



Memorandum

Date: June 25, 2021

To: Members of the Board

From: Georgina Daniels, FCPA, FCA, Director, Corporate Services Division
Ken Ranta, Director, Integrated Social Services Division

Subject: **Wadsworth Drive and Ruskin Crescent
Direct-Owned Housing Properties Options**

At the May 20, 2021, Board Meeting, the First Report on the Wadsworth Drive and Ruskin Crescent Direct-Owned Housing Properties Options was provided to the Board with information regarding the status of the two properties. The follow up Board Report was to be provided to fully evaluate options for each property at the July 15, 2021, Board Meeting.

Administration identified that to fully evaluate options for each property, the following information was still required:

- cost limits under TBDSSAB's insurance policy for replacement of the properties; and
- a buy-out price for each property under TBDSSAB's insurance policy if the properties are not replaced.

As this information has yet to be received, the follow up Board Report will be deferred until the fall.

Sincerely,

Georgina Daniels, FCPA, FCA
Director, Corporate Services Division

Ken Ranta
Director, Integrated Social Services Division

GD/KR/gf



Memorandum

Date: June 23, 2021
To: Members of the Board
From: Ken Ranta, Director, Integrated Social Services
Subject: **Geraldton Native Housing Corporation – Appointment of Board Members**

Summary

To provide The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB or the Board) with updated information with respect to Geraldton Native Housing Corporation and to identify the successful nominees to address current board vacancies to maintain the operations of the corporation.

Background

At the February 18, 2021 meeting, the Board was provided with information on the Geraldton Native Housing Corporation (GNHC) and challenges related to maintaining a Board of Directors (Report No.: 2021CS-01). At this meeting, the Board directed Administration to seek a legal opinion regarding possible remedies.

At the March 18, 2021 Board meeting, in Closed Session, the Board received information on the legal options to secure Board members for the GNHC. This included the nomination of TBDSSAB Board members and community nominees and a submission to the Superior Court of Justice to appoint these nominees. The Board approved the nomination of 3 TBDSSAB Board members and 2 alternates) in Open Session (Resolution No. 21/19).

Comments

A submission to the Superior Court of Justice was prepared and submitted by TBDSSAB's legal counsel seeking the appointment of 5 nominees to the Board of the GNHC. The matter was heard before Justice Fitzpatrick on June 21, 2021 and the application was granted.



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

As a result, the following were appointed as Directors for the Geraldton Native Housing Corporation:

Jackie Carter, Greenstone Community Member
Margie Abraham-Rondeau, Greenstone Community Member
Elaine Mannisto, TBDSSAB Board Member
Jody Davis, TBDSSAB Board Member
Rebecca Johnson, TBDSSAB Board Member

Communication has gone out to each new Director informing them of the appointment and the property management company (Infinity Property Services) has been informed. Infinity Property Services will establish a first meeting of the Directors to initiate the business of the corporation, including the appointment of the corporate officers.

Sincerely,

Ken Ranta
Director, Integrated Social Services

KR/sv

Attachment #1 [Ontario Superior Court of Justice Judgment - June 21, 2021](#)

Attachment #2 [Ontario Superior Court of Justice Endorsement on the Record - June 21, 2021](#)

Court File No.: CV-21-189

**ONTARIO
SUPERIOR COURT OF JUSTICE**

THE HONOURABLE JUSTICE)
)
F.B. FITZPATRICK) **MONDAY, THE 21ST DAY OF**
) **JUNE, 2021**

B E T W E E N:

THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD

Applicant

- and -

GERALDTON NATIVE HOUSING CORP.

Respondent

APPLICATION under subsection 288(4) of the *Corporations Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. C.38, as amended, and rule 14.05 of the *Rules of Civil Procedure*, R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 194, as amended

JUDGMENT

THIS APPLICATION, made by the Applicant, The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board ("**TBDSSAB**"), was heard on this day at Thunder Bay, Ontario by videoconference.

ON READING the Affidavit of Ken Ranta sworn on May 12, 2021 and TBDSSAB's Factum, filed, and on hearing the submissions of counsel for TBDSSAB, no one else appearing:

1. **THIS COURT ORDERS** that Margie Abraham-Rondeau, Jackie Carter, Elaine Mannisto, Jody Davis and Rebecca Johnson be and are hereby appointed to the board of directors of the Respondent, Geraldton Native Housing Corp., effective immediately.

**Jonathan R
Scott**

Digitally signed by Jonathan R Scott
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Ontario, ou=People,
serialNumber=DSAP415691,
cn=Jonathan R Scott
Date: 2021.06.22 15:53:00 -04'00'

Registrar

THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD
Applicant

v. **GERALDTON NATIVE HOUSING CORP**
Respondent

**ONTARIO
SUPERIOR COURT OF JUSTICE**

PROCEEDING COMMENCED AT THUNDER BAY

JUDGMENT

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Lawyers for the Applicant

ENDORSEMENT ON THE RECORD

SUPERIOR COURT OF JUSTICE, DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY FILE NO. CV-21-0189-00

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board v. Geraldton Native Housing Corp -

DATE	ENDORSEMENT
June 21, 2021	<p>Tim Duggan for Applicant</p> <p>No one appearing for Respondent</p> <p>This is an application pursuant to section 288(4) of the Corporations Act. No one attended to oppose the relief requested although duly served as indicated by the affidavit of service Catherine Salgado sworn June 9, 2021. In my view, the relief requested of appointing the five named individuals as directors is the only option given the circumstances of the respondent not for profit native housing corporation. Order to go as per draft filed.</p> <div data-bbox="954 890 1367 1100" style="text-align: right;"> Bruce Fitzpatrick J</div> <hr data-bbox="979 1163 1511 1167"/> <p data-bbox="1330 1205 1511 1241" style="text-align: right;">Fitzpatrick J.</p>

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	REPORT No.: 2021-30
MEETING DATE: JULY 15, 2021	DATE PREPARED: JUNE 17, 2021
SUBJECT: CHILD CARE CENTRE VIABILITY	

RECOMMENDATION

THAT with respect to Report No. 2021-30 we, The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (the Board), receive information on the status of the District of Thunder Bay child care service system and direct Administration to implement a comprehensive review of the child care service system including a financial viability model;

AND THAT Administration determine the viability of child care operations based on the review;

AND THAT following that review, Administration will provide, for the Board's approval, a child care sustainability plan for the District of Thunder Bay child care service system.

REPORT SUMMARY

To provide The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB or the Board) with information that supports a comprehensive review of the District of Thunder Bay child care service system financial viability.

BACKGROUND

On October 25, 2019, in a memorandum from the Ministry of Education Early Years and Child Care Division, it was announced that as of January 1, 2020, the 37 Consolidated Municipal Service Managers and 10 District Social Services Administration Boards (collectively: service system managers (SSMs) were asked to cost-share child care expansion plan operating funding at a rate of 80% provincial/20% municipal. While cost sharing was recommended, the Ministry committed to providing the full provincial allocation regardless of the SSM contribution.

On January 1, 2021, SSMs were asked to continue cost sharing expansion plan operating funding at a rate of 80/20 and were required to cost share all child care administrative funding at a rate of 50/50.

On January 1, 2022, the threshold for allowable administrative funding SSMs can spend on child care is scheduled to be reduced from 10% of overall budget to 5%, in addition to the ongoing cost sharing requirements previously introduced. The changes through 2020 are reflected in the current guidelines and future versions of the guidelines will reflect the changes occurring in that year.

Since 2019 the province has shared that an updated child care funding formula is being developed in a transparent approach to funding that responds to demand for services and helps stabilize fees and improves reliability of child care to support licensees and parents. With the COVID-19 pandemic and the continued impact on families and the child care sector, the implementation of an updated child care funding formula has been put on hold to ensure a more stable funding approach in 2021.

The Ministry's intention is to resume engagement on an updated formula, which will aim to promote greater equitability, predictability, transparency and responsiveness while reducing administrative burden. The Ministry is aiming to implement the updated child care funding formula in 2022, while continuing to consider the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Funding levels for 2021 remained stable in response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to support the child care system to remain sustainable during this unprecedented time.

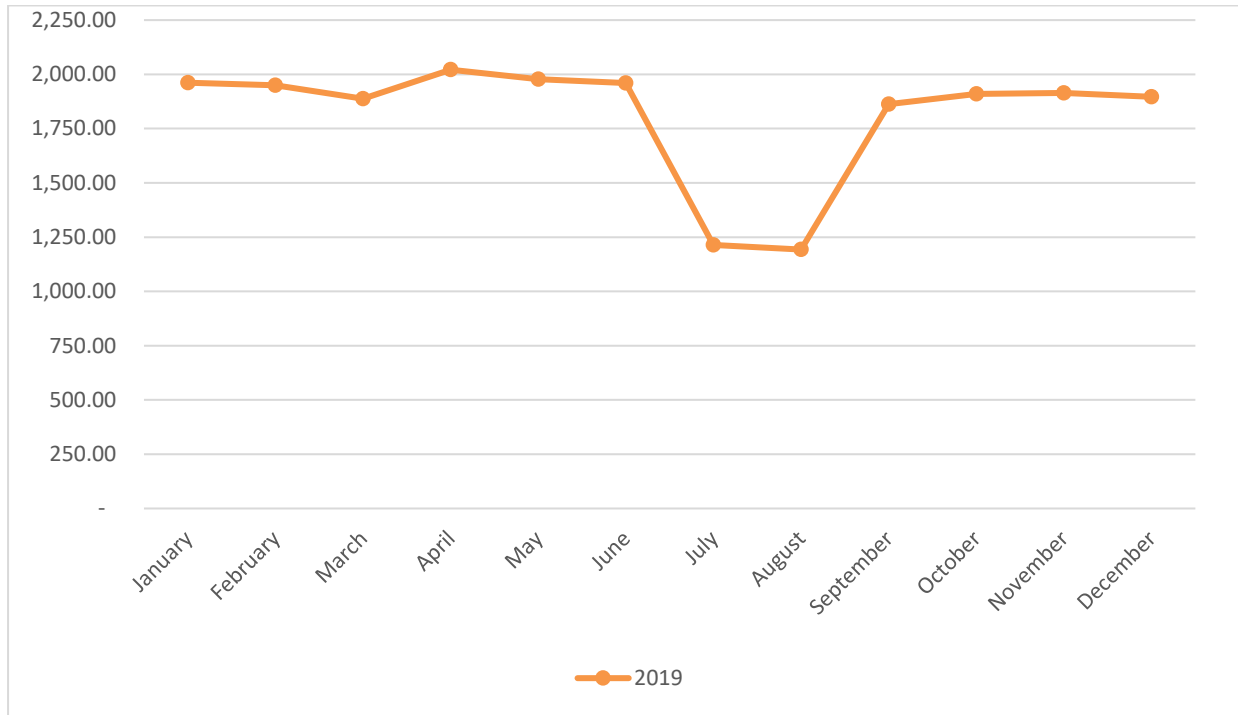
COMMENTS

For the purpose of this report, Administration will be highlighting the child care system for the year 2019, as it was the last "normal" year prior to the pandemic.

In 2019, TBDSSAB had service agreements with 20 child care operators that supported 45 child care sites as well as 11 licensed home child care providers. There were 2,591 licensed spaces in the system with a utilization that, at its peak, reached 2,021 licensed spaces utilized (see Chart 1).

Occupancy data collected for each child care centre is based on "Full Day Equivalent" (FDE). In some instances, there are more than one child being served in a FDE space, due to shared spaces as a result of less than full time attendance by a child. In 2019, 2,690 children were served across the child care system.

Chart 1 – Utilized Spaces by Month



Funding Model

The current funding model is based on three major priorities:

1. Fee Subsidy

Funding is based on the averaged previous years’ expenditures and is provided to reduce the costs of child care to families.

2. Special Needs Resourcing

A fixed cost based on the service agreement with the service provider to provide specialized support where required by a child.

3. General Operating Grant

The remaining funding allocation after the above amounts have been determined as well as other child care based expenditures to support the not-for-profit child care operations to remain sustainable.

The funding formula being implemented for General Operating Grants is based the following two step process:

Step 1:

operating capacity x points per space x number of months open / operating hours per week range = total points

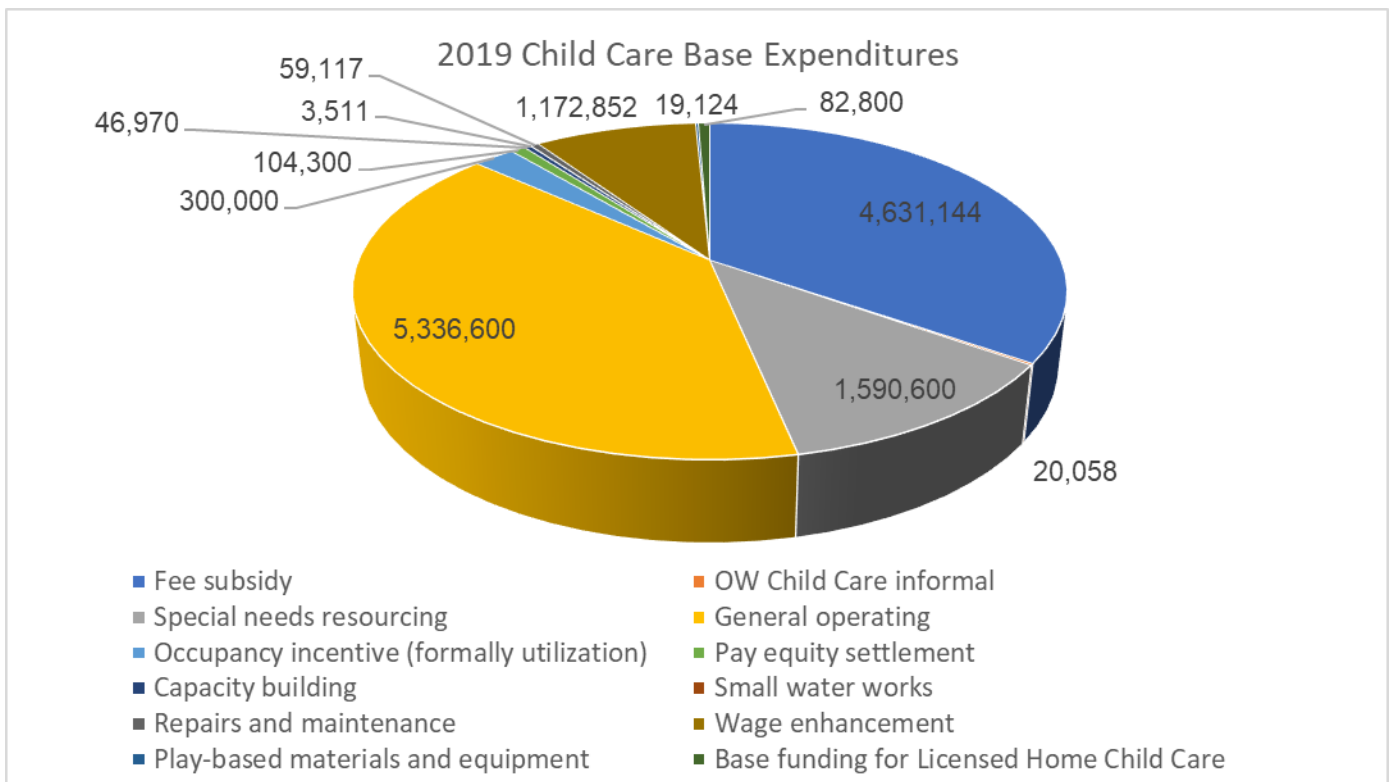
Step 2:

total points x dollars per point = total General Operating Grant

Points per Space is a calculation that assigns a different number of points to the various age categories of child care. For example, an infant space receives 42 points, while a school-aged space receives 4 points. This accounts for the different costs incurred by the child care centre associated with each age category. The actual dollar per point is based on the overall general operating allocation for any given year.

The 2019 child care base expenditures were \$13,367,076. The following chart explores the breakdown of expenditures:

Chart 2 – 2019 Child Care Base Expenditures



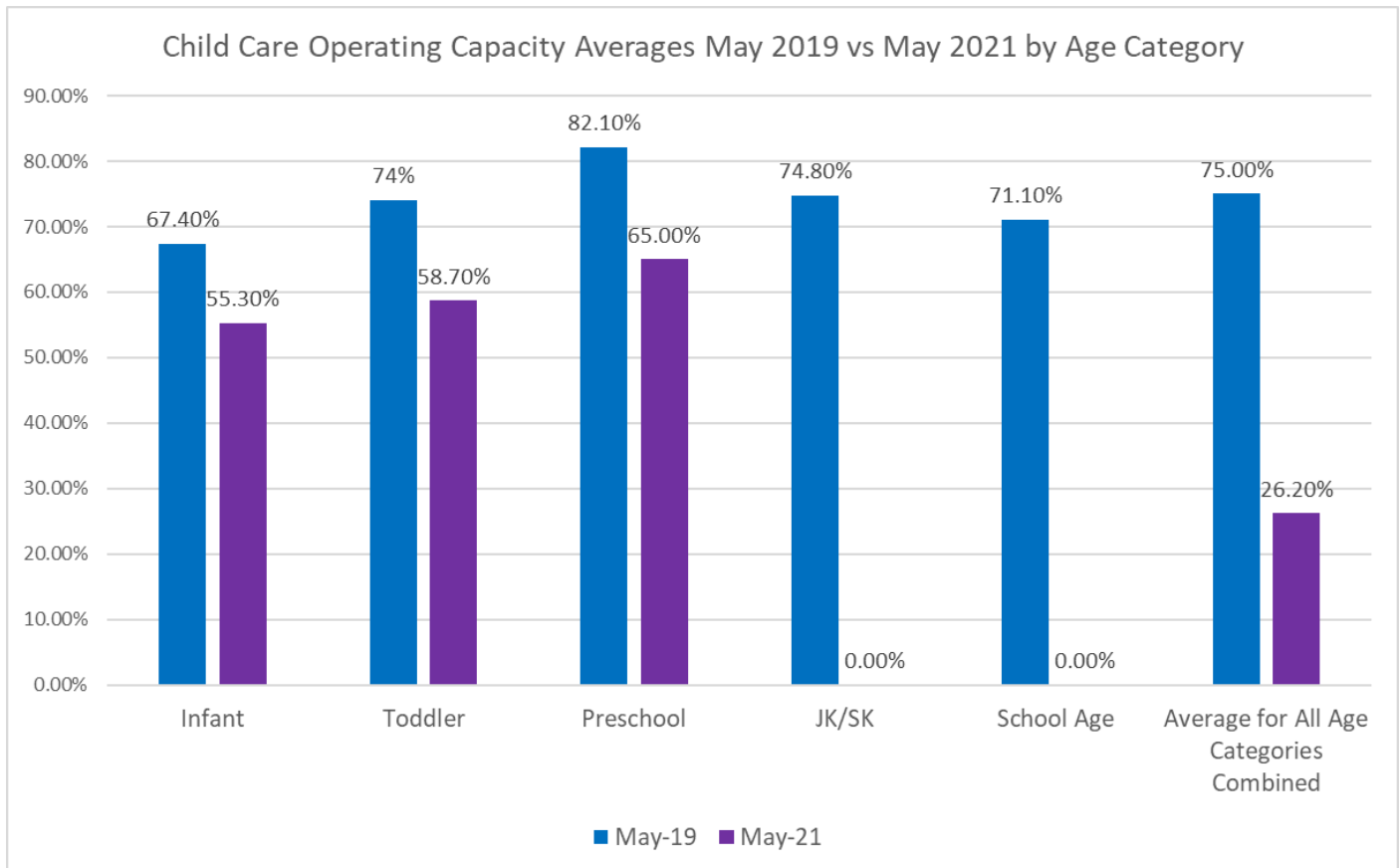
In 2019, TBDSSAB child care funding accounted for an approximate overall average of 58.5% of the child care system’s revenue. This funding included General Operating Grants, Fee Subsidy, and others as highlighted in chart above. The remaining 41.5% of revenues came from parent fees and other non-TBDSSAB sources. This demonstrates the importance of TBDSSAB as the service system manager and primary system funder.

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on the Child Care System

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a dramatic impact on the child care system over the past 16 months, including the closure of all child care centres for a period, the implementation of emergency child care on 3 occasions, reduced operating capacities based on public health requirements and the concerns of school-based child care operations with the implementation of remote learning. There have been several funding models implemented with child care operators to address these changes.

Administration continues to monitor the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on the child care system. The table below provides a comparison of the operating space utilization averages in May 2019 and May 2021.

Chart 3 – Child Care Operating Capacity, May 2019 vs May 2021 by Age Category



In April 2021, all schools were closed due to the provincial order and TBDSSAB began the process of setting up emergency child care for school age children. The overall impact has affected all age groups, but the biggest impact has been the Kindergarten and School Age Programs.

Further, during the 2021 budget release, the federal government announced plans for a National Early Learning and Child Care Plan with the goal of bringing fees for regulated child care down to \$10 per day on average within the next five years. Administration is waiting for detailed information on this plan, including the government of Ontario’s intentions.

Moving Forward

To best understand the viability of a child care system, a comprehensive review is required. Administration is recommending that the process for this review begin in 2021 and move into 2022 as more information is shared by the province and related to the National Early Learning and Child Care Plan.

Administration plans to move forward with a comprehensive review of the child care system to determine what is required for the long-term viability and sustainability of the child care system.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS



There are no immediate financial implications resulting from this report.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that this report provides the Board with information on the status of the child care system in the District of Thunder Bay and Administration’s recommendation to implement a comprehensive review of the District of Thunder Bay Child Care Service System including a financial viability model. Following this review, a detailed plan will be presented to the Board for consideration.

REFERENCE MATERIALS ATTACHED

None

PREPARED BY:	Louise Piercey, Manager Child Care Early Years Programs The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board
APPROVED / SIGNATURE:	
	Ken Ranta, Director, Integrated Social Services Division The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board
SUBMITTED / SIGNATURE:	
	William (Bill) Bradica, Chief Administrative Officer The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board



	REPORT No.: 2021-31
MEETING DATE: JULY 15, 2021	DATE PREPARED: JUNE 16, 2021
SUBJECT: SOCIAL SERVICES RELIEF FUND – PHASE 3 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 Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF) Phase 3.

BACKGROUND

At the March 18, 2021 meeting, the Board was provided with initial information on the SSRF Phase 3, including the allocation to TBDSSAB of \$2,422,782 and the eligibility of projects and initiatives for these funds (Report No. 2021-11). The Board reviewed and approved the submission of an investment plan to MMAH, outlining the planned areas for expenditure (Resolution No. 21/20A).

An update on SSRF Phase 3 was provided to the Board at the April 15, 2021 meeting (Report No.: 2021-17). In that report, Administration identified key areas of support targeted for the Phase 3 funding. These included rent and arrears support, emergency sheltering, and provision of additional temporary spaces as required, support for community housing providers to promote the safety and stability of those operators and tenants, and re-engaging community partners with the continuation of the Emergency Pandemic Fund, which promotes initiatives to address pandemic pressures directly between service providers and those they serve. A subsequent update was provided at the May 20, 2021 meeting (Report No.: 2021-23), and again at the June 17, 2021 meeting (Report No.: 2021-27).

COMMENTS

The SSRF Phase 3 funding implementation began April 1, following the approval of the investment plan by MMAH. A key area of support under the Phase 3 funding is rent supports to assist those impacted by the pandemic where rent and utility arrears may result in homelessness. Under the Phase 3 funding, it is anticipated that an additional

250 households may be supported by year end. As of June 28, 158 households have been assisted with funding totalling \$365,773.

TBDSSAB continues to provide support to community groups through the Emergency Pandemic Fund, an application-based initiative that looks to address the needs in all communities through supporting organizations in directly meeting the needs of the most vulnerable. Eligible expenses through the Emergency Pandemic Fund include shelter, food, transportation, supports, PPE, cleaning supplies and health and safety costs. This fund had been offered through prior phases of SSRF and was fully utilized. Through June 28, four applications have been received and approved under Phase 3, with a total expenditure of \$151,651.

Continued pressures are expected on the current emergency shelter system, as the pandemic has required operational changes. Reduced capacity to meet public health guidelines and the need to restrict access under static bed lists have resulted in the need for TBDSSAB to provide funding to overflow emergency shelters - temporary spaces provided to facilitate overnight shelter when access to emergency shelters is limited. Overflow emergency shelters utilize approved space offered and operated by community support organizations, as well as motel spaces as required. A total of \$69,497 has been expended from SSRF Phase 3 in this area through June 28.

The following chart outlines the budget and current expenditure for SSRF Phase 3 as of June 28, 2021:

	SSRF Phase 3	
	Allocation	Actuals YTD (Jun 28)
Rent Supports	473,475	365,773
Support to Community Groups	568,670	151,651
Overflow Shelter	295,000	69,497
Additional Cleaning	312,480	15,758
Testing	50,000	-
Personal Protective Equipment	100,000	26,406
Security	307,332	152,527
Administration	72,500	
Total	2,179,457	781,612

Moving forward, the needs and pressures related to COVID will continue to be monitored, and the amounts identified in the Initial Plan may be adjusted. Updates will be provided to the Board for information.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The SSRF Phase 3 is a 100% provincially funded program. TBDSSAB will receive \$2,422,782 based on the approved SSRF Phase 3 Investment Plan submitted in March, for use through December 31, 2021.



TBDSSAB is eligible to use up to 3% of the approved funding allocation for administrative costs.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that this report provides the Board with updated information on the Social Services Relief Fund Phase 3 funding received through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

REFERENCE MATERIALS ATTACHED

None

PREPARED BY:	Crystal Simeoni, Manager, Housing Programs The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board
APPROVED / SIGNATURE:	
	Ken Ranta, Director, Integrated Social Services Division The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board
SUBMITTED / SIGNATURE:	
	William (Bill) Bradica, Chief Administrative Officer The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board



	REPORT No.: 2021-32
MEETING DATE: JULY 15, 2021	DATE PREPARED: JUNE 16, 2021
SUBJECT: NIPIGON MARKET HOUSING OPTIONS	

RECOMMENDATION

For information only.

REPORT SUMMARY

To provide The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB or the Board) with information concerning Community Housing under the operation of TBDSSAB and information related to the establishment of market rent housing specific to the Township of Nipigon.

BACKGROUND

At the May 20, 2021 Board meeting, Board Member James Foulds presented an item of new business requesting that Administration review options for market rental housing in Nipigon. This request was supported by the Board.

Prior to 1999, Canada and the provinces directly delivered and administered social housing programs. In 1999 the Social Housing Agreement transferred federal funding and program responsibilities for many of Canada Mortgage & Housing's (CMHC) social housing programs to the provinces. It is notable that CMHC retained the responsibility for the federally funded cooperative housing programs. The administration of the units developed under the Rural and Native Housing program was transferred by Ontario to the Ontario Aboriginal Housing Service.

In Ontario, responsibility for funding and the overall administration was transferred to 37 Consolidated Municipal Service Managers and 10 District Social Services Boards beginning in 2001. These 47 organizations are referred to as Service Managers under the *Housing Services Act 2011*.

With the transfer of social housing, administrative and funding responsibility to Service Managers, the Province also established Service Level Standards (SLS) to identify the minimum number of households, whose incomes are under Housing Income Limits (HIL) established by Ontario, to be supported by the Service Manager. The SLS's were set to

ensure that after the transfer of social housing responsibilities to the Service Managers, the social housing stock would not be diminished and that this minimum number of households with incomes under the HIL would be supported.

The SLS categories defined by the Ministry of Housing as follows:

- 1. Number of Households whose income is no greater than the Household Income Limit (HIL) – At point of transfer in 2001**, the Ministry assumed that all the RGI units in public and non-profit and co-op housing were under the HIL.
- 2. Number of High Need Households** - for public housing it was 75% of the RGI units and 75% of the commercial rent supplement units. For non-profit housing, high need households were set as per the program requirements, 35% of the RGI units for the non-profits and 25% of the RGI units for the co-ops.
- 3. Number of Modified Units** were the actual number of units that were reported by the housing providers through the target and mandate exercise.

TBDSSAB has a SLS target of 3,601 at or below the HIL. This is the primary category of measure related to SLS. Further, TBDSSAB has targets to achieve 1,987 High Needs Households and 263 Modified units, all within the 3,601 target. TBDSSAB currently is at 3,487 SLS units, 114 units below the SLS target.

At the March 26, 2015 Board meeting, the Board was presented with a 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan for Housing Targets (Report No.: 2015-20). This plan looked at the future need of housing in each community within the District of Thunder Bay and established projections for housing targets. This plan has been updated to the Board several times, with the most recent update presented at the March 21, 2019 meeting (Report No.: 2019-16). In this most recent update, the projection for demand for single RGI units expanded by a proposed 25 units, while there was a reduction expected in seniors and family RGI units. This pattern of expected growth for single RGI units and reduction in seniors and family RGI units was consistent across most communities in the District.

To minimize the vacancy rate and maximize rent revenue in TBDSSAB properties, the Board approved a Long-Term Vacancies Policy at the May 16, 2019 meeting (Report No.: 2019-25). This policy states that if a unit is vacant for a period of four months or longer, efforts will be made to fill the vacancy with a market rent applicant. Though this would have an impact on the attainment of SLS, it was determined that the cost of a chronic vacancy was a greater risk to TBDSSAB.

COMMENTS

Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) or subsidized housing is a housing subsidy or benefit offered to make rent affordable for households. In most cases, the rent at a subsidized unit is set to be 30 per cent of a household's total monthly income before taxes and

adjustments. If a household received social assistance, the rent is based on the rent benefit established by the Ontario government. To be eligible for RGI or subsidized housing, an application must be submitted with the current income verified for anyone aged 16 or older within the family composition. Based on the income information provided with the application, eligibility for RGI housing is income tested, again based on family composition and if the income amount is below the HIL threshold, the household is placed on the centralized housing waiting list or in other priority categories.

At the May 17, 2018 meeting, the Board was presented with a multi-year strategy for the achievement of TBDSSAB's Service Level Standards (Report No.: 2018-32). This strategy included option to attain the SLS over a period of five years. As a part of this strategy, the Board supported the new annual investment of approximately \$217,000 over five years to grow the number of SLS-applicable units. An update to the initial report was provided to the Board at the November 18, 2020 meeting (Report No.: 2020-57). This updated report outlined a net growth of 52 SLS units, reducing the overall SLS shortfall to 208 units at the time.

Any measures to eliminate an RGI unit and convert this to a market unit would impact the SLS and may require additional investment to attain the targets.

On April 23, 2019, TBDSSAB facilitated an information session with Abbeyfield, a seniors housing developer. The session was aimed at addressing community housing needs for individuals who may not necessarily be eligible for RGI housing, but were interested in downsizing and remaining in their home community. Though TBDSSAB would not be involved directly with a non-RGI development, this information was viewed as valuable for communities and organizations looking to expand market-driven housing for seniors. Several community groups attended the information session, but to date there have been no developments with this model.

As of May 2021, TBDSSAB direct owned properties in Nipigon includes 16 mixed-age units with no vacancies, nine family units with one vacancy due to a fire and 20 seniors' units with one vacancy (this unit is currently on offer). Current waiting list numbers within the Nipigon portfolio have three applicants waiting for mixed-age units, no family applicants waiting, and the seniors list has four waiting. All the applicants waiting to be housed have RGI classification, to meet service level standards.

Of the 43 units currently occupied in Nipigon, 11 tenants are paying market rent rates. This includes eight of the 19 seniors at Sjolander Court. All these market rate tenants would have initially been deemed eligible at RGI rates, however over time with income increases, they have moved to market rent. TBDSSAB has not taken the position to evict market tenants who initially establish a home as an RGI tenant.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation conducts market surveys across the country to determine current market housing costs, vacancy rates and overall availability of housing. Unfortunately, the surveys are only conducted in communities of 10,000 population or greater. As a result, only the City of Thunder Bay data is available. Given this, TBDSSAB undertook an independent market rent study in 2016. This information

was reported to the Board at the September 28, 2016 meeting (Report No.: 2016-46). In the report it was noted that the area comprised of Nipigon, Red Rock and Dorion had a total of 1,849 dwellings, with 29 of these identified as market rental units. With this small number identified, the data provided limited insight and comparability with other market areas.

In 2016, the Township of Nipigon submitted an Expression of Interest to access Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH) funding to assist in the development of new affordable units in the community. The submission resulted in the provision by TBDSSAB of \$500,000 towards the construction of 4 new single units.

On April 17, 2019, The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH), addressed a letter to the TBDSSAB Board Chair announcing the provincial government's Community Housing Renewal Strategy – a multi-year plan to sustain and grow the community housing system. As part of this strategy, two new programs were launched in 2019-20, leveraging federal investments under the bilateral agreement between the MMAH and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

The Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI) is modeled after the recent Investment in Affordable Housing Extension (IAH-E) and allows Service Managers to address local housing priorities including affordability, repair, and new unit construction. Under the OPHI Program Guidelines, Service Managers have the flexibility to select the components they will deliver each year, under their approved funding allocations. This may include the construction of new affordable housing. Additional features include the ability to offer a support services component and utilize OPHI funding for social housing under the Ontario Renovates program. TBDSSAB recently accessed OPHI funding for the construction of six fully accessible units at McIvor Court.

The Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative (COCHI) represents a reinvestment of federal funding allowing Service Managers to address the challenges associated with housing projects reaching the end of their mortgages and/or operating agreements. COCHI funds are targeted towards protecting affordability for households in community housing, supporting the repair and renewal of existing social housing supply and expanding the supply of community housing. Housing projects and providers are eligible for COCHI funding if they are social housing providers that are listed in the *Housing Services Act, 2011* as of April 1, 2019.

An unknown at this time is the full impact the National Housing Strategy may have on the current housing stock and the availability of future housing programs and opportunities. An initial capital funding program has been announced under the Strategy, called the National Housing Co-Investment Fund. More recently, a Rapid Housing Initiative was announced, providing funding for the construction of new housing units. Administration will continue to explore all available options under the National Housing Strategy and present recommendations to the Board as appropriate. It should be noted that these federal programs are open to all applicants and are not restricted to providers of RGI housing.

The overall impact of converting RGI (SLS eligible) units to market units would be a reduction in units available to those beneath the Household Income Limit, making access to affordable housing more challenging. In certain circumstances, where there are chronic vacancies in RGI units, the decision to convert units to market rent may have merit, as this minimizes the costs of holding a vacant unit and maximizes the use of the existing asset. However, the unit would be removed from the RGI accessible stock for as long as a market tenant wishes to stay. This could have long-term implications, particularly if the RGI demand in an area increases.

It is recommended that TBDSSAB maintain the current ratio of RGI to market units in its existing portfolio and continue to consider addressing chronic vacancy units through the Long-Term Vacancies Policy. TBDSSAB should continue to seek interest in the creation of affordable housing by interested third parties, and support through federal and provincial funding as available. For new multi-unit housing developments, consideration will be given to mixed-income housing models following the Board’s endorsement of the Mixed Income Housing position paper in April 2019 (Report No.: 2019-22).

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS



There are no direct financial implications resulting from this report.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that this report provides the Board with information concerning the status of Community Housing under the operation of TBDSSAB and information related to the establishment of market rent housing specific to the Township of Nipigon.

REFERENCE MATERIALS ATTACHED

None

PREPARED BY:	Crystal Simeoni, Manager, Housing Programs The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board
APPROVED / SIGNATURE:	
	Ken Ranta, Director, Integrated Social Services Division The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board
SUBMITTED / SIGNATURE:	
	William (Bill) Bradica, Chief Administrative Officer The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board



	REPORT No.: 2021-33
MEETING DATE: JULY 15, 2021	DATE PREPARED: JUNE 28, 2021
SUBJECT: BRIEFINGS PACKAGE FOR MEETINGS WITH MINISTERS AT AMO 2021 CONFERENCE	

RECOMMENDATION

THAT with respect to Report No. 2021-33 (CAO Division), we, The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (the Board), approve the delegation briefings package for the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) 2021 conference as presented;

AND THAT we direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to send the delegation package to the appropriate provincial Ministries;

AND THAT a copy of the approved 2021 delegation briefings package be sent to Thunder Bay District municipal councils;

AND THAT the CAO attend the virtual 2021 AMO conference to provide support to the Board Chair and other Board members in their meetings with provincial officials regarding these issues.

REPORT SUMMARY

To provide The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB or the Board) with the briefing package for the 2021 Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) conference for review and approval.

BACKGROUND

AMO will be holding its 2021 Annual Conference virtually, August 15-18, 2021. As part of the programming for the Annual Conference, organizations may submit requests to meet with a Minister or Parliamentary Assistant.

COMMENTS

Briefings have been developed by the Integrated Social Services Division team in consultation with the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer on four issues that are recommended to the Board for advocacy with provincial Ministers. The AMO conference is one opportunity for the Board Chair, supported by other Board members and Administration, to present these issues to Ministers.

The Briefings Package contains 4 key recommendations.

- 1) TBDSSAB urges the Ontario government to establish a province-wide, low-cost plan structure with the telecom industry that provides access to telephone and internet technology for a reasonable \$10/month fee. This would remove barriers to accessing education, training, employment, and community services.
- 2) TBDSSAB urges the Ontario Ministries of Health and Municipal Affairs and Housing to partner to provide: a) designated funding in the District of Thunder Bay for mental health and addictions supports for in situ tenants of community housing, b) a new purpose-built supportive housing project(s) consisting of a minimum of 50 units and c) addictions agencies to be provided a long-term commitment for support funding.
- 3) TBDSSAB urges the Ontario government to combine Home for Good and CHPI allocations, increase the combined funding to \$5,440,093 from \$4,812,590, and allow for capital projects to be funded under this program.
- 4) TBDSSAB urges the Ontario government to convene a staff-level working group to inform and guide a whole of government approach regarding homeless individuals released from incarceration, including the development of a supported transitional housing option.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS



There are no immediate financial implications related to this report.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that the briefings package are recommended for approval.

REFERENCE MATERIALS ATTACHED

Attachment #1 – [Briefings Package for the 2021 Association of Municipalities of Ontario Conference](#)

PREPARED BY:	Carole Lem, Communications & Engagement Officer The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board
APPROVED / SIGNATURE:	 William (Bill) Bradica, Chief Administrative Officer The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board
SUBMITTED / SIGNATURE:	 William (Bill) Bradica, Chief Administrative Officer The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board



THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services

August, 2021

Brief: The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) requests that the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) establish a low-cost, province-wide plan structure with the telecom industry that provides low-income Ontarians with access to telephone and internet technology for a reasonable \$10/month fee. Access to a home-based internet service and cell phone service will allow individuals and families to connect to needed services and educational supports. This would remove barriers to accessing education, training, employment and community services.

Summary

Individuals and families without adequate resources to acquire communication devices and services face additional barriers in trying to access employment and training opportunities, health supports, and other community resources and services. The resources should exist to allow vulnerable people to access technology and service plans in order to remove barriers to accessing education, training, employment, health and community services.

Background

The inability to access communication services and devices for individuals and families supported by TBDSSAB increases the barriers that people face in trying to access employment and training opportunities and limits access to other community resources and services.

There has been a shift towards increasing the number of support programs and services that are now available through a digital platform and a corresponding decrease in the number of services available in person. This shift includes services provided or funded by the Province of Ontario. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated this shift and poses a greater challenge for those without access to computer and/or smart phone technology due to economic pressures.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, it became increasingly apparent that our tenants and clients are lacking in technological supports. There are many people that do not have the financial resources to ensure the same access that others in our

community have. With the closure of many of the computer resource centres (libraries, community centres, etc.) across the District of Thunder Bay, many of those who had access to phones, computers and internet no longer do. In a time of uncertainty and potential crisis, this means having no way to reach out for assistance, nor the ability to be reached by family or community organizations.

In response to this issue, TBDSSAB entered into a partnership with Tbaytel, the largest independently owned telecommunications provider in Canada that offers products and services that include smart phones, mobility, and internet service.

In March 2020, TBDSSAB purchased 66 phones from Tbaytel to be distributed to clients and tenants in the District of Thunder Bay. These phones came with discounted data packages and calling / texting capacity. These plans were set to expire at the end of June 2020, however TBDSSAB has committed to continue to fund these services through March 31, 2021.

The distribution of the 66 phones during the COVID-19 pandemic was intended to assist individuals with medical appointments that are now done via phone, counselling services being conducted online or over the phone and those suffering from isolation requiring a way to communicate. Some of the phones were provided to those clients that fall within the TBDSSAB's High Needs Homeless (HNN) population or those individuals supported through the Home for Good (HFG) program. This was done to ensure connection with support workers, connection with landlords to find accommodation, and to connect with other community programs. Phones were also provided to youth that require a means to connect with counselling services or require the means to connect with their educational institution, and to clients and tenants that require a means to communicate for financial reasons, to connect with Ontario Works staff, to make employment connections, or to make EI inquiries.

If an individual were to arrange direct access of a device and connection package, the cost would be \$210 for an entry level smartphone (or \$10/month added to a package), and \$55/monthly for a limited voice and data package. For a single individual receiving Ontario Works basic needs benefits of \$343 /month, this represents almost 20% of their monthly income. For most individuals, this poses an undue hardship in order to access telephone communication and basic supports and services, including online provincial programs.

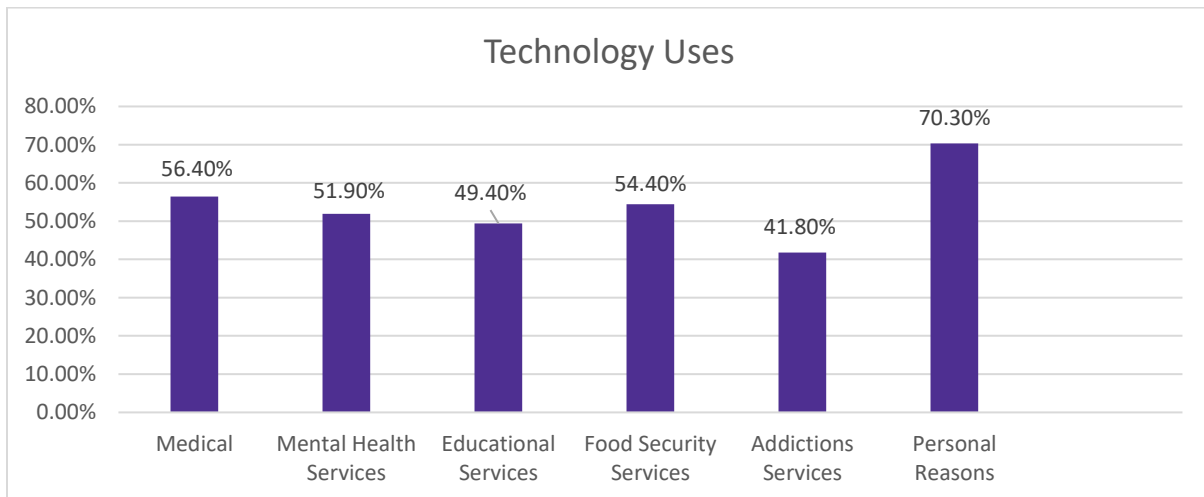
This program has had a profound impact on the lives of recipients. For example, a client was coming into the office actively looking for work and spending 1-3 hours following up with employment services. He received a phone, and shortly after he received a job offer as he came to print and fax information to the employers.

Another example is an 18-year-old dependant of a tenant with TBDSSAB housing who required help to leave an unhealthy and unsafe living environment. Her family had addiction issues and she needed to leave for her safety and reached out to a TBDSSAB Tenant Support Coordinator. She was given a phone under the program. With the help of several community organizations, she was able to secure safe accommodations and apply for Ontario Works on her own. She secured employment through the summer

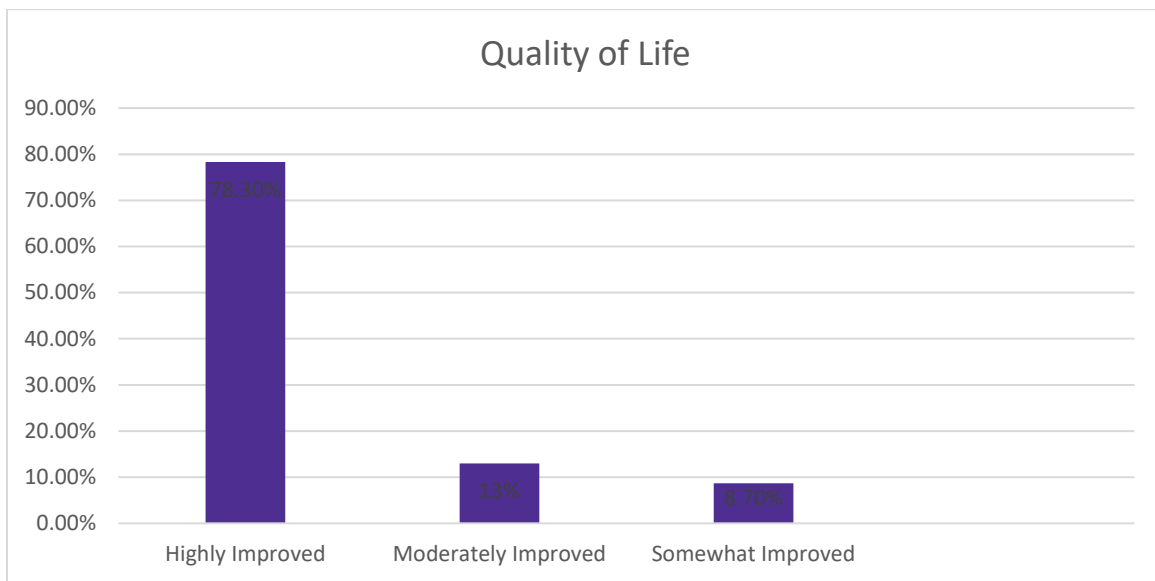
allowing her to build on skills and confidence. She is now back to school online and thriving. To her, that phone was a lifeline that would not been accessible otherwise.

Subsequently, TBDSSAB saw the value of providing technology resources to those in need and invested in another 200 smartphones with data packages in March 2021. These new devices were made available similarly to the initial 66, and all were assigned within 3 weeks. The data packages for these devices, as well as the initial 66 devices, are in place until March 31, 2022. TBDSSAB also initiated a laptop computer lending program, to facilitate the needs of those who were engaged in employment training programs or other life stabilization efforts. TBDSSAB purchased 17 laptops and distributed these to individuals who had expressed a need. Agreements were established for the lending, and the devices have all been assigned.

TBDSSAB recently conducted a survey with the 240 recipients of smartphones and laptops. The survey asked respondents to specify the resources or services they were able to access because of the technology. The following chart demonstrates the responses to this question.



The survey also asked respondents to indicate to what extent having access to technology has improved their quality of life. The following chart indicates the responses to this question.



In addition, 91% of survey respondents indicated that cell phone and internet access is very important to them. As more services move to an online format it is imperative that all Ontarians regardless of income can access all programs and services in an equitable manner.

In parts of Ontario where Rogers operates, the company offers a program called Connected for Success that offers high-speed, low-cost internet to subsidized tenants, seniors and to individuals receiving disability and income support.

(<https://www.torontohousing.ca/residents/your-home/phone-cable-internet/Documents/Rogers%20Connected%20for%20Success%20Internet%20Plans.pdf>). Access plans under this program start at \$9.99/month for eligible households.

Unfortunately, Rogers is not available in the District of Thunder Bay.

TBDSSAB encourages to the Ontario government to pursue a similar program province-wide.

Therefore, TBDSSAB urges the Ontario government to establish a province-wide, low-cost plan structure with the telecom industry that provides access to telephone and internet technology for a reasonable \$10/month fee. This would remove barriers to accessing education, training, employment and community services.



THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD

Hon. Christine Elliot, Minister of Health
Hon. Michael Tibollo, Associate Minister Mental Health and Addictions

August, 2021

Brief: TBDSSAB requests that the Ministry of Health partner with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to provide designated funding in the District of Thunder Bay for a) mental health and addictions supports for in situ tenants of community housing, b) a new purpose-built supportive housing project(s) consisting of a minimum of 50 units and c) addictions agencies to be provided a long term commitment for support funding to build upon the positive results of the programs funded using the one-time \$1,040,046 mental health & addictions funding that was provided to the TBDSSAB to assist vulnerable populations to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Summary

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) recognizes and applauds the government of Ontario's supportive approach to addressing homelessness by creating permanent and independent housing solutions. However, additional resources are required to provide mental health and addictions supports for in situ tenants of community housing and for the non-homeless requiring supports.

Therefore, TBDSSAB requests that the Ministry of Health partner with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to provide funding for a) mental health and addictions supports for in situ tenants of community housing, b) a new purpose-built supportive housing project(s) consisting of a minimum of 50 units, c) mental health and addictions agencies to be provided a long term commitment for support funding to build off of the positive results of the programs that were funded using the one-time \$1,040,046 mental health & addictions funding that was provided to the TBDSSAB to assist vulnerable populations to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic.

This flexible funding helped address the pandemic needs of vulnerable people living with mental health and/or addictions issues and was used for eligible operating activities within the TBDSSAB service area. However, increased and sustained funding is necessary to address the plethora of needs found throughout the District of Thunder Bay.

Background

a) Mental Health and Addictions Supports for In situ Tenants of Community Housing

Research has shown that certain groups are more at risk for substance abuse related harms. These include people who have had adverse childhood experiences, people with mental health disorders, people with workplace injuries and older adults, youth who have a history of trauma or neglect, homeless people, people working in the sex trade, and Indigenous people.

Many of the vulnerable populations cited above are represented in the community housing sector and as tenants in the private market. As a cross section of the broader population, it is reasonable to assume that incidence of mental health and addictions in the community housing tenant population occurs at a rate at least equal to the District as a whole.

Starting in 2016, TBDSSAB tracked the number of referrals for tenants involved in some type of presumed mental health and addiction issue. Approximately 409 of the referrals in 2019 were for such issues and this number increased to 427 in 2020. It is also estimated that an additional 100 referrals from the broader community housing sector were for mental health and addictions.

b) New Purpose-Built Supportive Housing Project(s) Consisting of a Minimum of 50 Units

It is evident that various supports are required to ensure successful tenancies, prevent evictions, and to end the cycle of homelessness. For example, the Housing First approach to ending homelessness is well-known for its individualized and client-driven supports as a core principle in sustaining permanent housing. Similarly, the Home for Good initiative launched by the province has committed funding to help Service Managers house homeless individuals and connect them to appropriate supports to support successful transitions into stable housing.

The supportive approach implemented by MMAH to addressing homelessness is the proper method for creating permanent and independent housing solutions.

In the context of the District of Thunder Bay there is need for a minimum of 50 transitional supportive housing beds. The actual number of beds required in the District of Thunder Bay far exceeds the requested minimum of 50, given that the incidence of mental health and addictions is much higher in the District of Thunder Bay than the provincial average, as demonstrated through the information in Figures 1-3. However, the addition of a minimum of 50 dedicated transitional mental health and addictions beds would demonstrate an important step toward meeting the needs in the District of Thunder Bay.

Figure 1: 2019 Comparative Opioid-related morbidity and mortality in Ontario and the District of Thunder Bay, rate per 100,000 people

	Ontario	District of Thunder Bay
Emergency Department Visits for Opioid Poisonings	71.6	117.8
Hospitalization Rates for Opioid Poisonings	13.6	23.3
Deaths from Opioid Poisonings	10.3	24.6

Source: Public Health Ontario, Interactive Opioid Tool

In addition to the impacts of opioids in the District of Thunder Bay, the impacts of alcohol on the population is equally troublesome. The following information from a Thunder Bay District Health study shows a comparison between the provincial and district averages.

Figure 2: Percentage of Adults who Exceed the Low Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines, 2015

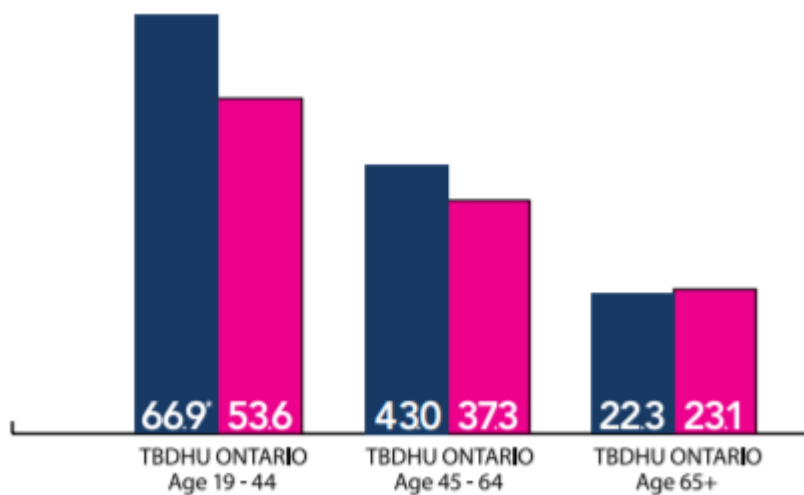
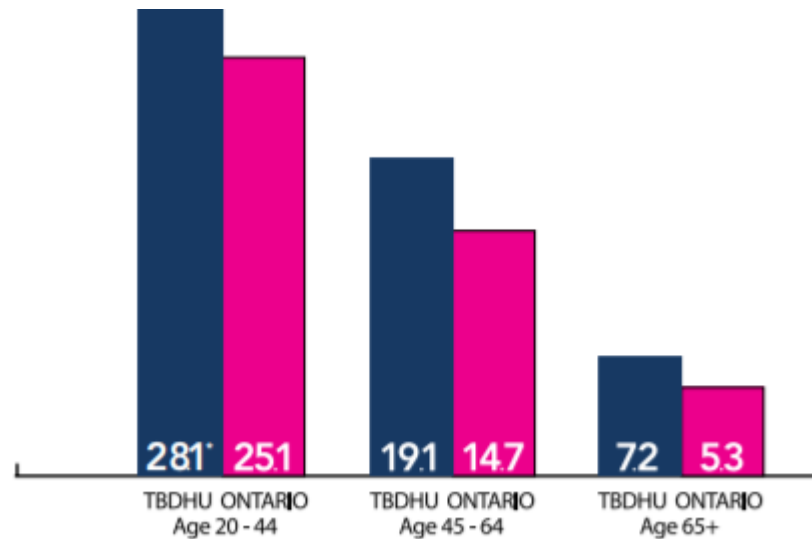


Figure 3: Percentage of Adults Who Self-Report Heavy Drinking by Age, 2015



TBDSSAB supports the involvement of the mental health and addictions sector in seeking these additional supports and resources to address this challenge.

Through the creation of new transitional supportive care housing, individuals in need would receive the care they require, and the burden of addictions would be reduced. This would also open space for those waiting to access community housing, reducing the homeless population and those struggling to pay rent in the private sector.

As the evidence demonstrates, the District of Thunder Bay has a much higher incidence of mental health and addictions when compared to the Ontario average. This creates more demand for services and supports that can be provided through dedicated supportive housing.

c) A Long-Term Commitment for Additional Support Funding

The TBDSSAB is grateful for the one-time allocation of \$1,040,046 received to support a range of mental health and addictions-related supports and services. Through this funding, the TBDSSAB provided funding to 14 programs.

The main focus of this funding was the provision of direct mental health and addictions supports within the District of Thunder Bay. Services were provided in the form of software applications to support suicide prevention in youth, 200 cellular phones were allocated to support clients maintain connections for medical, mental health, addictions, job connections and education links. Patients in rural settings post discharge were provided access to a culturally safe patient navigator. Support options for females released from custody via housing navigators were created. Mental health connections to reduce social isolation for those with acquired brain injuries was developed.

Funding for the local police services was provided to make connections with individuals living in encampments, providing care bags and support services connections. An Indigenous mental health and wellness program was created through community and

land-based supportive mental health programs. TBDSSAB connected with local pharmacies to support coverage for mental health and addictions prescriptions for twenty-five individuals.

Remote clinical care was provided through the implementation of the Lifeguard overdose prevention application. The Wet Warming Centre care bus was established to provide the homeless or precariously housed with connections to a nurse, shelter or housing contacts, COVID-19 prevention education, and a safe space to connect with mental health and addiction supports.

Through these programs 5,967 households were assisted, with 479 households that include a member with mental health and addictions issues and at risk of homelessness receiving services and supports directly related to housing stability. Additionally, 2,364 households experiencing homelessness that include a member with mental health and addictions issues were supported.

Though the funding provided was gratefully received, it is evident by the successful deployment and usage of over \$1,000,000 in less than 3 months that there is a very real need for increased and consistent funding to address the mental health and addictions need within the District of Thunder Bay.

Therefore, TBDSSAB requests that the Ministry of Health partner with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to provide designated funding in the District of Thunder Bay for a) mental health and addictions supports for in situ tenants of community housing, b) a new purpose-built supportive housing project(s) consisting of a minimum of 50 units, and c) addictions agencies to be provided a long term commitment for support funding to build off of the positive results of the programs that were funded using the one-time mental health & addictions funding that was provided to the TBDSSAB to assist vulnerable populations.



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

Hon. Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

August, 2021

Brief: The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) appreciates and acknowledges the Home for Good (HFG), Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI), and Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF) funding allocations received this year, and requests that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing: a) combine the HFG and CHPI allocations, b) increase the combined amount to \$5,440,093, and c) allow for capital projects to be funded through CHPI.

Summary

The emergency shelters in the District of Thunder Bay have been over 100% capacity for much of the previous 5 years, relying on overflow spaces to meet the demand for their services. The emergency shelters are funded through CHPI and, despite the successful implementation of the Home for Good (HFG) program, emergency shelter usage has often remained at or above 100% capacity. To build upon the success of the HFG program and reduce emergency shelter usage, the TBDSSAB requests that the MMAH combine the HFG and CHPI allocations and increase the combined funding amount to \$5,440,093. Further, it is requested that the MMAH allow capital projects to be funded through this combined program.

Background

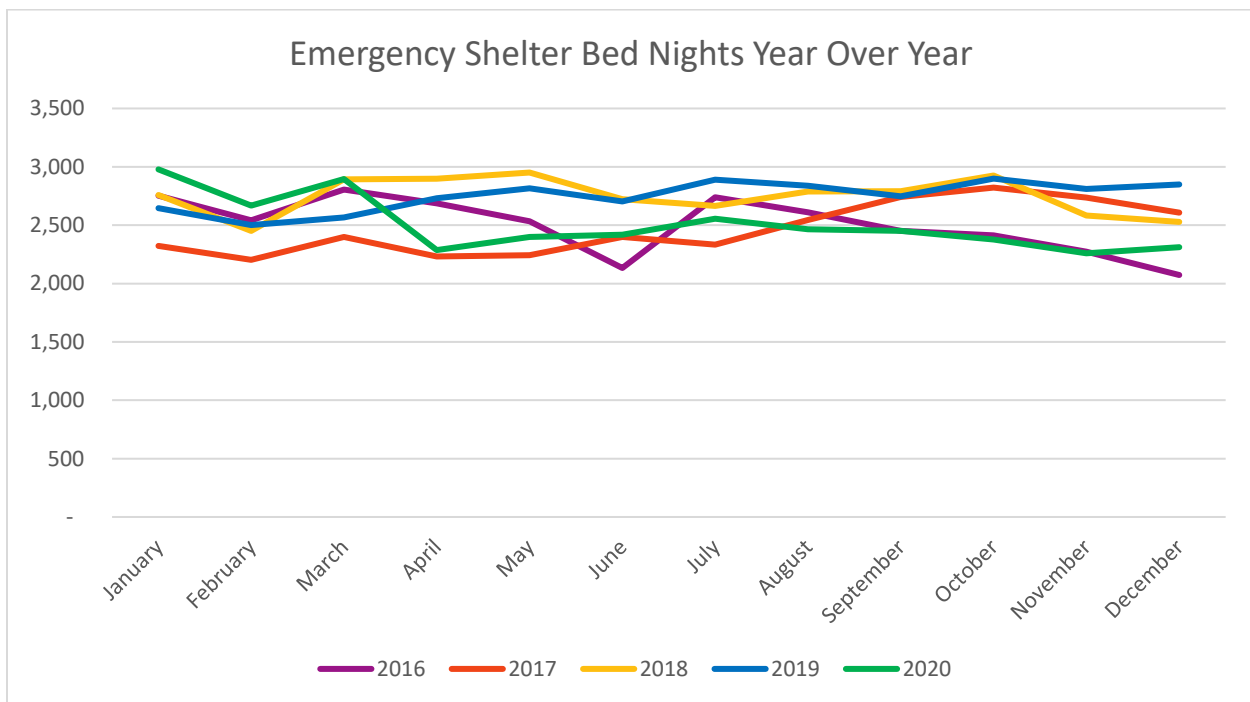
For 2021/22, TBDSSAB received \$1,270,124 in HFG allocations and \$3,542,466 for CHPI, for a combined total of \$4.8 million. Through the HFG funding allocation, the TBDSSAB created a system to house homeless individuals and families with appropriate supports by utilizing a special category on the community housing waitlist called the High Needs Homeless (HNH). The system works by the TBDSSAB Transition Outreach Support Workers (TOSW) attending the emergency shelters to assist the homeless to complete the community housing application as well as completing an initial Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT) assessment to determine their support needs.

Once completed, and if determined eligible, the individual or family is placed on the HNH waitlist and a support referral is made to one of the HFG funded support agencies. TBDSSAB has established partnerships with Dilico Anishinabek Family Care and St.

Joseph’s Care Group to deliver support services. The HFG support workers, in partnership with the TOSW, work to stabilize their support needs and work to secure stable housing. Once an individual is established at the top of the HNH waitlist they may receive a unit within the community housing stock, a rent supplement unit or may receive a portable benefit funded through the HFG program. In circumstances where an individual is determined to need more time to adjust to independent living, they will be referred to the Lodge on Dawson, a transitional housing environment that was established through the capital component of the HFG funding.

The HFG program has been tremendously successful. In 2020, the HFG funding supported 176 households. Of this total, 92 individuals received both housing assistance and support services with HFG funding. This has resulted in housing chronic emergency shelter users into transitional or more permanent housing.

Despite the successful implementation of the HFG program, emergency shelter usage has often remained above 100% capacity in the District of Thunder Bay, due to new users accessing the system.



Currently there are 67 individuals on the High Needs Homeless waitlist for HFG supports. With an increase in CHPI/HFG funding, the TBDSSAB will be able to support an additional 45-50 chronically homeless individuals and families, helping to achieve the province’s stated goal of addressing chronic homelessness.

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed existing gaps within the homeless and homelessness prevention service system that the TBDSSAB was able to address through the SSRF funding. When this temporary funding ceases, these gaps will again appear as the TBDSSAB cannot continue to address these areas within the regular CHPI allotment.

These gaps include, but are not limited to, funding for a cold weather shelter where individuals who are barred from the emergency shelters have a warm place overnight during the frigid winter months. The elimination of rent arrears has been another area of focus for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and this has allowed individuals to obtain permanent housing and retain their current housing. Funding was also made available for needed repairs to the infrastructure that support homeless individuals. Food, clothing and supports were also provided through the SSRF funding.

The impact of COVID-19 brought to light many of the issues related to 'hidden homelessness', as the supports and resources that were supporting these most vulnerable were no longer accessible. This put greater pressures on the homelessness services funded and administered by TBDSSAB, though the provincial resources provided through SSRF allowed more to be done. Without the continuation of these resources through CHPI, there will again be individuals who are unable to access supports.

Through the SSRF capital funding, more than \$2.9 million was invested in the District of Thunder Bay to address the needs of establishing and maintaining safe shelter for those most in need. Allowing more funding for capital through CHPI would provide for increased transitional capacity – eventually leading to a reduced need operationally for emergency shelters as TBDSSAB addresses more permanent measures for the chronically homeless.

Further, providing additional CHPI funding and allowing capital expenditures permit TBDSSAB to leverage federal funding programs like the Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI) and create more local transitional/supportive housing solutions. The RHI was initiated this past year, but there was not a significant availability of funds for Service Managers in smaller areas, and without sufficient capital to create capacity in transitional and permanent housing, the homelessness issue will continue.

Without the increased funding received through SSRF and the expanded eligibility that allowed for capital improvements, these projects cannot continue to exist and will create significant gaps to the homelessness service system.

Therefore, TBDSSAB requests that the MMAH combine the HFG and CHPI allocations, increase the combined amount to \$5,440,093 to address the needs identified through the pandemic, and allow for capital projects to be funded through CHPI.



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

Hon. Sylvia Jones, Solicitor General

Hon. Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

August, 2021

Brief: The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) requests that a staff level working group is convened to inform and guide a ‘whole of government’ approach regarding homeless individuals released from incarceration, including the development of a supported transitional housing option. As this is primarily a housing and homelessness prevention issue, in our view the group should be led by the Solicitor General and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing along with a housing service manager co-chair. Composition of the group should include both housing service manager representatives and those from the ministries of the Attorney General and Health.

Summary

The current discharge process, along with the lack of availability of housing options and community and health services to support successful reintegration to society, is continuing the cycle of homelessness post-incarceration. TBDSSAB requests that a ‘whole of government’ approach, led by the Solicitor General and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing along with a housing service manager co-chair, be convened to address this issue.

Background

With both a District Jail and a Correctional facility in the Thunder Bay area that serve the broader region, there are many people who are released from custody into our communities with not enough community resources currently in place to support them. The additional resources that the Ministry has committed to expand skills development and mental health and addiction services while people are incarcerated will greatly assist in reducing the magnitude of homelessness upon release. Some of these new resources are already in place. However, in the short to medium term, additional investments in community resources are needed until the full impact of the investments in the new facilities and programming take effect.

The discharge process, along with the lack of availability of housing options and community and health services to support successful reintegration to society, continues to be problematic and challenging for both former inmates and communities. It is a contributor to the ongoing cycle of chronic homelessness for these individuals. Consolidated Municipal Service Managers and District Social Services Administration Boards as housing service managers are challenged to prevent homelessness among this population under these conditions.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, this issue became a major issue in the District of Thunder Bay when individuals released from provincial incarceration were homeless and COVID-19-positive. As these released individuals sought shelter in the community emergency shelter system, the virus was transmitted through the homeless and vulnerable population, resulting in a major outbreak. This in part led to a declaration of emergency by the City of Thunder Bay, as the health and support resources were taxed to the extreme and human resources to address the outbreak were in short supply.

Had there been a supported transitional housing facility to receive these individuals upon release, the impact on the community would have been reduced, and the care and support for the individuals would be improved.

The TBDSSAB requests that the following measures be considered for discussion and implementation:

1. Implement a community re-entry planning process that begins at the time an individual is sentenced with discharge planning commencing well before the inmate's release date.
2. Provide information about employment and housing services and options in the area where the ex-offender wishes to live, including applications for affordable housing and social assistance.
3. Establish specialized program supports that target inmates who are more likely to be homeless upon release and who have a history of homelessness, mental illness, and/or addictions.
4. In situations where homelessness is likely, establish a process by which municipal service managers jointly develop and sign off on the discharge plan.
5. Establish a system where inmates are transferred to pre-release facilities near the offender's intended post-release home, including increased funding for a supported transitional housing facility, more transitional housing beds, hotels or motels. This will allow them to search for housing and work and reintegrate into society.
6. Expand the bail-bed program to allow low-risk and vulnerable individuals to be released back into the community with supervision and supports.
7. That the Ministry of the Solicitor General assess the availability of community supports (e.g. mental health and addictions) for released inmates and identify gaps to the Ministry of Health and other relevant ministries.

Therefore, TBDSSAB requests that the Solicitor General and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing— along with a housing service manager co-chair—convene a working group to address the issue of homelessness upon release from incarceration.