



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.

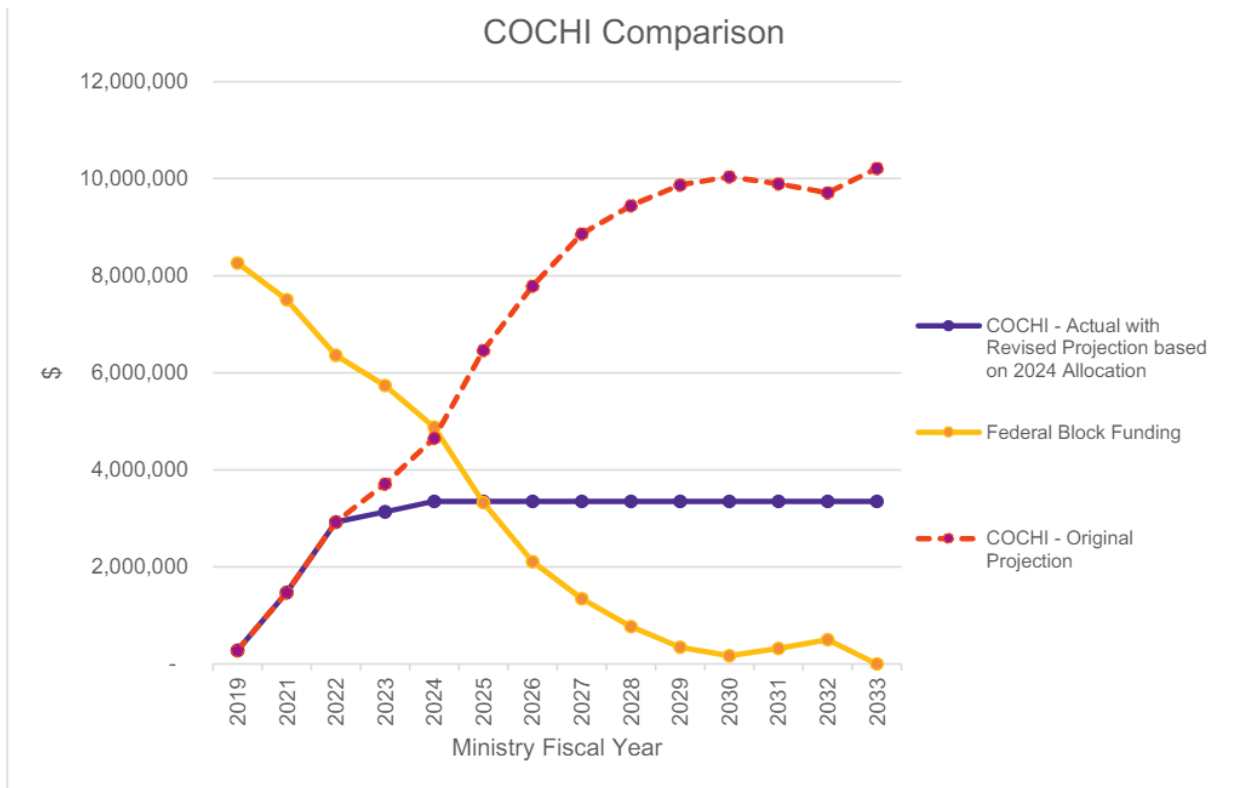
- Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI) - to address local housing priorities, including affordability, repair, and new construction.

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.