



	REPORT No.: 2022-02
MEETING DATE: JANUARY 13, 2022	DATE PREPARED: DECEMBER 24, 2021
SUBJECT: HOMELESS ENUMERATION REPORT 2021	

RECOMMENDATION

THAT with respect to Report No. 2022-02 (Integrated Social Services Division), we, The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (the Board), accept the 2021 Point in Time Survey report;

AND THAT the Board calls upon the Minister of Health and the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions to provide additional mental health and addiction support services in the District of Thunder Bay;

AND THAT the Board calls upon the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to address the service gaps in the child welfare system that contribute to homelessness;

AND THAT the Board calls upon the Minister of Health, the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for expanded funding to establish appropriate transitional housing and supports to assist a greater number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness;

AND THAT the Board calls upon the federal Minister of Housing Inclusion and Diversity, the federal Minister of Indigenous Services, the federal Minister of Health and the federal Minister of Mental Health and Addictions to establish, in consultation with Indigenous partners, new affordable housing programs and appropriate support services to assist Indigenous people living in urban and rural areas;

AND THAT the Board directs Administration to explore opportunities to continue research partnerships to determine the causes of migratory and transient homelessness, and other issues related to homelessness, in order to inform the development of adequate social policy interventions;

AND THAT a copy of this Resolution and the related reports be circulated to the Prime Minister of Canada, the Premier of Ontario, the relevant Federal and Ontario Ministers, the District of Thunder Bay municipalities, the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, The Metis Nation of Ontario, Ontario Native Women's Association, Anishnabek Nation, Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Matawa First Nations, Nokiiwin Tribal Council, Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre, and Thunderbird Indigenous Friendship Centre.

REPORT SUMMARY

To provide The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB or the Board) with an overview of the findings of the 2021 Point in Time Survey and to seek the Board's endorsement of the recommendations resulting from an analysis of the data.

BACKGROUND

As part of the Province of Ontario's efforts to end chronic homelessness by 2025 and the long-term goal to end homelessness, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, (MMAH) established a provincial requirement to conduct local enumeration of people experiencing homelessness by the end of 2021.

Through an amendment to the *Housing Services Act, 2011* (HSA) and a Ministerial Directive, MMAH required all Service Managers to conduct enumeration of those experiencing homelessness in their communities through the use of a Point in Time (PiT) count.

Local homeless enumeration, which is the measurement of the number of people experiencing homelessness over a specific period of time, assists Service Managers and MMAH to better understand the scale and nature of homelessness across the province, as well as inform current and future policy and program design.

TBDSSAB previously participated in a PiT count on April 21, 2018, to determine the number of people experiencing homelessness across the District. A total of 474 individuals participated in the 2018 PiT count. Since 2018, there has been the addition of a number of programs and services that work towards reducing the number of homeless individuals. For example, TBDSSAB introduced the High Needs Homeless Community Housing waitlist category and the Home for Good program. A PiT count was also conducted in January of 2016 and had 289 participants surveyed.

The PiT Count provides a snapshot of the population experiencing homelessness on one day of the year. It is intended to capture numbers, basic demographics, reasons for homelessness, and service use of people experiencing homelessness at a single point in time. It is not expected to identify all homeless individuals, but to act as a snapshot to establish a picture of homelessness in an area.

The PiT method counts unsheltered and emergency-sheltered populations. PiT count data was collected by trained volunteers at emergency shelters, violence against women (VAW) shelters, service organizations and magnet events.

COMMENTS

The 2021 PiT count was conducted on October 2, and continued for a period of 24 hours. The PiT count was conducted in Greenstone, Nipigon, Schreiber, Marathon, Conmee and Thunder Bay. A total of 221 individuals completed the survey, which provides a picture of homelessness across our entire District.

While the number of surveys completed in 2021 (221) was less than those collected in 2018 (474), and 2016 (289), this should not be interpreted as an indication of an overall decrease in the homeless population in the District of Thunder Bay. Due to the presence of COVID-19, the number of locations where the public could drop in and complete the survey was reduced from the 2016 and 2018 PiT Surveys. Further, the PiT count only reflects those individuals who elect to be counted at that particular time.

For the past year, the TBDSSAB has managed a by-name list through the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS). A by-name list is a comprehensive list of every person in a community experiencing homelessness, updated in real time. Using information collected and shared with their consent, each person on the list has a file that includes their name, homeless history, health, and housing needs. At the beginning of October, there were 693 individuals active on the by-name list in the District of Thunder Bay. The by-name list is a much more accurate indicator of the number of people experiencing homelessness in the District of Thunder Bay.

From this analysis of the 2021 PiT survey, the following recommendations have been developed:

Advocacy: Support for Mental Health and Addictions Treatment

The PiT count revealed that 78% of participants reported having used substances and 53% reported having a mental health condition. This correlation between addictions, mental health conditions and homelessness is serious cause for concern. It is known, for example, that opioid-related morbidity and mortality rates occur at a rate much higher in the District of Thunder Bay than the provincial average. In order to address homelessness, additional resources must be devoted to mental health and addictions treatment, prevention, and direct supports.

Recommendation: TBDSSAB will advocate to the Ministry of Health and the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions to encourage additional mental health and addiction support services.

Advocacy: Address the Service Gaps in Child Welfare Systems and Individuals Aging out of Foster Care

Almost half of PiT count participants (45%) responded that they had been in foster care in their youth. That number was significantly higher with participants currently under the age of 25 (59%). For Indigenous participants, experience in the foster care system was higher both in overall responses (54%) and for those under age 25 (61%). Given this correlation between homelessness and a history of foster care – a correlation well-supported by other research into homelessness – additional resources must be devoted to address service gaps in child welfare systems, particularly to those aging out of foster care.

Recommendation: TBDSSAB will advocate to the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to address the service gaps in the child welfare system that contribute to homelessness.

Advocacy: Expansion of the High Needs Homeless and Home for Good systems

Chronically homeless individuals utilize a disproportionate amount of bed nights at emergency shelters and often require wrap-around supports to ensure successful tenancies when housed. Providing long-term, stable housing options for chronically homeless individuals, along with appropriate supports, is an essential step to relieving pressure on overburdened emergency shelter services. As such, there is a need to explore opportunities to expand the High Needs Homeless and Home for Good systems to assist a greater number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

Through the High Needs Homeless system, emergency shelter resident needs are assessed using the Service Prioritization and Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT). Individuals are placed in the High Needs Homeless social housing waitlist prioritization category if their SPDAT score is in excess of a predetermined level. Through this, individuals who are placed in the High Needs Homeless category are housed much quicker than if they remained on the chronological waitlist.

The Home for Good program provides intensive case management support for individuals that are placed in the High Needs Homeless waitlist category, in addition to rent supports for housing.

Recommendation: TBDSSAB will advocate to the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for expanded funding to establish appropriate transitional housing and supports to assist a greater number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

Advocacy: Over representation of Indigenous Peoples in the Homeless Count

The data collected in successive PiT counts shows that about 70% of people that participate in these surveys identify as Indigenous. In 1994 the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation cancelled the housing programs that had been established in the 1970s to assist Indigenous people living off reserve, namely, the Urban Native Housing

and the Rural and Native Housing programs. The 2017 National Housing Strategy was to include a housing strategy for Indigenous people living in urban and rural areas; nothing has been established to date.

Recommendation: TBDSSAB will advocate to the Federal Ministries of Housing, Indigenous Services, Health, and Mental Health and Addictions to establish, in consultation with Indigenous partners, appropriate programs and funding to provide new affordable housing, transitional housing and supports for Indigenous people living in urban and rural areas.

Research on Migratory and Transient Homelessness

Data collected in the PiT count demonstrates that a considerable number of homeless individuals migrate to the City of Thunder Bay and surrounding communities from other areas. Only 27.4% of the homeless surveyed in the City of Thunder Bay stated that this was their home community, and 29.2% of respondents surveyed in the other District communities reported being from that community. Little is known about the reasons for migratory and transient homelessness in the District of Thunder Bay beyond anecdotal accounts. As such, partnerships should be formed to research the correlation between migration of individuals from remote communities and the numbers of people experiencing homelessness, to inform solutions to homelessness in the District of Thunder Bay.

In response to a recommendation from the 2018 homeless enumeration report, Administration has established a working relationship with a group of multi-disciplinary researchers from Lakehead University to conduct a study designed to understand the patterns and rationale of homeless migration. This research project received funding through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and is slated for completion in late 2022.

Recommendation: Administration continue to explore opportunities to establish research partnerships to determine the causes of migratory and transient homelessness, and other issues related to homelessness, in order to inform the development of adequate social policy interventions.

These recommendations will build upon the various programs, initiatives and funding that TBDSSAB has established to address and prevent homelessness. The following funding, programs, and initiatives impact homelessness within the District of Thunder Bay: Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI), High Needs – Homeless Social Housing Waitlist category, Home for Good (HFG), along with the Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative and the Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative.

TBDSSAB will use the data and analysis from the 2021 PiT Survey to inform ongoing and future strategy development to address and prevent homelessness throughout the District of Thunder Bay.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS



There are no immediate financial implications resulting from this report.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that this report provides the Board with an overview of the findings of the 2021 Homelessness Enumeration and provides detailed recommendations resulting from an analysis of the data.

REFERENCE MATERIALS ATTACHED

Attachment #1 [2021 Point in Time Survey Report](#)

PREPARED BY:	Aaron Park, Supervisor, Research and Social Policy The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board
APPROVED / SIGNATURE:	
	Ken Ranta, Director, Integrated Social Services Division The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board
SUBMITTED / SIGNATURE:	
	William (Bill) Bradica, Chief Administrative Officer The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board