



## BOARD REPORT

REPORT No.: 2023-24

MEETING DATE: JUNE 15, 2023

SUBJECT: 2023 ONTARIO WORKS SERVICE PLAN ADDENDUM

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### RECOMMENDATION

THAT with respect to Report No. 2023-24 (Integrated Social Services Division) we, The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board, approve the draft 2023 Ontario Works Service Plan Addendum, as presented;

AND THAT we direct the Chief Administrative Officer to submit the approved 2023 Ontario Works Service Plan Addendum 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 Addendum (Addendum) for the 2023 planning cycle as required by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS).

### BACKGROUND

Service System Managers who have not yet transitioned under Employment Services Transformation are required to submit a 2023 Addendum to the 2021-2022 Ontario Works Service Delivery Plan to MCCSS. Administration has prepared the draft Addendum for review and approval prior to submitting it to the MCCSS.

The Addendum outlines TBDSSAB's servicing plan under the following categories for the 2023 planning cycle:

#### 1. Social Assistance (SA) Service Delivery

- Accelerated digital delivery solutions
- Centralized and automated delivery
- Risk-based eligibility review
- Access to employment and training.

**2. Improving Employment Outcomes**

- Articulating how the TBDSSAB will meet the 3% improvement target.

**3. Leverage Local Economic Development**

- Describing the activities and approaches to collaborate with local economic organizations, employers, and other stakeholders to connect social assistance clients to available skills training, work experience and jobs.

**4. Develop and Maintain Local Community Service Partnerships**

- Demonstrating strategies used to strengthen the relationship with local community providers to specifically address long-term recipients of social assistance and marginalized or disadvantaged groups.

**5. Strengthen Program Accountability**

- Describing the program control for greater delivery and financial accountability.

**COMMENTS**

This Report includes internal as well as external data obtained through broad research and review. 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 Addendum provides an overview of the Board's achievements over the 2021-2022 service cycle, the environmental factors influencing service delivery and client outcomes, and the service delivery strategy for 2023.

**STRATEGIC PLAN IMPACT**

Service Planning for 2023 is in line with Objective #22 of the TBDSSAB Strategic Plan to exceed the Provincial average of exits to employment.



**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no immediate financial implications related to this report.

**CONCLUSION**

It is concluded that the draft 2023 Ontario Works Service Plan Addendum be approved as presented and submitted to the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services.

**REFERENCE MATERIALS**Attachment #1 [DRAFT 2023 Ontario Works Service Plan Addendum](#)

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

# **Ontario Works Service Plan Addendum Template**

## **2023**

**For Non-Employment Services Transformation (EST)  
Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs)  
District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs)**



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# ONTARIO WORKS SERVICE PLAN TEMPLATE

*Note: This template allows delivery partners to provide updates on services provided to support the 2021 Ministry priorities. This includes details on progress made, changes to current services, and or new initiatives being undertaken in year 3 (2023) during this extended period.*

## **Delivery Partner:**

**The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB)**

**For year three: 2023**

## **Section 1: Ontario Works Priorities**

### **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 2023 to support a better client experience, outcomes, and system efficiencies.*

#### **1. Social Assistance (SA) Service Delivery**

- *Accelerated digital delivery solutions*
- *Centralized and automated delivery*
- *Risk-based eligibility review*
- *Access to employment and training.*

TBDSSAB developed a general mailbox for applicants/participants to submit information to their Caseworker and continues to promote the use of My Benefits. During 2023, Administration will be exploring text options to support communication based on client preferences.

TBDSSAB continues to work with Centralized Intake and is streamlining local processes to ensure the applicant has a positive experience. In April 2023, all staff participated in refresher training on processes and service delivery.

Due to the COVID pandemic, TBDSSAB changed to a risk-based grant strategy and continues to employ this method of delivery.

TBDSSAB continues to provide training and employment opportunities for participants of OW. In the fall of 2021, a pilot partnership was launched with a hotel to support entry

into the workforce. Participants are referred to TBDSSAB Workshop Coaches who assist the participant in several training programs including WHMIS, Service Excellence, and Interview Skills. A new resumé and cover letter are completed and the participant practices interview skills. Once the participant has completed this work, their resumé is submitted to the hotel for an interview.

In July 2022, the program was named the Going to Work program and there was an addition of a Job Developer to support access to employment opportunities with more employers. To date, there have been 27 employer partnerships formed, 32 participants have been hired and \$6,388 in employment incentives paid to partner employers.

## **2. Improving Employment Outcomes**

- *As outlined in the Ministry's memo, the Ministry is establishing a 3% improvement to the employment outcome target, where feasible, to encourage continuous improvement within the program. Articulate how the 3% improvement target will be met for 2023.*

TBDSSAB has set exits to employment as an internal Key Performance Indicator (KPI). TBDSSAB's Strategic Plan 2020-2023 KPI for this outcome is to have the percentage of caseload exiting for employment exceed the Provincial average. According to the performance report, 1.11% of caseload exited for employment for the Provincial average and 1.33% exited the TBDSSAB's caseload for 2022.

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

- *Describe the activities and approaches to collaborate with local economic organizations, employers, and other stakeholders to connect SA clients to available skills training, work experience and jobs.*

The Going to Work program partners with local employers and provides job postings to applicants. Support is provided to the client to prepare for the interview and position. Once the applicant is hired, TBDSSAB provides funds to the employer to offset training costs and to reduce barriers to hiring. Ongoing support for the client and relationship building with the employer help to support the success of the program. To date, TBDSSAB has placed 32 SA clients into employment through this initiative.

## **4. Develop and Maintain Local Community Service Partnerships**

- *Demonstrate strategies used to strengthen the relationship with local community providers to specifically address long-term recipients of SA and marginalized or disadvantaged groups.*

TBDSSAB continues to work with St Joseph's Care Group Behavioral Health Sciences to have participants access various types of assessments in order to ascertain the types of barriers that are preventing them from moving forward. Often these assessments are used to add additional information to strengthen the Disability Determination Package.

We continue to partner with Confederation College and Lakehead Adult Education Centre to offer educational choices for participants to move forward with their employment goals. Confederation College has campuses in Greenstone and Marathon and offers distance education through the District of Thunder Bay. As well, Lakehead Adult Education Centre offers distance education through out the District of Thunder Bay. A Confederation College program is offered on site at TBDSSAB headquarters facilitating easy access to training and education and removing barriers that may prevent uptake.

**5. Strengthen Program Accountability**

- *Describe the program control for greater delivery and financial accountability.*

TBDSSAB Administration continues to review files each month that are randomly identified using the CRS100M-Integrated Case Summary Consolidated SDA Report. This is in addition to financial controls reviewed by Corporate Service Division. The objective is to achieve 0% non-compliance and to ensure accountability for the program delivery.

## Section 2: Environmental Scan

<b>External Influences</b>
<i>Updates to external influences such as political climate, social and economic environment, demographic trends, geographic, and climate-induced influences.</i>
<p><b><u>Political</u></b> In accordance with the <i>District Social Services Administration Board Act 1990</i>, 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).</p> <p><b><u>Demographic Shifts in Population</u></b> TBDSSAB's service area spans a geographic area of 103,723 square km and covers a population of 146,862 persons. According to 2021 Census data, the District of Thunder Bay's population remained relatively stable, with a slight increase in population of 0.6% from the 2016 census. During this same period, the population of Ontario increased by 5.8%.<sup>1</sup></p> <p>Census information shows an aging population in the North. The percentage of the population aged 65 and older in Ontario was 18.5% in 2021, while in the District of Thunder Bay this demographic represented 21.9% of the population, which is a 12.9% increase from 2016.<sup>2</sup></p>

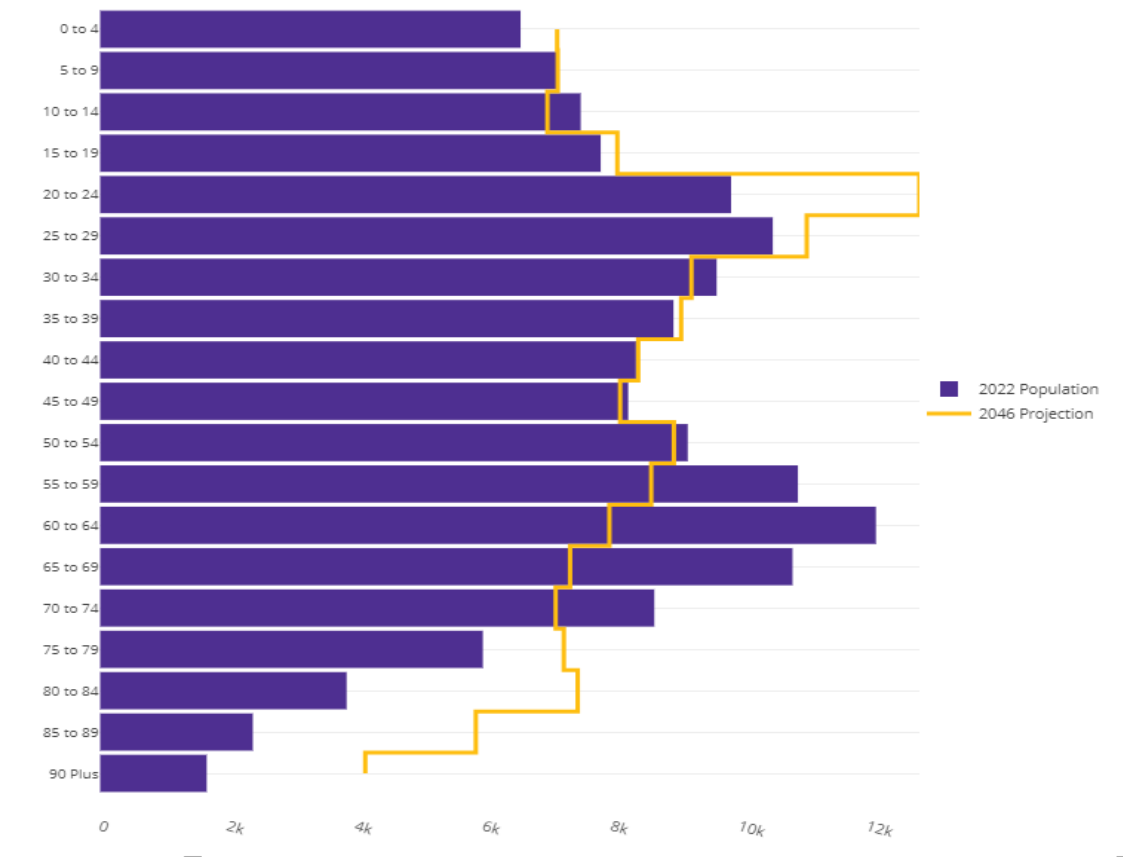
<sup>1</sup> Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



The Ministry of Finance projects the senior population will continue to grow into 2046 with the aging of the boomer generation. By 2032, the 65+ population is predicted to make up 26.7% of the population of the District of Thunder Bay and then decrease to 25.6% by 2046.<sup>3</sup>

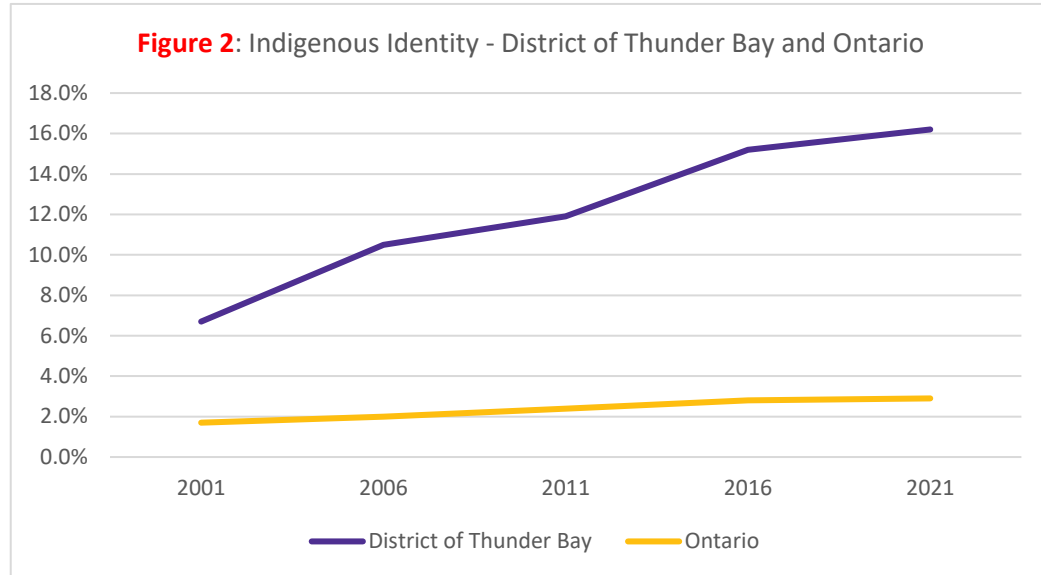
**Figure 1**  
Ministry of Finance Population 2022 and 2046 Projection



Although the population in Northwestern Ontario is relatively 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 16.2% in 2021, a 6.4% increase from 2016, and significantly higher than the overall Ontario percentage of 2.9%. 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 electing to 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

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Finance Population Projections 2021-2046, July 2022.

self-reported identification. Put simply, more people are newly identifying as Aboriginal on the census—a continuation of a trend over time.”<sup>4</sup>



**Figure 3: % of Population Identifying as Indigenous**

Municipality	2016	2021	% chg. From 2016-2021
Conmee	4.3%	8.1%	88.4%
Dorion	16.4%	14.6%	-11.0%
Gillies	7.6%	11%	44.7%
Greenstone	31.8%	32.9%	3.5%
Manitouwadge	10.9%	9.9%	-9.2%
Marathon	12.7%	17.9%	40.9%
Neebing	4.1%	8.7%	112.2%
Nipigon	28.3%	25.2%	-11.0%
O'Connor	1.6%	4.8%	200.0%
Oliver Paipoonge	8.4%	7.0%	-16.7%
Red Rock	18.3%	21.1%	15.3%
Schreiber	7.6%	7.6%	0.0%
Shuniah	4.9%	8.8%	79.6%
Terrace Bay	9.1%	12.7%	39.6%
Thunder Bay City	12.8%	14.1%	10.2%
TWOMO	10.5%	13.0%	23.8%
District of Thunder Bay Total	15.2%	16.2%	6.6%
Ontario	2.8%	2.9%	3.6%

<sup>4</sup> Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: Key Results from the 2016 census.

As of the 2021 Census, 57.9% of the District of Thunder Bay's Indigenous population was under the age of 35, compared to 52.5% in Ontario overall.<sup>5</sup> The average age of the Indigenous population in the District of Thunder Bay is 32.4 years compared to 42.5 years average for the non-Indigenous population. It is expected that the number of Indigenous applicants will continue to increase due to the percentage of population and the high in-migration of persons from First Nation communities into municipalities across the District seeking 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 20.7% of people in the District of Thunder Bay have no certificate, diploma, or degree, compared to 16.7% of people within Ontario, and a lower percentage of people with a university degree (20.6% in the District of Thunder Bay compared to 29.9% in Ontario as a whole).<sup>6</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.

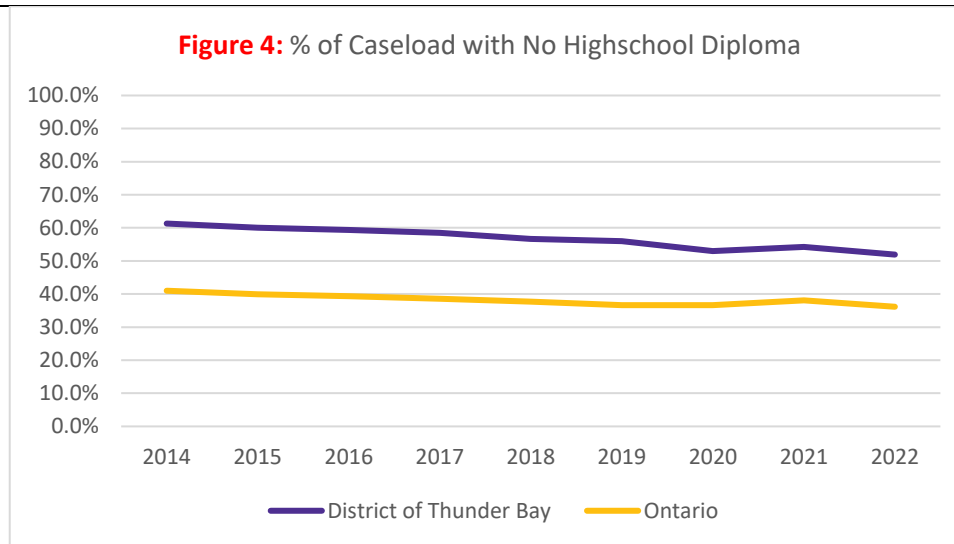
Since 2014, an average of 57% of TBDSSAB OW recipients are without a secondary school diploma which demonstrates a need to upgrade education, social, and job skills to be able to secure sustainable employment. As a result, at the Thunder Bay delivery site, TBDSSAB continues to partner with the Lakehead District School Board 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 other areas of the District, participants are referred to the nearest education or literacy program, as appropriate. As of September 2022, 51.9% of the District of Thunder Bay's OW caseload was without a secondary school diploma, 15.8% higher than the OW provincial average.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Statistics Canada. 2021 Census of Population.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Caseload at a Glance Report, SAMS



### **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 2021 is 45.1 points higher than the overall province of Ontario and 27.61 points higher than the national score. Thunder Bay CMA recorded the highest violent CSI among Canadian CMAs in 2021 at 176.3.<sup>8</sup>

**Figure 5: Crime Severity Index Over Time**

	Crime Severity Index			% Change
	Thunder Bay	Ontario	Canada	Thunder Bay
2016	83.84	53.29	72.0	4.68
2017	86.55	56.35	73.6	3.23
2018	99.09	60.4	75.6	14.49
2019	101.79	60.99	79.8	2.72
2020	94.86	55.47	73.4	-6.81
2021	101.31	56.21	73.7	6.8

<sup>8</sup> Statistics Canada. Statistics Canada. [Table 35-10-0026-01 Crime severity index and weighted clearance rates, Canada, provinces, territories, and Census Metropolitan Areas](#)

While the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on police reported crime across Canada<sup>9</sup>, the CSI for the Thunder Bay CMA increased by 6.8% from 2020 to 2021 with the end of pandemic measures.<sup>10</sup>

Within the context of family violence, in 2021, the Thunder Bay CMA had a rate of 395 victims of police-reported family violence per 100,000 residents. the seventh highest rate of CMAs in Canada. This has increased from the 2019 rate of 289 victims per 100,000 residents and puts the Thunder Bay CMA above the Canadian average of 337 victims per 100,000. When split by reported gender, the rate of family violence is 562 per 100,000 women and 225 per 100,000 for men. Women are 2.5 times more likely to be the victims of police-reported family violence in Thunder Bay.<sup>11</sup> Police-reported family violence overall has increased slightly (4.4%) since before the pandemic for Canada overall in 2021, while it increased 36.7% in the Thunder Bay CMA.<sup>12</sup>

In 2021/2022, Indigenous adults were over-represented in admissions to provincial and territorial correctional services, as they accounted for 31.1% of admissions to correction services, an increase from 30.4% in 2018/2019.<sup>13</sup> There are two provincial correctional facilities in Thunder Bay. In the 2021 census, the census metropolitan area of Thunder Bay had 14.1% of the population that identify as Indigenous,<sup>14</sup> which is less than half the rate of Indigenous adults who are admitted to correction facilities.

### **Opioid Use**

As of 2021, the Thunder Bay District Health Unit (TBDHU) catchment area has among the highest rate of opioid-related deaths in Ontario (78.8 per 100,000 residents compared to the Ontario average of 19.2), which increased 82.1% from 2020.<sup>15</sup>

In 2021, the number of emergency department visits for opioid-related illness in the Northwest LHIN area increased 76.6% from 2020; opioid-related deaths increased 79.5%.<sup>16</sup> In the District of Thunder Bay, paramedic calls for opioid overdoses have been increasing over time but saw a sharp 52.8% increase in 2021.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>9</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>10</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>11</sup> Statistics Canada. [Table 35-10-0200-01 Family and non-family victims of police-reported violent crime and traffic offences causing bodily harm or death, by age and gender of victim](#)

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

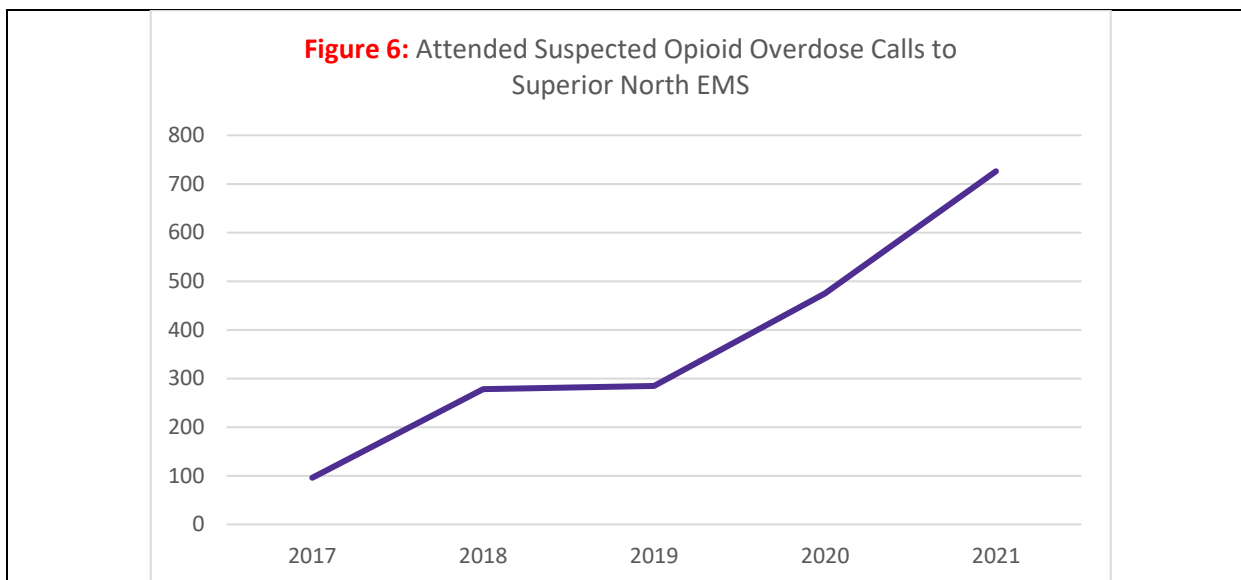
<sup>13</sup> Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Adult Correctional Services Survey, Integrated Correctional Services Survey and Canadian Correctional Services Survey, 2021/2022.

<sup>14</sup> Source: Census profiles 1996-2021

<sup>15</sup> Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Interactive Opioid Tool. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario; 2020. Available from: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/data-and-analysis/substance-use/interactive-opioid-tool>

<sup>16</sup> Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Interactive Opioid Tool. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario; 2020. Available from: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/data-and-analysis/substance-use/interactive-opioid-tool>

<sup>17</sup> The District of Thunder Bay Health Unit Opioid Information <https://www.tbdhu.com/opioidinfo>



### **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>18</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>19</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. Residents in the District of Thunder Bay face many health inequities due to numerous and interconnected issues including access to healthcare.

Health services are funded? primarily by Ontario Health, formerly the North West Local Health Integration Network (NWLHIN). There is 1 regional hospital, and 1 rehabilitation hospital in the City of Thunder Bay, and 5 community hospitals located in Greenstone, Manitouwadge, Marathon, Nipigon, and Terrace Bay.<sup>20</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%) which is 5% lower than the provincial average. Both statistics rank the second lowest in Ontario.<sup>21</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>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.cpha.ca/what-are-social-determinants-health>

<sup>19</sup> [https://www.who.int/social\\_determinants/sdh\\_definition/en/](https://www.who.int/social_determinants/sdh_definition/en/)

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.northwestlhinc.on.ca/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.hqontario.ca/System-Performance/Primary-Care-Performance>

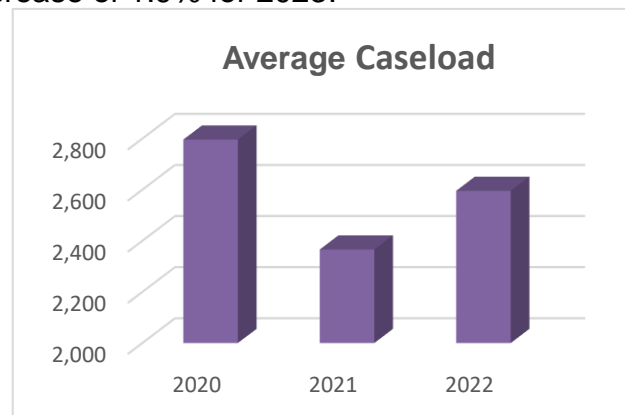
<sup>22</sup> Thunder Bay District Health Unit. “Opiate Use and Impacts in Thunder Bay District.”

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>23</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.

### **Caseload Description**

*Have there been any changes to current composition of caseload and provide anticipated changes over the course of 2023 (i.e., projected growth/ decline)?*

TBDSSAB saw the caseload reduce in 2021 during the pandemic and then increase with the cessation of the Canada Recovery Benefit. The caseload has increased month over month through out 2022 and continuing in the first 3 months of 2023. TBDSSAB has projected an increase of 1.9% for 2023.



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

*Provide any updates to the local labour market that may have occurred during year 2, including changes to:*

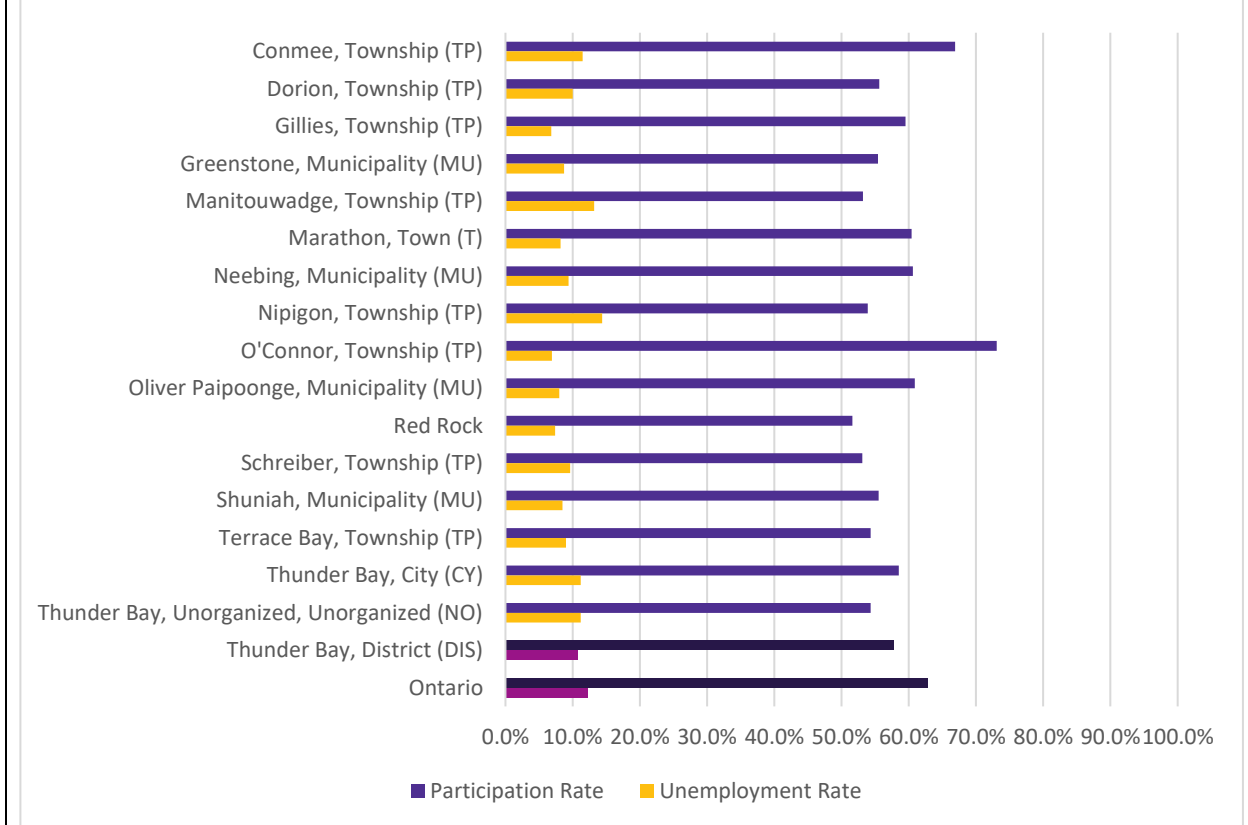
- *Typical job patterns: part-time, seasonal, self-employment, etc.*
- *Common industries: manufacturing, hospitality, etc.*
- *Anticipated industry growth or decline, etc.*
- *Employment opportunities in First Nations communities.*

### **Labour Market Participation**

Stated in the 2021 census, the unemployment rate for the District of Thunder Bay was 10.8%, compared to the overall Ontario rate at 12.2%. The Labour Force participation rate in the municipalities of the District of Thunder Bay has increased since 2016, and ranges from 51.6% to 73.1%; overall, 57.8% of adults 15-64 are participating in the workforce in the District of Thunder Bay, compared to the provincial average of 62.8%.

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.northwestlhin.on.ca/goalsandachievements/IntegratedHealthServicesPlan.aspx>

Figure 7: Unemployment and Participation Rates - 2021 Census



The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for the Economic Region of Thunder Bay CMA is 4.1%, and 8.0% for Northern Ontario, compared to Ontario’s 5.1% for March 2023, however, Thunder Bay CMA has a participation rate estimate of 63.8% and an employment rate of 59.6%. As in the past, these are lower than provincial labour force statistics. Ontario’s March 2023 participation rate estimate is 65.5%, and employment rate is 62.2%.<sup>24</sup>

### Local Labour Market and Economic Development

#### The District of Thunder Bay

According to the Ontario Ministry of Finance, the population of the District of Thunder Bay is expected to slowly increase 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 65+ is projected to increase to 26% of the population by 2046; the overall population is projected to increase approximately 1.7%, but the population in the workforce (15-64) will have decreased 3.5% in this time.

<sup>24</sup> Statistics Canada Labour force characteristics, three month moving average, seasonally adjusted. Table 14-10-0380-02 April 2023



As of 2022, residents 65 or older years of age made up 22.2% 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 27% of the total population by 2036 and remain steady from there into 2046. The total population of the District of Thunder Bay is expected to continue to increase slightly by 1.7% from 2022 to 2046.

According to the North Superior Workforce Planning Board (NSWPB) 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.

The lack of economic recovery from the decreases in the forestry sector since 2006 continue to affect the District of Thunder Bay. There has been renewed interest in mining and exploration with the world price of gold and other metals consistently high over the past ten years. Gold mines which closed or were close to shutting down are now being explored as viable. Of particular note is the potential for the mining of chromite in the Ring of Fire which could lift the economy of the District by adding new infrastructure and approximately 1,000 jobs.<sup>25</sup> It is important to note that discussions surrounding the mining of the Ring of Fire have been held for more than a decade with little progress. The development of the Ring of Fire has seen many delays and has still not come to fruition as of the April 2023, despite the Ontario Government committing to pushing the project along since 2018.<sup>26</sup>

Regarding pandemic recovery, the NSWPB comments that the impacts of job losses year-over-year have been more severe for women, low-wage earners, and those without a post-secondary degree, and that these groups will continue to feel impacts disproportionately over the next several years.<sup>27</sup> The impacts of employment loss will be felt more drastically by TBDSSAB's clients as demographics show the caseload fits into these groups.

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

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<sup>25</sup>Ontario Business Report. "Ring of Fire Lights Up Northern Ontario's Mining Industry".  
<http://www.mri.gov.on.ca/obr/>

<sup>26</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>27</sup> North Superior Workforce Planning Board. "Setting the Course: Navigating the North Superior Workforce in 2022-2023." <https://www.nswpb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/NSWPB-LLMP-for-2022-2023-22.03.16.pdf> (accessed April 14, 2023).

and control technician, metal fabricator, powerline technician, welder, truck and coach technician, millwright, and electrician.<sup>28</sup>

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>29</sup>

Of note, there has been an increase to the proportion of people who report working from home at least some of the time between the 2016 census (4% in 2016) and the 2021 census (16% in 2021) post-pandemic.

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**

Conmee is a rural township with large acreages located approximately 40 kilometers northwest of the City of Thunder Bay. Between 2016 and 2021, the Township of Conmee population decreased 2.6%, after being one of the few communities who saw growth in 2016. The median age of the population of Conmee is 40 as of the 2021 census, the lowest median age in the District of Thunder Bay, and has remained the same since 2016. 15.7% of the population of Conmee is 65 or older, while 65.4% fall into the 15-64 workforce range.

In 2021, 16.9% of the employed work force reported working from home, an increase of 8.6%. 100% of the active labour force with a usual place of work report travelling to a different community in the District of Thunder Bay for work, indicating a number of hybrid work arrangements in the area. Conmee's employment participation rate was 66.9% in 2016, slightly declined from 67.9% in 2016. 28% of the labour force works in trades, transport, and equipment operators<sup>30</sup>.

#### **Dorion**

The Township of Dorion historically experienced a significant decline in population since 1996, but between 2016 and 2021, the population increased 18.7%. This may be due to the proximity to the City of Thunder Bay, and households seeking a more rural home within commuting distance. 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. The median

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<sup>28</sup> Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, In-Demand Skilled Trades Project. November 2020 (<https://www.nswpb.ca/research-reports/>)

<sup>29</sup> North Superior Workforce Planning Board. Are Robots Coming for Our Jobs? The Economic Impact of Automation on Northern Ontario's Economy, 2019.

<sup>30</sup> 2021 Census Data

age of Dorion residents has increased to 56. 29.3% of the population of Dorion is 65 or older, while 57.3% fall into the 15-64 workforce range.

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.

The employment participation rate has decreased slightly from 57.1% in 2016 to 55.6% in 2021. 52% 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>31</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 7% since 2016 and has historically been declining. 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 50, which has increased since 2016, aging will become a factor with out-migration to the City for increased services. 22.7% of the population of Gillies is 65 or older, while 65.9% fall into the 15-64 workforce range.

Gillies defines itself as “a small, rural community with residents enjoying the advantages of living close to a large economic centre.”<sup>32</sup> Of the active labour force, 88.9% commute to another community within the District of Thunder Bay, and 30% report working from home at least some of the time<sup>33</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.

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<sup>31</sup> 2021 Census Data

<sup>32</sup> Gillies Township. “About Us.” <https://www.gilliestownship.com/en/living-here/about-us.aspx> (Accessed August 12, 2021).

<sup>33</sup> 2016 Census Data

The population of the communities comprising Greenstone have seen a significant decline, decreasing 29% from 1996 to 2016, and a further 7.1% to 2021. The median age has increased to 47 (from 43 in 2011), leading to the assumption that the demand for supports will continue to increase. 21.2% of the population of Greenstone is 65 or older, while 61.8% fall into the 15-64 workforce range.

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>34</sup> As of March 2023, a plan for an all-season road connecting Matawa First Nations to the provincial highway and the Ring of Fire was approved but is being protested.<sup>35</sup>

Greenstone Gold Mines began construction in 2022 of a mine on the former Hardrock Gold Mine in the Municipality of Greenstone.<sup>36</sup> 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>37</sup>

The labour force participation rate in the Municipality of Greenstone has dropped significantly from 64.2% in 2011 to 55.4% in 2021, with the employment rate also dropping to 50.6%.<sup>38</sup>

### **Manitouwadge**

The population in Manitouwadge increased 1.9% between 2016 and 2021. Though the median age has remained stable at 49, indicating an increase of younger people in the area. It is still one of the older communities in the District, as 23.5% of the population of Marathon is 65 or older, while 62% fall into the 15-64 workforce range.

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<sup>34</sup> <https://canada.constructconnect.com/dcn/news/resource/2018/12/marten-falls-first-nation-noront-suggest-ring-fire-timetable>

<sup>35</sup> Ontario Government. “Ontario Approves First Nations-led Plan for the Road to the Ring of Fire.” <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1002784/ontario-approves-first-nations-led-plan-for-the-road-to-the-ring-of-fire> (accessed April 14, 2023)

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.northernontariobusiness.com/industry-news/mining/new-mines-hundreds-of-jobs-loom-on-the-horizon-for-northern-ontario-4205579>

<sup>37</sup> Tbnnewswatch. “New Geraldton-area gold mine passes hurdle.” Tbnnewswatch. December 17, 2018. <https://www.tbnewswatch.com/local-news/new-geraldton-area-gold-mine-passes-hurdle-1163122> (Accessed December 17, 2018).

<sup>38</sup> 2021 Census Data

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 \$230,000, 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.

The labour force participation rate in Manitouwadge has increased to 53.2% but unemployment has also increased to 13.2%<sup>39</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**

Between 1996 and 2016, the population of Marathon has declined by 30%. This accelerated between 2001 and 2011 because of the ongoing mill and mine closures. Since 2016, it has decreased another 4.1%. The median age in Marathon is now 43 (slightly decreased from 2016). The continued decline in employment opportunities has amplified these trends. 16.1% of the population of Marathon is 65 or older, while 68.3% fall into the 15-64 workforce range.

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>40</sup> It currently employs 500 direct employees and 200 contractors.<sup>41</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

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<sup>39</sup> 2021 Census Data

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.barrick.com/English/news/news-details/2020/modernized-hemlo-transitions-to-underground-mining/default.aspx>

<sup>41</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).

industry. 28.9% of people in Marathon are now employed in sales and service occupations, a shift from the historical lean on natural resources.

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>42</sup>

Marathon's labour force participation rate has decreased to 60.4%. The top three occupations are sales and service (28.9%), trades, transport, and equipment operators (19.2%) and education, law, government services (11.9%).<sup>43</sup>

### **Neebing**

The Municipality of Neebing is a community approximately 35 kilometers from the City of Thunder Bay. Its population more than doubled between 1996 and 2016, increasing 101%, and increased a further 9.1% to 2021. The increase trend is likely due to people moving from the City of Thunder Bay. The median age has remained stable at 49 since 2016.

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, 87.9% of the labour force of Neebing travels to a different community within the District of Thunder Bay, likely the City of Thunder Bay. 20.3% of residents report working from home some of the time.<sup>44</sup>

### **Nipigon**

The population of Nipigon fell 26% between 1996 and 2016 because of the ongoing industry closures and fell a further 10.3% to 2021. 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. Nipigon is the oldest community in the District of Thunder Bay, as 28.5% of the population is 65 or older. The residents continue to age as the median age is now 52, with only 56.9% of the population in the 15-64 workforce range.

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

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<sup>42</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>43</sup> 2021 Census data

<sup>44</sup> Ibid

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.

Despite the aging population, the participation rate for Nipigon increased slightly to 53.9%. The main occupations are sales and service, and trades, transport, and equipment. The unemployment rate is 14.4%, 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. This project is still in the planning phases.

### **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, increased 3.9% since 2016. It is also an aging community as the median age has increased to 46 in 2021 from 42 in 2011. 18.8% of the population of O'Connor is 65 or older, while 64.5% is in the 15-64 workforce range.

O'Connor is a rural and agricultural community with a labour force participation rate of 73.1%. Due to the township's proximity to the City of Thunder Bay and other surrounding communities with established businesses and infrastructure, 94.5% of the active work force commutes to a different community within the District of Thunder Bay.<sup>45</sup>

### **Oliver Paipoonge**

The Municipality of Oliver Paipoonge, the largest community bordering the City of Thunder Bay to the west, saw a population increase of 1.9% between 2016 and 2021. 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. The median age of the population is 46, with 20.9% of the population 65 or older. 62.2% of the population of Oliver Paipoonge is in the 15-64 workforce range.

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, 77.2% of the active labour force still commute to a different community within the District of Thunder Bay for work.<sup>46</sup>

### **Red Rock**

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<sup>45</sup> 2021 Census Data.

<sup>46</sup> 2021 Census Data

As a result of the decline in employment through the loss of its main employer, the population of Red Rock saw major decline between 2001 and 2016. It has now stabilized, with no movement between 2016 and 2021. The median age is 48, with 26.3% of the population 65 or older, and 57.5% in the 15-64 workforce range.

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, and the out-migration of much of the population.

Red Rock has a labour force participation rate of 51.6% and an unemployment rate of 7.4%. The majority of the population work in trades, transport, and equipment operator occupations. 60.8% of the active labour force commutes to a different community in the District of Thunder Bay.<sup>47</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 1.9% in the years between 2016 and 2021. The median age in Schreiber is now 54. 24% of the population is 65 or older, and 63% fall into the 15-64 workforce range.

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.

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>48</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 2022, this project is in the planning phase, hoping to be operational in late 2023.

Schreiber's work force participation rate has dropped to 53.1%; the unemployment rate has remained stable at 9.6%, suggesting instability continues to plague the Schreiber employment environment.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid

<sup>48</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>49</sup> 2021 Census Data



### **Terrace Bay**

The population of Terrace Bay decreased 30.5% between 1996 and 2016, and a further decrease of 5.2% to 2021. The median age in Terrace Bay is currently 48, with 24% of the population 65 or older, and 59.8% of the population in the 15-64 workforce range.

The Township of Terrace Bay has had a stable economy with the operation of the Terrace Bay Pulp Inc., 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.

The labour force participation rate has dropped to 54.3%, while unemployment in Terrace Bay is 9%.<sup>50</sup>

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

The population of TWOMO increased 6% between 2016 and 2021, however, it continues to age as the median age increased to 52. 25.2% of the TWOMO population is 65 or older, while 60.1% of the population falls into the 15-64 workforce range.

TWOMO has seen historical 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 2021 census has decreased to 54.3%; the unemployment rate increased to 11.2%.

As TWOMO encompasses 97,010 square kilometers of the District of Thunder Bay, 88.2% 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 3.7% of working TWOMO residents travel to a different District for work. 13.2% of working TWOMO residents commute for over an hour.<sup>51</sup>

### **Employment**

As of the 2021 census, there were 70,930 workers in the workforce (a decrease of 3% from 2016) with an employment rate of 51.5% and a participation rate of 57.8% 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.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid

<sup>51</sup> Ibid

**Figure 8: Major Employers in the City of Thunder Bay<sup>52</sup>**

Employers	Business Type	# of Employees 2017
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

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.

<sup>52</sup> City of Thunder Bay Community Economic Development Commission, July 2021

**Figure 9: Major Industry in the District of Thunder Bay<sup>53</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	6.80%	30.70%	15.90%	11.40%	25.00%	0.00%	4.50%
Dorion	15.40%	30.70%	14.90%	15.40%	15.40%	0.00%	0.00%
Gillies	11.60%	32.60%	20.90%	18.60%	14.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Greenstone	5.40%	30.00%	19.00%	12.30%	28.70%	0.50%	3.30%
Manitouwadge	19.20%	25.20%	22.00%	8.80%	18.10%	0.00%	2.70%
Marathon	11.30%	22.70%	28.90%	10.40%	18.20%	1.30%	6.00%
Neebing	4.30%	31.20%	17.10%	13.20%	18.80%	2.60%	10.30%
Nipigon	3.80%	29.50%	25.80%	9.10%	21.90%	1.50%	2.30%
O'Connor	5.70%	39.10%	13.80%	23.00%	11.40%	2.30%	4.60%
Oliver Paipoonge	7.70%	25.40%	16.50%	15.80%	23.80%	1.30%	6.30%
Red Rock	7.40%	26.00%	22.20%	13.60%	21.00%	0.00%	6.20%
Schreiber	3.20%	31.90%	31.90%	10.60%	18.10%	0.00%	3.20%
Shuniah	2.80%	27.80%	17.40%	11.10%	29.40%	0.60%	6.30%
Terrace Bay	3.00%	39.80%	21.80%	9.80%	16.60%	1.50%	6.80%
Thunder Bay City	2.20%	19.30%	26.00%	14.60%	27.20%	1.90%	6.00%
TWOMO	5.10%	32.60%	18.30%	11.50%	23.00%	1.10%	6.40%
<b>District of Thunder Bay Total</b>	3.30%	<b>21.70%</b>	<b>24.50%</b>	14.10%	<b>26.10%</b>	1.70%	5.90%
Ontario	2.00%	20.50%	23.50%	17.90%	19.10%	3.10%	9.30%

Unemployment rates increased in 10 of 15 member municipalities in the District of Thunder Bay between 2016 and 2021, illustrating continued impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

<sup>53</sup> 2021 Census Data

**Figure 10: Unemployment Rates for the District of Thunder Bay<sup>54</sup>**

Municipality	2016	2021	% Chg. since 2011
Conmee	6.70%	11.50%	71.64%
Dorion	10.70%	10.00%	-6.54%
Gillies	5.20%	6.80%	30.77%
Greenstone	10.60%	8.70%	-17.92%
Manitouwadge	10.10%	13.20%	30.69%
Marathon	7.40%	8.20%	10.81%
Neebing	11.50%	9.40%	-18.26%
Nipigon	11.90%	14.40%	21.01%
O'Connor	6.90%	6.90%	0.00%
Oliver Paipoonge	5.60%	8.00%	42.86%
Red Rock	8.10%	7.40%	-8.64%
Schreiber	9.60%	9.60%	0.00%
Shuniah	6.30%	8.50%	34.92%
Terrace Bay	10.30%	9.00%	-12.62%
Thunder Bay City	7.70%	11.20%	45.45%
TWOMO	9.20%	11.20%	21.74%
District of Thunder Bay Total	8.20%	10.80%	31.71%
Ontario	7.40%	12.2%	64.86%

### **Income Source Distribution**

6.2% of people with an income in the District of Thunder Bay received some sort of Social Assistance compared to 4.4% across all of Ontario. 66.6% report having an employment income in the District of Thunder Bay compared to Ontario with 69.2%. This illustrates the continuing lack of employment opportunities and lower level of education in the District of Thunder Bay.<sup>55</sup> Of note, a higher proportion of residents of the District of Thunder Bay receive CPP and OAS/GIS than greater Ontario, again illustrating the aging population in the north.

<sup>54</sup> Statistics Canada, Census Data 2011-2021

<sup>55</sup> Statistics Canada. [Table 98-10-0070-01 Income statistics for detailed income sources and taxes: Canada, provinces and territories, census divisions and census subdivisions](#)

**Figure 11: Income Sources as a Share of Income for Thunder Bay and Ontario**

Income Type	Thunder District	Bay	Ontario
Wages/Salaries	60.2%		63.6%
Self-Employment	2.0%		3.7%
<b>Total Employment Income</b>	<b>62.0%</b>		<b>67.4%</b>
Employment Insurance	1.4%		1.1%
OAS/GIS	3.9%		3.1%
CPP	5.3%		3.6%
Child Benefits	1.7%		1.6%
Workers Compensation	0.9%		0.3%
Social Assistance	1.3%		0.9%
Other Government Transfers	5.3%		6.0%
<b>Total Government Transfers</b>	<b>20.4%</b>		<b>17.1%</b>
Private Pensions	11.3%		7.5%
Investment	3.8%		5.5%
Other Income	2.9%		3.1%
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>100.0%</b>		<b>100.0%</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.

From 2016 to 2021, there was decrease in the prevalence of low income in the District of Thunder Bay, although it remains higher than the provincial incidence of low income. 53% of the member municipalities of the District of Thunder Bay have a higher incidence of poverty than the province. Manitouwadge experienced the highest level of poverty at 17.3%.

**Figure 12: Incidence of Low Income based on the LIM-AT in the District of Thunder Bay, 2016, 2021<sup>56</sup>**

Municipality	2021	2016	% Change
Conmee	4.8%	9.8%	-51.0%
Dorion	10.8%	11.3%	-4.4%
Gillies	10.0%	13.8%	-27.5%
Greenstone	15.5%	18.8%	-17.6%
Manitouwadge	17.3%	16.9%	2.4%
Marathon	9.4%	11.3%	-16.8%
Neebing	4.6%	7.1%	-35.2%
Nipigon	11.7%	17.8%	-34.3%
O'Connor	4.4%	5.3%	-17.0%
Oliver Paipoonge	5.3%	4.9%	8.2%
Red Rock	13.4%	12.9%	3.9%
Schreiber	12.4%	11.4%	8.8%
Shuniah	4.0%	4.5%	-11.1%
Terrace Bay	6.8%	9.4%	-27.7%
Thunder Bay City	11.6%	14.7%	-21.1%
TWOMO	11.6%	12.0%	-3.3%
District of Thunder Bay Total	11.6%	13.8%	-15.9%
Ontario	10.1%	14.4%	-29.9%

The City of Thunder Bay continues to have a higher prevalence of low income than the province, due to in-migration and the number of low-paying service jobs that are currently available.

Households that are spending more than 30% of their before-tax income on shelter costs and are unsuitable/inadequate are said to be in core housing need. In the District of Thunder Bay in 2021, 9% of all households were in core housing need. 19% of all tenant households were in core housing need, while 5% of owner households were in core housing need.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>56</sup> 2021 Census Data

<sup>57</sup> 2021 Census Profile

## **Community Engagement**

*A description of any changes to how community partners have been engaged in improving employment outcomes for clients. Community partners may include:*

- *Community agencies*
- *Local employers*
- *Employer associations*
- *Educators*
- *Training organizations*
- *Local economic development department*
- *Health and wellness centres*
- *Elders in First Nations communities*
- *Organizers of cultural events and programs*

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 SA 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)** provides 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** provides specialized education to young mothers to achieve high school equivalency and beyond.
- **The Lakehead Adult Education Centre** offers upgrading to an Ontario Secondary School Diploma.
- **MISOL (Mothers in Search of Learning)** partnership with Confederation College.
- 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.
- **Confederation College** provides 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 a partner in prototype Financial Empowerment for clients
- **St Joseph's Care Group and Dilico** are partners through the Home for Good Program through the province's Homelessness Prevention 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 have expressed an interest to the Ministry of Children and Community Social Services (MCCSS) and the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD), in becoming an Employment Ontario delivery agent. Communication from MLITSD 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 2022, 5 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 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 into 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. The initial success of this initiative prompted an expanded outreach to employers and greater job opportunities for SA recipients.

### **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 regularly informed by community agencies on changes to their programming. Community Caseworkers, 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 Caseworkers 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, Tikinagan Child and Family Services 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 child welfare agencies.

### **Family Violence**

Services in the District of Thunder Bay addressing family violence issues are offered through Beendigen 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. TBDSSAB maintains strong working relationships with all service providers to ensure smooth referral processes and access to supports.

### **Housing**

TBDSSAB is responsible for the administration of community housing programs within its service area. It directly owns and operates 2,472 housing units, operates a rent supplement and portable housing benefit programs, and provides funding to 21 non-profit housing corporations who offer access to community and affordable housing. 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 remained consistent since 2013, with 920 unique individuals served in shelter in 2022. 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 homeless individuals 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 to protect the most vulnerable in the community.

The third comprehensive homelessness Point in Time (PIT) Count was conducted in Thunder Bay in October 2021. A total of 221 people experiencing homelessness were interviewed during a 24-hour period. Of the individuals interviewed, 68% identified as Indigenous; 19% of individuals reported addiction/substance use as the reason for housing loss; and 58% were experiencing chronic homelessness (180 or more days of homelessness in a 365-day period). 69% of respondents experiencing homelessness during the PiT Count were in receipt of social assistance. Though the Point in Time count is not an ideal indicator of homelessness in a community, it does provide insights at a particular time. TBDSSAB also maintains an ongoing by-name list of homeless individuals.

### **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). The District is challenged by vast geography which can be a barrier to access for some seeking mental health supports. Opportunity for referrals to service are explored whenever a need is identified.

## **Section 3: Program Management**

### **Service Delivery**

*Outline business practices in place to ensure modernizing and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of program delivery.*

### **Staffing Resources**

Service area and specialized caseloads impact this distribution significantly. Staffing directly involved with the delivery of Ontario Works includes:

#### ***Caseworkers – 33.6:***

- 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 Workers - 2:***

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

***Workshop Coaches - 2:***

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

***Team Clerks - 5:***

- 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 - 12:***

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

There is 1 Manager, Social Assistance Programs and 4 Supervisors, Social Assistance Programs.

TBDSSAB's internal administrative services support service delivery.

Information Technology staff support staff technology needs as well as 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.

Research and Social Policy provides statistical analysis to support reporting and decision-making.

A recent addition of a Process Review Lead assists with reviews, including collaborative identification and piloting of new processes to improve programs and delivery. 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.

### **Oversight Strategy**

Any changes in the oversight strategy in place to ensure that:

- Delivery of Ontario Works is in accordance with legislative requirements, program directives and standards
- Subsidy claims submissions are accurate, reflect actual expenditures provided to eligible persons and meet ministry expectations (as per the Subsidy Claims Guidelines)
- Risks and areas for improvement are identified.

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 improving education levels and shows an increase in participants who have achieved a high school (or equivalent) diploma. As 51.9% 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 returned to in-person learning as public health guidelines permit, in addition to remote learning.

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 2022 only 7% of participants were fully ready for employment. This continues to decline from its peak in 2019 at 16% of participants fully ready. 81.1% of participants' first assessments were deemed not ready for employment in 2022. TBDSSAB continues to create and foster partnership to assist clients to gain employment.

The implementation of GERE (an in-house employment assessment tool – Guiding Employment Resources Efficiently) and its entrenchment in operations will support participants with system-driven match to available education 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. It is expected that Ontario's reopening coupled with our administrative readiness will see resources at the ready for participants.

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

Because 51.9% 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.

### **Analysis of Resources**

*Any change in the resources (e.g., financial, staffing, community, etc.) required for program management.*

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>58</sup> Additions coupled with the low rate of secondary school achievement, many TBDSSAB clients face multiple and complex barriers to employment.

As only approximately 48.1% 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

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<sup>58</sup> Source: Public Health Ontario, Interactive Opioid Tool, 2020

<p>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.</p>
<p><b>Overview of Learning Supports</b></p>
<p><i>Outline the strategic learning plan to train staff in the delivery of stability supports, employment and financial assistance, to achieve program objectives.</i></p>
<p>In preparation for Employment Transformation, Administration has had Bridges out of Poverty and Coaching for Life Stabilization for all Ontario Works front line staff, in addition to Social Assistance Programs Supervisors taking a Co-Active Coaching program.</p>
<p><b>Strategy to Deliver French Language Services</b></p>
<p><i>Have there been any changes to the delivery of French Language Services within designated communities.</i></p>
<p>FLS is a standing item on meeting agenda. We have designated staff in programs where appropriate. Most forms are available in French and all reports are available for translation per request.</p>
<p><b>Business Practices</b></p>
<p><i>Have any changes to business practices been made in order to meet standards for performance to comply with program policy (e.g., developing local policies to support program delivery).</i></p>
<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>

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.