



MEDIA RELEASE – December 5, 2008

DTSSAB Steps in as Province Removes Winter Clothing Allowance

Timiskaming District, Ont. – Hundreds of low-income children and their families receiving social assistance in the District are without money to buy winter clothes for their children because the provincial government has ended back-to-school and winter clothing allowances as part of the introduction of the new Ontario Child Benefit (OCB).

Starting in July 2008, as families received their first Ontario Child Benefit cheque, the province restructured social assistance so that families would no longer receive the back-to-school and winter clothing allowances as lump sum payments in August and November. Instead, both allowances would be rolled into the OCB monthly payments, with parents expected to set aside the amounts necessary for school and winter clothing needs each month.

Given the depth of poverty for families on social assistance, the majority will find it extremely difficult to save for school supplies and winter clothing throughout the year. And this year, with families getting their first OCB cheque in July, it will be impossible to save enough money.

In light of this, the District of Timiskaming Social Services Administration Board (DTSSAB) made the decision to issue funds in the same amount of the winter clothing allowance to each eligible family this November. Earlier this year, the DTSSAB provided the necessary funds for replacement of the back-to-school allowance. Again as part of the DTSSAB's National Child Benefit Reinvestment Strategy, the Board will issue the winter clothing allowance as a one-time benefit in 2008 to help reduce the depth of child poverty. Many children in our communities across the District walk to school each day, and winter clothing is a necessity.

The DTSSAB will issue a replacement for the Ontario Works Winter Clothing Allowance to eligible families in receipt of Ontario Works assistance, in November and December this year. Each eligible family will be issued \$111.00 per child under the age of 18. There are approximately 250 families with 425 children under the age of 18 who will benefit. The DTSSAB will issue approximately \$47,000 in total to assist families affected by the province's removal of the winter clothing allowance this year as a result of the introduction of the Ontario Child Benefit.

- FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT -

Mr. Mark Stewart, Director of Integrated Client Services & Program Supports

OR

Mr. Jim Whipple, Board Vice Chair