



## Rainy River District Social Services Administration Board

206 Scott Street  
Fort Frances, ON  
P9A 1G7  
Phone: (807) 274-5349  
Fax: (807) 274-0678  
Toll Free: (800) 265-5349

Rawn Road Centre  
P.O. Box 1300  
Atikokan, ON  
P0T 1C0  
Phone: (807) 597-1431  
Fax: (807) 597-1493

---

19 May, 2006

Editor  
Fort Frances Times  
P.O. Box 339  
116 First Street East  
Fort Frances, ON P9A 3M7

Dear Editor:

**Re: *Wendy Judson's letter to the editor (17 May, 2006)***

I welcome the opportunity to respond to Wendy Judson's letter to the editor regarding the transfer of administration for land ambulance delivery from Riverside Health Care Facilities Inc to the Rainy River District Social Services Administration Board (RRDSSAB), effective 01 January, 2007. It is extremely important to present factual information to our Municipal taxpayers who are currently paying at least 58% of the ambulance bill in our District.

The responsibility for land ambulance services was transferred from the Province to Ontario municipalities in 2001 and has been Municipally-controlled through the RRDSSAB since that time. Up until a very recent influx of Provincial dollars, the Municipalities were paying almost 70% of the costs! Lobbying by the Rainy River DSSAB was instrumental in ensuring that the Province paid its share of costs, including those for unincorporated areas. By 2008, the Province has committed to paying its full 50% share.

The RRDSSAB notified the Hospital Operators (both Atikokan General Hospital & Riverside) in November of 2005 that the DSSAB was undertaking a review of service delivery models for land ambulance, as the five year contracts with the two hospitals were ending December 31, 2006. At that same time, each Municipality was informed through direct correspondence with the Municipal Clerks.

Following the review, a decision was made by the RRDSSAB Board of Directors at the January 19<sup>th</sup> Board meeting to deliver the service directly and formal Notice was forwarded to the hospitals that same evening (it was covered in an article in the *Fort Frances Times* the next day).

It is interesting to note that, in terms of delivery models, there are a total of 53 designated delivery agents for land ambulance in the Province of Ontario (the Rainy River DSSAB being one of the 53). Out of those 53, only 9 continue to contract out the service. Bringing it closer to home, of the 10 DSSABs in Northern Ontario, only one continues to contract out the service.

The RRDSSAB considered several factors in their decision to choose a delivery model including, but not limited to: uniformity & consistency in service delivery across the District; opportunities to centralize purchasing; maintaining quality & consistency of equipment across the District; standardization in uniform & service identity across the District; improved communication with Paramedics; increased opportunities for training; elimination of duplication in tasks; opportunity to redirect savings in administrative costs to patient services; direct financial control and reporting; and greater accountability and 'say for pay' for the Municipal taxpayer. This list is not exhaustive by any means.

In terms of the ambulance bases, they were built by the Ministry of Health & Long Term Care on hospital property at the total expense of the Province. At the time of transfer from the Province to the DSSAB, the Ministry anticipated that the existing bases would remain with the service, however, contract interpretation resulted in the hospitals getting full ownership of these bases. The hospitals have now offered to sell or lease specific bases to the DSSAB. For example, in March of this year, Riverside offered to sell the Rainy River base and lease the Emo base - they chose to keep the Fort Frances base for their own use. The Atikokan base was offered on a lease. The DSSAB did agree to the above and is presently exploring alternatives for the Fort Frances base.

The RRDSSAB has always been responsible for paying the bills at the bases, including lease costs, through the dollars it flowed to the Hospitals for operating, therefore, direct delivery of service will not result in any additional building costs to the taxpayer.

*Letter to the Editor*  
*Response to Wendy Judson's letter*  
*Land Ambulance*  
*18 May, 2006*  
*page 3*

The RRDSSAB has an excellent working relationship with the First Nations through our various departments. Our Board membership is entrenched in legislation as to representation. The RRDSSAB is committed to continue to provide service to all residents of the Rainy River District, regardless of where they live. Land Ambulance services to residents of the District, including First Nations, will not deteriorate, only improve.

The RRDSSAB has never stated nor implied that the "service" has been inadequate. In fact, we are extremely proud of the Paramedics employed in this District. For example, one of the Riverside Paramedics recently received an award from the Ontario Paramedic Association for exemplary service and her devotion to the service. Atikokan Emergency Medical Services recently made news by arranging and participating in a mock multi-vehicle accident. Our local Paramedics participated in the inaugural Women's Health Forum. We are proud that we are one of the few services in the Province to maintain and often exceed our legislated response times. The quality of service in this District is second to none.

The Province transferred its responsibility for administration of land ambulance to the Municipalities almost six years ago - as in all other areas of the North, the DSSAB was appointed the designated delivery agent, as it represents all of the Municipalities and Unincorporated Areas in the Rainy River District. Operational decisions are now made by local people in the Rainy River District.

The staff at the RRDSSAB office are always available to answer questions or concerns about the services we administer - whether land ambulance, social housing, child care or Ontario Works. Should you have any questions about any of the services we offer, please contact our staff at 274-5349 or 1-800-265-5349.

Thank you for the opportunity to clarify the information through your newspaper.

Yours truly,

'original signed by'

Val Pizey, Chair, RRDSSAB