



THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD

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

POSITION PAPER

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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 programming 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 community housing, which includes capital projects, repairs and maintenance, housing supplements, and homelessness prevention in the district. Recent unexpected changes to COCHI's funding formula have resulted in severely limiting available resources that TBDSSAB could use 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 provided an opportunity to align federal funds with Ontario's Community Housing Renewal Strategy priorities.

Currently, 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 community housing; to support the repair and renewal of existing community 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.

In addition to these initiatives, 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 eligible to be on the community housing waitlist or with financial needs, who live in community housing, while assigning priority to vulnerable groups.

Since their inception, these three funding streams have become critical to TBDSSAB's effective provision of community housing. For example, in the past three years COCHI funding has been central to capital repairs for 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 impact the TBDSSAB's 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan that focuses on addressing housing needs and tackling the increasing problem of homelessness in the district.

However, in 2023 the funding formula for COCHI changed and TBDSSAB received approximately \$1,000,000 less than the amount anticipated and required to offset the funding decline from the Canada-Ontario Social Housing Agreement. In relation to COCHI, the MMAH has not provided a rationale or details regarding the new funding formula to Service Managers. As a result of the reduced COCHI allocations in 2023 and 2024, TBDSSAB has fewer resources available to effectively provide quality community housing for those living in the District of Thunder Bay. To mitigate these limitations, gaining access to future funding formulas will allow TBDSSAB to adequately plan for upcoming funding allocations and proactively pivot for any possible changes.

Therefore, TBDSSAB requests that that the MMAH provide details on the future funding allocation formulas for COCHI, OPHI, and COHB to allow Service Managers to effectively plan for program and service provision in the upcoming funding cycle.