



BOARD REPORT

REPORT No.: 2022-41

MEETING DATE: JULY 21, 2022

SUBJECT: 2022 AMO CONFERENCE BRIEFINGS PACKAGE

RECOMMENDATION

THAT with respect to Report No. 2022-41 (CAO Division), we The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (the Board), approve the delegation briefings package for the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) 2022 conference as presented;

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

AND THAT the Briefings Package be circulated to all member municipalities, the Northern Ontario Service Deliverers' Association, the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association, the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, the Rural Ontario Municipal Association and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario;

AND THAT the CAO (or their delegate) attend the 2022 AMO conference to provide support to the Board Chair and other Board members in their meetings with provincial officials regarding these issues.

REPORT SUMMARY

To provide The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB or the Board) with the briefings package for the 2022 Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) conference for review and approval.

BACKGROUND

AMO will be holding its 2022 Annual Conference on August 14-17 in Ottawa. As part of the conference programming, organizations may submit requests to meet with a Minister or Parliamentary Assistant.

COMMENTS

Position papers have been drafted by the Integrated Social Services Division team in consultation with the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer on three issues that are recommended to the Board for advocacy with provincial representatives.

These issues were presented to the Board as part of a First Report at its June 16, 2022 meeting for review and discussion.

The three proposed advocacy topics include:

- 1) Adjustments to Social Assistance Rates
- 2) Supportive Housing Strategy
- 3) Homelessness Prevention Program Funding and Allocation

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPACT

This report aligns with the following Strategic Direction: Advocacy

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS



There are no immediate financial implications related to this report.

CONCLUSION

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

REFERENCE MATERIALS

Attachment #1 [Briefings Package for the 2022 AMO Conference](#)

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APPROVED BY	William (Bill) Bradica, Chief Administrative Officer
SIGNATURE	
SUBMITTED BY:	William (Bill) Bradica, Chief Administrative Officer



THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD

Adjustments to Social Assistance Rates

POSITION PAPER

August 2022

Association of Municipalities of Ontario 2022 Conference

Prepared by:

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board

Prepared for:

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

Brief

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) urges the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) to address the adequacy of current social assistance rates, in particular the need to improve the maximum shelter allowances for recipients of Ontario Works.

Summary

TBDSSAB urges MCCSS to adjust Ontario Works shelter rates to match local average market rents and to set basic needs and shelter rates for Ontario Works according to locally defined market baskets of essential goods, including transportation, telephone, average market rents and a nutritious food basket, that are adjusted annually according to the Consumer Price Index.

Background

Rents in Thunder Bay increased 3.5% between 2018 and 2019, 2.3% from 2019 and 2020 and by 3.1% from 2020 and 2021.¹ As illustrated in Figure A, Ontario Works shelter allowances are insufficient to cover housing expenses for a benefit unit of their

¹ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Housing Market Information Portal. 2021. <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/hmiportal>

size. Households are then placed in the position to draw on their Basic Needs Allowances meant for food and clothing to pay for shelter costs.

For example, a single individual on Ontario Works receiving a Shelter rate of \$390 and Basic Needs Allowance of \$343 (total combined \$733) will experience a shortfall of approximately \$490 after paying the average rent on a bachelor apartment (\$809.00), the cost of a nutritious food basket (\$264.56), transportation (\$80) and telephone (\$60) in Thunder Bay and this list does not include other household necessities which would further add to the deficit.²

Figure A: Shelter Allowances Compared to Average Rent in Thunder Bay³

Benefit Unit Size	Apartment Size	Average Rent (Thunder Bay)	OW Shelter Rate	Average Shelter Allowance Shortfall
1	Bachelor	\$809	\$390	-\$419
2	1 Bedroom	\$950	\$642	-\$308
3	2 Bedroom	\$1,168	\$697	-\$471
4	3+ Bedroom	\$1,083	\$756	-\$327
5	3+ Bedroom	\$1,083	\$815	-\$268
6+	3+ Bedroom	\$1,083	\$844	-\$239

Households in such circumstances ultimately turn to food banks to account for some of this shortfall. In the District of Thunder Bay, over 26,000 meals are provided each month.⁴

² Thunder Bay District Health Unit. "The Cost of Eating Well in the District of Thunder Bay 2021." <https://www.tbdhu.com/sites/default/files/files/resource/2019-10/The%20Cost%20of%20Eating%20Well%202019.pdf>

³ Note: for benefit units above 4 members, the average rent for 3+ bedrooms used as per available data from CMHC. The average rent for units above 3 bedrooms will be higher, resulting in an increased deficit. October 2021 rents, current 2022 OW shelter rates.

⁴ Regional Food Distribution Association. FAQs. <http://www.foodbanksnorthwest.ca/about-us/faqs/> Accessed May 4, 2022.

Further, the Basic Needs allowance has not increased since 2018. According to the Bank of Canada, the cost of a fixed basket of consumer products has risen by 12.38% between 2018 and 2022.⁵ Further significant inflation in 2022 to date is driving the costs of these products dramatically higher.

Figure B: Canadian Inflation Rates⁶

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2022	5.1%	5.7%	6.7%	6.8%								
2021	1.0%	1.1%	2.2%	3.4%	3.6%	3.1%	3.7%	4.1%	4.4%	4.7%	4.7%	4.8%

This results in significantly less buying power today for recipients of Social Assistance. Therefore, the Basic Needs allowance should be increased and set to rise each year with the increased cost of living to ensure individuals and families maintain the same buying power year over year.

Therefore, TBDSSAB urges the MCCSS to adjust Ontario Works shelter rates to match local average market rents. As well, TBDSSAB calls on the MCCSS to set basic needs and shelter rates for Ontario Works according to locally defined market baskets of essential goods — including transportation, telephone, average market rents and a nutritious food basket— that are adjusted annually according to the Consumer Price Index.

⁵ Bank of Canada Inflation Calculator. <https://www.bankofcanada.ca/rates/related/inflation-calculator/>

⁶ Canadian Inflation Rates. <https://www.rateinflation.com/inflation-rate/canada-historical-inflation-rate> Accessed June 7, 2022.



THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD

Supportive Housing Strategy

POSITION PAPER

August 2022

Association of Municipalities of Ontario 2022 Conference

Prepared by:

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board

Prepared for:

Hon. Sylvia Jones, Minister of Health

Hon. Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

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

Brief

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) urges the Province to establish a Supportive Housing Strategy for Ontario.

Summary

TBDSSAB urges the MMAH, MOH, and MCCSS to continue the important work established by the virtual engagement process initiated by the three ministries that sought targeted input and feedback on how the government can improve the supportive housing system. These engagement sessions were followed by the release of **What We Heard: Improving Ontario's Supportive Housing Programs 2020-2021**. The TBDSSAB urges the MMAH, MOH, and MCCSS to work with Service Managers to finalize an Ontario Supportive Housing Strategy.

Background

It is evident that various supports and supportive housing solutions are required to ensure successful tenancies, prevent evictions, and to end the cycle of homelessness. For example, the Housing First approach to ending homelessness is well-known for its individualized and client-driven supports as a core principle in sustaining permanent housing.

Similarly, the Home for Good (HFG) initiative (now part of Homelessness Prevention Programs) launched by the Province committed funding to help Service Managers house homeless individuals and connect them to appropriate supports to establish successful transitions into stable housing.

From inception, the TBDSSAB, through the HFG program has housed 249 individuals. As of March 2022, 70 individuals are receiving a portable HFG subsidy. 82 clients are provided with case management services through the HFG support staff from Dilico and SJCG.

In addition, since 2021 TBDSSAB has worked in partnership with Elevate NWO through the Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF) to support 41 individuals who were living in encampment-style or precarious housing environments. This partnership evolved into housing 25 individuals in cluster units in TBDSSAB housing with supports in place, and 12 individuals gaining employment at Elevate's warming centre. TBDSSAB also partnered with Matawa's WiiChiiHehWayWin street outreach program to provide more than 1,691 people with much needed supports and outreach services.

Further, through recent investment from the SSRF, TBDSSAB has realized the establishment of 51 new/planned transitional housing spaces. SSRF funding allowed for partnerships to be identified for the operational functions while TBDSSAB supported the capital development.

These new beds build upon the previous investments made in supportive and transitional housing stock. Through the Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH) and HFG program the TBDSSAB provided funding for 20 units as part of the Salvation Army's Journey to Life Program and another 20 units at the Lodge on Dawson through the HFG program. Despite these investments, more supportive and transitional solutions are required. The By-Name List for the District of Thunder Bay currently has 722 active individuals with that number expected to rise as more organizations in the TBDSSAB service area are added to the system.

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

The high incidences of poor mental health and addiction amongst the homeless population is well documented. Data from the TBDSSAB's 2021 Point in Time Count of the homelessness population showed that 78% of participants reported having used substances and 53% reported having a mental health condition.

In addition, the former North West LHIN (now Ontario Health North) had 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. Further, 54% of residents aged 19 and older exceed at least one of Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines, compared to the 44% average for Ontario¹.

Without the appropriate supports and supportive housing in place, homeless individuals have a much lower likelihood of housing retention.

A multi-ministry pan Ontario supportive housing strategy will ensure a more efficient system that will better support people with needs who require support from multiple systems.

Therefore, TBDSSAB urges the Province of Ontario to establish a Supportive Housing Strategy for Ontario, and engage Service Managers in the design and delivery process.

¹ Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Snapshots: Alcohol Use Snapshot: Self-reported rate of exceeding either low-risk alcohol drinking guideline, accessed June 9, 2022.



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

HPP Funding & Allocation

POSITION PAPER

August 2022

Association of Municipalities of Ontario 2022 Conference

Prepared by:

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board

Prepared for:

Hon. Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Brief

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) appreciates and acknowledges the amalgamation of the Home for Good (HFG), Strong Communities Rent Supplement Program and Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) funding allocations and the increased flexibility allowed under the Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP). However, the **TBDSSAB urges the MMAH to increase the TBDSSAB allocation to at least \$6,194,503, revise the current allocation methodology utilized for HPP allotment, and to hold the allowable administration level at 7.5%.**

Summary

In order to build upon the success of the former HFG and SSRF programs and reduce the number of emergency shelter bed nights used by people experiencing chronic homelessness, the TBDSSAB urges the MMAH to increase the HPP funding amount to at least \$6,194,903 to allow the TBDSSAB to expand transitional services for those experiencing chronic homelessness. Further, it is requested that the MMAH revise the current utilization methodology utilized for the HPP allotment.

Background

Through the former HFG funding allocation, the TBDSSAB created a system to house homeless individuals and families with appropriate supports by utilizing a special category on the Community Housing waitlist called the High Needs Homeless (HNH).

The system works by the TBDSSAB Transition Outreach Support Workers (TOSW) attending the emergency shelters to assist the homeless to complete the Community Housing application as well as completing an initial Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT) assessment to determine their support needs.

Once completed, and if determined eligible, the individual or family is placed on the HNH waitlist and a support referral is made to a HNH funded support agency. These supports were previously funded through HFG and will continue to be funded through HPP.

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

From inception, the Home for Good program has housed 249 individuals. As of March 2022, 70 individuals are receiving a portable HFG subsidy. 82 clients are provided with case management services through the HFG support staff from Dilico and SJCG. As this is a transitional housing and support program, individuals do progress on to more independent living, often receiving rent supports from TBDSSAB.

Since Fall 2021, TBDSSAB has worked in partnership with Elevate NWO through the Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF) to support 41 individuals who were living in encampment-style or precarious housing environments. This partnership evolved into housing 25 individuals in cluster units in TBDSSAB housing with supports in place, and 12 individuals gaining employment at Elevate's warming centre. TBDSSAB also partnered with Matawa's WiiChiiHehWayWin street outreach program to provide more than 1,691 people with much needed supports and outreach services.

In addition, through recent investment from the SSRF TBDSSAB has realized the establishment of 51 new/planned transitional housing spaces. SSRF funding allowed for partnerships to be identified for the operational functions while TBDSSAB supported the capital development.

Despite the successful implementation of the HFG program and the strategic investments through the SSRF, people experiencing chronic homelessness have accounted for 22% of the emergency shelter bed nights used in 2022. In addition, there are 85 individuals on the HNH waitlist for HNH supports. With the requested increase in HPP funding of \$627,103, the TBDSSAB will be able to support an additional 45-50¹ chronic homeless individuals and families, helping to achieve the province's stated goal of addressing chronic homelessness.

In addition, the TBDSSAB encourages MMAH to adjust the methodology used to allocate the available HPP funds. The TBDSSAB suggests that the By-Name List number adjusted for population should be the primary indicator for the allocation of funding.

The MMAH should also take into consideration additional funding for Service Managers with rural and remote locations. Rural and remote communities do not typically have the purpose-built infrastructure to accommodate homeless populations. In these cases, more expensive options exist such as motel stays for the homeless. This costs more than the cost of a stay at a designated emergency shelter. The TBDSSAB's Point in Time Count showed a high number of homeless individuals in several the smaller locations across the District of Thunder Bay. Therefore, additional funding, beyond the \$627,103 being requested today, would also be needed to provide supports to individuals in other communities in the TBDSSAB service area. Currently most of the homeless prevention service effort is concentrated in the City of Thunder Bay and TBDSSAB is using a portion of the SSRF Phase 5 to determine the level of service that is needed in the other 14 communities in the District of Thunder Bay.

Further, the high prevalence of mental health and addictions issues in the North contribute to challenges in stabilizing homeless individuals and accessing appropriate supports.

¹ Estimated number of individuals that can be supported is based on the cost to support and house an individual through the former HFG program.

The TBDSSAB's 2016, 2018, and 2021 PiT Counts all showed very high incidences of mental health and addictions amongst the homeless population.

In addition, the former North West LHIN (now Ontario Health North) had 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. Further, 54% of residents aged 19 and older exceed at least one of Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines, compared to the 44% average for Ontario.²

Addressing poor mental health and addictions is key to building successful tenancies for those currently homeless. Additional consideration of these pressures should be included in the allocation methodology. These factors should be considered in a new HPP allocation methodology.

The TBDSSAB also urges the MMAH to reconsider the reduction of the allowable HPP administration from 7.5% to 5%. The allowable HPP administration percentage has decreased from 10% to 7.5% in this current funding year and is announced to be further reduced to 5% in 2022-23. This reduction results in fewer resources available to Service Managers to deliver the HPP program and results in a download on the municipalities in the District of Thunder Bay to continue to ensure staffing levels are sufficient to deliver the provincially funded programs.

² Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Snapshots: Alcohol Use Snapshot: Self-reported rate of exceeding either low-risk alcohol drinking guideline, accessed June 9, 2022.

Therefore, TBDSSAB urges the MMAH to increase the TBDSSAB's HPP allocation to at least \$6,194,503, revise the current allocation methodology utilized for HPP allotment, and allow Service Manager's to utilize up to 7.5% of the HPP allocation for administration costs.