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I recently had the opportunity to attend the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) meeting held in Thunder Bay and the Service Managers Housing Forum in Toronto. Both conferences were excellent this year. The following represents a brief summary:

*Provincial Land Tax (PLT) Reform*

- PLT generated a great deal of discussion among those attending NOMA, including the unincorporated representative from the Kenora DSSAB. Unfortunately, little new information was provided other than the fact that the Province is working on reassessment of the properties and development of a new tax formula or design.
- Concerns were raised for the impact on industry in the unincorporated areas and on education taxes being fairly distributed to those properties outside of school board boundaries.
- The Ministry of Finance has no data on the amount the Province pays for the unincorporated areas - is it too much, not enough, etc.
- There were questions as to where the new revenues will go - the Ministry line is that it will go to support services in the North but there is nothing specific as yet.
- The Ministry of Finance needs to bring clarity and consistency in the information it presents - many in the audience appeared to have more knowledge on the subject than the staff. Much of the information presented was contradictory.
- PLT affects DSSABs and the DSSABs appreciate the opportunity to provide input.
- It was noted by the Thunder Bay DSSAB and the Mayor of Nestor Falls-Sioux Narrows that tax reform could result in less dollars from the unincorporated rather than more which was the case in the NF-SN area.
- Leanne has been asked to check with MPAC as to the amount of property outside school board boundaries in our District.

*Affordable Housing Program*

- Both the Kenora and Rainy River DSSABs have declined to participate in the Affordable Housing Program initiated by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing, as the criteria simply does not meet the needs of our Districts.
- I did have an opportunity to discuss our specific situation with Susan Bacque, Director, MMAH, including the significantly high number of seniors in the Rainy River District, many who require supports to live comfortably and safely in their homes. Our DSSAB would have gladly accepted the \$600,000 allocation earmarked for our area had we been allowed to use it specifically for accommodating senior's needs.

- The administration fee was severely inadequate and our DSSAB does not have the skilled technical services required to implement the project.
- Those present spoke of the need for supports from other Provincial Ministries for supportive housing and the need for the Province to address the issue of under-funded capital reserves.
- RRDSAB continues to explore 'transitional' housing for seniors in our District to bridge the gap between independent living and long term care accommodation.

#### *Provincial Review of Social Services*

- Minister Gerretsen, Municipal Affairs & Housing, reinforced that Northern DSSABs should be involved in the review process. MMAH is working with AMO and the Ministry of Finance on the project, hoping to arrive at a consensus report between the provincial and municipal players.
- During the 18 month process, the committee will attempt to determine which services should be delivered by the province and which by the municipalities.
- Minister Gerretsen told us not to hold our breath for capital funding in any form right now.
- The Minister did mention *Bill 130*, the new *Municipal Act*, which gives municipalities more permissive authority, as of January 1, 2007.

#### *Building Healthy Communities*

- We were honoured to have Stephen Lewis, the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy For HIV/AIDS in Africa, present to us at the Service Managers Forum.
- Mr. Lewis acknowledged that matters of housing need to be on the children's agenda, having seen its significance firsthand during his days at UNICEF.
- He spoke of the world's preoccupation with conflict and the impact that has on the dwindling dollars left for human services.
- In 1989, the United Nations pledged to end child poverty by 2000, and, in 2000, child poverty had actually increased and continues to do so. Mr. Lewis stated that housing/shelter does not have a priority on the provincial or federal agendas.
- He was an extremely entertaining and passionate speaker.

*Congratulations to Dan McCormick, Health Services Manager, for receiving the Governor General Exemplary Service Medal at the annual meeting of the Association of Municipal Emergency Medical Services of Ontario.*

Respectfully Prepared & Submitted by:  
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