



## BOARD REPORT

REPORT No.: 2026-11

MEETING DATE: MARCH 19, 2026

SUBJECT: ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP INITIATIVES

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### RECOMMENDATION

For information only.

### REPORT SUMMARY

To provide The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB or the Board) with information on initiatives undertaken in 2025 to enhance environmental stewardship across the organization, in keeping with the objective of being an environmentally friendly organization.

### BACKGROUND

At the January 23, 2014, meeting, the Board requested that a report outlining the green energy initiatives and potential energy savings be presented annually, which has been provided since that date.

Since that time, and with a view to expanding the scope of environmental stewardship to all areas of the organization, TBDSSAB has continued to view various operational items through that environmental stewardship lens.

### COMMENTS

#### Current and On-going Initiatives

##### Housing Portfolio Energy Management

Significant energy-related projects have been implemented through the annual TBDSSAB approved Capital Budgets, as well as through 100% funded initiatives over the years.

In addition, energy-efficient products replaced high-energy-usage products to reduce consumption. Several of these projects were supported through energy savings incentive programs provided by Synergy North, Hydro One, Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) and Enbridge.

Through the Board-approved Capital Budgets, projects were identified with an environmental stewardship lens. Attachment #1 outlines the list of capital projects with specific environmental impact.

The most significant projects in 2025 included:

1. The installation of new energy efficient windows at Manion and Sequoia (Phase 2) to improve efficiency and reduce heat loss.
2. The repairs and upgrades to the existing solar panels and inverter at Spence Court to ensure the system is functioning efficiently.
3. The installation of new LED unit lighting throughout the units at 824 McLaughlin Court to improve energy efficiency.
4. The installation of updated domestic hot water tanks at Matthews and Ross Court. This will reduce the energy used by the previous units and reduce carbon emissions.

Twelve projects which started in 2024 were completed in 2025. These are noted in Attachment #1.

From the installation of more energy-efficient products through these initiatives, additional operational savings are expected over the useful life span due to lower consumption, maintenance, and repair costs.

#### Paper Reduction Initiative

Significant efforts have been undertaken over the past five years across the organization to reduce the amount of paper produced, printed, and distributed. In addition to previous advancements made to reduce paper, the following processes continued in 2025 which continues to support this initiative:

- Continued digitizing applications for Housing Security Funds;
- Continued marketing of the Ontario Works (OW) My Benefit application for two-way communication between the client and the caseworker by establishing plans to reduce the required paper intake for these programs;
- Instructions to OW clients to scan and email documents;
- Continued focus on paperless processes for those OW clients who are active in My Benefits, as they have stopped receiving the following paper documents by mail if their preference is to go paperless:
  - statement of assistance
  - reporting forms
  - cheque inserts;
- Continued electronic formats for human resources recruitment files;
- Continued web based and e-recruiting formats;

- Continued paperless processes for childcare files;
- All childcare fee subsidy documentation continues to be electronically uploaded in OCCMS; and
- Continued operation of the electronic / on-line format for Community Housing applications.

TBDSSAB paper purchases have been steadily declining since the start of these initiatives approximately five years ago. Paper purchased was reduced by 100,000 pieces from 660,000 in 2024 to 560,000 in 2025. The overall spend on paper decreased by \$464 from \$6,966 in 2024 to 2025 \$6,502 in 2025 due to the reduction in paper purchased.

### Community Gardens

Tenant inclusion efforts continue to be supported by TBDSSAB Tenant Support Workers, through the organic community gardens. These projects continue to help deliver the TBDSSAB goal of being an environmentally friendly organization. Involving tenants in community gardens, and producing some of their own food, instills the value of working with the earth and protecting the environment while supporting food security efforts.

Throughout the housing portfolio, eight large community gardens and many flower gardens have continued to be maintained with the support of tenants and the Housing Operations team. The larger garden sites were equipped with compost bins and rain barrels to support sustainability efforts.

### Neighbourhood Cleaning and Recycling

Annual tenant community cleaning efforts have continued to take place in many TBDSSAB neighbourhoods involving tenants to help beautify and clean their homes and outdoor areas. Families and individuals are engaged in this process, encouraging the involvement of the children to have them understand the importance of 'pitching in' to keep their community green.

Additionally, recycling programs were previously established and continue to be maintained at many of TBDSSAB's apartment-style buildings, accounting for around 70% of the housing portfolio's units, with education and support provided to encourage involvement.

### Information Services Equipment Consolidation

In June of 2019, Information Services (IS) began an initiative to consolidate network and server equipment. This involved using hybrid server and storage systems vs separate devices for each function, improving server processing capacity allowing TBDSSAB to reduce the number of physical servers by two, while maintaining the same functionality and processing power.

Another initiative was the move from Microsoft Exchange on Premise to Microsoft Exchange Online. Prior to this, TBDSSAB email was hosted onsite, using six virtual servers. Although virtual servers do not use as much power as physical servers, each

virtual server takes processing power to run, thus using electricity. By moving TBDSSAB email to Microsoft Online, the number of virtual servers was reduced by five, from seven to two.

The benefit of these projects continues, as energy consumption continues at reduced levels. Cost avoidance is expected to continue based on the reduced number of servers. In Q3 2023, IS upgraded the core networking infrastructure from chassis style network switches to smaller form factor, more robust switches, reducing the power and energy consumption. In addition, the user access network switches were upgraded to more efficient ones.

The positive impact of server room energy usage resulting from these initiatives continued in 2025, with continued lower average monthly energy usage; 5,209 Kw/h vs 5,683.0 Kw/h prior to the implementation of these initiatives.

#### Accounts Payable Process Modernization

In 2022, Administration developed and implemented processes to make the accounts payable function virtually paperless. This enhancement continues to save approximately 15,000-20,000 sheets of paper (part of the Paper Reduction Initiative noted above) from being printed each year, and ten archive boxes from being stored off-site, as well as the time required to maintain the paper-based process.

#### Purchasing Policy

Since 2014, the Purchasing Policy CS-03:1 has included Environmental Stewardship to allow for the expanded use of durable products, reusable products, and products (including those used in services) that contain the maximum level of post-consumer waste and/or recyclable content.

Specifications provided for various capital projects, including language, to ensure proper disposal of all removed equipment as per environmental guidelines.

#### Single Use Plastics

The Federal government announced its plan to reduce single-use plastics and related plastic waste target to zero by 2030 and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In that regard, and in accordance with the Regulations, since December 20, 2022, the manufacture and import for sale in Canada of checkout bags, cutlery, foodservice ware, stir sticks and straws (i.e., straight straws), as defined in the Regulations, are prohibited.

The Administration had previously established internal practices to reduce the use of single use plastics, including eliminating the purchase of bottled water and plastic dishes and cutlery. Human Resources had moved towards biodegradable items for all staff events where possible. All these practices continued in 2025.

### Water Fountain & Bottle Fill Station - Intake Lobby and Staff Areas.

In 2025 TBDSSAB completed the installation of the three Water Fountain & Bottle fill Stations at the headquarters office in Thunder Bay. One in the main lobby area is for public use and one on each floor above is for staff use. This project was completed at the end of December 2025. These fill stations have a green ticker counter which will count the number of plastic water bottles diverted from the landfill and this will be tracked and reported on an annual basis. As of February 25, 2026, the total number of bottles diverted from the landfill is 1180. Continuing with efforts to reduce single use plastics, Administration will continue to track the usage of the bottle filling stations and enhance sustainability by minimizing the use of plastic water bottles.

### Coffee Pod and Pen Recycling

In 2023, TBDSSAB implemented an in-office recycling program for coffee pods, pens, pencils and markers. Recycling boxes were placed throughout the Headquarters Office Building. Once boxes are filled, they are shipped to a recycling facility, and a certificate is issued to confirm proper disposal and record the weight. In 2025, 54.35 lbs. of coffee pods were diverted from the landfill, an increase of 3.5 lbs. from the previous year.

### Cigarette Recycling

In the spring of 2026, TBDSSAB will be implementing a cigarette recycling program at the TBDSSAB headquarters location. Cigarette butts are non-biodegradable, take decades to decompose and are harmful to the environment. Once collected, the cigarette waste is cleaned and separated by material type. The materials are recycled into raw formats that manufacturers use to make new products. The ash and tobacco are separated out and composted in a specialized process. The cigarette butts will be shipped, and a certificate will be provided. Small changes have large impacts on the environment.

### E-Waste Recycling

In 2022, TBDSSAB implemented an electronic waste collection at its Headquarters Office Building. This waste is collected in bins throughout the office and sent for recycling under the Electronic Products Recycling Association (EPRA) program and in compliance with all laws and regulations and with Responsible Recycling (R2) standards. Reports are provided for each pickup and a certificate of the amount diverted from the landfill is provided and tracked. In 2025, TBDSSAB recycled 399 kg or 880 lbs. (2024: 1332 kg or 2937 lbs. The high amount in 2024 was related to the disposal of desktop computers that were end of life and could not be resold.

### Environmental Stewardship Plan

The Province of Ontario's *Preserving and Protecting our Environment for Future Generations – A Made in Ontario Environment Plan*, includes various strategies related to reducing waste that goes to landfills, protecting the air, natural spaces and species, addressing climate change, holding polluters accountable, and supporting infrastructure development while ensuring environmental protection.

In 2021, Administration developed a Cascaded Environmental Plan for TBDSSAB, using the Provincial plan as a framework, and incorporating the concepts as they apply to TBDSSAB. Similar to the Provincial plan, this is a developing project to further align TBDSSAB activities to enhance its environmental stewardship.

#### Technical Services Officer - Environmental Sustainability

As a result of the Board's approval of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy, TBDSSAB added 1.0 FTE position (July 2025) to support the development and implementation of its strategy. The major responsibilities of this role include providing technical advice and support for environmental sustainability initiatives, developing and implementing tools, templates and guidelines to coordinate efforts of the environmental sustainability program. This position has been working to create a database in the clean energy management software program that will allow TBDSSAB to track environmental sustainability trends, create benchmarks and show how the capital projects have a positive impact on the environment. These trends will be tracked throughout the year and reported annually.

#### TBDSSAB Staff Newsletter

In 2021, the monthly staff newsletter included an environmental stewardship section to enhance information sharing and awareness relative to the environmental stewardship initiatives across the organization. This will continue in 2026.

### **STRATEGIC PLAN IMPACT**

The 2013-2016 Strategic Plan initially focused on incorporating green environmentally friendly housing into the organizations housing strategy, emphasizing energy efficiency, sustainable materials, and long-term cost savings. Over time this focus has broadened beyond housing to encompass organization-wide environmental stewardship, integrating sustainability into operations, policy and culture.

This evolution marked a shift from asset-level initiatives to comprehensive environmental framework, with long term goals that included progress toward net-zero emissions through energy optimization, carbon reduction strategies, and climate resilience capital planning.

The focus on continuous improvement of our environmental stewardship practices aligns with the 2024 – 2027 Strategic Plan relative to Fostering Innovation and Progress.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS.**

#### Capital Costs – Housing Portfolio

The capital projects included within the Housing Portfolio are included in the Board approved Capital Budget which is financed from the Housing Portfolio Capital Reserve Fund, as well as opportunities through 100% funded capital programs. In 2025, the cost of the environmental projects totaled \$676,058 of which \$258,372 was funded through

various externally funded capital programs, and \$417,686 funded through the Reserve Fund.

### Operating Costs

The priority for green, environmentally sustainable practices is to reduce TBDSSAB's environmental footprint, with a secondary impact of cost avoidance on various operating expenses.

For example:

- Capital projects' priority is to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of utility usage across the housing portfolio by reducing energy waste and thereby positively impacting utility costs. Utility costs remain one of the largest operating expenses TBDSSAB incurs within its housing portfolio. Natural gas and electricity amounted to \$2,573,194 in 2025 (2024: \$2,462,303), which accounts for approximately 14% of the operating costs of the housing portfolio. Although utility costs are not totally controllable, it is anticipated that the green, environmentally friendly initiatives will support cost avoidance by controlling the rise of utility consumption (by reducing energy waste) as unit commodity costs for utilities continue to rise.

Operating cost impacts are and will be factored into and included in annual operating budgets.

### CONCLUSION

It is concluded that TBDSSAB continues to focus on the strategic direction of providing green, environmentally friendly housing.

It is also concluded that other opportunities to engage in initiatives have been taken and will continue to be investigated and further developed relative to environmental stewardship across the organization.

**REFERENCE MATERIALS**

Attachment #1      2025 Environmental Stewardship Initiatives Listing

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**The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board  
2025 Environmental Stewardship Initiatives - List of Completed Capital Projects  
Attachment 1**

#	Project Name	Description	Actual Project Cost (\$)
1	Manion Court	<b>Windows:</b> Phase 1 Replacement of exterior windows. Existing windows were original to the building construction. The new windows will achieve greater energy efficiency and building comfort.	92,398
2	Manion Court	<b>Make up Air:</b> Replace existing end of life make up air unit to a new more energy efficient unit.	251,085
3	North James Street	<b>Electrical:</b> Replace electric baseboards in common areas to more energy efficient models.	43,264
4	Assef Court	<b>Electrical:</b> Replace electric baseboards in common areas to more energy efficient models.	47,548
5	Wade Crescent	<b>Windows:</b> New windows were installed to reduce energy cost and improve the energy efficiency of the building.	18,515
6	Wade Crescent	<b>New Bathroom Fans:</b> Installed to improve the air quality in the units and the new insulated fans will remove condensation and heat loss through the attic.	13,061
7	Glenwood Court	<b>LED lighting:</b> Upgrade unit lighting throughout to LED lighting to improve energy efficiency.	27,475
8	Sequoia Park	<b>Windows:</b> New windows were installed to reduce energy cost and improve the energy efficiency.	37,030
9	Fisher Court	<b>Caulking/Weather Stripping:</b> This was installed to reduce energy cost and improve the energy efficiency of the building.	4,477
10	Spence Court	<b>LED lighting:</b> Replacement of exterior lighting throughout the units, transitioning from incandescent light fixtures to LED lighting.	20,148
11	Gore Neebing	<b>LED lighting:</b> Replacement of interior emergency lighting and exit signs throughout, transitioning from incandescent light fixtures to LED lighting.	7,878
<b>2024 Projects completed in 2025 Totals</b>			<b>562,879</b>
12	230 Amelia Street	<b>Solar Panel repairs:</b> solar panel repairs were required at spence to update the inverter to ensure the system is working properly.	31,816
13	824 McLaughlin	<b>LED lighting:</b> Replacement of exterior lighting throughout the units, transitioning from incandescent light fixtures to LED lighting.	8,665
14	Various Locations	<b>Energy Efficient Appliances:</b> Replacement of older appliances to energy efficient fridges and stoves	41,610
15	201 Ravenwood	<b>Domestic Hot Water:</b> Replacement of the domestic water storage tanks. New domestic water heating system will achieve improved energy efficiency and reliability.	22,540
16	210 Ross Street	<b>Domestic Hot Water:</b> Replacement of the domestic water storage tanks. New domestic water heating system will achieve improved energy efficiency and reliability.	8,548
<b>2025 Totals</b>			<b>113,179</b>