

TRAVELLING THE ROAD TO **CHANGE**

Thunder Bay Drug Strategy
Community Report

May 2014



THUNDER BAY
Drug Strategy



City Council ratified the Thunder Bay Drug Strategy (TBDS) in September 2011. The TBDS is the official community plan to address substance use in Thunder Bay, and provides a comprehensive approach to substance use issues based on integration of our five pillars: prevention, treatment, harm reduction, enforcement and housing.

This is the third annual report to the community. It focuses on progress achieved over the last year as a result of continued collaboration and collective effort of many groups and organizations across Thunder Bay. Through working together, community organizations involved with the TBDS continue to implement programming, services and policies that reflect the Strategy's recommended actions.

IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURE

This diagram outlines the Working Groups formed to address the Strategy's 21 priority actions. Membership of the groups is diverse and reflective of the TBDS pillars:

- **Harm Reduction** • **Enforcement** • **Treatment**
- **Housing** • **Prevention**

The Implementation Panel ensures sustainability, provides coordination and oversight of strategic projects and assists with evaluation of progress. The Panel also created a Working Group Advisory Committee comprised of all working group chairs, the Strategy Coordinator and Strategy Chair. This group meets quarterly to review work plans, progress and cross-connections to goals of other working groups.



VISION

To improve the health, safety and well-being of all citizens by working together to reduce the harm caused by substance use.

MISSION

To implement the Thunder Bay Drug Strategy.

WORKING GROUPS

ADVOCACY WORKING GROUP

CHAIR PATTY HAJDU

Develops advocacy priorities from the Drug Strategy actions, conducts advocacy for the TBDS at global, national, regional and local levels, and is available to other TBDS working groups to assist/consult on issues from an advocacy perspective.

HOUSING WORKING GROUP

CHAIR NICOLE LATOUR

Works towards all people in Thunder Bay having access to safe, appropriate and affordable housing, and improves access to housing that supports people on the healing continuum.

The Housing and Homelessness Coalition has agreed to function as the Housing Working Group for the TBDS. The coalition has incorporated TBDS priority actions related to housing in their terms of reference, and included housing-related priorities from the TBDS Accommodation Needs Assessment Community Plan into their work plan.

PREVENTION & EDUCATION WORKING GROUP

CHAIR SHEENA ALBANESE

Provides education and conducts prevention activities in schools, the community, and for caregivers in order to: ensure all children and youth have optimal success and health; ensure people who use substances have optimal physical, emotional and mental health; and ensure community members are safe in their neighbourhoods.

The Drug Awareness Committee (DAC) promotes prevention and awareness activities related to alcohol and substance use, and have integrated TBDS prevention and education priorities in their three year work plan. It functions as the Prevention & Education Working Group for the TBDS.

HARM REDUCTION WORKING GROUP

CHAIR MELISSA SCOTT

Supports and promotes harm reduction priority actions of the TBDS to ensure people who use substances have optimal physical, emotional and mental health, and to ensure community members are safe in their neighbourhoods.



MATERNAL SUBSTANCE USE & CHILD WORKING GROUP

CHAIR AIMEE JAUN

Develops strategies for supporting pregnant women and new mothers who use substances, as well as their infants, to ensure all children and youth have optimal success and health, and to ensure people who use substances have optimal physical, emotional and mental health.

YOUTH ISSUES WORKING GROUP*

CHAIR NANCY BLACK

Engages young people in substance use awareness, advocacy and education through youth-led activities to ensure youth have optimal success and health.

RESEARCH WORKING GROUP*

Chair yet to be determined.

Conducts research on behalf of the TBDS to improve the ability to work toward its eight key results.

**note that some working groups are currently in the development stage and will be further established as we continue with implementation.*

RESULTS

Using a framework called results-based accountability, the TBDS has identified eight key results, as well as evidence-based actions that can be implemented to achieve them. The following is an update on year two of implementation as we make progress towards our stated results.

The community of Thunder Bay implements actions to reduce harms associated with substance use (result one)

CONTINUED COORDINATION (1.2)

Research shows that to ensure recommendations are implemented and for changes to be lasting, a dedicated coordinator position is required. Funding until the end of 2014 for this position has been made possible through the TBDS Community Partnership:

- **City of Thunder Bay**
- **District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (year one)**
- **Fort William First Nation**
- **St. Joseph's Care Group**
- **Superior North EMS**
- **Thunder Bay District Health Unit**
- **Thunder Bay Police Service**
- **Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre**

Congratulations to City Council and the key partners in recognizing the value of coordinating efforts to continue the work of the TBDS. It will be important for the Drug Strategy to continue to explore sustainability to ensure that the momentum of work can continue.



CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE (1.4)

After a presentation in February 2013 to the Board of Health, a resolution was passed to support an engagement process for exploring a Centre of Excellence in Addiction and Mental Health. It was brought forward to the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care for consideration was well-received. In December 2013, the TBDS took the lead and an ad-hoc steering committee was formed to work with the Centre for Rural and Northern Health Research on a proposal and budget for the engagement process.

In March 2014, a letter requesting financial support from the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care was sent, along with the proposal that outlines a region-wide engagement work plan with stakeholders to develop a model for a Centre of Excellence for Addictions and Mental Health for Northwestern Ontario. The goal is to identify a model that is best suited to the unique needs of the North, and one that provides improved infrastructure, support for surveillance, evidence-based decision making, opportunities for applied and participatory research, evaluation, knowledge translation and exchange, and enhanced community capacity, collaboration and multi-sectoral integration. We are still awaiting a decision from the Ministry.

All people in Thunder Bay have access to safe, appropriate and affordable housing (result three)

MANAGED ALCOHOL PROGRAM: KWAE KII WIN CENTRE (KKW) (3.11)

The KKW managed alcohol centre continues to offer support and accommodation to 15 men and women who have experienced long-term homelessness and chronic and severe problems related to alcohol use.

The Centre opened its doors in March 2012, and since that time has been consistently full. Recently, a comprehensive, controlled-study evaluation of the program was completed. It demonstrated reductions in use of withdrawal management services, emergency health services, and police contact and incarceration in the range of 40-80 per cent for individuals participating in the program. The study also showed that residents have experienced a much-improved quality of life, including a stronger sense of safety and connection to family. Shelter House continues to seek financial support to sustain this cost-saving and community enhancing program for years to come.

Federal and provincial governments set public policy and determine spending priorities that support optimal health for all citizens (result four)

TRANSITIONAL FUNDING FROM PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

In December 2012, the Ontario government responded to community concern about the elimination of the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit (CSUMB) by instituting a one-time \$42 million “transition fund” to help municipalities deal with the loss and the move to community-based homelessness prevention. The TBDS submitted a letter urging the Ontario government to take the humane and fiscally-responsible approach to preventing and alleviating homelessness in Ontario, requesting the government ensure the \$42 million remains available to municipalities in 2014, and work with service providers across the province to revise the long-term housing strategy in a manner that can truly reduce homelessness in Ontario.

All children and youth have optimal success and health (result five)

DRUG AWARENESS COMMITTEE – EDUCATION TABLE (5.1)

In the fall of 2013, the DAC invited partners in education to join in a conversation about school-based substance misuse prevention. This initiative came out of a prevention and education action of the Thunder Bay Drug Strategy to support evidence-informed drug education in schools with an emphasis on positive social and behaviour development. School board mental health leads and members of the DAC established the Education Table to gather information and share evidence-informed prevention practices.

The timing of this collaboration is ideal, as school boards are in various stages of developing mental health and addiction strategies. The Education Table is currently working on a literature review and environmental scan and will be preparing a report to share with decision-makers.

To learn more about the Ontario Ministry of Education’s strategy to support student mental health and well-being, visit <http://smh-assist.ca/>.

2014 ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN (5.2)

The TBDS was supported by a Lakehead University Honors Bachelor of Social Work student in completing the first phase of an environmental scan to identify resources and gaps in parenting supports and programming for families, with a focus on supports for pregnant and/or parenting women with substance use issues. The goal of the scan was to identify support services in Thunder Bay, highlight successful, evidence-based treatment and support models, and gain an understanding of the strengths of, and gaps in, the current system through key stakeholder engagement. As part of the Maternal Substance Use and Child Working Group, the Research Subcommittee will build upon this scan and is in the process of developing research questions for focus groups (phase two). The report is in its final stages of iteration and will be released to the community in the near future.



MATERNAL SUBSTANCE USE & CHILD WORKING GROUP (5.16)

This group was initiated in early 2013 and by September began developing a terms of reference and work plan, both of which have been approved and adopted. The basis for these documents are the group's objectives, which include generating new knowledge, supporting professional development and the implementation of evidence-informed practices, advocating, and supporting a continuity of care for pregnant or parenting women with substance use issues, their children and their families. To date, the working group has established a Research Committee whose focus is currently on obtaining a better understanding of existing services, barriers, needs, best practice models and research in order to build a base for further research in our region.

People who use substances have optimal physical, emotional and mental health (result six)

COMMUNITY PARAMEDIC PROGRAM (6.2)

Following the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care's announcement to provide funding to support the expansion and development of community paramedicine (CP) programs in Ontario, a Thunder Bay CP task force was struck by Superior North EMS (SNEMS) to develop and submit a proposal for a CP program in Thunder Bay and District. The Thunder Bay Drug Strategy is represented on this task force.

CPs in a nonemergency context can offer preventive care to an inner city community where problems are often not managed until they reach a crisis level and require much more intensive and crisis oriented care. One component

of the proposal is a partnership with Shelter House, Thunder Bay District Health Unit (TBDHU), NorWest CHC and TBDS, which would see paramedics visiting marginalized populations with chronic care issues to improve care, access and reduce emergency department (ED) visits/9-1-1 demand. The partnership will explore how CPs and related outreach projects can help alleviate the load on emergency services. Further, other supports for people who are intoxicated will be offered, thus decreasing pressure on paramedics, the TBRHSC ED, and police.

(SOS) STREET OUTREACH SERVICES (6.2)

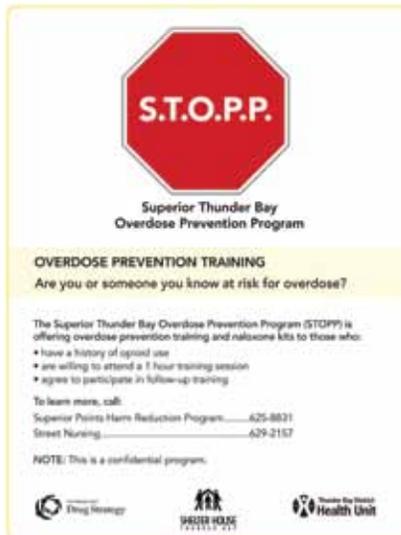
Shelter House, in response to a looming cold winter, proposed a cold weather plan to the City of Thunder Bay. On December 27, 2013, armed with a contribution of \$35,000 from the City of Thunder Bay and matching funds from DSSAB, the organization launched the Street Outreach Services (SOS) and day services room, addressing actions in the TBDS. The SOS program offered an alternative to emergency services, helping people who were publicly intoxicated to access appropriate and supportive services. The day services room allowed for daytime shelter for people that were intoxicated but who could not access withdrawal management services. The SOS teams transported 948 people over four months, alleviating pressure on emergency responders and ensuring people could access services that were the right fit for their specific situation. The team also visited a number of people that chose to remain outdoors, providing essential supplies of food, blankets, clothing and support. The project has concluded, however the need remains high.



ENHANCED WITHDRAWAL MANAGEMENT SERVICES (6.2)

Balmoral Centre has completed its first year of operations of the two-year pilot project, which was designed to enhance access to services and the level of care provided to clients of the Centre through the addition of Registered Practical Nurses to the current staffing complement. To date, the project has met and/or exceeded service targets and demonstrated an increase of 46 per cent in the number of clients served within the first year. In collaboration with community partners, new pathways and care protocols designed to improve health outcomes

for clients have been developed, such as the direct transfers of clients from the TBRHSC Adult Mental Health unit who could be safely transitioned to receive continued support at Balmoral Centre. Despite these and other investments, community needs for those living with substance use issues continue to rise.



SUPERIOR AND THUNDER BAY OVERDOSE PREVENTION PROGRAM (STOPP) (6.8)

Operating since July of 2013, STOPP is a collaborative effort between TBDS, TBDHU, Shelter House and AIDS Thunder Bay. The program aims to decrease the number of overdoses in Thunder Bay and region, as well as increase the chances of survival of someone who does overdose. The training focuses on a wide variety of substances, with a special emphasis on opiates. Individuals who undergo training will receive a kit which includes naloxone, a tool shown to help reverse the effects of opiates in the case of an overdose.

Thunder Bay has distributed 17 kits and trained 29 individuals and several agencies on overdose prevention. There has been one reported use of a kit so far. Regular training opportunities are held at Shelter House, AIDS Thunder Bay, and Dilico Adult Treatment Centre. Through outreach and partner collaboration the program is able to reach a diverse population of high-risk individuals. STOPP is currently developing more partnerships throughout Thunder Bay and region.

RECOVERY IN FOCUS PROJECT (6.18)

Through a grant received from the Thunder Bay Community Foundation, the Drug Awareness Committee (DAC) has been able to build upon the foundation of last year’s Recovery in Focus Project. The goal is to build awareness, challenge social stigma and celebrate the role recovery plays in improving the lives of individuals, families and communities. Recovery in Focus strives to achieve this objective through education by engaging people in open dialogue about recovery and addiction. So far, in its second year, Recovery in Focus has been able to reach three different organizations on four separate occasions totaling to a combined audience of 76 attendees. The feed-back through this initial stage was not only constructive, it was overwhelmingly positive.

While the presentation initiates a discussion with our audience, the project’s success is driven by the voices and stories of our community members. So far this year, six new speakers have been recruited and trained, adding to our collection of stories, voices and faces of recovery. Our new storytellers come from diverse walks of life and are champions of recovery. They are eager to share their story, start the conversation and share the message that recovery is possible.

The DAC and TBDS will be hosting the first annual Recovery Day in Thunder Bay as another component to the Recovery in Focus project. In joining the national Recovery Day movement, Thunder Bay will be one of 16 cities looking raise awareness, challenge stigma surrounding addiction and support recovery in their communities in September. Recovery from addiction is possible and is happening in our very city every day. However, success stories are rarely shared and are usually overpowered by the negative images and media associated with drug use. We would like to change that and give the spotlight to recovery as well as highlight the benefits of supporting recovery in our community. For more information on Recovery Day Canada, please visit www.recoveryday.ca.





Photo courtesy of Leith Dunick

Community members are safe in their neighbourhoods (result eight)

IMPROVED NEEDLE DISPOSAL (8.2, 8.4)

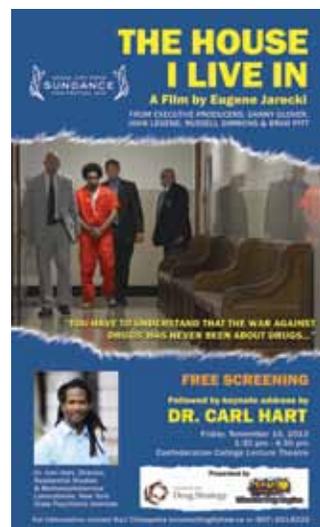
The TBDS purchased three new disposal bins for installation in the community. The City of Thunder Bay, in partnership with Superior Points, will be installing the new bins in areas that have had limited access to safe disposal bins.

In April 2014, Superior Points, in partnership with AIDS Thunder Bay and Shelter House, launched a new needle disposal kit that community members and people who inject drugs can access to help reduce the amount of discarded needles on the ground. The kit has a small biohazard bin, tongs, rubber gloves and instructions on how to safely pick-up discarded needles. To date, 84 kits have been distributed to community members and can be picked up at AIDS Thunder Bay, Shelter House, or by calling Superior Points. The demand from the community to utilize the kits has far exceeded expectations, and each organization continues to receive requests for them.

CANADIAN STUDENTS FOR SENSIBLE DRUG POLICY: THUNDER BAY REGION (8.12)

In November 2013, the Drug Strategy supported the local chapter of Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy (CSSDP) to host a film screening of *The House I Live In*, a 2012 Grand Jury Prize winner at the Sundance Film Festival. The film examines the consequences of the ongoing war on drugs, which has resulted in 45 million arrests and cost more than \$1 trillion in the United

States since the 1970s. The huge number of arrests has destroyed low-income communities; the film argues that the criminalization of individuals suffering from problematic drug use is actually an attack on issues of race, class, and poverty. Further to the film screening, CSSDP brought in keynote speaker Dr. Carl Hart to discuss his research on substances and his role in the film. Dr. Hart also was the keynote at an Executive Breakfast hosted for the Drug Strategy Implementation Panel.



EDUCATION (8.12)

The TBDS is committed to providing public education surrounding many issues as they relate to substance use. Over the last year, the TBDS coordinator made the following presentations:

- **June 10, 2013** – Intergovernmental Affairs Committee: Methadone Maintenance Therapy
- **August 12, 2013** – Committee of The Whole: Accommodation Needs Assessment and Community Plan
- **August 12, 2013** – Intergovernmental Affairs Committee: Accommodation Needs Assessment and Community Plan
- **October 10, 2013** – Ontario Association of Police Services Board and Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police meeting: 5 Pillar Approach to Addressing Substance Related Harms
- **November 21, 2013** – Kenora Substance Abuse and Mental Health Task Force AGM: 5 Pillar Approach to Addressing Substance Related Harms, with a focus on Housing Pillar
- **January 29, 2014** – Crime Prevention Council: Accommodation Needs Assessment and Community Plan

ADVOCACY

The TBDS will also advocate for and endorse initiatives that support any action identified in our Drug Strategy (Roadmap for Change, 2011) as they arise. The TBDS provided letters of support for the following initiatives:

SHELTER HOUSE

The TBDS has partnered with Kwae Kii Win Managed Alcohol Program since the Centre's inception and are proud of the program's success. Funding for Kwae Kii Win continues to be precarious, and the TBDS provided a letter of support for Shelter House's effort to seek Trillium funding in the amount of \$180,000 over two years to address creating financial sustainability for the program. (Supports TBDS Action 3.11)



MAKING CONNECTIONS

The Thunder Bay Drug Strategy is a representative on many committees as a key stakeholder interested in common or aligned initiatives, such as:

- **The Thunder Bay Crime Prevention Council**
- **Hep C Advisory Committee**
- **SWAN (Sex Workers Action Network)**
- **Restorative Practice Thunder Bay**
- **Kwae Kii Win steering committee**
- **Street Outreach Services (SOS) steering committee**
- **Human Services & Justices Coordinating Committee – District & Regional**
- **Community Paramedicine Task Force**
- **Withdrawal Management Enhancement Pilot Project**
- **Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy – Thunder Bay Region**
- **Municipal Drug Strategy Coordinators' Network of Ontario**

The Thunder Bay Drug Strategy is recognized as a leader for its innovative and progressive recommendations. We have been contacted by other communities to discuss our pillars, our process for development, our Community Partnership funding model, and for general guidance as communities develop their own strategy. The City of Greater Sudbury has requested and received permission to adapt the TBDS for their Community Drug Strategy. We will be noted in their plan, and will receive a copy for our records. The TBDS was also recently highlighted in the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition's report, *Getting to Tomorrow: A Report on Canadian Drug Policy*.



Photo courtesy of the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition

NEXT STEPS

It is important to consider the future of the Thunder Bay Drug Strategy Implementation Panel. As we move into the final year of our three-year plan, it will be important that we address the following:

- **Planning and Priorities for 2015-2017**
- **Demonstrate evidence of progress**
- **Increase youth involvement**
- **Enhance meaningful service user/ people in recovery involvement**

CONCLUSION

The Thunder Bay Drug Strategy continues to be busy and productive. The collective commitment to a balanced evidence-based approach to substance use is evident with the progress and efforts that have been made toward reducing harms for individuals, families, neighbourhoods and communities in Thunder Bay.

For more information visit:

www.thunderbaydrugstrategy.ca







THUNDER BAY
Drug Strategy

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|---|--|--|
| AIDS Thunder Bay | Dilico Anishinabek Family Care | St. Joseph's Care Group |
| Alpha Court | District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board | Superior North EMS |
| Brain Injury Services of Northern Ontario | Drug Awareness Committee | Teen Challenge |
| Children's Aid Society | Elizabeth Fry Society | Thunder Bay Counselling Centre |
| Centre for Addiction & Mental Health | Fort William First Nation | Thunder Bay Catholic School Board |
| City Council | FWFN Healing Strategy | Thunder Bay District Health Unit |
| City of Thunder Bay | Ka-Na-Chi-Hih | Thunder Bay Housing & Homelessness Coalition |
| Community Members | Lakehead Public Schools | Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre |
| Conseil scolaire de district catholique des Aurores boreales | Northwest LHIN | Thunder Bay Police |
| Crime Prevention Council | NorWest Community Health Centres | Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre |
| Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy – Thunder Bay Region | Salvation Army | |
| | Shelter House | |

