



BOARD REPORT

REPORT No.: 2024-28

MEETING DATE: JUNE 3, 2024

SUBJECT: 2024 ASSOCIATION OF MUNICIPALITIES OF ONTARIO POSITION PAPERS

RECOMMENDATION

THAT with respect to Report No. 2024-28 (Chief Executive Officer Division), we The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (the Board) receive the 2024 Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) Position Papers as presented;

AND THAT we direct the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to incorporate any edits to the position papers recommended by the Board by consensus into a final delegation package;

AND THAT we direct the CEO to send the final delegation package to the appropriate provincial Ministries;

AND THAT a copy of the approved delegation briefings package be sent to the District of Thunder Bay municipal councils for endorsement;

AND THAT the CEO attend the 2024 AMO Annual Conference to provide support to the Board Chair and other Board members in their meetings with provincial officials regarding these issues.

REPORT SUMMARY

To provide the Board with the position papers for the 2024 AMO Annual Conference for review and approval.

BACKGROUND

AMO will be holding its 2024 Annual Conference on August 18-21, 2024, in Ottawa. As part of the conference programming, organizations may submit requests to meet with a Minister.

COMMENTS

Position papers have been drafted on 4 issues that are recommended to the Board for advocacy with provincial representatives.

The proposed advocacy topics include:

- 1) Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing: Planning for the Future of Housing in the District of Thunder Bay (COCHI, OPHI, COHB)
- 2) Ministry of Health: Supportive Housing Strategy
- 3) Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services: Social Assistance Modernization Update Request
- 4) Attorney General: Landlord and Tenant Board Hearing Timelines

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPACT

This Report aligns with the 2020-2023 strategic plan's Advocacy-related objectives.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS



There are no immediate financial implications related to this report.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that the 2024 AMO position papers are presented for review and approval.

REFERENCE MATERIALS

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| Attachment #1 | Draft AMO 2024 Position Papers – COCHI, OPHI, COHB |
| #2 | Draft AMO 2024 Position Papers – Supportive Housing |
| #3 | Draft AMO 2024 Position Papers – Social Assistance Modernization |
| #4 | Draft AMO 2024 Position Papers – LTB Wait Times |

PREPARED BY:	Carole Lem, Communications & Engagement Officer Tomi Akinyede, Supervisor, Research and Social Policy
SIGNATURE	
APPROVED BY	William (Bill) Bradica, Chief Executive Officer
SIGNATURE	
SUBMITTED BY:	William (Bill) Bradica, Chief Executive Officer



THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD

Planning for the Future of Housing in the District of Thunder Bay

POSITION PAPER

August 2024

Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) Annual Conference

Prepared by:

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board

Prepared for:

Hon. Paul Calandra, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Brief

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) requests that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) provide details on the future funding allocation formulas for the Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative (COCHI), Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI), and Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) to allow Service Managers to effectively plan for housing program and service provision in the upcoming funding cycle.

Summary

COCHI, OPHI, and COHB provide critical funding for TBDSSAB's effective planning for the provision of social housing, which includes capital projects, repairs and maintenance, housing supplements, and homelessness prevention in the district. Recent changes to COCHI's funding formula have resulted in TBDSSAB working with fewer resources to effectively provide these services. Access to the funding formulas will enable TBDSSAB to better plan for future funding allocations in the upcoming cycle.

Background

On April 30, 2018, Ontario and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation signed a Bilateral Agreement regarding the National Housing Strategy. This agreement provides an opportunity to align federal funds with Ontario's Community Housing Renewal Strategy priorities.

There are two National Housing Strategy funding streams that are transferred to Ontario Service Managers:

- Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative (COCHI) - to protect affordability for households in social housing, to support the repair and renewal of existing social housing supply, and to expand the supply of community housing over time.

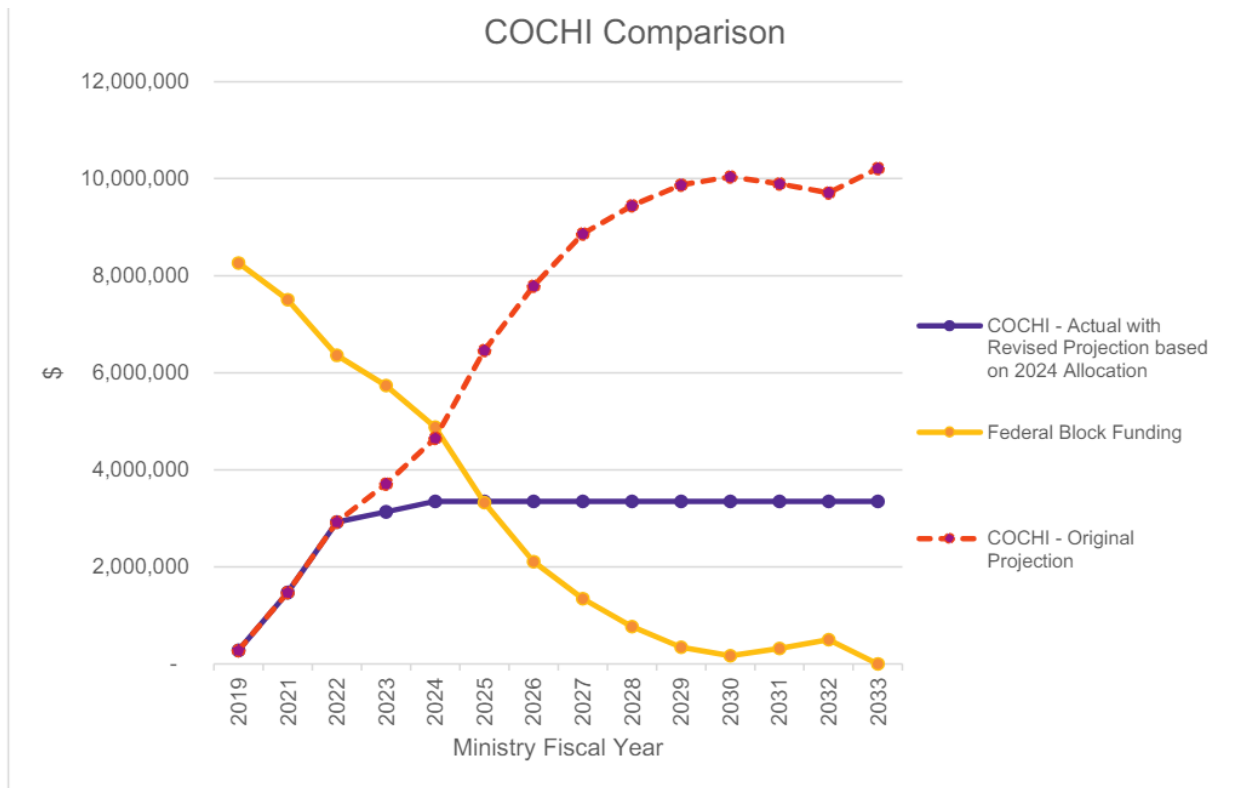
- Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI) - to address local housing priorities, including affordability, repair, and new construction.

Additionally, on April 1, 2020, the province of Ontario initiated a separate funding program for housing:

- Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) – to provide portable housing benefits for households with social housing wait list eligibility or with financial need living in community housing, while assigning priority to vulnerable groups.

Since their inception, these three funding streams have become critical for TBDSSAB’s effective provision of social housing. For example, COCHI funding is vital for capital repairs on over 440 housing units, along with supporting maintenance of over 270 existing legacy housing units built under the Urban Native Housing Program. COCHI, OPHI, and COHB funding also significantly impacts the TBDSSAB’s 10-Year Housing and Homeless Plan, which focuses on addressing housing needs and tackling the increasing problem of homelessness in the district.

Figure 1



However, in 2023/24 the funding formula was altered and TBDSSAB received approximately \$577,000 less than the amount required to offset the funding decline from the Canada-Ontario Social Housing Agreement as demonstrated in Figure 1. That shortfall for 2024/25 is \$1,301,000 and this annual gap is expected to widen every year. This funding reduction put additional strain on the TBDSSAB levy to member municipalities.

In relation to COCHI, the MMAH has not provided an update on the details regarding the new funding formula to Service Managers. As a result of the COCHI allocations in the past years, TBDSSAB has fewer resources to effectively provide social housing in the District of Thunder Bay. To mitigate these limitations, access to future funding formulas will allow TBDSSAB to adequately plan for upcoming funding allocations and proactively plan for any possible changes.

Therefore, TBDSSAB requests that the MMAH provide details on the future funding allocation formulas for the Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative (COCHI), Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI), and Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) to allow Service Managers to effectively plan for program and service provision in the upcoming funding cycle.



THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD

Supportive Housing Strategy

POSITION PAPER

August 2024

Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) Annual Conference

Prepared by:

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board

Prepared for:

Hon. Sylvia Jones, Minister of Health

Hon. Paul Calandra, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Hon. Michael Parsa, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services

Brief

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) urges the Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH), and the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) to collaborate with Consolidated Municipal Service Managers and District Social Services Administration Boards to implement a Supportive Housing Strategy for Ontario.

Summary

TBDSSAB urges the MMAH, MOH, and MCCSS to continue the important work established by the virtual engagement process in 2020-21. Municipalities are facing increasingly complex challenges without the financial tools to solve them. Budget 2024 makes several important commitments in response to AMO's advocacy on housing and social services, including:

- \$152 million over three years in supportive housing;
- an additional \$396 million over three years for mental health and addictions supports and treatment;
- and making surplus properties available to support affordable and attainable housing.

Through various funding streams, TBDSSAB has made significant investments in supportive housing. However, individuals experiencing homelessness in the District of Thunder Bay face disproportionately high incidences of poor mental health and addictions. A multi-ministry pan-Ontario supportive housing strategy will ensure a more efficient system that is positioned to better support people with mental health and/or addiction needs. For this reason, TBDSSAB urges the MOH, MMAH, and MCCSS to finalize and release an Ontario Supportive Housing Strategy.

Background

Between October 2020 and February 2021, the MMAH, MOH, and MCCSS ministries held virtual engagement sessions to elicit targeted input on how the government can improve the supportive housing system. These engagement sessions culminated into the release of **What We Heard: Improving Ontario's Supportive Housing Programs 2020-2021**. This document detailed the inputs received from participants of the session and laid out next steps the ministries would take to make improvements for people who rely on the supportive housing system. In addition, the 2024 Ontario Budget references expanding access to supportive housing, including a \$152 million funding increase over the next three years to support individuals with mental health and addictions needs. Despite these developments, an official Supportive Housing Strategy for Ontario has not been released to-date.

Supportive housing solutions are required to ensure successful tenancies, prevent evictions, and end ongoing cycles of homelessness. For example, the Housing First approach to ending homelessness offers individualized and client-driven support to help sustain permanent housing.

For instance, the province-led Home for Good (HFG) initiative (now part of Homelessness Prevention Programs) committed funding to help Service Managers house homeless individuals and connect them with appropriate supports to facilitate successful transitions into stable housing.

Since the inception of HFG, the TBDSSAB has housed over 436 unique individuals, with a 75% increase in the past two years. As of May 2024, 59 individuals are receiving a portable Home for Good subsidy and 65 clients are provided with case management services through the HFG support staff from Dilico Anishinabek Family Care and St. Joseph's Care Group.

In addition, through investments from the concluded Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF), TBDSSAB has worked with community partners to establish 31 transitional housing spaces. This includes providing capital funding towards the development of 10 low-barrier transitional spaces through Dilico and 21 transitional housing spaces through Matawa, with on-site access to cultural, health and educational supports. These new beds build upon the previous investments made in supportive and transitional housing stock.

As of April 2024, the Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) has also enabled TBDSSAB to provide funding for 52 new supportive housing units. These include:

- 9 new units through partnership with the Elizabeth Fry Society of Northwestern Ontario for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness
- 17 new units through partnership with Shelter House and NorWest Community Heath Centre for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness
- 22 long-term supportive housing units through St. Joseph's Care Group and Northern Linkage for individuals with mental health and addictions challenges
- 4 new units through Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services, for Indigenous individuals experiencing mental health and addictions challenges

Despite these investments, we believe more supportive and transitional solutions are required. The rationale behind this position is that the District of Thunder Bay's By-Name List currently has ~953 active individuals. Homeless individuals in the District of Thunder Bay experience high incidences of poor mental health and addiction. Data from the TBDSSAB's 2021 Point in Time Count showed that 78% of participants reported ongoing substance use and 53% reported having a mental health condition.

In connection to the data above, Ontario Health Northwest (OH NW) has indicated that admission rates to inpatient adult mental health units are the 3rd highest in the province (33.7 per 1000 population compared to 24.9 per 1,000 population provincially). Additionally, opioid-related morbidity and mortality in the District of Thunder Bay, like mental illness, occurs at a rate much higher than the provincial average¹.

In a current analysis of gaps in the healthcare and housing systems, the current capacity of supportive housing units is highly inadequate to meet the population's needs². Using a 'Needs-Based Planning' model, OH NW projects that the catchment area should have 1,677 units. Currently capacity is at 188 units, which is a gap of 1,498 units. This stark difference between the projected requirement and actual

¹ Thunder Bay District Public Health Unit. Snapshot: Emergency Department Visits for Opioid Overdoses accessed May 29, 2024.

² Noojmawing Sookatagaing Ontario Health Team – Gap Analysis Review (Draft). Accessed June 06, 2024.

capacity shows the alarming need for more funding to add more supportive units to our current stock.

Without appropriate support and adequate funding for additional supportive housing in place, homeless individuals have a much lower likelihood of housing retention.

A multi-ministry pan-Ontario supportive housing strategy will ensure a more efficient system that is positioned to better support people with mental health and/or addiction needs who require support from multiple systems.

Therefore, TBDSSAB urges the MOH, MMAH, and MCCSS to collaborate with CMSMs and DSSABs to implement a Supportive Housing Strategy for the province of Ontario.



THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD

Social Assistance Modernization Update Request

POSITION PAPER

August 2024

Association of Municipalities of Ontario Conference

Prepared by:

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board

Prepared for:

Hon. Michael Parsa, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services

Brief

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) requests that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) provide TBDSSAB with further details on the plan and timeline for full implementation of Social Assistance modernization.

Summary

In preparation for the operationalization of Social Assistance Modernization in Ontario Works, TBDSSAB appreciates that there has been consultation with Service Managers in multiple phases of the project. However, the current lack of clarity surrounding the direction and timeline of the Social Assistance modernization project impedes effective resource planning, provision, and program development for stabilization services.

Background

When the Social Assistance Modernization project was announced in 2020, the rationale sought to reduce bureaucratic and paper-heavy processes for caseworkers and clients, while increasing focus on helping people improve their lives through independence and employment.¹ Since the initialization, TBDSSAB has participated in several provincial-led modernization initiatives that have been undertaken to achieve the project's aims:

- Centralized Intake (as of 2022)
 - In October 2020, MCCSS introduced a Centralized Intake (CI) process for applicants looking to apply for Ontario Works. MCCSS piloted the new intake model with seven sites at that time. Non-pilot Service

¹ <https://www.ontario.ca/page/recovery-renewal-ontarios-vision-social-assistance-transformation>

Managers then adopted CI throughout 2021 and TBDSSAB went live with CI on June 21, 2021. All Ontario Works sites are now engaged with CI.

- Centralization of Financial Administration (as of 2022)
 - For Ontario Works, centralization of financial administration has only extended to 3rd party vendor records administration. Further pilots on this area of the project were delayed as of 2022, with no further information on when or if it will launch, neither is there a clear definition for the term “financial administration.”
- Ontario Works E-Signature Pilot (as of 2022)
 - This has been launched to all 47 Ontario Works sites as of July 2022, with the addition of the ‘Rights and Responsibilities form’ to be added in Spring 2024.

As of 2024, Social Assistance modernization efforts have focused on the Employment Services Transformation. TBDSSAB was informed by MCCSS, in partnership with the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, that it will become part of Phase 3 of the Employment Services Transformation in 2024, with a full launch of the new model expected in April 2025. When this change is complete, the focus of TBDSSAB’s work with clients will no longer include employment planning but will focus on stabilization services.

However, the current lack of clarity surrounding the direction of the Social Assistance modernization project impedes effective resource provision and program development for stabilization services.

Additionally, based on previously outlined impacts on Service Managers in anticipation of the upcoming Employment Services Transformation, TBDSSAB will lose 22% of its program delivery funding. Given this significant impact, we request that the Ministry provide us with more details regarding the modernization plan and a timeline, enabling us to anticipate and plan for these changes appropriately.

Therefore, TBDSSAB requests that the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) provide TBDSSAB with details on the plan and timeline for full implementation of Social Assistance modernization.



THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD

Landlord Tenant Board Hearing Timelines

POSITION PAPER

August 2024

Association of Municipalities of Ontario Conference

Prepared by:

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board

Prepared for:

Hon. Doug Downey, Attorney General of Ontario

Hon. Paul Calandra, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Brief

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) calls on the Attorney General of Ontario to work with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to address the Landlord and Tenant Board's (LTB) long hearing wait times by fast-tracking priority applications from Community Housing providers related to high-risk issues (i.e., crime, behaviour, damages), as these typically have already undergone extensive mediation efforts prior to a hearing date request.

Summary

The TBDSSAB recognizes that Community Housing is essential for the well-being of low-income individuals and families who access these services across Ontario. Given this, TBDSSAB staff prioritize successful tenancies and eviction prevention by adhering to the parameters set out in our robust eviction prevention policy. However, interventions aimed at maintaining an existing tenancy are not always successful. While eviction is a last resort for the TBDSSAB, there are situations that arise where eviction is necessary to protect the safety of other tenants, to avoid further damage to properties, and to avoid stigmatizing Community Housing as a place that is unsafe or undesirable. In these circumstances, the extended wait times to secure LTB hearings are highly detrimental as they increase the duration and effects of these high-risk situations. Therefore, introducing a priority system where applications from Community Housing providers with high-risk issues are expedited and addressed separately from other applications would more quickly address time-sensitive, high-risk tenancy issues impacting tenants and Community Housing providers.

Background

In January 2023, TBDSSAB provided LTB wait time details at the Rural Ontario Municipalities Association (ROMA) Conference to the Hon. Doug Downey, Attorney General of Ontario and the Hon. Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. At that time, TBDSSAB had 64 hearings waiting for adjudication at the LTB.

Attempting to address these issues, in May 2023, the LTB announced an increase in adjudicators from 53 to 128. We acknowledge the Attorney General's important action to increase the capacity of the LTB. However, these additional resources have only reduced hearing timeframes to an average of 4 months; prior to 2020 the average wait for a hearing was 1.7 months.

Another factor adding to the wait times pressures is the quantity and severity of the active high-risk cases. Since the addition of adjudicators, TBDSSAB currently has 90 active high risk cases pending LTB hearings, an increase of 40% from January 2023. Of these cases,

- 38 are N4's (L1's) for unpaid rent;
- 30 are N5's (L2's) for interfering with others, damages, or overcrowding; and
- 22 are for N6 or N7 (L2's) for illegal acts or causing serious problems within a rental unit.

Meanwhile, the LTB continues to experience a substantial hearing request backlog with wait times to receive a hearing date averaging four months. These wait times prolong and exacerbate safety issues for other tenants while compounding lost rent revenue in the intervening months where a tenant has stopped paying. In the past year, the TBDSSAB estimates these amounts to be more than \$175,571. In addition to lost rent revenue, TBDSSAB has incurred paralegal fees related to LTB hearings and is incurring unit damage and security costs due to criminal activity at its housing properties. This lost revenue and cost becomes an additional burden on the municipal levy.

To address time-sensitive and high-risk tenancy issues impacting Community Housing Providers, we recommend the introduction of a priority system whereby applications from Community Housing providers with high-risk issues are expedited and addressed separately from other applications. This would mitigate the negative

impacts of these situations on other tenants and properties, while decreasing lost revenue due to unpaid rent.

Additionally, in January 2023, TBDSSAB brought forward the concern that all cases are still heard electronically, often resulting in multiple hearings being booked on the same day for the same landlord. Further to the ensuing issue, the current booking system does not cross-reference landlords' pre-existing hearing appointments, consequently booking two hearings on the same date and time. When the hearings were in-person, the adjudicator would call one at a time, so the overlap was not an issue. We recommend that the resulting issue of using the electronic approach be addressed and streamlined through a priority system for Community Housing providers. For instance, hearings could be grouped, and conflicts avoided.

Another effect of the substantial LTB time delays is that other tenants in the affected building are negatively impacted for a longer period by the actions and activities of high-risk individuals who would otherwise be evicted. This detrimentally reduces the quality of life for many tenants and visitors in the affected properties, worsens relationships between frustrated tenants and TBDSSAB staff, and stigmatizes Community Housing as a less desirable housing option.

To mitigate the negative impact on tenants, prioritizing high-risk hearings by fast-tracking high-risk applications from Community Housing providers would significantly alleviate these issues.

Therefore, TBDSSAB requests that the Attorney General of Ontario, work with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, to address the negative impacts of the Landlord and Tenant Board's long hearing wait times by fast-tracking priority applications from Community Housing providers related to high-risk issues.