



THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD

Supportive Housing Strategy

POSITION PAPER

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Prepared for:

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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.