



	<b>REPORT No.: 2021- 36</b>
<b>MEETING DATE: SEPTEMBER 16, 2021</b>	<b>DATE PREPARED: AUGUST 25, 2021</b>
<b>SUBJECT: ONTARIO WORKS SERVICE PLAN 2021-2022</b>	

### **RECOMMENDATION**

THAT with respect to Report No. 2021-36 (Integrated Social Services Division) we, The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB or the Board), approve the draft TBDSSAB Ontario Works Service Plan: 2021-2022, as presented;

AND THAT we direct the Chief Administrative Officer to submit the approved TBDSSAB Ontario Works Service Plan: 2021-2022 to the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services.

### **REPORT SUMMARY**

This report outlines The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB or the Board) Ontario Works Service Delivery Plan (OW Service Plan) for the planning cycle 2021-2022, as required by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS).

The OW Service Plan outlines TBDSSABs servicing under the categories of Vision and Mandate, including plans for the MCCSSs Recovery and Renewal Modernization. There are also sections for an environmental scan, strategies and outcomes and program management.

### **BACKGROUND**

Service System Managers are required to submit an OW Service Plan to MCCSS for each two-year funding cycle. Administration presents the draft OW Service Plan to the Board for review and approval prior to submitting to the MCCSS.

### **COMMENTS**

This Report includes internal as well as external data obtained through research. The external data is an important component of service system planning as Administration endeavors to maintain a current understanding of environmental factors potentially influencing service delivery and client performance outcomes.

The draft OW Service Plan provides an overview of the Board’s achievements over the 2019-2020 service cycle, the environmental factors influencing service delivery and client outcomes, and the service delivery strategy for 2021-2022.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**



There are no immediate financial implications.

**CONCLUSION**

It is concluded that the draft OW Service Plan be approved as presented and submitted to the MCCSS as TBDSSAB’s official OW Service Plan for 2021-2022.

**REFERENCE MATERIALS ATTACHED**

Attachment #1 [Draft Ontario Works Service Plan: 2021-2022](#)

<b>PREPARED BY:</b>	Jennifer Lible, Manager, Social Assistance Programs The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board
<b>APPROVED / SIGNATURE:</b>	
	Ken Ranta, Director, Integrated Social Services Division The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board
<b>SUBMITTED / SIGNATURE:</b>	
	William (Bill) Bradica, Chief Administrative Officer The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board

# **Ontario Works Service Plan Template:**

**2021-2022**

**For non-EST CMSMs / DSSABs**

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## ONTARIO WORKS SERVICE PLAN TEMPLATE

*Note: This template includes items for delivery partners to consider when undertaking service planning. Delivery partners may submit Service Plans using this template or in an alternate format. Approval of the Service Plan requires that sufficient supporting information is presented to meet Ministry standards for approval.*

**Delivery Partner:**

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**For the two-year period: 2021 & 2022**

### Ontario Works Vision and Mandate

**All Ontario Works delivery partners share the same vision and mandate. This serves as a common starting point for the service planning process.**

#### ***Vision***

To create an efficient, effective and streamlined social services system that focuses on people, providing them with a range of services and supports to respond to their unique needs and address barriers to success so they can move towards employment and independence.

#### ***Mandate***

To provide employment assistance and financial assistance, including life stabilization services and supports, to people in financial need. The Ontario Works program:

- recognizes individual responsibility and promotes self-reliance through participation in life stabilization and employment activities;
- provides financial assistance to those most in need while they meet obligations to become and stay employed;
- effectively serves people needing assistance; and
- is accountable to the taxpayers of Ontario.

#### **Ministry Priorities**

Ontario Works delivery partners play a key role in delivering on many of the government's priorities and have the ability to leverage provincial investments in infrastructure, employment, education and social services to create new opportunities for clients. The Service Plan provides an opportunity for delivery partners to demonstrate linkages between local service delivery and Ministry priorities.

*Enter specific activities and strategies here to address the following key Ministry priorities in 2021-2022:*

As part of the Service Plan, Ontario Works delivery partners will articulate how they will undertake to address the following Ministry priorities for the current 2021 business cycle:

### **1. Recovery and Renewal**

In September 2020, the government announced its plan to support economic recovery and employment through a new recovery and renewal plan for social assistance.

Building on successes achieved since March 2020 where service was completely overhauled and with consideration of the first phase of the SA recovery and renewal plan is underway, initially focusing on five key areas:

- **Accelerated digital delivery solutions** – TBDSSAB has specifically focused on delivering service in a manner that meets clients in their current location. In December 2020, processes were built to enable a centralized email account (including twice-daily monitoring) for clients to provide documentation and/or update to caseworkers. This supports clients and caseworkers in providing timely information in a coordinated fashion – actioning incoming items sooner than if they were required to be mailed or dropped off in person.

The team also completed the move to Electronic Documents Management (EDM) in December 2020, in partnership with Nimble. Electronic files have enabled a more flexible work environment for Caseworkers, preventing any service interruption present to access a paper file.

TBDSSAB has observed marked participation increase in MyBenefits. Clients benefit from two-way messaging and the ability to provide documentation to Caseworkers easily. The secure platform (in SAMS) offers seamless transition between Caseworkers in the event of need for coverage, reducing the need for client explanation of their story and circumstance and retains communication in an easy-to-access format.

March 2020 saw a shift in service delivery from in-person to telephone and other means (i.e., video conference). The team was incredibly creative and flexible during this rapid transition. As Ontario moves forward with reopening, the team is taking the opportunity to build flexibility in to service delivery. Where possible, clients are offered choice for meeting medium (telephone, in person).

In December 2020, the team completed configuration of an employment support tool called Guiding Employment Resources Effectively (GERE) and conducted a soft launch. The software officially went live in May 2021. Tombstone data mirrors what is available in SAMS and connects clients with available training, education and employment opportunities. Internal teams coordinate position entry, administration of inventories with clients and tracking of training and employment activities, reporting across the organization. Future functionality includes the ability to email individuals and/or groups with available opportunities.

TBDSSAB is confirmed as a pilot site for Electronic Signature, working with OpenText Core Signature. Collecting valid, protected electronic signatures allows the team to deliver timely service to clients across our vast region – especially important given the geographic reach of our mandate. Staff have enthusiastically agreed to become champions and look forward to a robust internal group of subject matter experts.

- **Centralized and automated delivery**, beginning with centralized intake pilots across several municipalities that reduce paperwork, giving caseworkers more time to support clients through crisis and helping them get back to work.
  - TBDSSAB launched Centralized Intake on June 21, 2021. Administration is currently taking part in a Ministry lead process review of the CI path. The team participated in remote-delivery training at CI implementation and continue to provide feedback to bolster the quality and accuracy of the process review. Workload adjustments have been accommodated to ensure targets met (i.e., grant within four days) and to assist the Integrated Benefit Adjudication Unit (IBAU) when needed.
- **Risk-based eligibility review**, to be developed alongside the centralized intake pilots, that uses provincial, federal and third-party sources to make financial assistance processing faster, while strengthening program integrity.
  - With the declaration of emergency in March 2020 due to the COVID 19 Pandemic, TBDSSAB immediately changed client servicing protocols. Appointments were transitioned to over the phone with face-to-face appointments only where necessary. To reduce traffic to the office, the caseworker completed a risk-based grant. The file was reviewed prior to grant for history and any allegations from the past that would put a grant without immediate verification in a risk category. Verification was required after grant. There has been an increase in client satisfaction with this alternate means of engaging with their caseworkers
- **Access to employment and training**, partnering with the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development to support people to get back to work, including people with disabilities who have been particularly hard hit by job losses during the COVID-19 outbreak.
  - TBDSSAB introduced a “device lending” program to participants who required a computer to start or continue employment programming. ERE was issued for internet costs. This facilitated continued learning and training plans. As of August 2021, of the 15 available units, 11 are actively in use by clients. There have been 69 requests from clients (19 complete & returned; 11 in process and 12 waitlisted). This program built upon previous success in TBDSSAB’s strategic direction to ‘maximize use of technological equity across communities’.

- **Delivery of training virtually**
  - TBDSSAB staff completed training in developing and delivering virtual training which opened more opportunities in the communities outside of the City of Thunder Bay.
  - The team also participates in regular online training to enhance service delivery. This includes but is not limited to Centralized Intake, specific employment-related software and regular caseworker team meetings. In 2020 the team built a file review process that has highlighted specific training opportunities. The team has observed improvement on specific items where training and education has been conducted.
- **Collaborating with municipal partners**, by co-designing a renewed SA operating model following work with municipalities to design a new SA transformation vision; and engaging with key stakeholders, including staff, provincial bargaining agents and clients.
  - TBDSSAB has maintained and gained partnerships with local service delivery agencies. Specific opportunities include partnership with a local hotel to mentor entry level employees and a partnership with the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD) has begun for client participation in heavy equipment training. TBDSSAB intends to apply to become an Employment Ontario (EO) Service Provider when the Service System Manager is named (expected in 2023-24). Existing partnerships with the Northwest Employment Works (NEW), an Employment Ontario (EO) provider, provides on-site individual employment services bi-monthly to participants. This was suspended for a period after March 2020. These partnerships allow Social Assistance Participants the chance to meet at the local OW office with an employment counsellor. Referrals are also made for participants to the EO office site. The YES Employment Services office also partners with TBDSSAB and offers Career Fairs one day a month on site (at TBDSSAB headquarters). This allows clients the ability to connect with EO Services and review the available job postings.

## **2. Improving Employment Outcomes**

The Ministry is developing a performance management framework based on the learnings from EST prototype phase, with the goal of encouraging continuous improvement within the program.

For the interim, while a SA performance management framework is being developed non-EST Ontario Works delivery partners will use the current four employment and earnings outcomes for service planning.

As outlined in the Ministry's memo, the Ministry is establishing a 3% improvement employment outcome target, where feasible, to encourage continuous improvement within the program, see **section 2 – Strategies and Outcomes**, for further information.



Activities may focus on a combination of:

- a. Improvements to service design and delivery of employment supports;
- b. Enhanced coordination and communication between Ontario Works and ODSP delivery offices within the service area, including transfers between programs, business protocols, shared case management when appropriate, and expanded and strengthened access to employment services for non-disabled ODSP clients, and people with disabilities.
- c. Enhanced coordination and communication with Employment Ontario service delivery offices to support Ontario Works recipients in accessing an expanded range of employment and training services.
  - TBDSSAB moved to remote service delivery for employment services in March 2020. Restrictions and safety considerations demanded creativity. The aforementioned device lending program facilitated training and education with partners during an otherwise challenging time. The team continues to offer employment supports remotely.
  - The implementation of EDM improved the ability to share files with ODSP offices near seamlessly. The team continues to focus on file composition and completeness with a monthly file review process implemented in January 2021. The electronic signature pilot will only serve to improve documentation and coordination.
  - The range of employment services has grown in 2021 to include several new partnerships (see number one – collaborating with municipal partners). It is expected these will continue to grow as Ontario moves forward with reopening plans.

### **3. *Leverage Local Economic Development***

Activities/approaches to collaborate with local economic development organizations, employers and other stakeholders to identify opportunities for Ontario Works clients to access available skills training, work experience, and new jobs.

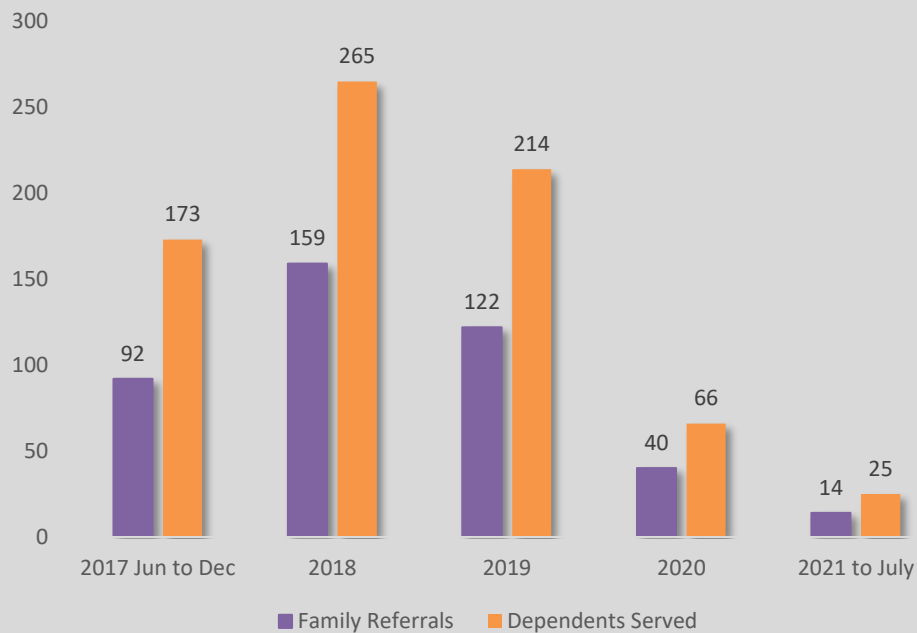
- TBDSSAB is working in partnership with OW Administrators and economic advisors in First Nations communities who are near the District's communities to capitalize on training and employment opportunities.
- TBDSSAB is a member of the Central Planning Table of the Local Employment Planning Council (LEPC). The Central Planning Table is the advisory body of the LEPC, and representative of the varied community and stakeholder interests within the region of Thunder Bay. Participation at this table links TBDSSAB to other employment delivery services, educational and literacy partners and employment and labour market groups. These include groups such as the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, the Thunder Bay Community Economic Development Commission, the Northern Policy Institute, the MLTSD, the Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre and the Thunder Bay Multicultural Association. Ongoing participation at this table allows TBDSSAB to remain current and engaged with economic changes and economic trends.

- TBDSSAB is presently in discussions with MLTSD and examining a potential partnership through the Ontario Labour Market Partnership Program, with the goal of increasing the labour potential of OW recipients.
- Develop and Maintain Local Community Service Partnerships - build on and strengthen the range of supports available to Ontario Works clients, including long-term recipients of social assistance and marginalized or disadvantaged groups across service sectors including: health, developmental services, housing and child care.
- The Transitional Outreach and Support Workers (Transition Outreach) connect with applicants, participants and those who identify as homeless (clients), in the community. A Service Prioritization Determination Assessment Tool (SPDAT) is used to assess individual ability to obtain and maintain housing without intervention. The outcome of the tool is used to rank clients for possible placement on TBDSSAB High Needs Homeless wait list for Rent Geared to Income (RGI) housing. This is one example of TBDSSAB efforts to internally wrap service around clients in a way best matched to need. The outcome of the tool is used to identify needed community supports and a referral for intensive case management through the TBDSSAB Home for Good Program in partnership with St. Joseph's Care group and Dilico Anishinabek Family Care (Dilico). Based on results from the SPDAT, the Transition Outreach Worker connects the client to the identified community supports. In 2018, TBDSSAB expanded this service to clients in receipt of ODSP, as well as non-social assistance recipients throughout the District who identify as homeless.
- June Steeve Lendrum Court / Family Resource Centre provides housing and support services to young mothers on OW between the ages of 16-24 years who are pregnant or who have a child less than six years of age. Many of the mothers are referred by Dilico Anishinabek Family Care who provides a range of responsive individual, family and community programs for Indigenous people. Mothers are also referred by The Children's Aid Society of Thunder Bay with a vision to develop, through collaboration, a community where all children grow up with a sense of belonging, in a safe and nurturing environment. The Centre is a partnership between TBDSSAB and Dilico Children's Mental Health Services. This 24 unit, 100% RGI building has an on-site Coordinator, Intensive Child & Family Worker, Daycare facility, and access to the Property Management Officer and Tenant Support Worker who work collectively to support thriving tenancies and thriving families. Families are empowered to value their strengths and contribute to their community.
- There are several TBDSSAB owned housing complexes where there will be co-located caseworkers, starting in 2021. This caseworker will support OW clients and connect/refer tenants to appropriate community supports and internal resources (i.e., tenant support). It is expected this on-site connection will facilitate connections and result in future co-located services that support move to independence for tenants and their families.
- TBDSSAB refers participants who qualify to Single Adolescent Mothers/Mothers in Search of Learning (SAM/MISOL) through the Lakehead District School Board and Confederation College. The Thunder Bay District Health Unit

(TBDHU) coordinates the pre-natal program geared to teens. TBDSSAB referrals to these programs improve outcomes for participating mothers as well as their children. In the case of TBDHU, outcomes improve prior to birth. Early intervention and support of parents subsequently improve outcomes for infants and children.

- After a student delivers her baby, she continues her studies using facilities present in the room to care for her infant. Upon completion of the semester, the student is encouraged to re-enter her home school, however, if the student prefers to remain in the program, she is then transferred to the MISOL program where daycare may be provided by TBDSSAB. Daycare is provided for infants and children on a limited basis. A caseworker from TBDSSAB provides on-site support to OW participants. This on-site support is one example of co-located service and support to clients.
- In June 2017 TBDSSAB partnered with the TBDHU to offer families with children referrals to the Ontario Healthy Smiles Program. Once a family agrees to a referral, the TBDHU follows up with the family and arranges appointments for children from infant to 18 years of age. The COVID-19 pandemic decreased the number of referrals for 2020 and 2021 to date, but the partnership is continuing and the number of referrals is expected to increase in the future as service provision is more widely available.

Figure 1: Healthy Smiles Referrals



- TBDSSAB joined the Thunder Bay Situation Table in the fall of 2017. The Table is a community-led initiative that brings together more than 42 representatives from across sectors including mental health, addiction, justice, social services and education to help those at “acutely-elevated risk of harm or victimization”. Ontario Situation Tables use a Risk-Driven Tracking Data Base (RTD) that align with other jurisdictions across Canada to allow for National comparison. The RTD provides a standardized means of gathering de-identified information on situations of elevated risk for communities implementing multi-sectoral risk intervention models, such as Situation Tables. Recently, the Northshore Situation Table and the Nipigon Situation Table have been on-boarded to the RTD. This data will be very useful in identifying priority risks and planning strategies to reduce prioritized risk factors. TBDSSAB is a member of the Thunder Bay Situation Table, the Northshore Situation Table, Nipigon Situation Table, and is looking into becoming a member of the Greenstone Situation Table.
- TBDSSAB is also a partner in the Thunder Bay Coordinated Housing Access Table (CHAT) to ensure all residents have the same access to housing and housing supports. This table brings together many service providers to examine opportunities for individuals based on needs. TBDSSAB joins the table as a housing provider and facilitator of other programs, including Home for Good, Portable Housing Benefit and Ontario Renovates.
- TBDSSAB is exploring potential partnerships with health organizations within the District to ensure full support is available to participants. The Norwest Community Health Centre is home to a Safe Injection site. TBDSSAB intends to collocate a Transition Outreach staff on site. Currently, staff are co-located in shelter locations and provide support to clients therein.
- TBDSSAB has partnered with Confederation College Dental Hygiene program to provide basic dental care for clients.
- TBDSSAB has partnered with the Thunder Bay Counselling Centre in partnership with Prosper Canada to develop a prototype Financial Empowerment program for the Ministry with an eye to Life Stabilization. The prototype will focus on financial information, education and counselling. There is an estimated \$1M<sup>1</sup> in unclaimed benefits. Information and education provided will assist clients in knowing what types in benefits are available as well as how to apply for them. Information will also be provided for safe and affordable products which will encourage building savings and possible investments. Once the prototype is completed, TBDSSAB will refer clients to the Thunder Bay Counselling Centre whose financial counsellors will facilitate the session.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://financialpost.com/moneywise/10-benefits-tax-credits-and-grants-from-the-canadian-government-that-may-be-available-to-you>

- Strengthen Program Accountability – as outlined in the Ministry memo dated April 17, 2019, the Ministry will be introducing new program controls to support greater delivery and financial accountability. Delivery partners will need to consider how these controls impact their business processes and delivery approaches when constructing their service plans.
- TBDSSAB is continuing its internal process reviews to ensure resources are allocated to the most value-added activities to assist the client.
- TBDSSAB conducted a process review regarding overpayments specific to Ontario Works. There was a root analysis of over 1100 transactions performed. Leading causes included timing (of information provided by clients and/or timing of calculations and their variance) and administrative resolution of a payment. Education and training was added to regular caseworker meetings to seek to resolve administrative errors. A study of conduct across Ontario was completed. It was noted that there are challenges throughout, especially with the ability to collect overpayments and manage the administrative process to comply with annual contact requirements for clients that leave OW and are no longer attached to a caseworker. As a direct result of this study, the TBDSSAB advocated for access to the Overpayment Recovery Unit's centralized services.

## Section 1: Environmental Scan

### Service Delivery

- a summary of outcomes achieved in relation to established targets, and a description of service system outcomes and delivery successes, client outcomes, challenges and lessons learned. Focus on both internal organizational and identification of external influences such as political climate, social and economic environment, demographic trends, geographic and climate-induced influences that may impact service delivery over the next two years.

*Enter Service Delivery analysis here.*

For the planning cycle of 2019 – 2020 TBDSSAB set targets and achieved the following results.

*Figure 2: Targets and Actuals*

Average Percent of Caseload Exiting to Employment 2019					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Avg.
Target	2.38%	6.13%	2.78%	4.15%	3.86%
Actual	6.32%	27.35%	26.81%	18.76%	19.81%

Percentage of Caseload Exiting to Employment 2019					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Avg.
Target	0.14%	0.29%	0.21%	0.24%	.22%
Actual	0.26%	1.68%	1.77%	0.97%	1.17%

Average Percent of Caseload Exiting to Employment 2020					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Avg.
Target	6.51%	28.17%	27.61%	19.32%	20.40%
Actual	18.76%	11.90%	17.91%	22.19%	17.69%

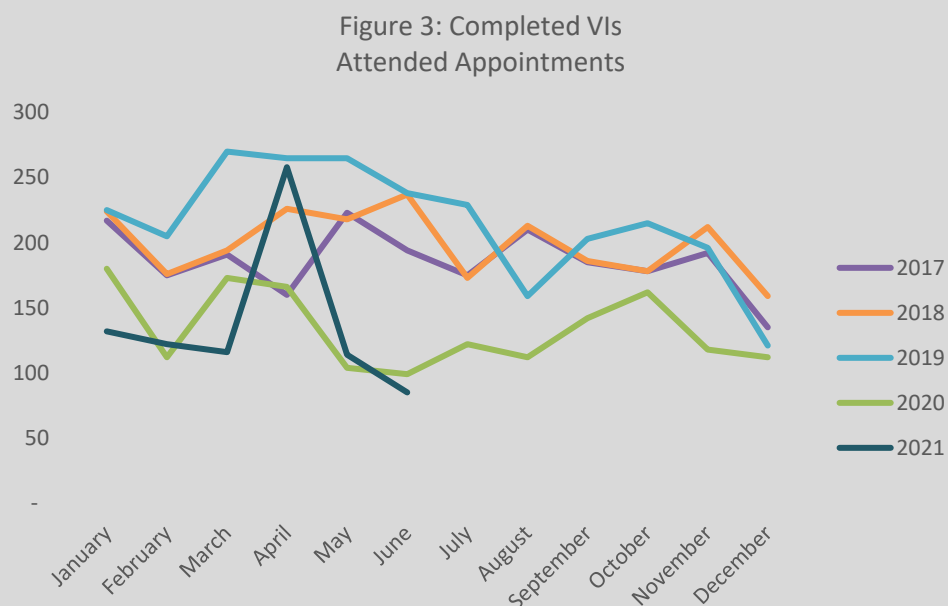
Percentage of Caseload Exiting to Employment 2020					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Avg.
Target	0.27%	1.73%	1.82%	1.00%	1.21%
Actual	0.79%	0.57%	1.33%	1.16%	0.96%

In 2019 TBDSSAB exceeded the target for both targets, however in 2020, the pandemic caused obstacles for clients in terms of employment availability and opportunities to participate fully in employment programming. the total caseload dropped and clients exiting to employment decreased in Q2 and Q3.

TBDSSAB uses the Employment Readiness Scale to determine possible training opportunities in soft skills. In December 2020 (soft launch) and May 2021 (official launch) an Employment Assessment Data base was purchased and launched. This tool contains a client profiles and matches client experience with training and employment opportunities. Please see Section one - • Accelerated digital delivery solutions for more information about the current and future capabilities of this program.

TBDSSAB employs a Generalist Model of Case Management in which each caseworker manages the case from VI to exit/case closure. Once a case is assigned, caseworkers are responsible for booking daily appointments (other than VIs), directly manage Participation Agreements (PAs) and increase flexibility to maintain a participant-focused approach to service delivery. With the launch of Centralized Intake (CI) in June 2021, the caseworkers still complete applications that are not able to be completed by CI as well as post grant follow up which includes circumstance specific forms, follow up with required verification needs and completes employment plans.

Caseworkers completed an average of 2,407 VIs per year pre-pandemic.<sup>2</sup>



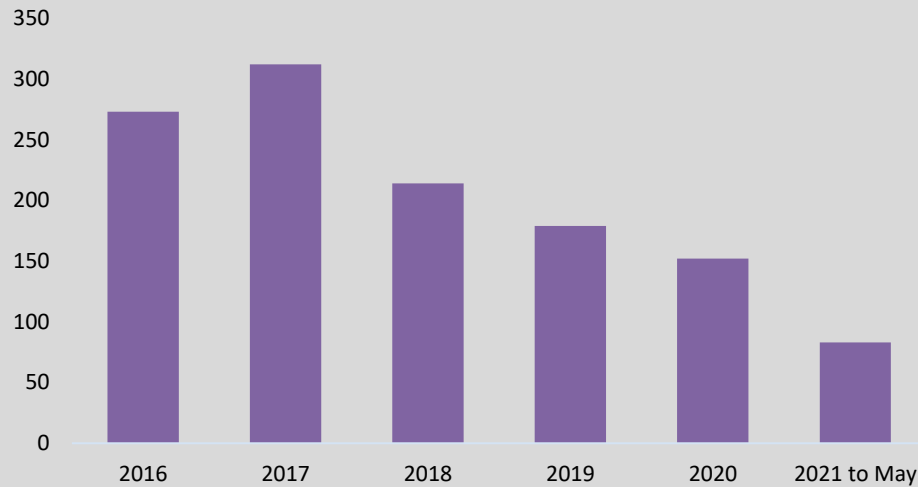
Exceptions to the Generalist Model are: Transition Outreach and Support worker (Transition Outreach), and a Caseworker that follow a financial/employment model. TBDSSAB continues to have a Caseworker dedicated to Intensive Case Management for hard to serve participants. This Caseworker works one-on-one with the participant to gather medical information and to complete the Disability Determination Package in instances where it has been determined that the participant may be eligible for Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). This Caseworker also assists with ODSP appeals. The number of ODSP grants has been declining since peak in 2017, decreasing 43% pre-pandemic.<sup>3</sup> Resources to assist clients to be eligible in an application to ODSP were suspended during the

<sup>2</sup> From TBDSSAB Scheduling Software/Skywire Reports

<sup>3</sup> Social Assistance Management System. CRS120 Reports.

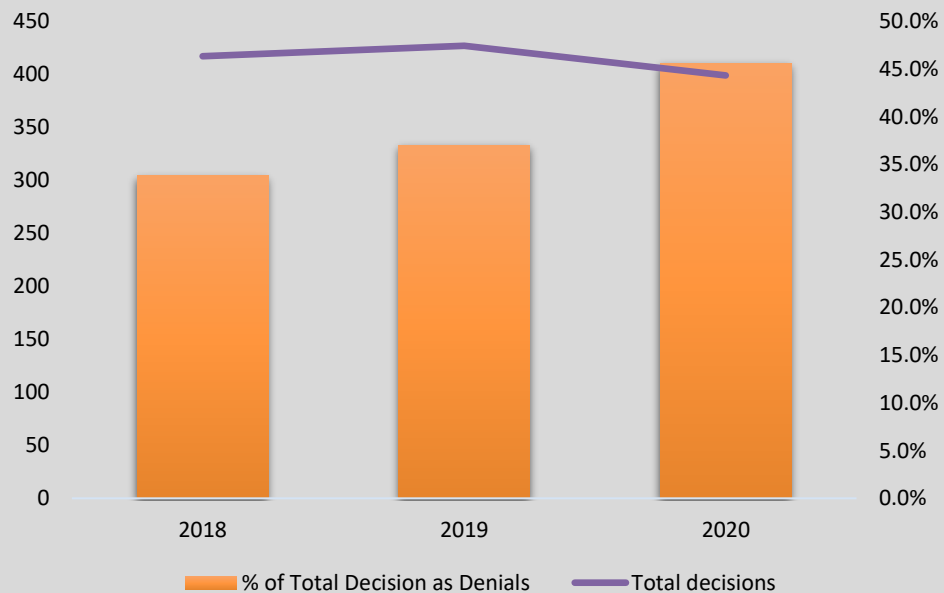
pandemic. Stay at home and lockdown orders limited the ability of staff to accompany clients to medical appointments as well as behavioral assessments.

Figure 4: ODSP Grants



While the number of ODSP applications referred by TBDSSAB has remained relatively stable over time, averaging 414 annually (line in Figure 5), the number of denials has increased each year since 2018.

Figure 5: ODSP Denials

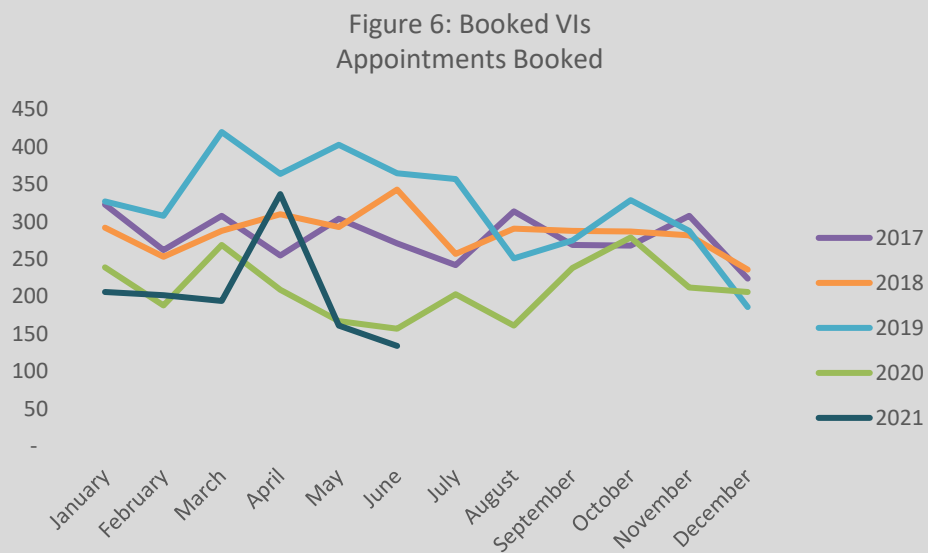


TBDSSAB continued to streamline applications in which clients need only to “tell their story once”, ideally when they are face-to-face with a caseworker or via other means (generally telephone) since March 2020. When CI was launched in June 2021 this process changed to accommodate applications that were already granted.



In March 2020, appointments ceased being completed face to face due to the COVID 19 pandemic. All applications were completed over the telephone. If the client did not have access to a telephone, the client could use a phone in an interview room at the TBDSSAB office to contact their caseworker. Applications were granted using a Risk Assessment in order expediate granting and to reduce the need to attend the office. Verification was required after grant if the client was considered low risk. As of September 2021, face to face appointments have commenced, however lessons learned during pandemic servicing have led to providing the client the choice of in-person or over the phone appointments where legislation allows.

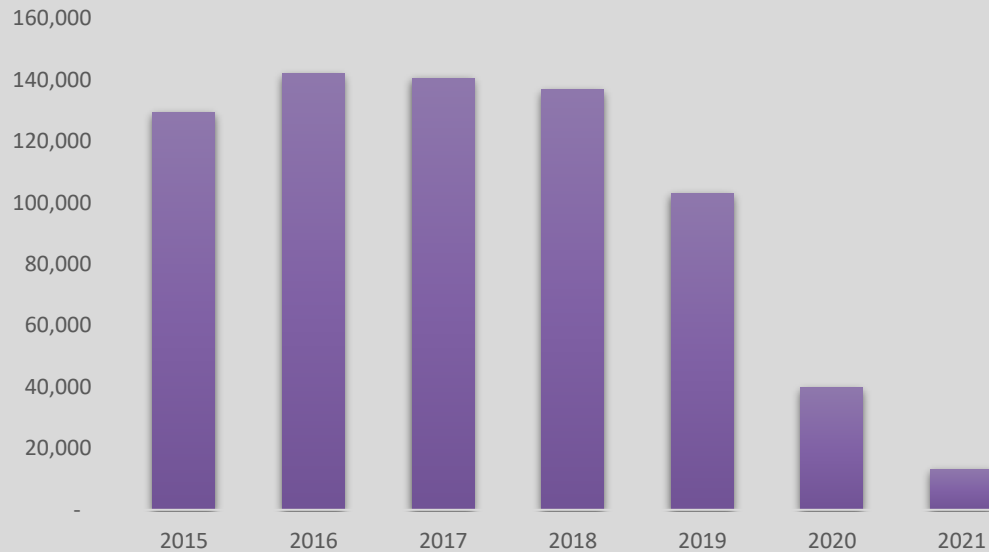
Pre-pandemic, an average of 296 VIs were booked monthly. During 2020 and to end of June 2021, TBDSSAB books an average of 208 VIs per month.<sup>4</sup>



TBDSSAB continues to offer a holistic and integrated Intake that assists participants with navigating computers, applications for TBDSSAB programs and providing general resources for use (i.e., job board). Pre-pandemic, TBDSSAB main office saw an average of 10,870 individuals through the doors each month.

<sup>4</sup> From TBDSSAB Scheduling Software Reports.  
*Ontario Works Service Plan Template for non-EST CMSMs/DSSABs*

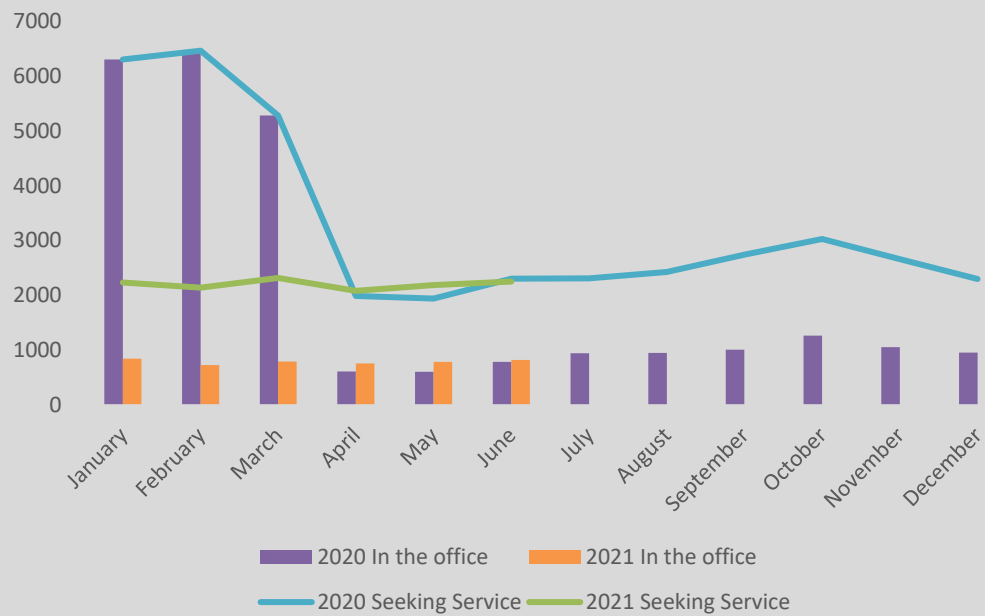
Figure 7: People Seeking Service at TBDSSAB Main Office  
2015 to 2018



With increased COVID screening and service limitations, the average monthly number of individuals seeking service dropped to 2,330, with an average of 863 completing screening and entering the office per month.<sup>5</sup> The resources at TBDSSAB headquarters have remained available throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, a testament to a service focus.

<sup>5</sup> From TBDSSAB Foot Traffic Counter Reports and Daily Pandemic Screening Statistics.  
*Ontario Works Service Plan Template for non-EST CMSMs/DSSABs*

Figure 8: People Seeking Service and In the Office at Main TBDSSAB Office During COVID-19 Pandemic



TBDSSAB continues to offer the Housing Security Fund (HSF) under the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI). The HSF is geared towards the needs of individuals residing within our service area and is accessible to individuals who meet income threshold limits, including those in receipt of OW, ODSP, and non-social assistance recipients. TBDSSAB receives an average of 1,200 applications per year for financial assistance under HSF to establish or maintain housing for people at risk of experiencing homelessness. Applicants received an average of \$617.

Figure 9: Approved HSF Applications

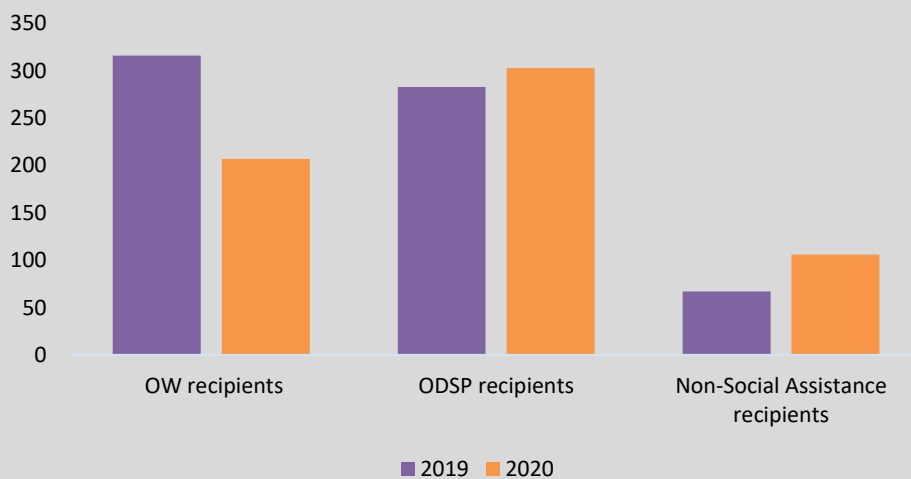
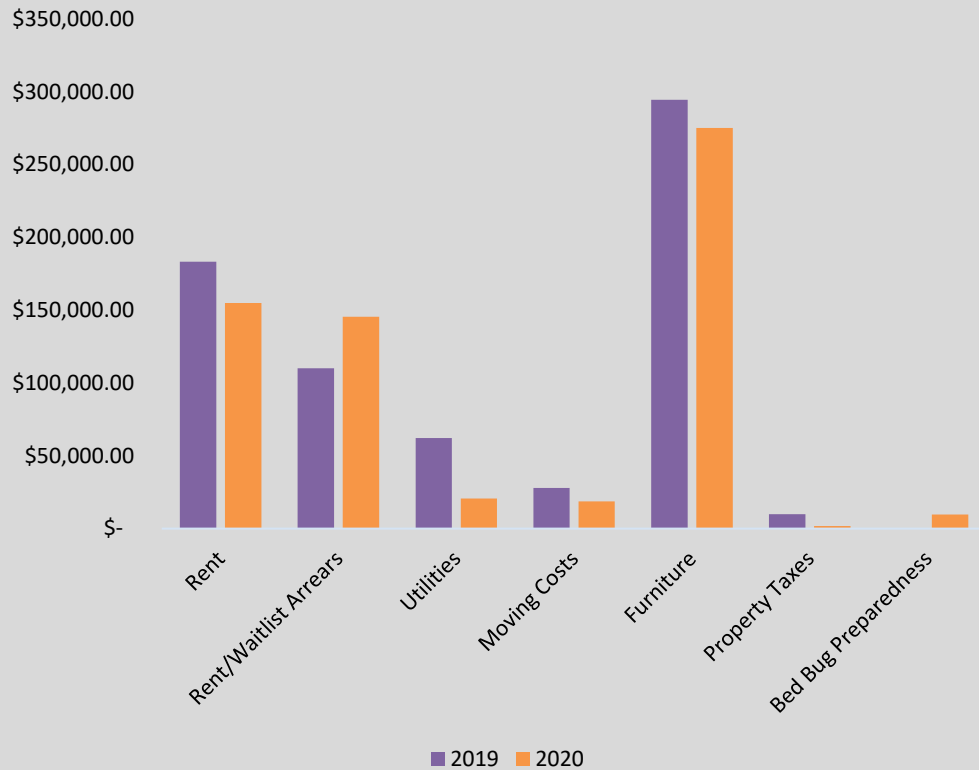


Figure 10: HSF Approved Costs by Type



**Political**

In accordance with the *District Social Services Administration Board Act 1990*, TBDSSAB represents 15 member municipalities and the unincorporated areas. The Board is comprised of 13 board members appointed by the municipalities, and one elected member representing the Territories without Municipal Organization (TWOMO).

**Demographic Shifts in Population**

TBDSSAB’s service area spans a geographic area of 103,723 square km and covers a population of 146,048 persons. According to 2016 Census data, the District of Thunder Bay’s population remained stable, with a decline of only nine (9) individuals between 2011 and 2016, while the population of Ontario during the same period increased by 4.6%.<sup>6</sup>

Census information shows an aging population for the North. The percentage of the population aged 65 and older in Ontario was 16.7% in 2016, while in the District of

<sup>6</sup> Source: Census profiles 1996-2016  
*Ontario Works Service Plan Template for non-EST CSMs/DSSABs*

Thunder Bay this demographic represented 19.4% of the population, which is a 2.8% increase from 2011.<sup>7</sup>

The Ministry of Finance projects the senior population will continue to grow into 2046 with the aging of the boomer generation; by 2031, the 65+ population is predicted to make up 30% of the population of the District of Thunder Bay.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 11: Population Projections by Age Group for the District of Thunder Bay



Although the population in Northwestern Ontario is stable overall, the Indigenous population is increasing, is younger than the overall population in the District of Thunder Bay and represents a considerable percentage of Northwestern Ontario’s population. The percentage of persons in the District of Thunder Bay reporting Indigenous Identity was 15.2% in 2016, significantly higher than the overall Ontario percentage of 2.8%. It is important to note that while the number of people with Indigenous Identity has increased in the District of Thunder Bay, it is possible that could be attributed to more participation in the census or more people identifying as Indigenous. “Two main factors have contributed to the growing Aboriginal population: the first is natural growth, which includes increased life expectancy and relatively high fertility rates; the second factor relates to changes in self-reported identification. Put simply, more people are newly identifying as Aboriginal on the census—a continuation of a trend over time.”<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Finance Population Projections 2021-2046

<sup>9</sup> Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: Key Results from the 2016 census.

Figure 12: Indigenous Identity - District of Thunder Bay and Ontario

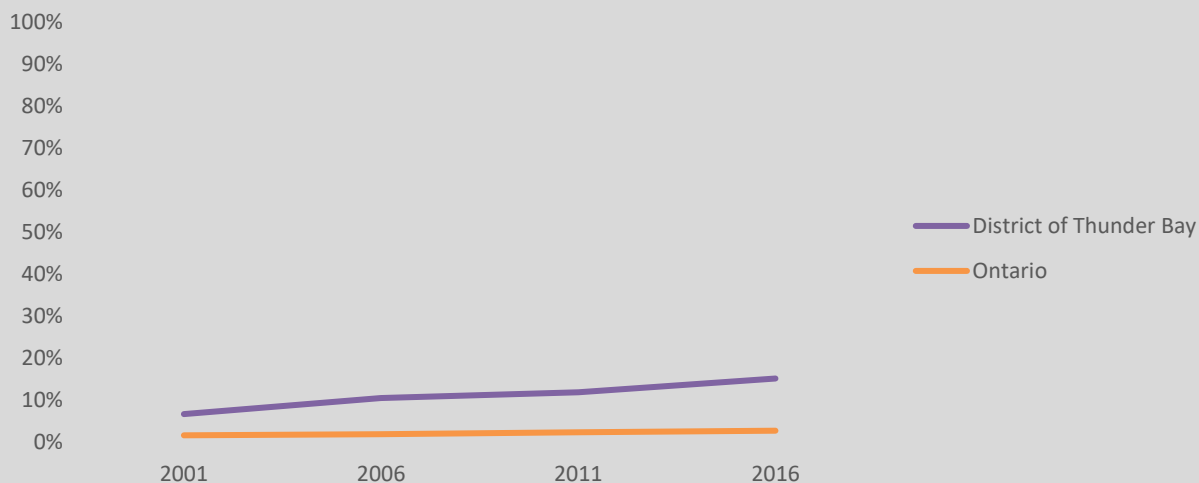


Figure 13: % of Population Identifying as Indigenous

Municipality	2006	2016	% chg. From 2006-2016
Conmee	3.4%	4.3%	26.3%
Dorion	26.7%	16.4%	-38.6%
Gillies	0.0%	7.6%	-
Greenstone	20.1%	31.8%	58.7%
Manitouwadge	5.7%	10.9%	92.7%
Marathon	7.8%	12.7%	63.4%
Neebing	3.2%	4.1%	29.1%
Nipigon	23.5%	28.3%	20.2%
O'Connor	3.5%	1.6%	-54.3%
Oliver Paipoonge	4.2%	8.4%	102.4%
Red Rock	13.7%	18.3%	33.7%
Schreiber	1.1%	7.6%	586.1%
Shuniah	2.1%	4.9%	135.5%
Terrace Bay	3.7%	9.1%	145.5%
Thunder Bay City	10.5%	12.8%	44.3%
TWOMO	8.2%	10.5%	55.4%
District of Thunder Bay Total	9.3%	15.2%	13.1%
Ontario	2.0%	2.8%	40.0%

As of the 2016 Census, 46% of Northwestern Ontario's Indigenous population is under the age of 25, compared to 27% in Ontario overall.<sup>10</sup> It is expected that the number of Indigenous applicants will continue to increase due to the high in-migration of persons from First Nation communities into municipalities across the District, as they seek education, employment and other opportunities.

The education levels of Northern Ontario residents tend to be lower than Ontario residents as a whole as there are more job opportunities in trades than in the south; Northern Ontario residents have a higher percentage of people with less than a high school diploma as 21.2% of people in the District of Thunder Bay have no certificate, diploma or degree, compared to 17.5% of people within Ontario, and a lower percentage of people with a university degree (18% in the District of Thunder Bay compared to 26% in Ontario as a whole).<sup>11</sup> Given the increasing pool of persons looking for work, there is a tendency for employers to look beyond basic qualifications, causing people without basic education to have limited opportunities and to face the greatest barriers to accessing the work force.

Since 2014, an average of 57% of the TBDSSAB OW recipients there are without a secondary school diploma, which demonstrates a need to upgrade education, social, and job skills to be able to secure sustainable employment. As a result, at the Thunder Bay delivery site, TBDSSAB continues to partner with the Lakehead Board of Education, to assist participants in obtaining their high school diploma, and Confederation College for an equivalency diploma and/or to obtain basic to intermediate computer skills. Throughout the other areas of the District, participants are referred to the nearest education or literacy program, as appropriate. As of June 2021, the District of Thunder Bay's OW caseload without a secondary school diploma was 16.1% higher than the OW provincial average.<sup>12</sup>

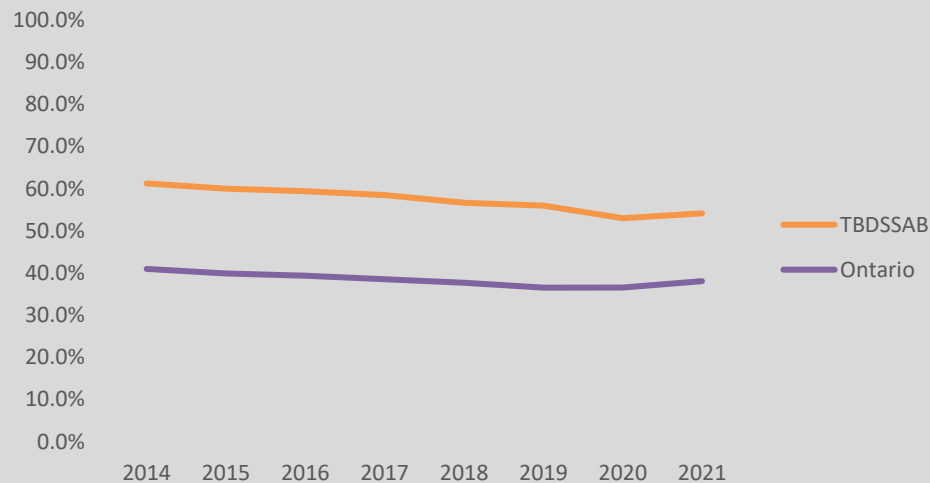
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<sup>10</sup> Source: Census Profiles 1996–2016.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Caseload at a Glance Report, SAMS

Figure 14: % of Caseload with No Diploma



### Crime

Challenges in obtaining employment are significant for those with criminal records and this challenge is compounded by the presence of substance use issues or concurrent disorders. The crime severity index (CSI) includes all Criminal Code violations including traffic, as well as drug violations and all Federal Statutes, and is weighed based on severity of crimes. The Thunder Bay census metropolitan area (CMA) CSI value for 2020 is 38.09 points higher than the overall province of Ontario and 20.31 points higher than the national score. Thunder Bay CMA recorded the second highest violent CSI among Canadian CMAs in 2020.<sup>13</sup>

Figure 15: Crime Severity Index Over Time

	Crime Severity Index			% Change
	Thunder Bay	Ontario	Canada	Thunder Bay
2016	83.84	53.29	72.01	4.68
2017	86.27	56.35	73.6	2.9
2018	98.73	60.4	75.61	14.44
2019	101.76	60.99	79.77	3.07
2020	93.75	55.66	73.44	-7.87

<sup>13</sup> Statistics Canada. Statistics Canada. [Table 35-10-0026-01 Crime severity index and weighted clearance rates, Canada, provinces, territories and Census Metropolitan Areas](#)



The COVID-19 pandemic has also had an impact on police reported crime in Canada. According to The Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics:

In 2020, all measures of the CSI—the overall CSI, the Violent CSI and the Non-violent CSI—decreased for the first time after five years of increases. The combined volume and severity of violent crimes, as measured by the Violent CSI, was 87.0, a 4% decrease from 2019. The combined volume and severity of non-violent crime, as measured by the Non-violent CSI, decreased 10% in 2020. This was the largest year-over-year change in the Non-violent CSI dating back to 1998, the first year for which CSI data are available.<sup>14</sup>

The CSI for the Thunder Bay CMA decreased 7.9% from 2019 to 2020, mirroring the federal trend.<sup>15</sup>

Within the context of family violence, in 2019, the Thunder Bay CMA had a rate of 273 victims of police-reported family violence per 100,000 residents: the eighth highest rate of CMAs in Canada. This is a decrease from the 2016 rate of 283 victims per 100,000 residents. Which just below the Canadian average of 276 victims per 100,000. Broken down, these figures reveal that this rate is 406 per 100,000 women and 140 per 100,000 for men, demonstrating that women are 2.9 times more likely to be the victims of police-reported family violence in Thunder Bay.<sup>16</sup> As police-reported family violence overall has remained unchanged for Canada overall for 2020, it is expected that the Thunder Bay CMA would be similar, however the rates of unreported family violence during pandemic lockdowns is unknown.<sup>17</sup>

In 2018/2019, Indigenous adults were overrepresented in admissions to provincial and territorial correctional services, as they accounted for 30.4% of admissions to provincial/territorial correction services, an increase from 28% in 2016/2017.<sup>18</sup> There are two provincial correctional facilities in Thunder Bay. In the 2016 census, the census metropolitan area of Thunder Bay had 12.8% of the population that identify as Indigenous,<sup>19</sup> which is less than half the rate Indigenous adults are admitted to correction facilities.

<sup>14</sup> Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. “Police Reported Crime Statistics in Canada 2020.” <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2021001/article/00013-eng.htm#a7>

<sup>15</sup> Statistics Canada. Statistics Canada. [Table 35-10-0026-01 Crime severity index and weighted clearance rates, Canada, provinces, territories and Census Metropolitan Areas](#)

<sup>16</sup> Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Victims of police-reported family and non-family violence, by gender of victim and census metropolitan area, 2019 <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2021001/article/00001/tbl/tbl01.5-eng.htm>

<sup>17</sup> Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. “Police Reported Crime Statistics in Canada 2020.” <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2021001/article/00013-eng.htm#a7>

<sup>18</sup> Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Adult Correctional Services Survey, Integrated Correctional Services Survey and Canadian Correctional Services Survey, 2016/2017.

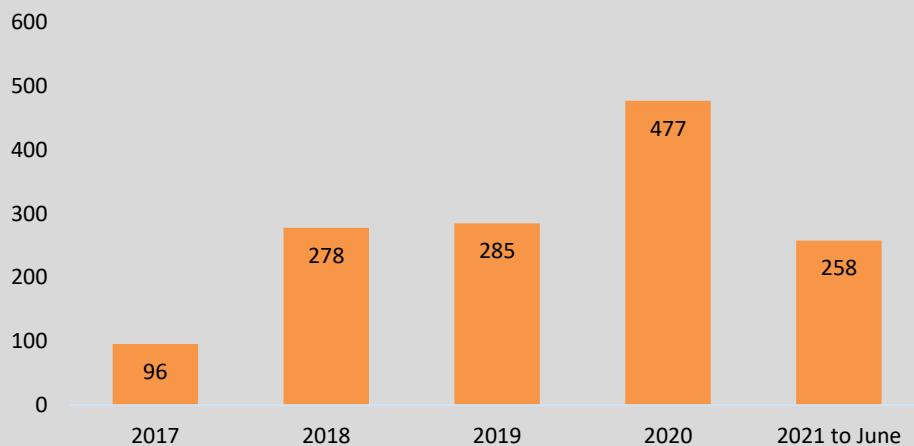
<sup>19</sup> Source: Census profiles 1996-2016

## Opioid Use

As of 2019, the Thunder Bay District Health Unit (TBDHU) has among highest rate of opioid-related deaths in Ontario (24.6 per 100,000 residents compared to the Ontario average of 10.3), as well as the highest rate of opioids dispensed for addiction (2.2% of residents) and for pain (16.1% of residents).<sup>20</sup>

In 2020, the number of emergency department visits for opioid-related illness in the Northwest LHIN area increased 64.6% from 2019; opioid-related deaths increased 72.3%.<sup>21</sup> In the District of Thunder Bay, paramedic calls for opioid overdoses have been increasing over time but saw a sharp 67.4% increase in 2020.<sup>22</sup>

Figure 16: Suspected Opioid Overdose Calls to Superior North EMS



## Access to Health Care and Healthy Food

The Canadian Public Health Association defines the social determinates of health as, “the social and economic factors that influence people’s health.”<sup>23</sup> According to the World Health Organization, “social determinants of health are mostly responsible for health inequities – the unfair and avoidable differences in health status seen within and between countries.”<sup>24</sup> Social determinates of health typically include income, education, employment/unemployment, early childhood development, food insecurity, housing, social exclusion, social safety net, health services, Aboriginal status, gender, race and disability. The District of Thunder Bay’s residents face many health inequities due to numerous and interconnected issues including access to health care.

<sup>20</sup> Behind the Prescriptions: Maps by Ontario Drug Policy Research Network

<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/odprn/viz/NMSEarlyEvalPHUMapV3/Story>

<sup>21</sup> Public Health Ontario Interactive Opioid Tool <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/data-and-analysis/substance-use/interactive-opioid-tool>

<sup>22</sup> The District of Thunder Bay Health Unit Opioid Information <https://www.tbdhu.com/opioidinfo>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.cpha.ca/what-are-social-determinants-health>

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.who.int/social\\_determinants/sdh\\_definition/en/](https://www.who.int/social_determinants/sdh_definition/en/)

Health services are provided primarily by the North West Local Health Integration Network (NWLHIN). There is 1 regional hospital, and 1 rehabilitation hospital in Thunder Bay, and 5 community hospitals located in Geraldton, Manitouwadge, Marathon, Nipigon, and Terrace Bay.<sup>25</sup>

As of 2019, in the NWLHIN (now Ontario Health) service area only 27.7% of people 16 years or older were able to see their family doctor (or someone else in the office) on the same day or the next day when sick; this is 12.9% lower than the provincial average. 88.3% of people 16 years or older have access to a family doctor or other primary care provider (decreased from 91.5%); 5% lower than the provincial average. Both of these statistics rank the second lowest in Ontario.<sup>26</sup> The NWLHIN had reported 7.02 practicing psychiatrists per 100,000 people, compared to 15.2 per 100,000 for Ontario as a whole, and Toronto with 61 per 100,000 people in 2013.<sup>27</sup>

According to the NWLHIN's Integrated Health Services Plan 2016-2019, in the NWLHIN boundaries, mortality rates from all causes are the second highest in the province. Smoking rates are 5.6% higher than the provincial average, alcoholic consumption rates of those who are categorized as 'heavy drinkers' are 8% higher than the provincial average, and suicide is the leading cause of death among Aboriginal youth and adults up to 44 years of age.<sup>28</sup> According to the TBDHU in 2016, nearly half of adults 19+ reported drinking in excess of the Low Risk Drinking Guidelines, and 1 in 3 high school students in Northern Ontario reported binge drinking at least once in the past month.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> <http://www.northwestlhin.on.ca/>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.hqontario.ca/System-Performance/Primary-Care-Performance>

<sup>27</sup> Thunder Bay District Health Unit. "Opiate Use and Impacts in Thunder Bay District."

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.northwestlhin.on.ca/goalsandachievements/IntegratedHealthServicesPlan.aspx>

<sup>29</sup> Thunder Bay District Health Unit Alcohol Infographic  
<https://www.tbdhu.com/sites/default/files/files/resource/2016-10/Alcohol%20Infographic.pdf>

## **Caseload**

- An overview of the current composition of the caseload (e.g., demographic, impact barriers and socioeconomic characteristics, caseload that is receiving services from other human services programs) and anticipated changes over the next two years (i.e., projected growth/decline, shifts in demographics, COVID-19 etc.).
  - Note: Potential sources of caseload information include the Ontario Works Caseload at a Glance, Social Assistance Operations Performance Reports, Local Case Management System Reports, 2016 Census Data and other caseload information compiled locally by the delivery partner.
  - Note: Impact barriers are barriers that prevent an individual from becoming sustainably employed and self-sufficient. These barriers must be addressed prior to employment efforts to set the candidate up for success and manage resources responsibly. Examples of impact barriers can include homelessness, mental health, addictions, financial literacy etc.

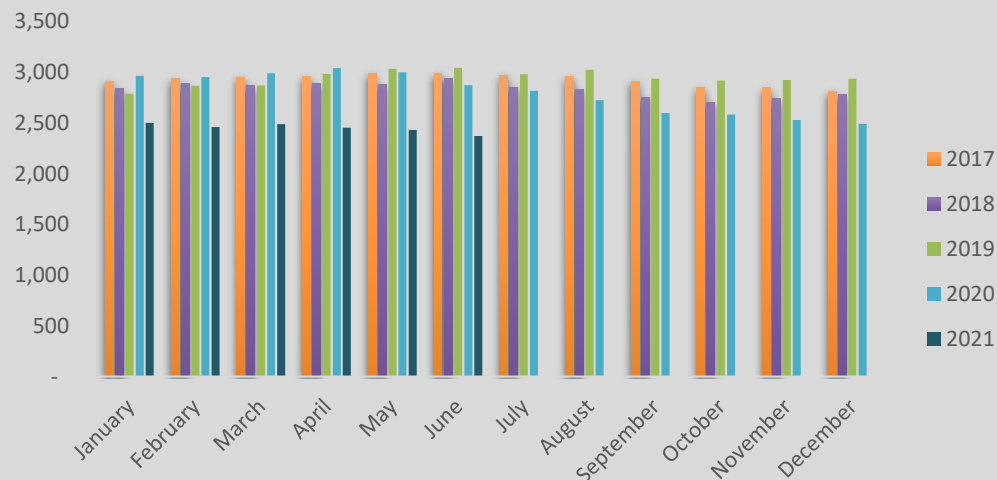
## Ontario Works Caseload in the District of Thunder Bay

Caseloads began to decrease in May 2020 when COVID-19 financial assistance programs became available, with an average caseload of 2,989 from January to May, compared to 2,492 at the end of December 2020. The 2020 OW Caseload average (2,796) decreased 4.9% from 2019 (2,941).<sup>30</sup> As of June 2021, the OW Caseload is 2,372.

Figure 17: TBDSSAB Average OW Caseload

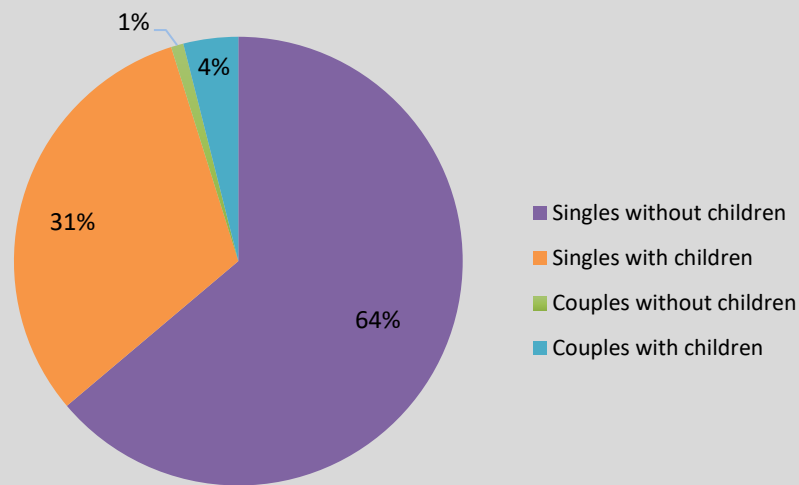


Figure 18: OW Caseload by Month



The caseload composition for TBDSSAB has remained relatively stable over the last 5 years.<sup>31</sup> Single individuals comprise the majority of participants, increasing slightly to 64% of the caseload in 2021 from 62% in 2018.

Figure 19: Family Status of TBDSSAB OW Caseload 2021



An average of 54.2% of TBDSSAB caseload in 2021 had not achieved a grade 12 education level, much higher than the provincial average of 38.1%, which contributes to an inability to find and maintain sustainable employment. Given recent employment trends within the District of Thunder Bay, most jobs demand a grade 12 education as a minimal requirement for employment. TBDSSAB has been and will continue to concentrate efforts with most participants to upgrade their education.<sup>32</sup>

There had been a gradual decrease in referrals from ODSP to the OW employment stream resulting in a lower caseload for ODSP OW participating from 2018 to 2020. Referrals have increased in 2021.<sup>33</sup>

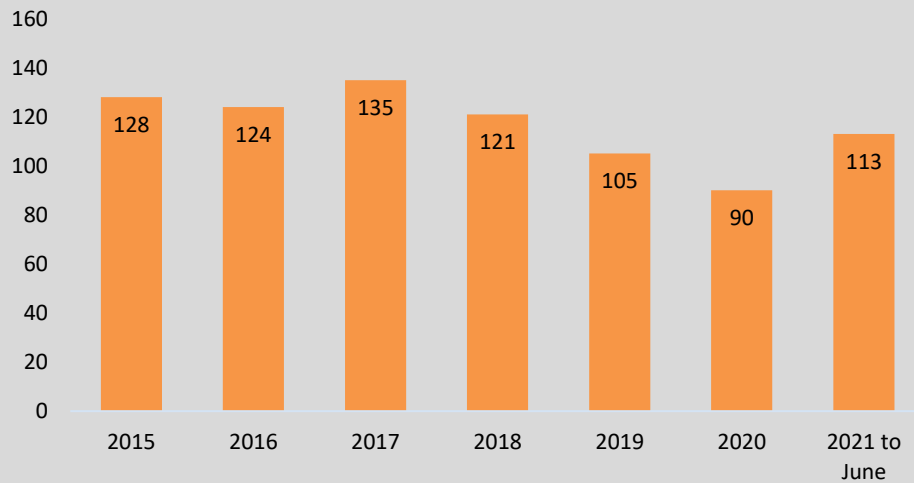
<sup>30</sup> From SAMS Social Assistance Operations Performance Report – Ontario Works, June 2021.

<sup>31</sup> From SAMS OW at a Glance Report – June 2021.

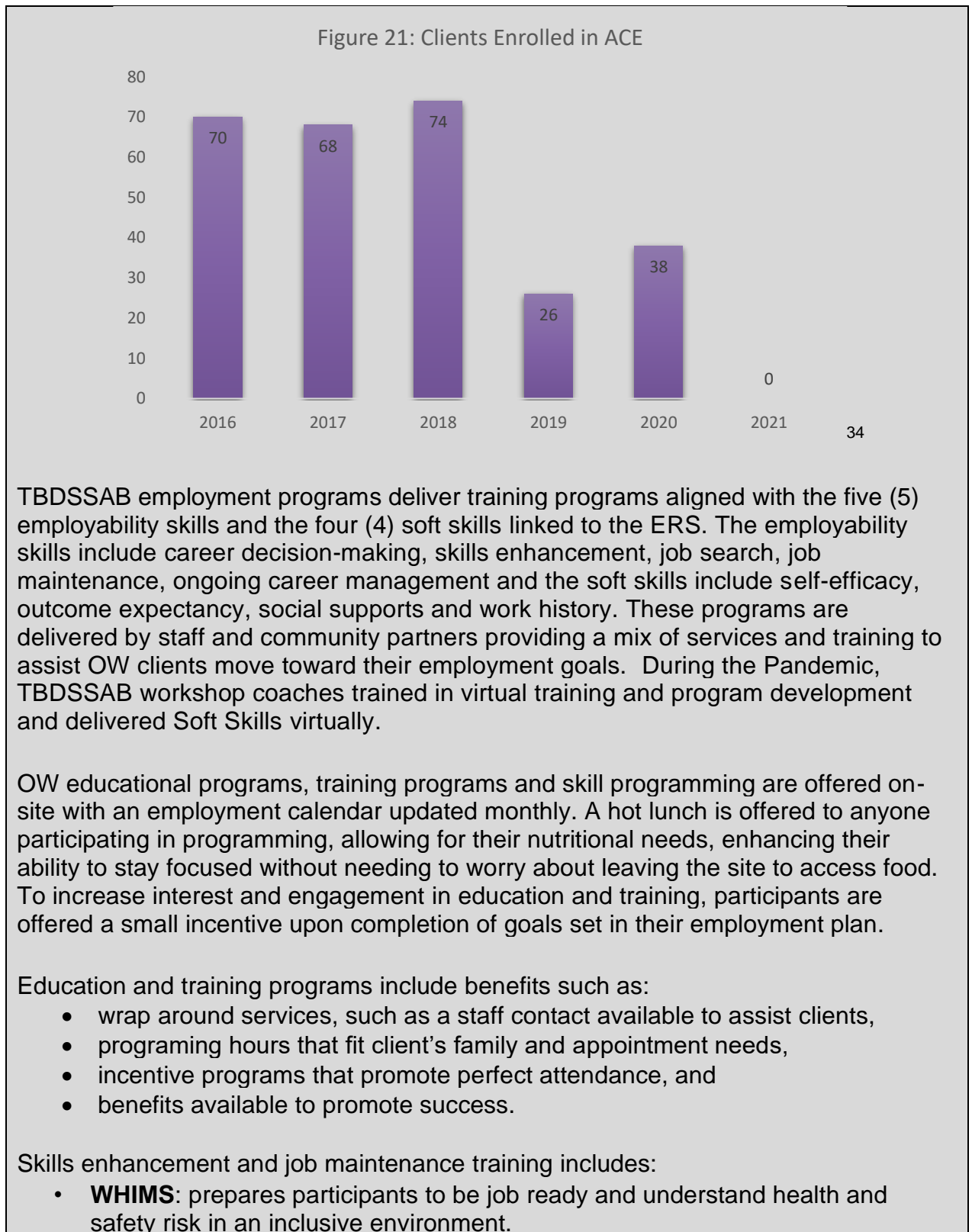
<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> From TBDSSAB Employment Programs manual count

Figure 20: ODSP Participating in Employment



TBDSSAB Employment and Training team continue to assist participants daily. In December 2014 TBDSSAB entered into a contract with Confederation College to have their Academic and Career Entrance (ACE) program on site at TBDSSAB headquarters. Lunch is provided to participants during in-person classes. During the Pandemic, ACE moved to a virtual platform, removing the ability to track engaged participants. The Manager of Social Assistance Programs works very closely with Confederation College to ensure the program is running smoothly and to address any issues that may arise. The employment and caseworker staff concentrate on promoting the ACE program and recruiting participants. Referrals come from caseworkers, and from the Employment Team. The Placement Support Worker provides supports to the ACE students and, in order to support attendance, works with participants to identify and remove barriers to liaise with caseworkers.



<sup>34</sup> From TBDSSAB Employment Programs manual count.  
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- **Smart Serve:** participants learn and take the certification that is required to work in the service industry. In Ontario, this now includes retail with grocery.
- **Service Excellence,** participants fine tune their skills in the provision of excellent customer service and earn a certificate.
- **Soft Skills Training** This is a one-week training program on soft skill development in those skills necessary for successful work/life balance.

Educational upgrading training includes:

- **ACE** (Academic and Career Entrance) and Academic Upgrading on site.
- **LAEC** (Lakehead Adult Education Centre) to earn their Ontario Secondary School Certificate.

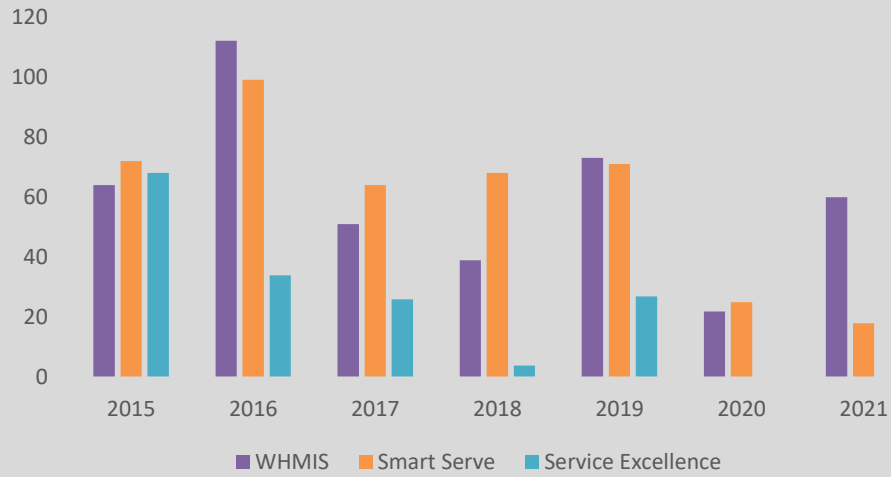
Career decision making training, job search, job maintenance, ongoing career management, training includes:

- **PCD (Personal Career Development)**  
This 12-week program focuses on goal setting, self-concept, a self-assessment, and communication skills. It also includes presentation skills, education and career planning, job readiness, a job placement and next steps planning.
- **Essential Skills for Employment Program**  
This 6-week employment program introduces the learner to orientation and introduction to essential skills, interpersonal skills, resiliency and personal marketing, skills such as managing under pressure, employment preparation, a two-week volunteer work placement followed by placement presentations, next steps planning, and ERS assessment.
- **Resume Building Workshop**  
Specific training where learners produce a resume.
- **Interview Skills Workshop**  
Specific training that targets enhancing interview skills.

Soft skills training that targets self-efficacy, outcome expectancy, social supports and work history includes:

- **Soft Skills Solution© Training** is a 40-hour training that focuses on the key workplace skills that employers are asking for which include communication, teamwork, personal management, problem solving and critical thinking as well as professional development.

Figure 22: Enrollment in Certificate Programs

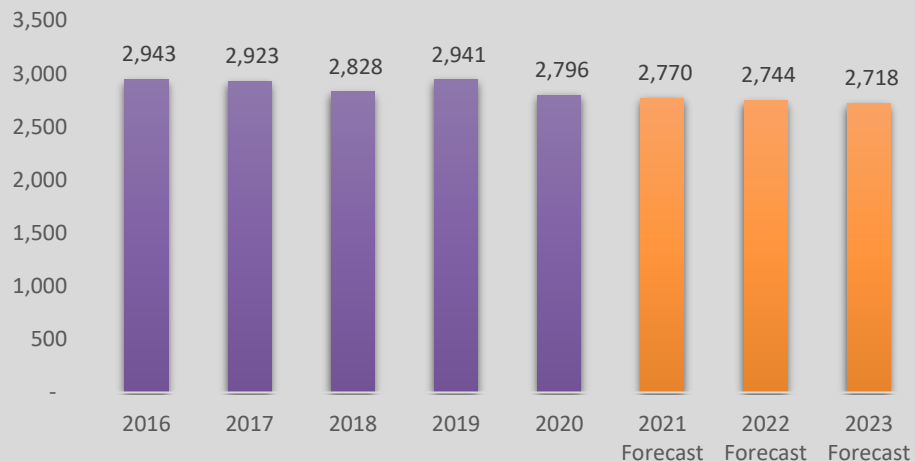


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### Caseload Forecast

Based on the trends of the last five years, TBDSSAB anticipates that cases will be relatively stable for the next three years, however the impacts of COVID-19 and the 'return to normal' may have varied impacts. The caseload will be impacted by new directives surrounding earnings exemptions formulas and policy changes regarding eligibility for ODSP, as well as people moving off pandemic financial stability programs.

OW Caseload Averages and Forecast

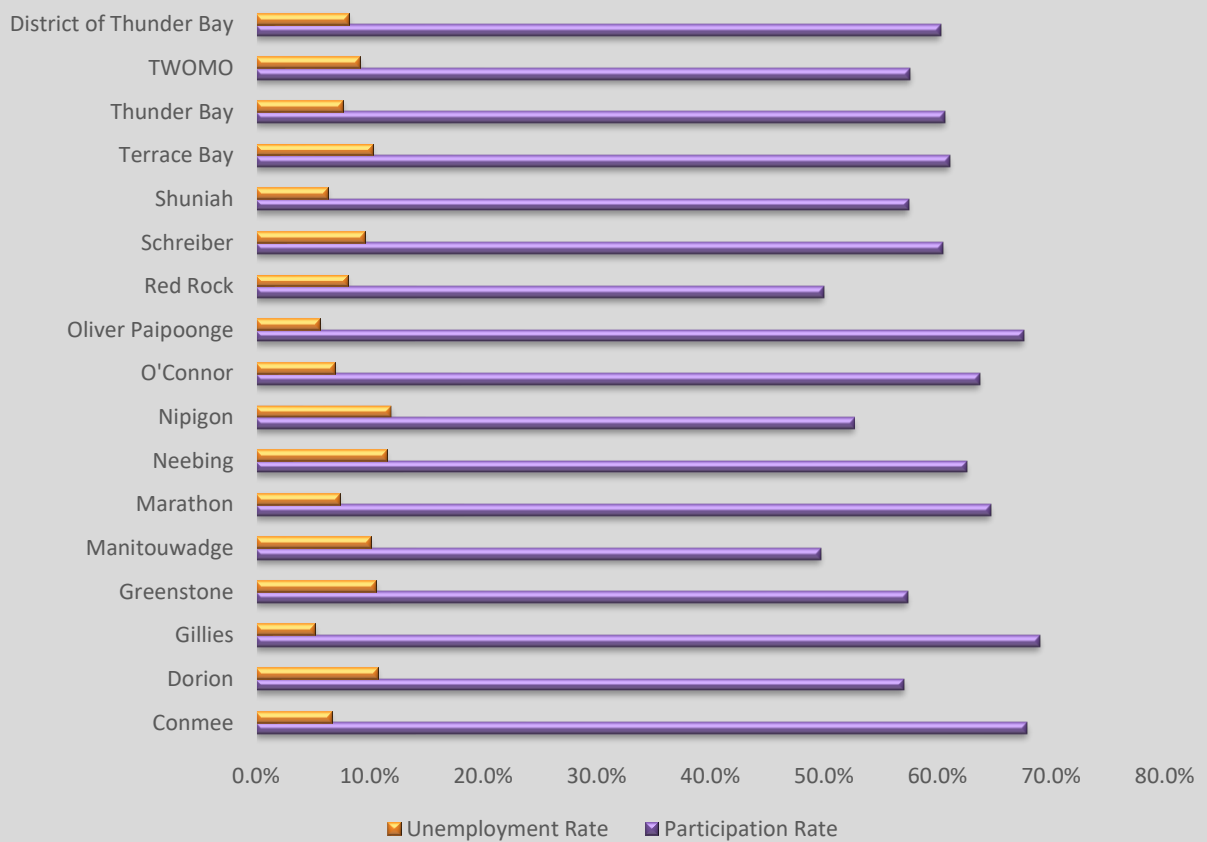


<sup>35</sup> From TBDSSAB Employment Programs manual count.

### Labour Market Participation

As of the 2016 census, the unemployment rate for the District of Thunder Bay was 8.2%, compared to the overall Ontario rate at 7.4%. The Labour Force participation rate in the municipalities of the District of Thunder Bay ranges from 49.7% to 69%; overall, 60.3% of adults 25-64 are working, compared to the provincial average of 64.7%.

Figure 24: Unemployment and Participation Rates  
Census 2016



The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for the Thunder Bay CMA is 6.2% compared to Ontario's 8.6%, however Thunder Bay CMA has a July 2021 participation rate estimate of 60.2% and an employment rate of 56.5%. This is lower than the Ontario labour force statistics; Ontario's July 2021 participation rate estimate is 64.6%, and employment rate is 59.1%.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Statistics Canada Labour force characteristics, three month moving average, seasonally adjusted. Table 14-10-0380-02 July 2021

### **Local Labour Market and Economic Development**

- An overview of current and future local labour market conditions and economic development activities or issues that may impact life stabilization and employment opportunities for participants. This includes:
  - Current and forecasted local labour market conditions:
    - Decreases / increases in unemployment, labour force participation, income rates, etc.;
    - Emerging and declining industries and jobs. Employment provided by small, medium and large business; and
    - Employment patterns (e.g., part-time vs. full-time, seasonal vs. year-round).
  - Current and future socioeconomic factors that may influence life stabilization, employment and employability:
    - Education and skills required to obtain available jobs; and,
    - Access to transportation, health, housing and other services.
  - Regional and local demographic trends (e.g., shifts in population size, age groups, and increases or decreases in immigration).
  - Regional and local economic development issues/trends and activities (e.g., initiatives to attract new industries, retain existing businesses, build/grow local communities, etc.)
- (See Service Planning Guidelines Appendix A for potential sources of labour market information.)

## Labour Market of the District of Thunder Bay

According to the Ontario Ministry of Finance, the population of the District of Thunder Bay is expected to continue its decline over the longer term. Like other locations in Ontario and in most developed nations, the aging of the post-World War II baby boom will result in the aging of the overall population. The projections for the District of Thunder Bay show that over time the age distribution of the population will change with more people being in the senior (65-74) or older senior (75+) age categories. Most significantly, the population 75+ is projected to increase by 92.6% in the time between 2020 and 2046; the overall population is projected to increase approximately 1.8%, but the population in the workforce (15-64) will have decreased 3.6% in this time.

As of 2020, the population over 65 years of age made up 20.8% of the total population of the District of Thunder Bay. The updated population projections from the Ontario Ministry of Finance continue to predict that this will increase to over 30% of the total population by 2031 and continue to increase into 2046. The total population of the District of Thunder Bay is expected to continue to increase slightly by 1.8% from 2020 to 2046.

According to the North Superior Workforce Planning Board and Local Employment Planning Council, the jobs with the highest projected retirement rates between 2016 and 2026 in the District of Thunder Bay are managers in transportation, corporate sales managers, contractors and supervisors for industrial, electrical and construction trades and related workers, motor vehicle and transit drives, and other service support jobs.

Economic recovery from the decreases in the forestry sector since 2006 has been slow and hinges on the ability of the District of Thunder Bay to transform itself into a more diverse economy. There has been renewed interest in mining and exploration with the world price of gold and other metals consistently high over the past few years; gold mines which closed or were close to shutting down are now viable. Of particular note is the potential for the mining of chromite in the area known as the “Ring of Fire” which could lift the economy of the District by adding new infrastructure and approximately 1,000 jobs.<sup>37</sup> The development of the Ring of Fire has seen many delays and has still not come to fruition as of the end of 2020, despite the Ontario Government committing to pushing the project along in 2018.<sup>38</sup>

According to a study conducted by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development in 2020 with the Local Employment Planning Councils, the District of Thunder Bay has demand for the following skilled trades: cement finisher, construction craft worker, general carpenter, sheet metal worker, general machinist, instrumentation and control technician, metal fabricator, powerline technician, welder, truck and coach technician, millwright, and electrician.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Ontario Business Report. “Ring of Fire Lights Up Northern Ontario’s Mining Industry”.

<http://www.mri.gov.on.ca/obr/>

*Ontario Works Service Plan Template for non-EST CMSMs/DSSABs*

According to North Superior Workforce Planning Board, 76.2% of employment in Northwestern Ontario is in sectors with relatively low potential for automation, with approximately 37.2% in education, health care and public administration.<sup>40</sup>

Due to the vast geography of the District of Thunder Bay, many residents are unable to commute outside their municipalities for employment opportunities unless a secondary residence is found or provided.

## **District Population and Economic Profiles**

### ***Conmee***

The Township of Conmee has been one of the few communities to experience population growth in the District of Thunder Bay; the population increased 12.5% in the decade between 1996 and 2006, and 6.7% from 2011 to 2016. Located approximately 40 kilometers northwest of the City of Thunder Bay, the increase seems to stem from migration out of the City into the surrounding area. The median age of the population of Conmee is 40 as of the 2016 census, which is the lowest median age in the District of Thunder Bay, and has decreased slightly since 2011 when it was 41.

Conmee is a rural township with large acreages allowing for some farms, as 9.5% of the employed work force works from home, and 93.7% of the active labour force travel to a different community in the District of Thunder Bay. Conmee's employment participation rate was 67.9% in 2016, declined from 76.1% in 2011. 28% of the labour force works in trades, transport, and equipment operators<sup>41</sup>.

### ***Dorion***

The Township of Dorion has experienced a significant decline in population since 1996. Specifically, there has been a major decline in the number of younger people which can be attributed to the economic decline that resulted in out-migration of younger family households and single people looking for employment. Counter to this is the increase in the number of people in the 45-64 year and senior age groups. This demographic grew over the decade and now accounts for 60% of the population inclusively, indicating there will be a core population that is likely to remain in the community. The aging of the population in Dorion will result in an increase in seniors over the mid-term, but the lack of support services in the community will likely result in out-migration to Nipigon or Thunder Bay. Dorion's population continues to decline: 6.7% from 2011 to 2016, and

<sup>38</sup> Northern Ontario Business. "Cutting Red Tape Extends to Ring of Fire." Northern Ontario Business. Nov 16, 2018. <https://www.northernontariobusiness.com/industry-news/mining/cutting-red-tape-extends-to-the-ring-of-fire-1125688> (accessed December 12, 2018).

<sup>39</sup> Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, In-Demand Skilled Trades Project. November 2020 (<https://www.nswpb.ca/research-reports/>)

<sup>40</sup> North Superior Workforce Planning Board. Are Robots Coming for Our Jobs? The Economic Impact of Automation on Northern Ontario's Economy, 2019.

<sup>41</sup> 2016 Census Data

overall by 32.2% in the 10 years from 1996 to 2016. The median age of Dorion residents has increased to 52.

Dorion's economic base consists of employment in emerging mining exploration, private contracting, forest harvesting, municipal government, education, agriculture and tourism-based business. The emerging mining exploration industry, tourism, agro-forestry and wind energy are felt to have the greatest prospects for future economic growth, and the township is pursuing opportunities in cottage development, regional bio-economic initiatives, agricultural revitalization, tourism, marketing and alternative energy development.

Renewable Energy Systems Canada Inc. (RES) completed construction of the Greenwich Wind Farm in 2011 which can power approximately 30,000 typical Canadian homes each year. The hydro generated is supplied to Hydro One Networks' high-voltage transmission network then flowed to customers across Ontario.

Employment in Dorion grew by 17% between the 2006 and 2011 censuses. While employment in the resource-based sector declined substantially, other industries increased; even after the decline, the proportion of workers employed in resource industries far outstripped the proportion of people in the sector for Ontario as a whole.

The employment participation rate has increased slightly to 57.1% in 2016. 62% of the active labour force travel to a different community in the District of Thunder Bay; due to the proximity of Dorion to the municipalities of Thunder Bay, Nipigon, and Red Rock, the residents have several options for work in other areas<sup>42</sup>.

In December 2020, the Ontario government awarded a contract to Teranorth, a Sudbury based company, for twinning an 8.6km stretch of the Trans-Canada Highway between Superior Shores and Dorion, which is expected to be completed in September 2023, bringing temporary construction jobs to the area.

### **Gillies**

The Township of Gillies is a rural community approximately 40 kilometers southwest of the City of Thunder Bay. The population of Gillies has decreased 4.4% between 1996 and 2011, then remained stable between 2011 and 2016. There are various local small businesses and farms in the area, but most people commute to the City of Thunder Bay for work. As the median age of the population of Gillies is 46, which remains the same since 2011, aging will become a factor with out-migration to the City for increased services.

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<sup>42</sup> 2016 Census Data

Gillies defines itself as “a small, rural community with residents enjoying the advantages of living close to a large economic centre.”<sup>43</sup> Of the active labour force, 94.5% commute to another community within the District of Thunder Bay<sup>44</sup>.

### **Greenstone**

The Municipality of Greenstone was formed through the amalgamation of the former towns of Geraldton, Longlac, Nakina, Beardmore, Caramat, Jellicoe, Orient Bay and MacDiarmid. Historically these towns were known for gold mining, forestry, commercial fishing and wilderness tourism.

The population of the communities comprising Greenstone have seen a significant decline, decreasing 29% from 1996 to 2016. The median age has increased to 45 (from 43 in 2011), leading to the assumption that the demand for supports will continue to increase.

While employment fell in most industries, the resource sector was hardest hit falling by over a third of total employment in the sector in 2006. Like the situation in Dorion, even with the substantial decline, the percentage of employment in resource-based industries was significantly higher than the average for Ontario.

The “Ring of Fire” is a major new source of chromite used in making stainless steel. When developed, it is expected that 300 jobs will be created. A new rail line will join the present East-West line at Nakina. The project is expected to have a 100-year life span and will require major road and rail construction.<sup>45</sup> As of May 2021, an environmental assessment and consultation was under way for an all-season road connecting Matawa First Nations to the provincial highway and the Ring of Fire.<sup>46</sup>

Greenstone Gold Mines is proposing to construct and operate a mine on the former Hardrock Gold Mine in the Municipality of Greenstone. The construction is expected to take 2 years, using as many local contactors as possible; 450 direct jobs per year are expected to be directly associated with the project; 1,000 jobs during construction and pre-production. The project passed the federal environmental assessment phase and is in the public consultation phase of the provincial environmental assessment.<sup>47</sup> On

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<sup>43</sup> Gillies Township. “About Us.” <https://www.gilliestownship.com/en/living-here/about-us.aspx> (Accessed August 12, 2021).

<sup>44</sup> 2016 Census Data

<sup>45</sup> <https://canada.constructconnect.com/dcn/news/resource/2018/12/marten-falls-first-nation-noront-suggest-ring-fire-timetable>

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/northern-link-tor-begins-1.6012449>

<sup>47</sup> Tbnewswatch. “New Geraldton-area gold mine passes hurdle.” Tbnewswatch. December 17, 2018. <https://www.tbnewswatch.com/local-news/new-geraldton-area-gold-mine-passes-hurdle-1163122> (Accessed December 17, 2018).



March 26, 2019, the Provincial Environmental Assessment (EA) was approved.<sup>48</sup> The site for this mine was being cleared of trees as of July 2021.<sup>49</sup>

The labour force participation rate in the Municipality of Greenstone has dropped significantly from 64.2% in 2011 to 57.4% in 2016, with the employment rate also dropping to 51.3%.<sup>50</sup>

### ***Manitouwadge***

The population under 45 in Manitouwadge is declining; there was an 8.7% decrease in population between 2011 and 2016. This decline is especially true for the population aged 25 to 44 as the population is also aging; the median age has increased to 50 in 2016, from 48 in 2011.

While mining had always been at the forefront of economic activity, forestry has also played a significant part in Manitouwadge's economy, specifically logging.

While Manitouwadge continues to have some of the lowest housing prices in the country, prices now range from \$45,000 to \$200,000, indicating recent higher demand. Hunting and fishing are the main tourist attractions along with hiking, snowmobile trails, and downhill and cross-country skiing; however, the lack of a hotel or motel is hindering the development of the tourism industry.

56% of the population is over 45 years of age; the labour force participation rate is 49.7% and unemployment is 10.1%.<sup>51</sup>

As of July 2021, Hemlo Explorers reported finding a gold pocket near Manitouwadge north of the Hemlo Gold Mine. This may bring future mining projects back to Manitouwadge.

### ***Marathon***

Since 1996, the population of Marathon has declined by 30%; this had been accelerated between 2001 and 2011 because of the ongoing mill and mine closures. Like Manitouwadge, the decline in population was concentrated in the under 45 age groups which have each fallen 4% since 2006. Marathon has decreased a further 2.4% in the years between 2011 and 2016. The population is continuing to age as the median age is now 45 (increased from 43 in 2011). The continued decline in employment opportunities has amplified these trends. At the same time, the population in the older age groups has increased more than 3% because of the aging population.

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<sup>48</sup> <http://www.greenstonegoldmines.com/upload/documents/ggm-q1-2019.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.northernontariobusiness.com/industry-news/mining/new-mines-hundreds-of-jobs-loom-on-the-horizon-for-northern-ontario-4205579>

<sup>50</sup> 2016 Census Data

<sup>51</sup> 2016 Census Data

Marathon's economy was initially built on the pulp industry but has expanded to include gold mining operations. The gold deposit discovered at Hemlo (40 km east of Marathon) was the richest ever to be found in Canada and is one of the world's richest outside of South Africa. In October 2020, Barrick Gold Corporation announced transitioning and expanding Hemlo open pit mine to a Tier Two underground operation with an expected life of at least 10 years.<sup>52</sup> It currently employs 500 direct employees and 200 contractors.<sup>53</sup>

Employment levels fell after 2001; in comparison to other municipalities in the district, the decline was relatively small due to an upsurge in employment in health and education services. Employment in the resource-based industries fell especially after Marathon Pulp Inc. announced a shutdown of its pulp mill which affected hundreds of jobs and dealt a severe blow both to Marathon's tax base and its local economy, but the employment in the sector was still over eight times the level for the province as a whole. This may mean that Marathon is vulnerable to further declines in the resource industry.

As of July 2021, Sienna Resources announced the second phase of surface exploration work for their Marathon North Platinum-Palladium Property, with the potential for future mining activities.<sup>54</sup>

In August 2021, the Canadian and Ontario Governments announced funding to improve pedestrian access to Lake Superior by "installing a new accessible kayak dock, wooden trails, a foot bridge, and remediating the shoreline" to remedy accessibility concerns.<sup>55</sup>

Marathon's labour force participation rate is 64.7%; the top three occupations are trades/natural resources, sales and service, and community/government services.<sup>56</sup>

### ***Neebing***

The Municipality of Neebing is a community approximately 35 kilometers from the City of Thunder Bay. Its population has more than doubled since 1996, increasing 101%; this is likely due to people moving from the City of Thunder Bay to the outskirts in the newer developments. The median age has increased to 49 from 47 in 2011.

The main industries in Neebing are tourism and service. Located just south of the City of Thunder Bay and along the shores of Lake Superior, the location is ideal for boat launches, parks and recreation, and fishing. However, 95% of the labour force of

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<sup>52</sup> <https://www.barrick.com/English/news/news-details/2020/modernized-hemlo-transitions-to-underground-mining/default.aspx>

<sup>53</sup> Clutche, Carl. "Hemlo mine could live longer." The Chronicle Journal. March 12, 2017. [http://www.chroniclejournal.com/business/hemlo-mine-could-live-longer/article\\_9618dc62-072c-11e7-8a0a-bfd9e205a657.html](http://www.chroniclejournal.com/business/hemlo-mine-could-live-longer/article_9618dc62-072c-11e7-8a0a-bfd9e205a657.html) (Accessed December 13, 2018).

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.juniorminingnetwork.com/junior-miner-news/press-releases/1925-tsx-venture/sie/105112-sienna-commences-phase-2-surface-exploration-program-marathon-north-platinum-palladium-project-ontario.html>

<sup>55</sup> <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1000685/canada-and-ontario-invest-more-than-21-million-in-active-transportation-infrastructure-to-respond-to-the-impacts-of-covid-19>

<sup>56</sup> 2016 Census data

Needing travels to a different community within the District of Thunder Bay; likely the City of Thunder Bay.<sup>57</sup>

### ***Nipigon***

The population of Nipigon has fallen 26% since 1996 because of the ongoing industry closures. Like other communities in the area, the decline in population has been concentrated in the age groups under 45. The decline in employment opportunities is likely a major contributor to these trends. Between 2011 and 2016, Nipigon experienced a minimal 0.7% increase in population, but the residents continue to age as the median age is now 49, up from 48 in 2011.

The main industries in Nipigon are forest products, fishing and tourism, including big game hunting for bear, moose and deer. The town is trying to diversify its economy by encouraging small manufacturing companies and First Nations to expand their businesses in the area.

There was a major decline in levels of employment between the 2001 and 2006 census years; particularly significant decreases were felt in the resource sector, wholesale and retail trade, and in manufacturing and construction. On February 6, 2007, a devastating fire destroyed the Multiply Forest Products mill; the plant employed 7% of the population of Nipigon. The mill has not been rebuilt and the property remains for sale.

As of the 2016 census, the participation rate for Nipigon was 52.7%; the main occupations are sales and service, and trades, transport and equipment. The unemployment rate is 11.9%; the highest in the District of Thunder Bay.

On January 25, 2019, the Ontario government announced approval for a new plant in Nipigon to convert natural gas into a liquid form. In the announcement, they project between 700 and 2,800 jobs to be created. The second phase of the plan will extend natural gas access to the other communities in the District of Thunder Bay, including Manitouwadge, Marathon, Schreiber and Terrace Bay.

### ***O'Connor***

The population of the Township of O'Connor, a rural farming community approximately 30 kilometers to the west of the City of Thunder Bay, has decreased 10% in the years between 1996 and 2011. It is also an aging community as the median age has increased to 45 in 2016 from 42 in 2011.

O'Connor is a rural and agricultural community with a labour force participation rate of 63.7%. Due to the township's proximity to the City of Thunder Bay and other surrounding communities with established businesses and infrastructure, 92.8% of the active work force commutes to a different community within the District of Thunder Bay.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> 2016 Census Data

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

### **Oliver Paipoonge**

The Municipality of Oliver Paipoonge, the largest community bordering the City of Thunder Bay to the west, has seen small fluctuations in population since 1996; over the decade, it has seen a cumulative 0.2% increase in population to 2016. This is likely due to the movement of the older population into the City of Thunder Bay to take advantage of more long-term care services, offset by younger families purchasing homes, as evidenced by the decrease in median age to 45 in 2016 from 48 in 2011.

Oliver Paipoonge's primary economic sectors include agriculture, tourism, construction, forestry and manufacturing. It has the largest town centre of the rural communities within the Thunder Bay Census Metropolitan Area. Despite this, 92.8% of the active labour force still commute to a different community within the District of Thunder Bay for work.<sup>59</sup>

### **Red Rock**

As a result of the decline in employment through the loss of its main employer, the population of Red Rock declined by 14% between 2001 and 2006, decreased by 11% between 2006 and 2011, decreased a further 5.3% between 2011 and 2016, and continues to age as the median age is 49 as of 2016; an increase from 48 in 2011.

Employment levels fell by almost 19% between 2001 and 2006; the decline was broadly based across all industries. Unlike other District municipalities, however, there was a 50% increase in employment in resource-based industries. The data suggests that employment in Red Rock will be less vulnerable to further declines in the resource sector.

Red Rock's main source of employment was a kraft paper mill owned by Norampac. It originally consisted of two kraft paper machines, but in late 2005, the mill was reduced to running only one. On August 31, 2006, Norampac announced the indefinite cessation of container board production due to unfavourable economic conditions such as the rising price of fibre, energy costs and the strengthening Canadian dollar. This resulted in the loss of over 300 jobs.

Red Rock has a labour force participation rate of 50% and an unemployment rate of 8.1%. The majority of the population work in trades, transport and equipment operator occupations. 55% of the active labour force commutes to a different community in the District of Thunder Bay;<sup>60</sup> it is likely that many people travel to Nipigon or the City of Thunder Bay because of the proximity.

### **Schreiber**

Schreiber's population fell by 6.3% in the years between 2011 and 2016. The median age in Schreiber is now 50.

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<sup>59</sup> 2016 Census Data

<sup>60</sup> Ibid

The Canadian Pacific Railway remains one of Schreiber's biggest employers; much of the town's population is also employed by a pulp mill in nearby Terrace Bay. The magnitude in the decline in employment indicates how quickly the local economy declined and, consequently, the rapid de-population of Schreiber.

Total employment fell by 42.8% between 2001 and 2006, with declines experienced in all industries; even after the significant decline in employment, local industries still could not support the remaining work force. Following the decline in employment, the unemployment rate stood at 18% in 2006.

As of September 2018, an Australian-based company has been conducting testing at the former Inmet zinc mine at Winston Lake. The price of zinc is significantly higher today than when operations at the mine ended in 1998.<sup>61</sup> While outside of the townships of Schreiber and Terrace Bay, if this project goes ahead, it will bring jobs back to both communities. As of 2021, this project is still in the exploration phase.

Schreiber's work force participation rate is 60.5%; the unemployment rate has increased to 9.6%, suggesting some stability has come to the Schreiber employment environment.<sup>62</sup>

### ***Terrace Bay***

The population of Terrace Bay has decreased 30.5% overall since 1996 but experienced an 8.7% increase between 2011 and 2016. The median age in Terrace Bay is currently 51, an increase from 50 in 2011.

The Township of Terrace Bay has had a stable economy with the operation of the Terrace Bay Pulp Inc. mill, the McCausland Hospital and a service industry for local residents and tourists. The Terrace Bay Mill was reopened in late 2012 as AV Terrace Bay and currently employs over 360 people from the area.

In early 2021, a developer proposed a waterfront development, severing a property into 16 lots on Hydro Bay.

The labour force participation rate is 61.1%, while unemployment in Terrace Bay is 10.3%; the second highest in the District of Thunder Bay.<sup>63</sup>

### ***Territories Without Municipal Organization (TWOMO)***

The population of TWOMO saw little movement between 2011 and 2016, however, it continues to age as the median age increased from 49 to 51. Employment in TWOMO, in contrast to the municipalities in the District, was fairly robust, growing by 7% from

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<sup>61</sup> Rinne, G. "Schreiber awaits potential reopening of zinc mine." TbnnewsWatch. September 28, 2018. <https://www.tbnewsWatch.com/local-news/schreiber-awaits-potential-reopening-of-zinc-mine-1062779> (Accessed December 17, 2018).

<sup>62</sup> 2016 Census Data

<sup>63</sup> 2016 Census Data

2001 to 2006. TWOMO has seen growth in all industries except manufacturing and construction. This is consistent with other municipalities and likely reflects the decline in the pulp and paper industry. The number of employees in wholesale and retail trade rose considerably, reflecting that the unorganized territories are near the City where the service sector has grown considerably.

The labour force participation rate in TWOMO as of the 2016 census is 57.6%; the unemployment rate was 9.2%.

As TWOMO encompasses 97,010 square kilometers of the District of Thunder Bay, 85.6% of the active labour force travel to a different community within the district for work. As it borders Rainy River District, Kenora District, Algoma District and Cochrane District, 2.9% of working TWOMO residents travel to a different district for work. 10% of working TWOMO residents commute for over an hour.<sup>64</sup>

### Employment

As of the 2016 census, there were 73,140 workers in the workforce with an employment rate of 55.3% and a participation rate of 60.3% for the entire District of Thunder Bay.

A total of 26.6% of the labour force of the Thunder Bay CMA (which includes Conmee, Gillies, Neebing, O'Connor, Oliver Paipoonge, and Shuniah) work for the 9 major employers. Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre remains the largest employer and now employs 4.6% of the labour force of the Thunder Bay CMA.

Figure 25: Major Employers in the City of Thunder Bay<sup>65</sup>

Employers	Business Type	# Employees 2016
Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre	Acute Care Hospital	2,824
Lakehead District School Board	Elementary & Secondary Education	2,200
St. Joseph's Care Group	Complex Care, Rehabilitation, Mental Health & Addiction Services, Long Term Care	2,200
Lakehead University	Education	2,100
City of Thunder Bay	Municipal Government	1,855
Government of Ontario	Provincial Government	1,849
Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board	Education	1,500
Confederation College	Education	785
Alstom	Mass Transportation Equipment Manufacturing	400

<sup>64</sup> Ibid

<sup>65</sup> City of Thunder Bay Community Economic Development Commission, July 2021  
*Ontario Works Service Plan Template for non-EST CMSMs/DSSABs*

The major industries in the District of Thunder Bay are health and education, wholesale and retail trade, and manufacturing and construction. This is a shift away from the resource-based pulp and paper industries of the past; moving towards more public sector jobs and seasonal labour.

Figure 26: Major Industry in the District of Thunder Bay<sup>66</sup>

Municipality	Agriculture & Other Resource Based	Manufacturing & Construction	Wholesale & Retail Trade	Business, Finance & Real Estate	Health Care, Education and Social Services	Art, Culture, Rec and Sport	STEM
Conmee	6.8%	4.5%	42.0%	22.7%	20.5%	3.4%	2.3%
Dorion	0.0%	0.0%	37.0%	29.6%	14.8%	0.0%	7.4%
Gillies	3.4%	0.0%	44.8%	24.1%	15.5%	3.4%	5.2%
Greenstone	6.3%	2.1%	40.0%	19.7%	28.1%	1.2%	3.0%
Manitouwadge	18.0%	0.0%	40.7%	19.8%	18.6%	0.0%	2.4%
Marathon	12.5%	2.6%	40.0%	20.6%	15.9%	1.7%	6.7%
Neebing	4.2%	3.3%	46.0%	22.1%	14.1%	2.3%	8.5%
Nipigon	3.0%	3.0%	42.1%	18.8%	22.6%	1.5%	7.5%
O'Connor	5.6%	2.8%	34.7%	29.2%	22.2%	0.0%	8.3%
Oliver							
Paipoonge	3.5%	3.5%	38.1%	23.7%	23.7%	1.8%	5.8%
Red Rock	2.7%	0.0%	49.3%	16.4%	27.4%	2.7%	4.1%
Schreiber	2.6%	7.9%	49.1%	19.3%	17.5%	0.0%	3.5%
Shuniah	2.1%	2.1%	32.6%	30.1%	24.8%	3.2%	6.0%
Terrace Bay	0.0%	14.0%	40.9%	18.9%	20.7%	1.2%	4.3%
Thunder Bay City	1.9%	2.5%	40.1%	22.5%	24.5%	2.3%	6.2%
TWOMO	5.5%	2.6%	47.2%	20.4%	18.2%	1.7%	4.3%
District of Thunder Bay Total	2.9%	2.7%	40.4%	22.4%	23.7%	2.1%	5.8%
Ontario	1.6%	5.2%	36.7%	27.5%	18.3%	3.2%	7.4%

<sup>66</sup> 2016 Census Data

Figure 27: Unemployment Rates for the District of Thunder Bay<sup>67</sup>

Municipality	2011	2016	% Chg. since 2011
Conmee	9.8%	6.7%	-31.6%
Dorion	9.4%	10.7%	13.8%
Gillies	7.7%	5.2%	-32.5%
Greenstone	13.0%	10.6%	-18.5%
Manitouwadge	7.1%	10.1%	42.3%
Marathon	6.8%	7.4%	8.8%
Neebing	9.6%	11.5%	19.8%
Nipigon	7.3%	11.9%	63.0%
O'Connor	8.5%	6.9%	-18.8%
Oliver Paipoonge	14.4%	5.6%	-61.1%
Red Rock	17.5%	8.1%	-53.7%
Schreiber	7.6%	9.6%	26.3%
Shuniah	5.2%	6.3%	21.2%
Terrace Bay	5.7%	10.3%	80.7%
Thunder Bay City	8.0%	7.7%	-3.8%
TWOMO	12.8%	9.2%	-28.1%
District of Thunder Bay Total	8.9%	8.2%	-7.9%
Ontario	8.3%	7.4%	-10.8%

<sup>67</sup> Statistics Canada, Census Data 2011-2016



## Income Source Distribution

1.5% of income in the District of Thunder Bay comes from Social Assistance while 67.2% comes from employment income.<sup>68</sup>

*Figure 28: Income for Thunder Bay vs. Ontario*

Income Type	Thunder Bay District	Ontario
Wages/Salaries	64.9%	67.7%
Self-Employment	2.3%	4.3%
<b>Total Employment Income</b>	<b>67.2%</b>	<b>72.0%</b>
Employment Insurance	1.4%	1.1%
OAS	3.8%	3.3%
CPP	5.4%	3.9%
CCTB	1.1%	1.1%
Workers Compensation	1.0%	0.4%
Social Assistance	1.5%	1.1%
Other Government Transfers	1.4%	1.3%
<b>Total Government Transfers</b>	<b>15.7%</b>	<b>12.2%</b>
Private Pensions	10.6%	7.7%
RRSP	0.4%	0.4%
Investment	3.8%	5.3%
Other Income	2.3%	2.5%
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Incidence of Low income and Core Housing Need

Statistics Canada uses a standard measure called the Low Income Measure After Tax (LIM-AT) to determine those households that can be identified as low-income earners. Those who earn less than half the median income for the area after tax are considered to be low-income earners.

In 2016, there was a lesser incidence of low-income earners in all of the municipalities in the District except the City of Thunder Bay compared to the province as a whole. This is not surprising since most areas also had higher incomes than the provincial median. The City of Thunder Bay, while still better off than the provincial level, experienced the highest level of poverty. It is likely that this is a result of in-migration to the City from the surrounding municipalities and the number of low paying service jobs available in the City.

<sup>68</sup> North Superior Workforce Planning Council Community Labour Market Reports.  
<https://www.nswpb.ca/lepc/reports/community-labour-market-reports>  
Ontario Works Service Plan Template for non-EST CMSMs/DSSABs

Figure 29: Incidence of Low Income based on the LIM-AT in the District of Thunder Bay, 2016<sup>69</sup>

Municipality	Prevalence of Low Income 2016
Conmee	9.8%
Dorion	11.3%
Gillies	13.8%
Greenstone	18.8%
Manitouwadge	16.9%
Marathon	11.3%
Neebing	7.1%
Nipigon	17.8%
O'Connor	5.3%
Oliver Paipoonge	4.9%
Red Rock	12.9%
Schreiber	11.4%
Shuniah	4.5%
Terrace Bay	9.4%
Thunder Bay City	14.7%
TWOMO	12.0%
District of Thunder Bay Total	13.8%
Ontario	14.4%

In 2016, 4 communities in the District of Thunder Bay had higher prevalence of low income than the provincial level: Greenstone, Nipigon, and Manitouwadge experienced the highest levels of poverty, ranging 2% to 5% higher than the provincial level, while the City of Thunder Bay had only slightly higher than the provincial level at 14.7%.

Households that are spending more than 30% of their before-tax income on shelter costs are said to be in core housing need. In the District of Thunder Bay in 2016, 18.7% of households were in core housing need.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>69</sup> 2016 Census Data

<sup>70</sup> Statistics Canada. 2017. *Thunder Bay, DIS [Census division], Ontario and Ontario [Province] (table). Census Profile. 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001. Ottawa. Released November 29, 2017. Ontario Works Service Plan Template for non-EST CMSMs/DSSABs*

### **Community Partnerships**

- A description of how delivery partners have developed, maintained and plan to grow relationships with local community stakeholders that enhance access to services for clients. Stakeholders may include:
  - Employers and employer associations;
  - Education and training institutions;
  - Community agencies and other providers of employment, health, human and social services; and
  - Federal government departments and provincial ministries, including ministries of Training, Colleges and Universities, Health and Long-Term Care and Municipal Affairs and Housing.
- Note: municipal delivery partners participating in the Employment Project for Youth with Disabilities (Youth Project) should also identify themselves as project sites in the environmental scan.

TBDSSAB has many partnerships within the District that facilitate referrals from staff members to community services to meet the identified needs of participants. Administration endeavors to increase opportunities for OW participants by working with different agencies and organizations to meet both participant and agency employment and skill development needs. Administration further strives to establish and maintain linkages which eliminate duplication of services, utilize best practices and build upon existing community capacity.

### **Partnerships with Related Initiatives, Programs and Services**

Administration works directly with the following community partners to develop services, and community and employment opportunities for participants:

- Dilico Anishinabek Family Center (Dilico) are providing trusteeship services to those clients under 18 who do not have an appropriate person to take on this obligation. They provide services throughout the District
- The Lakehead District School Board which provides specialized education to young mothers
- The Lakehead Adult Education Centre offers upgrading to an Ontario Secondary School Diploma
- Anishinabek Employment and Training Services and Matawa First Nations - Kiikenomaga Kikienjigewen Employment and Training Services (KKETS) offer upgrading for participants who are Matawa First Nations members
- The Confederation College to provide their Academic & Career Entrance program and basic computer courses on site at Headquarters in Thunder Bay. Confederation College also provides virtual classes throughout the district
- The Confederation College Dental Hygiene Program assists adult clients with basic dental care.
- Thunder Bay District Health Unit (Healthy Smiles Ontario) through direct referral provide dental care for dependent children
- Employment Ontario (EO) providers from YES and Northwest Employment Works (NEW) attend on-site to work with OW participants in various locations
- The Ontario March of Dimes is the service provider for Enhanced Employment Placement
- Thunder Bay Counselling Centre is partner in prototype Financial Empowerment for clients
- St Joseph's Care Group and Dilico are partners through the Home for Good Program which provides outreach services to Chronically Homeless clients in the district. They work one on one to assist individuals to find and maintain housing.

The TBDSSAB's Board of Directors has expressed an interest to the Ministry of Children and Community Social Services (MCCSS) and the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MOLSTD), in becoming an Employment Ontario delivery agent. Communication from MOLSTD indicates that once a service manager is announced for Northern Ontario, applications for delivery agents will be accepted and awarded by the service manager. In preparation for this, TBDSSAB has developed partnerships to enable clients to find employment in hotel and hospitality, heavy equipment operations and skilled trades.

- Origin provides a virtual introduction to many trades and heavy equipment operations as well as assessments for those who are interested in the trades and funding to assist in the training. Their major focus is working with Indigenous people and communities. Their services, in addition to virtual introduction to trades, include assessments with referred clients to recommend next steps. In 2020, 7 TBSSAB clients were referred to Heavy Equipment Training through Taranis Training.
- Currently training for heavy equipment operators for certification in International Union Of Operating Engineers (IUOE) is located in Southern Ontario. The local IUOE is currently developing a training centre in Thunder Bay. TBDSSAB is in contact with the local to develop a 3 way partnership between TBDSSAB, Origin and IUOE to train certified heavy equipment operators.
- TBDSSAB has partnered with The City of Thunder Bay Community Economic Development assists with making linkages in the City to employers who can offer entry level employment opportunities. Through this partnership a local hotel has agreed to work with TBDSSAB to offer housekeeping positions in its two locations. TBDSSAB will offer clients training in resume building, interview skills and WHMIS. Once clients have completed the training, they will be referred for an interview. If the client is a successful, they will be hired in to the housekeeping department. A caseworker is assigned to this partnership to work with the client directly to assist with removing barriers, assessing needs and to provide ongoing support.

### **Strategies to Coordinate**

Social Assistance Program staff participate on various tables, attend meetings, act as a resource and provide presentations regarding OW services to agencies within the community. There is internal collaboration with colleagues who administer housing and childcare programs; wrapping service around clients and their families.

Staff members are frequently educated by community agencies on changes to their programming. Community CWs, who work in the TBDSSAB Satellite offices, keep current on various community agencies on a one-to-one basis and through updates from their supervisor and general community awareness. All CWs have meetings where representatives from various community agencies are invited as guest speakers. Staff have established long-standing working relationships with many agencies. Meetings occur with representatives from different agencies to discuss possible strategies for

improved service and to address issues within the community. Cooperative planning, development, and delivery of service have become an established practice of TBDSSAB staff.

### **Collaborative Community Servicing**

A variety of social challenges being experienced by OW participants can result in significant barriers to employment. Consequently, with proper client consents in place, TBDSSAB sees the value in collaborative work between front line staff and community agencies to assist shared participants towards addressing these challenges.

### **Child Welfare**

Child welfare services are provided by Dilico Anishinabek Family Care and by the Children's Aid Society. Caseworkers work in collaboration with child welfare workers. TBDSSAB has a formalized information sharing and service protocols with each of these two child welfare agencies.

### **Family Violence**

Services in the District of Thunder Bay dealing with family violence issues are offered through Beendingen Inc., Children's Aid Society, Faye Peterson Transition House, Marjorie House, Northshore Food Bank, Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), and the Thunder Bay Sexual Assault/Sexual Abuse Counselling and Crisis Centre.

### **Housing**

TBDSSAB is responsible for the administration of community housing programs within its service area. It directly owns and operates 2,473 housing units, operates a rent supplement program and provides funding to 21 non-profit housing corporations. OW participants have access to the community housing programs for which they are eligible according to the protocols established for each program. Caseworkers collaborate with the TBDSSAB Housing Programs as well as other community housing providers to assist with placement and maintenance of housing.

### **Homelessness**

The need for emergency shelter services has continued to increase significantly over the last several years with shelter occupancy rates over 100% since 2013. The over utilization of emergency shelters warrants early and ongoing supports to attach to and successfully maintain housing to reduce incidences of chronic homelessness in the District of Thunder Bay. This was further stressed during COVID-19.

During the Pandemic the shelters were reduced in capacity leading to more homeless individuals with no place to go. TBDSSAB implemented an overflow shelter to keep them off the streets and in a safe environment. TBDSSAB also partnered with the District Health Unit to provide isolation rooms for individuals with positive or suspected COVID. In February 2021, the positivity rate in the District exploded and TBDSSAB was immediately responsive to expand the isolation and overflow resources.

The second comprehensive homelessness Point in Time (PIT) Count was conducted in Thunder Bay in April 2018. Results of the PIT Count show that a total of 474 people experiencing homelessness were interviewed. Of the individuals interviewed, 66% identified as Indigenous; 33% of individuals reported addiction/substance use as the reason for housing loss; and 19% said they were new to Thunder Bay within the past year. The next PIT Count is scheduled for October 2021 in partnership with Lakehead University.

### **Mental Health**

Within the City of Thunder Bay and some areas outside of the City, the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) offers mental health services for OW participants. In some communities, services can be accessed through North of Superior Programs and People Advocating for Change through Empowerment (PACE).

## **Section 2: Strategies and Outcomes**

### **Service Strategy**

- Improvements to employment outcomes is an important part of the government's plan to reform social assistance. While social assistance reform and employment services transformation planning is underway, non-EST Ontario Works delivery partners will use current employment outcomes for service planning.
- Strategies should demonstrate sound rationale for the employment services will be provided and how much of each service is needed locally to improve or maintain the delivery partner's achievement of employment outcomes.

The Employment Services continue to assist participants daily. Caseworkers refer appropriate participants to both in-house and community training opportunities. It is recognized that employment outcomes are a driving factor in social assistance reform, and TBDSSAB has implemented several initiatives to support these outcomes. These include new employment placement opportunities as well as new technology to identify employment links for clients.

As outlined in the environmental scan, TBDSSAB has concentrated on education levels and shows an increase in participants who have achieved a high school (or equivalent) diploma. As 54% of the current caseload does not have a high school diploma, it is imperative work continue to upgrade education. TBDSSAB has maintained education support offerings through the pandemic and has plans to return to in-person learning as public health guidelines permit.

TBDSSAB is exploring further partnership opportunities for education for participants that can be provided in-person and virtually to expand reach and ease of access for participants.

The data provided by the ERS indicates that in 2021 only 6% of participants are near or ready for employment. The percentage has declined over 3 years with 22% in 2020 and 30% in 2019. An assumption to the decline of employment ready participants can be made in that many participants who were employed but still eligible for OW qualified for Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) which is also evident in declining caseload; 3000 March 2020 to 2372 June 2021, and percentage of participants with earning; 10.74% March 2020 to 5.52% June 2021, on the caseload. TBDSSAB continues to create and foster partnership to assist clients to gain employment.

The implementation of GERE and its entrenchment in operations will support participants with system-driven match to available education and employment opportunities. It is expected that Ontario's reopening coupled with our administrative readiness (including learning from May (soft launch) to December 2020) will see resources at the ready for participants.



### Link Strategies to Outcome Measures

- Delivery partners must include a **minimum of two** weighted outcomes in their negotiated service contracts, the minimum percentage target for non-EST CMSMs/DSSABs is:
  - 3% improvement target for 2021 for those delivery partners with an achievement of 3% or higher in 2020 compared to 2019.
  - Those with under 3% achievement compared to 2019 are to be held to their 2020 performance levels.
- Link the strategies to the employment and earnings outcome measures as a basis for setting targets.
- Provide the respective weighting and indicate the outcome measures that will be used to demonstrate results.

TBDSSAB has lowered case to Caseworker ratios to support meaningful interactions with participants to ensure movement along the employment continuum

TBDSSAB has implemented a stand aside computer application, Guiding Employment Resources Efficiently (GERE; gerE) for managing participant employment profiles and to facilitate matching with education, training and employment opportunities. The caseworker meets with each participant and completes a profile that gathers education, training and employment experience and captures a client's future goals. The application then matches the client with potential employment and training opportunities. There are robust administrative practices built to support up to date information in line with SAMS and to compliment the participation agreement processes already in place.

Because 54% of the caseload has not yet achieved their secondary school education, they are further away from the job market. There is need to fill the education gap and provide training opportunities to facilitate labour force participation. Once engaged, it is important to support participants through community referral and engagement that solidifies their employment relationships and encourages individual growth.

### Action Steps and Resources

- Outline the key strategies that will be used to achieve the targeted improved earnings and employment outcomes for clients. Strategies should align with findings from the environmental scan and with the Ministry's priorities (see Program Vision, Mandate and Strategic Priorities section).

Rates of emergency department visits and hospitalizations for opioid poisoning are almost twice the provincial average in the District of Thunder Bay; this district also has among the highest rate of opioid-related mortality in Ontario.<sup>71</sup> Additions coupled with the low rate of secondary school achievement, many TBDSSAB clients face multiple and complex barriers to employment.

As only approximately 54% of participants have achieved a Secondary School Diploma or equivalent and most entry level jobs require a minimum high school diploma, TBDSSAB continues to work extensively in matching participants with educational opportunities that will work for their circumstances.

The team will continue to develop and deliver programming that is flexible (in-person and online) to extend reach and enable easier client participation. This will be supported by the device lending program that is expected to grow beyond its current 15 unit supply. There are also partnerships with local providers of mobile technology (including internet and smart phones) to assist with increasing client connectivity. This increase in connectivity has proven successful in improve appointment attendance, facilitating discussion between caseworkers and clients.

Monitoring and evaluation of existing services is an essential ongoing process to ensure that service delivery responds to participant need.

TBDSSAB uses the Employment Readiness Survey (ERS) Tool to provide measures of readiness against the internationally validated employment readiness model in conjunction with the new stand aside employment software. Outcome data collection from the ERS helps guide program planning and development by providing data regarding participant employment skills and soft skill needs which is used to target programming to suit the needs of participants and to increase positive outcomes.

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<sup>71</sup> Source: Public Health Ontario, Interactive Opioid Tool, 2020  
*Ontario Works Service Plan Template for non-EST CMSMs/DSSABs*

<b>Stakeholder Linkages</b>
-----------------------------

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Description of how stakeholder partnerships will be leveraged to support employment and client-experience outcomes.</li></ul> |
|---|

*Enter stakeholder linkages here.*

TBDSSAB is active in engaging our varied stakeholders to leverage the strongest outcomes for participant. Please see Partnerships with Related Initiatives, Programs and Services

Currently, linkages with education, mental health, addiction and homelessness partners provide opportunities for referral for participants.

<b>Addressing Service Gaps</b>
--------------------------------

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Outline how service gaps will be addressed to achieve results.</li></ul> |
|--|

*Enter how service gaps will be addressed here.*

### **Transportation**

TBDSSAB continues to use Employment Related Expenses (ERE) Benefit to assist participants with transportation for education and employment support related activities. In the City of Thunder Bay, the equivalent of the cost of a monthly bus pass is issued. Public transportation in most communities does not exist and staff continue to problem solve on a case-by-case basis. Options in many communities are limited to rideshare and other collaborative efforts. This has been exceptionally challenging during stay at home and lockdown orders in Ontario. It is hopeful that reopening, combined with increased online delivery of education (and in some cases, employment opportunities) and available technology will reduce some former transportation barriers. This is contrasted, of course, with the participation rates of clients who are employed in the service sector – where employment cannot be conducted from home.

### **Health**

The shortage of doctors, particularly general practitioners, has a negative impact on the general health of the population. The ability of participants to find emergency dental care is continues to be an ongoing challenge and most certainly was challenging with closures during 2020. TBDSSAB continues its efforts to link participants with medical care by developing partnerships within the District through intensive caseload management as well as a new partnership with the Confederation College Dental Hygiene program. Other health-related linkages and opportunities are explored in the partnerships section.

Efforts are made in community housing to engage tenants and their families in community gardens. The resulting programming around the impact of nutrition on health is important, especially for the children in these locations. Local organizations (i.e., Roots to Harvest) provide farmer's market including local produce to facilitate easier access to healthy food. These collaborative programs have been negatively impacted by pandemic restrictions and local drought in 2021. It is hopeful that relief for local farms will reduce barriers to their participation with clients in housing communities.

There is a need to champion health support related to medication adherence. Outcomes are improved as individuals managing complex health conditions

### **Addictions**

The addiction rate in the District of Thunder Bay continues to climb. TBDSSAB continues to assist participants daily to enter into rehabilitation programming. Thunder Bay and surrounding area had the highest dispensing rate of methadone or buprenorphine/naloxone in Ontario in 2020. The rate of death due to opioid overdose in the District of Thunder Bay is one of the highest in Ontario with 24.6 deaths per 100,000 people versus the Ontario average of 10.3.<sup>72</sup>

In addition to opioid use, there is an increasing rate of use of other substances (including alcohol) that reduce likelihood of successful completion of education and training and interfere with successful outcomes in employment.

### **Education**

Education is an issue in the District of Thunder Bay. With potential employment opportunities in mining it is incumbent upon TBDSSAB to continue to plan with our participants for their future. TBDSSAB continues to concentrate on upgrading education to prepare participants for job training. As well as building on a partnership with Origin training services who offer a virtual training.

### **Housing**

The rental vacancy rate in the Thunder Bay CMA was at 4% as of October 2020 with a median rent of \$1,000.<sup>73</sup> The social housing vacancy rate average for 2020 was 3.4% in the City of Thunder Bay.<sup>74</sup> Caseworkers continue to work with local housing providers to assist participants in finding, and securing safe, affordable housing. TBDSSAB's owned housing and partnerships with not-for-profit providers help provide service in a more coordinated fashion.

## **Increased Employability Strategies**

- Identify how increased employability activities and supports will:
  - Promote self-reliance and financial independence; and
  - Result in positive employment and earnings outcomes.
  
- For Ontario Works participants, increased employability is a holistic concept that often depends on:
  - The knowledge, skills and attitudes they possess;
  - The ability to access integrated supports such as, health, housing, transportation and childcare;
  - The ability to break the cycle of poverty; and
  - Their connection to the economic, local labour market and community environment.

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<sup>72</sup> Public Health Ontario, Interactive Opioid Tool, 2020

<sup>73</sup> CMHC Primary Rental Market Statistics

<sup>74</sup> TBDSSAB Social Housing Vacancy Rates

*Enter increased employability strategies here.*

Removal of barriers is the key towards promoting a higher quality of life and improved social determinants of health. This includes assisting participants who are physically able to work to increase their employability, obtain and maintain employment and financial independence. With the Ministry's objective to move into life stabilization services, TBDSSAB is strengthening existing and developing new service pathways for basic needs, life skills, community supports and health.

Basic needs include financial supports, housing needs and crisis resolution. Examples of existing partnerships for life stabilization include:

- Financial supports: as previously indicated, TBDSSAB has partnered with TBCC and Prosper Canada to prototype financial empowerment among social assistance clients.
- Housing needs: TBDSSAB partners with Dilico and St Joseph's Care Group for outreach to clients in the Home for Good Program as well as a member of the CHAT member organizations
- Crisis resolution: TBDSSAB implemented "wellness calls" to clients during the COVID-19 pandemic to check in and see how individuals are managing, if they need assistance, and establish linkages to local services if required.

Life Skills include self-efficacy, education and literacy. Examples of existing partnerships for like skills include:

- Self -efficacy: Continuation of training through in house courses including soft skills. During the pandemic TBDSSAB trained staff in developing and delivering online courses. Soft skills was delivered several times during the pandemic
- Education and literacy: most basic education provided by TBDSSAB partners was continued online. It is recognized that many clients do not have access to technology and that created a barrier to continuing their education. TBDSSAB purchased laptops and created our device lending program. A client uses a TBDSSAB device to continue their education online. TBDSSAB has partnered with Renewed Computer Technology of Ontario (RCTO) to purchase refurbished computers to give to clients who have one through our device lending program. Once the refurbished computer is received the client returns the loaned devices and is given the refurbished computer. To facilitate use of device TBDSSAB issues ERE funds for monthly internet costs.

Community supports encompasses dependent care, justice, cultural connections and justice and legal support. Examples of existing partnerships for community supports include:

- Dependent care: TBDSSAB leverages OW benefits for child care to remove or reduce barriers to employment. TBDSSAB is partnered with the Lakehead Board of Education to provide childcare on site for clients who attend the SAM/MISOL program.

- Cultural Connections: TBDSSAB has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with NAN that outlines the rights and equality of Indigenous clients. As well as partnered with Matawa First Nations to support our clients who are participating through their education and training programs.
- Justice and legal support: TBDSSAB assist clients in securing pardons in order to expand employment opportunities

Health Supports includes primary care, mental health and addiction supports, and ongoing medical care.

- Mental Health and Addictions supports: TBDSSAB was previously an Addictions Services Initiative site under the program was ended in July 2019. Partnerships with TBCC in the City of Thunder Bay and More Than Words in other communities remain strong.
- Primary care and ongoing medical care: TBDSSAB recognizes the shortage of primary care personnel and continues to link with services across the District.<sup>75</sup>

For OW participants who are physically unable to work and wish to apply for ODSP assistance, TBDSSAB provides varying degrees of assistance (depending upon functioning and complexity of the participant's situation) ranging from assistance with completion of the participant portions of the ODSP application form through to assistance in navigating the system.

TBDSSAB is committed to facilitating access to education and training, including soft skills training that seeks to develop self-awareness. These building blocks seek to remove internal barriers ahead of external challenges to employment (see sections on transportation and explanation of available employment in various communities).

TBDSSAB will continue to complete employment assessments for employable participants using the ERS. With the data from the assessments, TBDSSAB will continue to amend employment paths for individuals and assist in removing barriers. This is complimented using GERE, software for which tombstone data is provided by SAMS.

Although there will not be an updated PIT count in 2021, TBDSSAB continues to work with the last PIT count list to work intensively with participants who identify as homeless to assist them to secure permanent, safe and affordable housing.

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<sup>75</sup> <https://www.nosm.ca/2020/11/17/our-physician-workforce-strategy-nosm-solutions/>

### Monitoring Service Strategies

- Describe how the proposed strategies will be monitored to determine progress towards the achievement of outcome targets. Ongoing monitoring is critical in identifying potential year 2 adjustments to the Service Plan when managing for outcomes.

*Enter monitoring service strategies here.*

Caseworkers must ensure an equitable balance of services delivered amongst participants with varying levels of education. This equitable balance will facilitate a steady flow of participant achievement to maintain employment funding levels.

Once a participant is determined eligible for OW, the Caseworker completes a client profile and employment assessment in GERE which was launched in May 2021. The client can then be matched with employment and training opportunities. The client has the option to also complete the ERS to determine needs around soft skills. GERE tracks engagement in addition to Participation Agreement planning and TBDSSAB administrative processes keep the database of opportunities up to date. Future options for populating opportunities include collaboration with other employment providers (ability to enter training and employment opportunities), track and report upon engagement in activities and the technical ability to communicate with clients from the system (tying communication to their individual record). This continuity is imperative to supporting productive outcomes.

Given the low education level of the majority of the caseload, together with higher rates of addiction, poor mental health, limited job skills, more attention needs to be focused upon increasing employability through removal of barriers. Increasing one's employability is expected to progress to employment earnings and exits to employment. TBDSSAB staff deliver grassroots social services by providing individualized assistance to participants to overcome barriers and assist them with their educational and employment needs. TBDSSAB partners with Confederation College to provide an on-site classroom at headquarters and virtual to those who cannot attend in person. TBDSSAB is also partnered with Lakehead District School Board and local resources throughout the District to provide educational opportunities with the support of caseworkers and placement support workers who meet with the learners and discuss and resolve any barriers to attendance.

The resources available vary by community. TBDSSAB seeks to grow the current collaborative relationships with other service organizations and share knowledge across jurisdictions. This is increasingly possible as service providers move to include online service delivery.

The TBDSSAB Strategic Plan has set internal goals to ensure client achievement is focused on. For 2020 the goal of 300 Employment or Community Placements was not quite met at 277. It is however considered a success given the state of emergency that occurred due to the COVID 19 pandemic; especially with consideration given to business closures in the service and retail sectors – where the majority of entry level positions without education requirement are found.



## Section 3: Program Management

### Service Delivery

- Outline key program management activities and approaches that:
  - Support achievement of outcomes targets;
  - Provide a seamless client-experience;
  - Support ministry's modernization initiatives;
  - Address any delivery issues identified in the environmental scan and/or as part of the COVID-19 Recovery; and
  - Respond to, and address, Ministry priorities (see Program Vision, Mandate and Strategic Priorities section).

*Enter service delivery strategy here.*

### **Ontario Works Delivery Sites**

TBDSSAB has a vast service area of 103,719 square km comprised of 15 member municipalities and the territories without municipal organization. The Board delivers services through five permanently staffed offices and three satellite offices that operate with part-time hours.

Flexible service delivery as demanded by the pandemic and reopening plans have interrupted client experiences by some community agencies. TBDSSAB staff have remained in contact with clients through telephone and email, recently adding two-way messaging to the list of available means of contact. TBDSSAB intends to encourage clients to participate in these alternatives in addition to adding more frequent face to face meetings back in to schedules. This varied approach assists with 'meeting clients where they are'.

Modernization continues to be a focus for TBDSSAB. EDM is complete (December 2020). Childcare files contained in the Ontario Child Care Management System (OCCMS) are digitized (complete March 2021). The team is in the process of digitizing housing application files in Rent Café (expected complete 2021). Both Rent Café and OCCMS have an online application component slated for investigation and potential integration with current business practices in 2022. The digitization of files provides coordinated access by TBDSSAB staff (thanks to support by Information Technology and account management across disciplines). In a recent process review of Housing Application administration across Ontario, it was noted that TBDSSAB has more integrated information access and therefore provides more timely service to clients. This access to SAMS is often a paper request in other locations, slowing down the sharing of information.

COVID-19 recovery coupled with continued incidence of cases drives a creative and flexible approach to work. TBDSSAB is piloting a work from home process that seeks to formalize and build upon successful outcomes during early lockdowns.

In the 2019-2020 planning cycle, TBDSSAB indicated that the number of participants without a high school education represented 54.2% of the caseload. Since then, the proportion of OW recipients without a secondary school diploma has slightly increased to 54%. TBDSSAB will continue to build and strengthen opportunities with community providers.

### **Analysis of Resources**

- An analysis of the resources, including staffing and recipient ratios (e.g. financial, staffing, community, etc.) required for program management.
  - The Ministry will continue to request detailed staffing and Purchase of Service information as part of the budget submission process in order to complete a comparative analysis and considerations for the broader rollout of EST.
  - As part of the annual contracting process, the Ministry will continue to request delivery costs by category of expenditure (e.g., accommodation, internal services etc.) to determine effectiveness of the expenditure(s).
  - An analysis of the duration on social assistance including assessing barriers to sustainable employment.

## Staffing Resources

Service area and specialized caseloads impact this distribution significantly. Staffing directly involved with the delivery of Ontario Works includes 33.6 caseworkers, 2 placement support workers, 2 workshop coaches, 5 team clerks and 12 intake workers who have varying duties in offices across the District. These duties include but are not limited to;

### Caseworker:

- EVP for all offices
- ODSP OW participating non disabled adult dependents and spouses
- Transfer of clients who have been granted ODSP
- Financial support to TBDSSAB homeless outreach team
- Outreach to currently employed former clients
- Support to currently employed clients in Hotel Pilot
- Under 18 applicants and recipients
- Intensive caseload for individuals who have applied to ODSP
- General caseloads

### Placement support worker:

- Support Enhanced Employment Placement Program
- Support Community Placement
- Support clients involved with education
- Assisting clients with records checks, and pardons

### Workshop Coach:

- Deliver on site and virtual training from headquarters, satellite offices and housing hubs

### Team Clerks:

- Reduce administrative burden on caseworker by assisting with creating requested benefits
- Creating discretionary benefits for ODSP clients
- Completing 3<sup>rd</sup> party checks to in compliance with legislation

### Intake Workers:

- Provide information to clients
- Book appointments
- Assign transfers from Centralized Intake
- Book interpreters
- Update employment opportunities in GERE

There is one Manager, Social Assistance Programs and four Supervisor, Social Assistance Programs.

TBDSSAB's internal services support service delivery. Information Technology staff support the Device Lending program – provisioning and re-preparing devices for loan. Human Resources support position design, recruitment, retention and liaison with the bargaining unit as well as coordination of the Health and Safety program. Corporate Services oversee the Finance staff who are instrumental in managing the Eligibility Review Officer positions at arms-length from service delivery. There is also the recent addition of a Process Review Lead to assist with reviews, including collaborative identification and pilot of new processes. Recent activities include a Supervisor File Review of OW case files for completeness (and resulting caseworker training and education on specific areas); analysis of overpayments and recommendations; tools to track the Device Lending Program and implementation/analysis support of digitization projects for OW, OCCMS and housing applications.

### **Key Program Management Activities**

- An overview of the service delivery model for intake and the provision of emergency assistance, as well as eligibility determination and review, family support and participation management (including child care).
- Outline of business practices that are in place for the following:
  - Modernizing and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of program delivery, delivery partners have the flexibility to reinvest savings to respond to local priorities and enhance outcomes for clients
  - The program is delivered in accordance with legislative and policy requirements, such as:
    - Essential intake information is reviewed and verified by 3rd party checks (e.g., status in Canada, financial assets, employment);
    - Addressing expectations related to employment supports for Non-Disabled Adults that have been referred to Ontario Works;
    - A process is in place for monitoring and correcting instances of non-compliance with non-disabled adults;
    - Financial reassessments in conjunction with 3rd party checks completed in SAMS every 24 months;
    - Documentation and notations in SAMS to support Mandatory and Discretionary Benefit payments, assisting in management and compliance of maximums;
    - Documentation and notations are in SAMS regarding reasons for employment deferrals, and timely follow ups are completed to reassess eligibility for referral; and
    - Implementation of the default 10% recovery rate for all overpayments.
  - Financial assistance expenditures (subsidy claims submissions) are accurate and meet Ministry expectations;

- Listing of all Ontario Works benefits managed outside of SAMS and identify supporting documentation that will be provided with adjustments to subsidy claims.
- Describe business practices for Ontario Works benefits managed outside of SAMS.
- Performance standards are met, and risks and areas for improvement are identified and addressed in a timely manner.
- Youth Pilot implementation strategy overview outlining training, staffing and how project parameters will be met.
  - Applies to only those delivery partners partaking in the Youth with Disabilities Pilot

*Enter program management activities here.*

### **Ontario Works Delivery Sites**

The Integrated Social Services Division has made significant progress towards the achievement of greater consistency in service delivery throughout the service area. It has and continues to undertake internal process reviews to ensure procedures are streamlined and consistent throughout the District. Consideration is given to the delivery needs in terms of population, current economic trends and geographical location.

Caseworkers are assisted by Team Clerks who provide data entry and clerical support to facilitate the delivery of services by processing approved requests and responding to telephone inquiries.

Intake staff also support caseworkers, managing initial screening of telephone inquiry, scheduling verification interviews and managing in-office traffic where there is opportunity to serve clients in person.

The Thunder Bay Headquarters provides a variety of on-site programs including job seeking and readiness training. There are phones and computers available for use during business hours and navigation staff to support clients in their efforts. Off- site programs include participants volunteering at the Regional Food Distribution Association (RFDA), Clothing Assistance Mission and The Good Food Box. The volunteer work adds to the clients work experience and bolster resume content. Community Kitchen is offered once per month at RFDA and at Limbrick Housing Complex.

TBDSSAB also partners with the Lakehead District School Board, Confederation College and Matawa to offer secondary school upgrading to participants.

Employment Ontario delivery agents come on site to the Thunder Bay Headquarters to offer Job Fairs, career counselling and employment placement referrals.

**Housing Hubs** being introduced in 3 TBDSSAB Housing Services Areas in the City of Thunder Bay in 2021. The first will be launched in the Limbrick Place housing complex. A caseworker will be assigned to each OW recipient who resides in the complex. They will be stationed in the hub (a unit made available to community resources by TBDSSAB). The unit has a computer lab for client use. As well all appointments with the caseworker will be completed on site if this is the client preference. In addition to a caseworker, a workshop coach will also be leading training sessions in various topics. Both the OW staff will work closely with the TBDSSAB Property Manager, Tenant Support Clerk and Custodian on

site. Once the Limbrick Pilot is launched, two other sites will come online at Trillium and Windsor.

**Nipigon satellite office** works with YES Employment Services; however, they are no longer permanently located in this area and will work with participants on an “as needed basis”.

**Greenstone satellite office** works with the Thunderbird Indigenous Friendship Centre, (5 days per week service) More Than Words-5 days per week service, and Confederation College satellite office and Contact North office who offer upgrading and post- secondary education.

**Schreiber satellite office** works with NEW which works in Schreiber one day per week, Terrace Bay one day per week, and the Contact North office which offers upgrading and post-secondary education

**Marathon satellite office** works with NEW (5 days per week service), Superior North Adult Learning Centre 5 days per week service, and Confederation College satellite office and the Contact North office which offer upgrading and post- secondary education.

**Manitouwadge satellite office** works with Northwest Employment Works (NEW) (one day per week service) Manitouwadge Adult Learning Centre (5 days per week service).

### **The Community Placement Program**

The Community Placement Program is administered by all delivery sites enabling participants to increase employability through volunteer work. Participants are supported in volunteering to gain valuable work experience through “on-the- job training”.

### **The Enhanced Employment Placement Program**

The Enhanced Employment Placement Program assists job-ready participants into paid employment by offsetting employer hiring and training costs. Participants are provided with training and financial assistance as they seek employment opportunities within private and public sectors or within not-for-profit organizations. TBDSSAB has entered into formal employment placement agreements with the Ontario March of Dimes in Thunder Bay that assist participants to find jobs with employers in the community.

### **Employment Assistance**

Employment Assistance is available to assist OW recipients in securing employment and becoming self-sufficient. TBDSSAB administers employment financial benefits and offers a range of employment programs as well as partnering with employment program providers who offer services throughout the District.



### **Employment Supports**

Employment Supports, training and counselling services are provided to participants of OW. Counselling supports include one-to-one assistance with self-employment activities, preparation of resumes, cover letters, and interview skills. Training includes WHMIS and Smart Serve. In the remote offices, Community Caseworkers assist participants directly or with access to community training including, but not limited to, WHMIS, Smart Serve, computer, literacy, and education. Financial assistance may include the cost of travel, registration fees, safety equipment, and clothing necessary to obtain employment.

### **The Learning, Earning and Parenting Program (LEAP)**

LEAP provides intensive case management assistance to young parents aged 16 to 25 years who have not finished high school and are receiving financial assistance through OW or ODSP.

### **Child Care Assistance**

Child Care Assistance is provided in partnership with the Child Care and Early Years Services Program at the TBDSSAB. OW participants may access either informal child care through their OW Caseworker or formal child care with fee subsidy. OW Community Caseworkers in the satellite offices complete child care fee subsidy income testing and track attendance. This wraparound approach supports easier access to childcare -an incredible barrier to participation in employment, especially when in-person education may not be available – as was the case for much of 2020 and 2021.

### **Discretionary Benefits**

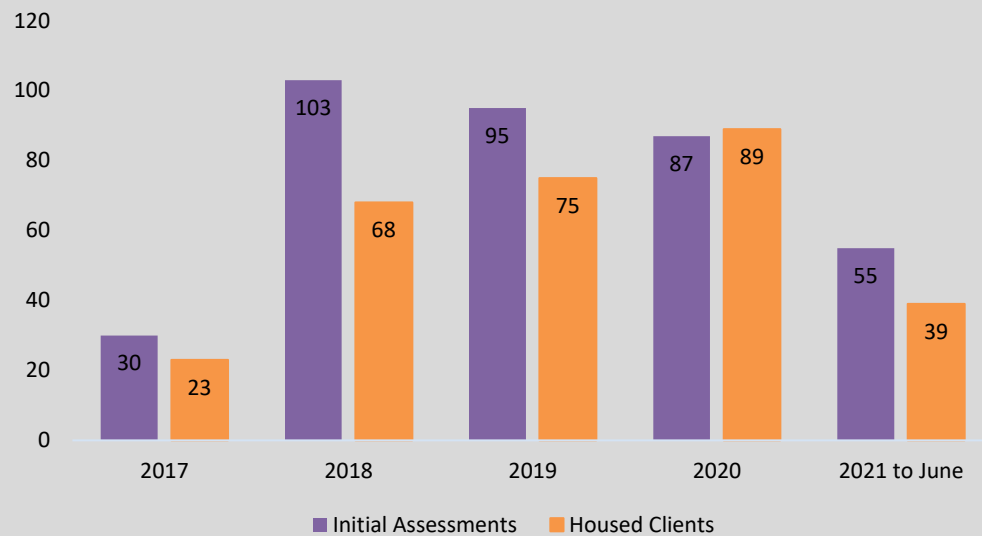
TBDSSAB assesses requests for Discretionary Benefits from ODSP clients as well as OW participants. Requested items include dentures, funerals and health aids that are not otherwise funded. The total spending for 2019-2020 was \$992,921 and \$1,657,835 respectively. These benefits are coordinated across the organization (including but not limited to intake, caseworker and supervisory staff from Integrated Social Services).

### **Transition Outreach and Support Worker (Transition Outreach)**

The Transition Outreach Workers support the movement of emergency shelter residents along the housing continuum. In the City of Thunder Bay and area, the Transition Outreach attends the Salvation Army Booth Centre, Grace Place, Rural Food Cupboard and the Shelter House to completed VIs for OW and assessments to assist with securing housing. In the other communities, the caseworker will refer homeless individuals to the Transition Outreach who will then complete an assessment virtually. The assessment identifies the need for supports regarding addiction, mental health and concurrent disorder issues. They provide interim counselling to assist the person and stabilize their condition while collaboratively

working with relevant community agencies to involve the resident in holistic services to address their barriers to housing.

Figure 28: Transitional Outreach Assessments and Housed Clients



The assessment used is the Service Prioritization and Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT), an evidence-informed approach to assessing an individual’s or family’s acuity. The tool, across multiple components, prioritizes who to serve next and why, while concurrently identifying the areas in the person/family’s life where support is most likely necessary to avoid housing instability. Individuals would be placed in the local priority housing wait list, High Needs – Homeless, if their SPDAT score is more than a numerical level that indicates a high need for supports – this level is reviewed regularly. This tool also qualifies the individual for a referral to TBDSSAB Home for Good Program intensive case management program in partnership with St. Josephs Care Group and Dilico Anishinabek Family Care.

**Eligibility Review (ER)**

Eligibility Review Officer (2.0 FTE) investigate allegations of fraud pertaining to TBDSSAB caseload. When an investigation determines the elements of fraud are present, a Crown Brief is prepared and forwarded to the relevant police service for review. The police determine whether the case has the necessary elements required for a charge under the Criminal Code of Canada and if so, the Crown Attorney’s office determines whether there is sufficient evidence to proceed with prosecution.

*Figure 29: Eligibility Review Decisions*

Eligibility Review			
Year	Complaints Supported	Complaints Unsupported	Restitution Ordered
2017	13	29	\$ 42,589.00
2018	23	11	\$ 43,610.00
2019	29	17	\$ 104,953.00
2020	22	10	\$ 51,390.10
2021 to June	14	3	\$ 34,112.60

TBDSSAB has a conviction rate of 100% for cases brought forward to the crown. Agreements are in place with both law enforcement agencies in the district. A Process review was completed in 2020 with regards to cause and collection of Ontario Works overpayments. Although conviction of fraud results in a restitution order, if the client is inactive, collection and tracking is a manual exercise. TBDSSAB will advocate to MCCSS to allow all Service Mangers access to the Overpayment Recovery Unit (ORU), now only available to ODSP and Toronto Employment Social Services.

#### **Internal Review and Case Presenting Officer**

Applicants and recipients of OW wishing to challenge eligibility decisions may request an Internal Review and further appeal to the Social Benefit Tribunal (SBT) should they still contest the decision. An independent Internal Review/Case Presenting Officer (1 FTE) performs the internal reviews and represents the OW Administrator at SBT hearings.

*Figure 30: Internal Review Decisions*

Internal Review OW/Discretionary Requests					
Year	Upheld	Overturned	Varied	No Decision/ Unappealable/ Withdrawn	Total Requests
2017	70	12	10	18	110
2018	92	15	10	19	136
2019	64	15	7	15	101
2020	38	5	1	20	64
2021 to June	17	4	0	6	27

*Figure 31: Social Assistance Tribunal Decisions*

Social Assistance Tribunal Decisions				
Year	For Appellant	For Administrator	Varied	Appeal Withdrawn
2017	2	3	2	6
2018	4	4	0	8
2019	2	1	0	5
2020	0	0	0	8
2021 to June	1	2	0	2

### Eligibility Verification Process

The Eligibility Verification Process (EVP) is one of the Ministry's key oversight mechanisms. The Ministry uses a model developed in partnership with a third party that incorporates information from the Social Assistance Management System (SAMS), Canada Revenue Agency and Third-Party Credit reports to prioritize cases for audit based on the likelihood of a change in entitlement.

Every two months, both the OW program and ODSP are responsible for completing case audits based on prioritization from the EVP model.

TBDSSAB results are in Figure 32.

*Figure 32: EVP Results*

EVP results 2019-2020		
	911	100% completion
completed with overpayment	148	\$ 166,863
completed with underpayment	89	\$ 27,440

100% of EVP cases were assigned within the mandated timelines. In March 2020, the Province announced that the March EVP Audit Plan would be cancelled due to Covid-19 restrictions. However, TBDSSAB requested exclusion from the cancellation process and continued work on the March Audit Plan. The May EVP Audit Plan was also cancelled due to Covid-19 restrictions, and not made available. The July EVP Audit Plan was optional. TBDSSAB opted to participate in the July EVP Plan and completed the plan. Starting in September, the EVP Audit process is back to its regular schedule.

Collection and tracking repayments against an overpayment for inactive clients a manual exercise. TBDSSAB will continue to advocate to MCCSS to allow all Service Mangers access to the Overpayment Recovery Unit (ORU), now only available to ODSP and Toronto Employment Social Services.

### **OW payments issued outside of SAMS**

Monthly service orders paid on behalf of transient applicants are paid outside of SAMS with discretionary funding. These items are added on a separate line on the Form 5 submission. The additions are added manually into SAMS for submission.

### **Overview of Learning Supports**

- An overview of other strategic learning plans to train staff in the delivery of life stabilization, employment and financial assistance, to achieve program objectives and improve employment outcomes to:
  - Champion client-centered service delivery that is fair and equitable
  - Build upon the skills, knowledge and performance of staff;
  - Help achieve program objectives; and
  - Improve employment outcomes.

TBDSSAB continues to seek out and offer training opportunities to front line staff and has completed:

- Cultural Competency,
- Strength Based Interviewing Skills,
- Essential Skills for working in Social Services,
- Language matters: rethink how we talk to people
- Practical interventions for Anxiety
- Legislative updates to understanding program intricacies to better serve clients

The Manager, Social Assistance Programs currently sits at OMSSA's education table to assist with future training offered.

*Enter overview of learning supports here.*

### **Staff Training and Development**

Training is provided in a combination of training administered by supervisors, or through purchase of service arrangements. Monthly meetings occur in which presentations from community agencies are provided. Supervisors use the meetings as an opportunity to review processes to ensure they are delivered consistently. Monthly supervisor file reviews inform ongoing training and education needs.

During 2020 – 2021 caseworker training took place for GERE, Restriction/Deferral Directives, Electronic Data Management, My Benefits Two Way Messaging, Centralized Intake.

Human Resources is currently reviewing HRDownloads and associated training therein for deployment to staff that support OW clients. This online delivery platform provides coordination, tracking and reporting on training participation. Through the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, staff engaged in training that included universal precautions and hand hygiene. TBDSSAB is a 'not myself today' Canadian Mental Health Association campaign participant and regular information is provided to staff regarding mental health generally and in the workplace. Training and education opportunities are available for voluntary participation (i.e., financial literacy, mindfulness) for all staff as part of TBDSSAB commitment to health and wellness in the workplace.