



Rainy River District Social Services Administration Board 2004 Annual Report

2004 HIGHLIGHTS

- The Rainy River District Social Services Administration Board (RRDSSAB) continues to contract out the delivery of Land Ambulance services to the two District Hospitals, i.e. Atikokan General Hospital which is responsible for the ambulance base in Atikokan, and Riverside Health Care Facilities Inc. which is responsible for the bases in Fort Frances, Emo and Rainy River. The Board debated whether to seek a *Request for Proposals* for alternative delivery models, but chose to retain the excellent partnership they have with the current Operators. Funding of Land Ambulance continues to be the most significant funding concern of the DSSAB. When transferred, the Province promised a 50/50 cost share, however, only on what the Province considers “approved” costs. Paramedic wages & benefits have increased dramatically since the transfer, primarily as a result of legislation introduced by the Province. The Province has refused to acknowledge any arbitrated wage settlements and will only fund 1% of a wage increase annually; this leaves the municipalities and unincorporated areas responsible for the rest. At present, the overall costs are unevenly distributed at approximately 33/67, with the municipalities picking up the major share. On a bright note, in 2004, the RRDSSAB, following a lengthy battle with the Province, received retroactive payment and an adjustment to funding for the unincorporated share. As well, we saw the development of Heliports in the communities of Emo, Rainy River and the Lake of the Woods Township. Our DSSAB was not only instrumental in resolving the unincorporated issue, but played a major role in the review of funding for land ambulance services to First Nations and a review of the attempted closure of the Province’s Judson Street Ambulance Supply Centre - both outstanding issues for 2005.
- The Federal government began to make good on its commitment to provide safe, affordable Child Care for Canadian families. As part of its *Best Start Initiative*, the Federal government, through the Province of Ontario, has transferred funds to begin the process of providing early learning opportunities to children through affordable Day Care. The Canadian Government, Province and Municipalities have partnered to ensure that our children have an equal opportunity to access services and are ready for school, regardless of socio-economic situation or residence. The RRDSSAB, as lead, will seek community partners in the coming year, to develop and implement the vision established in the *Best Start Plan*. In 2004, the RRDSSAB was successful in establishing subsidized Child Care for

low income families, across the District. At the present time, we are completing a Needs Analysis & Proposal for the Town of Rainy River, to ensure that families residing in that area also have access to subsidized care.

- Social Housing matters are now addressed under two Provincial Ministries: the Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing and the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal. The RRDSSAB began the process of *Operational Reviews* for all Housing Providers, under our jurisdiction; this is a requirement of Provincial law. As Service System Manager, the RRDSSAB has an obligation to ensure that all Housing Providers are in compliance with relevant legislation and policy. As part of the process, the RRDSSAB contracted with the Stonewell Group to perform Building Condition Audits on the programs in Atikokan. The Stonewell Group, who have completed audits for several other Provincial Managers, have raised the concern of future capital requirements and the lack of reserve funds for the various Providers; this is an extremely important issue which must be raised at the Provincial level. As part of a final transfer, the RRDSSAB received the transfer of the Fort Frances Native Urban Housing Corporation. The Province has introduced a temporary *Rent Bank* to assist low income families. Being an integrated service organization, the DSSAB will ensure that these funds are incorporated into our existing programs, to assist families across the District.
- With the new Government, came several changes to the Ontario Works Program. The lifetime ban for social assistance fraud was rescinded, a 3% increase in basic needs & shelter amounts instituted, and the elimination of Intake Screening Units introduced; major changes to the funding formula for Ontario Works programs is expected as well. A temporary *Energy Emergency Fund* was provided by the Province at 100% funding, to assist vulnerable households who find themselves facing an energy-related emergency.
- The *National Child Benefit Strategy Plan*, a program which provides support to children of low income families, continues to be used extensively throughout the District. Mid-year, 2004, a funding increase from the Province was introduced. The DSSAB continues to contribute financially to food programs at various schools, supports other community programs related to children, and offers financial assistance to low income families which allows their children to participate in school-related or community activities throughout the year. By the end of the 3rd Quarter in 2004 (end of September), the NCBS Program had already been accessed 2,989 times, a significant increase over last year.
- The *Homelessness Program* was accessed 6,257 times by the end of September,

2004, another increase over last year. The Program continues to provide funding to District Food Banks and community Soup Kitchens. DSSAB Staff provide Advocacy Services for individuals and families at risk of eviction or at risk of having their basic utilities terminated, and can access an Emergency Fund where necessary.

- The RRDSSAB participated in the Province's governance and accountability consultation in 2004, which should result in changes to the *DSSAB Act* and Provincial policy for DSSABs. The Provincial staff were very pleased with the input they received from our DSSAB, and were impressed with the knowledge and work accomplished by this Board to date. Congratulations.
- The Board has been exploring alternative accommodations for the RRDSSAB over the past year, and is presently researching partnership opportunities and a suitable site.
- If you don't already have one, please be sure to purchase our *Housing Manor Cookbook* which is full of recipes from the residents of our senior homes; many of these recipes have been passed down through generations! The *Cookbook* can be purchased at the DSSAB office in Fort Frances.
- To the staff and Board of Directors, please accept my sincere appreciation for another successful year.

Respectfully Submitted by:
Donna Dittaro, CAO

RRDSSAB Board Member & Staff Listing

RRDSSAB Board Members and Area of Representation

Glen Armstrong, Rainy River

Linda Armstrong, Dawson

Dennis Brown, Atikokan

John Callan, Vice Chair, Rainy River Central

Barb Cournoyer, Alberton

Wade Desserre, Rainy River West

Russ Fortier, Chair, Emo

Gary Gamsby, Morley

Michael Lewis, Rainy River East

Dan Onichuk, Fort Frances

Valerie Pizey, Lake of the Woods

Peter Van Heyst, Chapple

Emily Watson, LaVallee

RRDSSAB Staff

Wayne Acree, Custodian, Rainy River

Robin Archie, Fort Frances Van Driver*

Krista Ballard, Employment Support Worker

Mildred Beck, Assistant Manager of Finance

Cheryl Bodnar, Information Systems

Brian Burkart, Atikokan Van Driver

Jody DeGagne, Tenant Placement*

Donna Dittaro, Chief Administrative Officer

Ross Donaldson, Property Mgr/Mtce Super

Leanne Eluik, Manager of Finance

Sheila Faykes, Income Maintenance Worker

Dianne Faragher, Finance Clerk

Jacques Fiset, Custodian/Maintenance, FF

Kim Gardiman, Children's Services Manager

Gary Godin, Eligibility Review Officer, Hsg

Cathe Hoszowski, Social Housing Manager

Marie Howells, Income Maintenance Worker

Myrna Jacobs-Beachy, Maintenance Clerk

Michelle Korpi, Customer Service Clerk
/Tenant Placement

Judy Koski, Administrative Assistant

Ron MacKinnon, Finance Clerk

Heidi McCarthy, Income Maintenance

Dan McCormick, Health Services Manager

Ron Oswald, Custodian, Atikokan

Chris Rittau, Custodian, Fort Frances

Shelley Shute, Ontario Works Manager

Joanne Spence, Personnel & Policy

Kim Tarrant, Family Support Worker, OW

Kym Whalen, Student Placement*

* Previous Employee