additional \$1,836,300. Administration recommended to the Board that this entire allocation be dedicated to capital projects, to provide longer-term housing-based solutions to homelessness post the COVID-19 pandemic.

Updated information has been provided to the Board over the past months and this report provides the most current information regarding the entire SSRF allocation and investment.

COMMENTS

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, TBDSSAB has been providing supports and service to the community housing and homelessness sectors, to address needs and prevent the spread of the virus through the community. These supports have taken a variety of forms and have included partnering with community groups and organizations to deliver valuable programs and services.

Through the SSRF, TBDSSAB established an Emergency Pandemic Fund to assist organizations by offering housing and related supports to individuals and households experiencing financial pressures related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

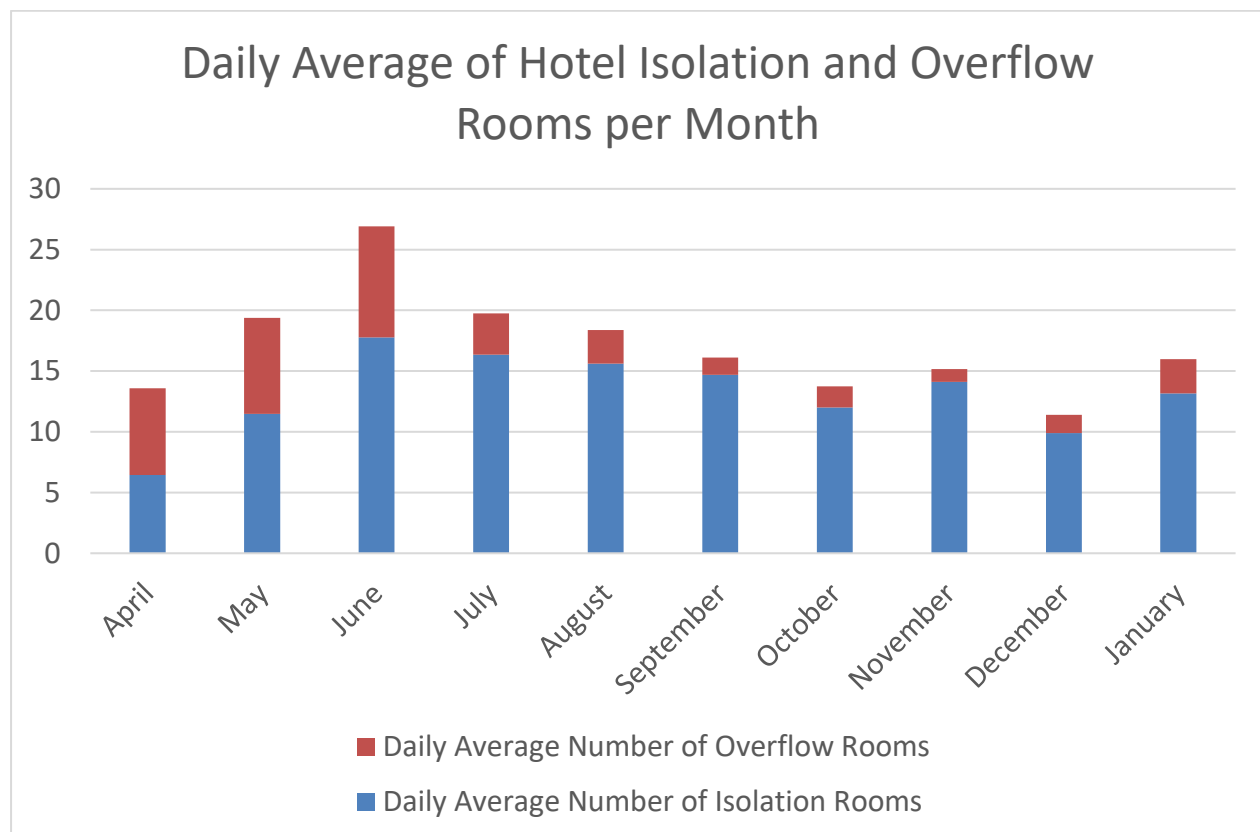
The following table outlines the Emergency Pandemic Fund grants awarded up to January 31, 2021:

Organization	Proposal	Community Served	Approved Amount
Boys and Girls Club	Food security for vulnerable populations	Thunder Bay	\$ 5,000
Community Clothing Assistance	Clothing assistance for vulnerable populations	Thunder Bay	\$ 8,910
Geraldton Composite High School	Backpack nutrition program	Greenstone	\$ 3,200
Grace Ministries of Thunder Bay	Isolation shelter staffing 24/7, supports for homeless; 3 approved applications	Thunder Bay	\$ 81,736
Greenstone Harvest Centre	Food security for vulnerable populations	Greenstone	\$ 3,000
Marathon Community Collective	Food/clothing/supplies; accommodations; transportation; support services	Marathon	\$ 4,500
Marjorie House	Food security for vulnerable populations; 3 approved applications	Marathon	\$ 51,700
Nipigon Red Rock District High School	Food security for vulnerable populations; 2 approved applications	Nipigon/Red Rock	\$ 7,975
North of Superior Healthcare Group, Peninsula Manor	Programming and mental health supports to senior residents; 3 approved applications	Marathon	\$ 4,032
Rural Cupboard Food Bank	Life stabilization supports for vulnerable populations	Oliver Paipoonge	\$ 50,000
Shkoday Abinojiiwak Obimiwedoan	Food security for vulnerable populations	Thunder Bay	\$ 4,500
The Salvation Army Community & Residential Services	Social distancing measures, enhanced screening, nutrition and hygiene; 2 approved applications	Thunder Bay	\$ 9,781
Urban Abbey	Illness isolation spaces and support to homeless population; 2 approved applications	Thunder Bay	\$ 40,960
Total:			\$ 275,294

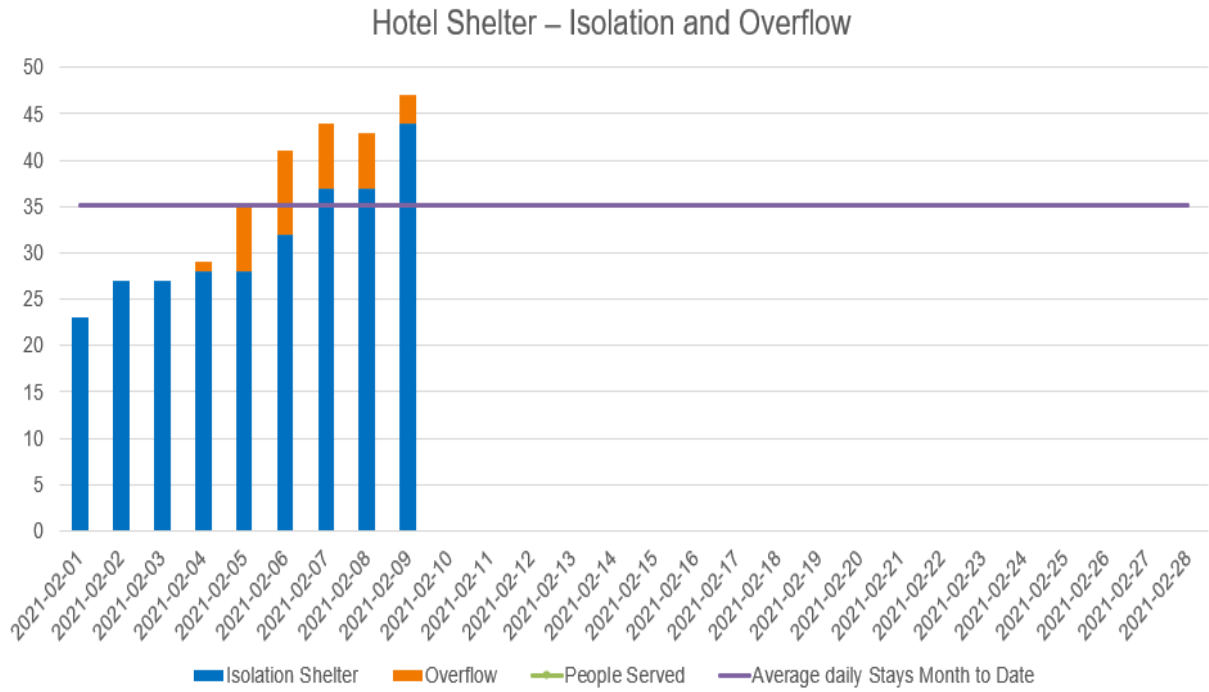
Administration has also been working with partners to facilitate an isolation shelter for homeless individuals who require isolation from the general population due to possible exposure to the virus or while awaiting test results. Use of this isolation shelter has varied, based on community and healthcare needs, but there have always been individuals in the isolation shelter. Recently, due mainly to the outbreak of COVID at the District Jail and at the Correctional Centre, usage of the isolation shelter has increased dramatically. This results not only from those released from incarceration needing isolation, but also because of close contacts between those released and the vulnerable population.

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 expanded the overflow shelter program through arrangements with several hotels. There has always been the capacity in the emergency shelter system to expand, however with the increased need for isolation sheltering, and the public health requirements to reduce capacity at the emergency shelters and maintain a static bed list at times, and most recently the extreme cold weather, the need for overflow sheltering has increased.

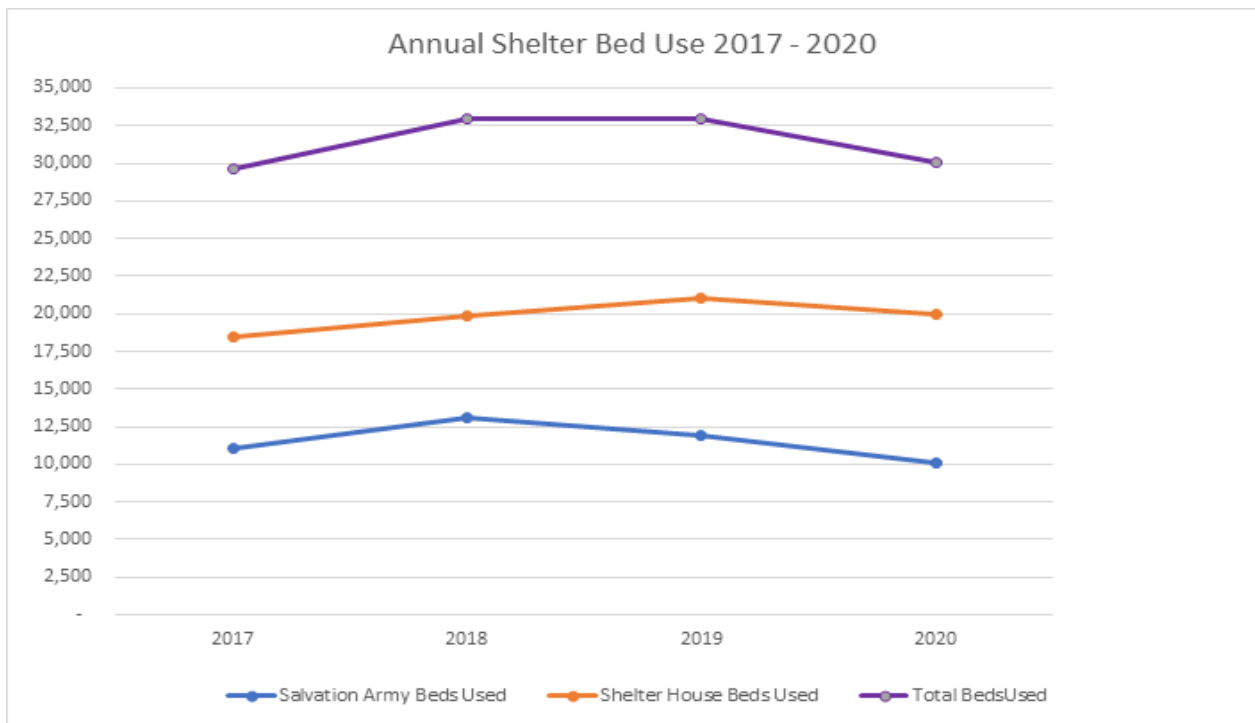
Following is a chart showing the average isolation and overflow shelter use from April 2020 through January 2021:



For the month of February, through February 10, the usage for isolation and overflow rooms are as follows:



The chart below shows bed usage at the two main emergency shelters over the past 4 years; there was a decline in 2020:



Prior to 2020's pandemic, overflow hotel usage was not very common in the city of Thunder Bay. The emergency shelter system had capacity to address most needs in the city of Thunder Bay. Service Orders for hotel stays are completed primarily by the shelters or by the OPP in outlying communities. From the Service Orders issued and approved in 2019, 10 hotel nights were approved in the city of the Thunder Bay and a total of 90 hotel nights were approved in 2019 for the entire District of Thunder Bay. In 2018, 49 hotel nights were approved for the District of 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, laundry and other supports are provided to those staying in isolation. Administration continues to connect with these and other communities to determine needs and pressures and offer support for isolation sheltering as required.

Addressing pressures related to rent and utility arrears has been another area of attention using the SSRF funding to reduce the burden of those who may have experienced reduced income through the pandemic and may now be facing possible eviction, as well as eliminating previous barriers to stable housing. Through the rent arrears program 127 individuals have been assisted from April 2020 through January 31, 2021 with a total of \$270,000.

Compiling the SSRF, SSRF Phase II and SSRF Phase II Holdback, TBDSSAB is projecting the following investments up to March 31:

	SSRF Phase I	SSRF Phase II	SSRF Holdback	Total
Capital	-	1,555,000	1,781,211	2,936,211
Community Support Applications	216,784	93,266	-	310,050
Isolation Hotel	419,995	213,736	-	633,731
Overflow Hotel	116,019	36,263	-	152,282
Supports to Housing Providers	26,873	-	-	26,873
Rent Supports	98,698	200,000	-	298,698
Phone Services Pilot	13,919	17,216	-	31,135
Communications & Technology	11,867	-	-	11,867
Security	172,393	40,600	-	212,993
Additional Cleaning and PPE	78,080	29,164	-	107,244
Administration	33,672	55,214	55,089	143,975
Total	\$1,188,300	\$1,840,459	\$1,836,300	\$4,865,059

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS



The Social Services Relief Fund is a 100% provincially funded program. TBDSSAB was eligible to receive up to \$1,168,300 under SSRF Phase I, up to \$1,840,459 under SSRF Phase II, and up to \$1,836,300 under SSRF Holdback. The SSRF Phase I allocation is fully spent and Administration is projecting to spend the entire SSRF Phase II and SSRF Holdback allocations by March 31, 2021.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that this report provides the Board with information relative to the Social Services Relief Fund, Social Services Relief Fund Phase II and Social Services Relief Fund Phase II Holdback allocations and investment in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the District of Thunder Bay.

REFERENCE MATERIALS ATTACHED

None

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