



Rainy River District Social Services Administration
Board

CAO REPORT

June 2004

Budget Announcements

- 3% increase to Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) basic needs & shelter amounts, effective 01 July, 2004 with no increase to municipalities until 2005.
- National Child Benefit increases as of 01 July, 2004. No clawback from social assistant recipients for one year, during which time the Province will review the present system of NCBS clawback.
- Additional dollars for nutritional supplements for expectant mothers on Ontario Works.
- Energy Emergency Fund of approximately \$5,000 to our DSSAB which we have incorporated into our *Homelessness Fund*.

**Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) Spring Conference:
*Value of Social Investment***

- Minister S. Pupatello, Minister of Community & Social Services and Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, presented at the conference regarding the above-noted budget announcements. The Minister was very critical of Ontario Works rules and has had her Parliamentary Assistant, Deb Matthews, visit various OW programs across the Province to identify what she referred to as "dumb OW rules". Her Ministry is looking at changes and will be bringing forward a package of reform for OW sometime before year end. We will be notifying the Minister of our concerns for the inability to use surplus OW child care dollars for other identified child care needs in our communities. We were disappointed that the Minister was not able to announce any changes to the children's services system.

- Judith Maxwell, President, Canadian Policy Research Network, spoke of the need for social investment for our future. Ms. Maxwell suggested that affordable child care & children's services, affordable and available housing, and training & skill development opportunities were critical in creating healthy & viable communities. The research indicates that people will move somewhere for job opportunity but will only stay if the quality of life is there. She suggests that service at the municipal level is best, as it is closest to the people, and that a lack of coordination is obvious at the provincial level. Going alone is not good - it is best to collaborate - for example, by working as a region or district rather than as an individual municipality, and by developing partnerships such as public/private partnerships or across service streams. Ms. Maxwell ended by encouraging Boards and Municipal Councils to look long-term rather than just at their three-year terms. She was an excellent and thought-provoking speaker.

Inter-Ministerial DSSAB Working Group

- On 31 May, 2004, I participated in the first meeting of the above-noted group which consists of:
 - 8 DSSAB CAOs;
 - Brian Smithies, Director, Corporate Policy Secretariate, Ministry of Northern Development & Mines (MNDM);
 - Malcolm Bates, Director, Emergency Health Branch, Ministry of Health & Long-Term Care;
 - Ian Smith, Regional Director, Northwestern Municipal Services Office, Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing;
 - Cliodhna McMullin, Director, Ontario Works Branch, Ministry of Community & Social Services (MCSS);
 - Germain Lacoursiere, Regional Director, North East, MCSS;
 - Dan Lafranier, Regional Director, North Region, MCSS;
 - Alfred Spencer, Manager, Social Assistance & Municipal Operations Branch, MCSS; and
 - Darlene Yewer, A/Manager, Ontario Works Branch, MCSS.
- The group will work together to:
 - identify & promote best practices;
 - strengthen cross-Ministry linkages;
 - support consistent approaches to program administration in areas

- where there is no established framework; and
 - identify opportunities to share resources and coordinate services.
- The Ministry of Community & Social Services indicated that they are still committed to the DSSAB model. In the North, costs are increasing but the ability to pay is decreasing which leads to a funding crisis. Unfortunately, municipalities sometimes equate this with the development of DSSABs. When asked what can we do, the Ministry indicated that we must look at our scope and attempt to look for new business to create new revenue; Victim's Services was mentioned as an example. Rainy River DSSAB is the only one in the Province who has already committed to the Victim's Services Program and awaits a decision from the Ministry of the Attorney General. (This is the Proposal in which the DSSAB collaborated with the OPP, Crown Attorney, and various community social service agencies to introduce victim's services to our area. The RRDSSAB was identified as the host agency for the initial project, until a Board could be developed and incorporated.) Public health was also mentioned as this is already identified as an optional service under the *DSSAB Act*. (Apparently, Kenora DSSAB was to look at the devolution of public health at their last board meeting.)
 - Municipal Affairs will approach the Ministry of Finance to supply CRF information to the DSSABs as a regular course of business rather than DSSABs requesting that information individually. It was noted that the CRF system is presently being reviewed.
 - The cost of administration for DSSABs was raised as a concern. Given that Consolidated Municipal Services Managers (CMSMs - our counterparts in the South) have extra sources of revenue (through taxes, licenses, etc) and can tax directly, they have an unfair advantage over the Northern DSSABs. The viability of small Boards is most often felt in the North and there needs to be long-term solutions. In that respect, discussion again centred around the scope of DSSABs and whether we can expand our existing mandate. Provincial land tax reform (PLT) was referred to as "an excuse" not to move ahead. Programs such as Homes for the Aged (available under an Area Services Board [ASB] model) were mentioned as was ODSP which is presently administered directly by the Province, and Community Care Access Centres. We need the support of municipal leaders and therefore a presentation on DSSABs will be created for the fall

NOMA and FONOM conferences. Municipal Affairs will include DSSAB information as part of its regular Municipal Councillor training.

- We were challenged to look ahead to the future and the role of the DSSAB as a human services system manager, as DSSABs are “not going away”.
- MNDM will be asked to conduct a financial analysis of the North’s ability to pay, based upon social and economic factors. Obviously, the costs to deliver services are higher. We were asked to identify our minimum infrastructure needs, regardless of DSSAB size, in order to equalize the playing field with Southern Ontario.
- The next meeting will be held in October/04.

Monthly CAO Teleconference

- While participating in the Monthly CAO teleconference on 10 June, 2004, the need for reform to the Ontario Works Act was reinforced. We will be working collectively to identify and bring forward our priorities for change to the Ministry of Community & Social Services.
- The Business Case for a Research Analyst position for NOSDA has been completed and will be forwarded to each DSSAB for consideration. Each DSSAB Board will be asked to support the position financially over a three-year period - i.e. \$5,000 per year per DSSAB. This will be brought to our July Board meeting.
- A discussion was held on the recent arbitration award for paramedic wages and the Ministry’s refusal to cost share 50/50 on the arbitrated amount. Across the North, this refusal to cost share the actual costs to deliver land ambulance is causing grave concern. There are DSSABs speaking, as have we, about an upload to the Ministry - some are ready to “hand over the keys”. In that regard, the DSSABs are being encouraged to work collectively to resolve the funding issues around this program. The opportunity to meet with Ministry officials at AMO was mentioned. We have taken advantage of this opportunity in the past. A special meeting with the Ministry of Health with all DSSABs regarding this issue has also been suggested. A resolution for consideration to upload ambulance will be brought to the July board meeting.