



BOARD REPORT

REPORT No.: 2022-06

MEETING DATE: FEBRUARY 17, 2022

SUBJECT: ADVOCACY FOR FEDERAL RAPID HOUSING INITIATIVE FUNDING EXPANSION

RECOMMENDATION

THAT with respect to Report No. 2022-06 (Integrated Social Services Division), we, The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board, call upon the Government of Canada to reconsider the methodology used to determine eligible communities under federal housing programs like the Rapid Housing Initiative;

AND THAT we direct the Chair and Chief Administrative Officer to request a meeting with the federal Minister of Housing and local Members of Parliament to present the Board's concerns;

AND THAT a copy of this Resolution and Board Report No. 2022-06 be circulated to the federal Minister of Housing, Members of Parliament for Thunder Bay-Superior North, Thunder Bay-Rainy River and Algoma-Manitoulin-Kapuskasing, the Ontario Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Thunder Bay District Municipal Councils, the Rural Ontario Municipal Association and Members of Provincial Parliament for Thunder Bay-Superior North, Thunder Bay-Atikokan and Algoma-Manitoulin.

REPORT SUMMARY

To provide The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB or the Board) with an overview of the Government of Canada's Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI) and provide rationale to advocate for the expansion of the funding criteria for this program.

BACKGROUND

The Government of Canada initially committed \$1 billion and launched the RHI in October 2020 to help address urgent housing needs of vulnerable Canadians through the rapid construction of affordable housing.

Under this initiative, \$500 million was provided directly to the 15 largest municipalities in Canada; TBDSSAB did not receive a direct allocation. An application-based component was established for the remaining \$500 million. TBDSSAB did not apply under that component due in part to the timelines for completion, the requirements and type of construction allowed, and so as not to compete with other non-profit organizations for what was expected to be a relatively small amount made available to organizations in the District of Thunder Bay. Administration is aware that at least two organizations in the TBDSSAB service area applied and that both applications were not successful.

The 2021 Federal Budget provided an additional \$1.5 billion for a second release of funding under the RHI, and the additional funding was available under two separate funding streams:

1. Cities Stream

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation identified 30 municipalities for direct allocations, based on the criteria of the number of renters in severe housing need, regional coverage, and local market housing cost in their respective rental housing market.

2. Project Stream

An application-based process, where RHI would only be considered for the applicants who submitted proposals during the first round of RHI funding and whose applications remain eligible for funding.

COMMENTS

None of the communities in the District of Thunder Bay qualified as one of the 30 predetermined municipalities under the Cities Stream, and TBDSSAB was not eligible for the second round of the Project Stream. The two organizations from the District of Thunder Bay that submitted applications under the initial phase of RHI funding were not successful under phase 2. As a result, the District of Thunder Bay was excluded from accessing the second round of funding through the RHI despite the overwhelming need, especially for transitional and supportive housing, in the District of Thunder Bay. Under the current criteria of the RHI, larger centres were favoured with the Cities Stream under both rounds despite the fact that there are homeless and underhoused people in rural communities as well as a lack of transitional/supportive options in smaller communities.

The methodology used to allocate \$500 million under RHI Phase 2 Cities Stream to 30 pre-determined municipalities was based on the number of renters in severe housing need, local market housing cost and regional coverage. Administration believes this was too narrow in scope and that indicators such as the number of chronic homeless (obtained through the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System – HIFIS), as well as mental health and addictions data, and transitional housing waitlist data, would have built a stronger methodology to ensure that resources are allocated to the communities with the highest need.

Administration surveyed service providers in the District of Thunder Bay to gauge the number of transitional housing units, rent supplements and other supports that are available for individuals with mental health or addictions.

Based upon this work, there are 312 transitional units or rent supplements specific for individuals with mental health and addictions. In addition to this, there are 294 individuals that are supported to live independently in the community (Housing First Programs, Social Navigation Programs, etc.). It is presumed that without this support these individuals would not succeed in their tenancy.

At this time, there are a total of 198 people on a wait list for a transitional space or supported rent supplement, and 146 individuals on a waitlist to receive support specific for individuals with mental health and addictions. Capital funding under the RHI would have been an ideal way to begin to address this waitlist and provide the resources to move individuals from homelessness to housing.

The lack of supportive and affordable housing resources to support mental health and addiction needs is increasing the number of the chronic homeless in the District of Thunder Bay. The North West LHIN previously indicated that admission rates to inpatient adult mental health units is the 3rd highest in the province (33.7 per 1000 population compared to 24.9 per 1,000 population provincially).

The average length of stay in inpatient adult mental health units was the highest in the province at 34.9 days and the number of admissions to inpatient adult mental health units is the second highest in the province (671.1 per 100,000, compared to 511.7 per 100,000 population provincially).

Additionally, Opioid-related morbidity and mortality in the District of Thunder Bay, like mental illness, occurs at a rate much higher than the provincial average.

2020 Comparative Opioid-Related Morbidity and Mortality in Ontario and the District of Thunder Bay

Rate per 100,000 People	Ontario	District of Thunder Bay
Emergency Department Visits for Opioid Poisonings	71.6	174.6
Hospitalization Rates for Opioid Poisonings	13.6	24.6
Deaths from Opioid Poisonings	10.3	41.4

Source: Public Health Ontario, Interactive Opioid Tool

With access to the funding that was committed through the RHI, the TBDSSAB would have had the resources to begin to address the capital costs associated with addressing the need for affordable housing in the District of Thunder Bay, especially for transitional housing and support for the homeless.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPACT

This report meets the Board's 2020-2023 strategic direction of Advocacy, particularly the strategy to advocate for local, flexible solutions.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS



There are no immediate financial implications with this report.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that this report provides an overview of the Government of Canada's Rapid Housing Initiative and provides rationale to advocate for the expansion of the funding criteria for this program.

REFERENCE MATERIALS

None

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