



2009 Annual Report

In 1943, Abraham Maslow proposed his "Hierarchy of Needs", a theory of psychology in which he suggested that people are motivated to fulfill basic needs before moving on to other 'higher-level' needs. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is most often displayed as a pyramid with the lowest (and largest) level representing our very basic needs such as the need for food, water, sleep, and shelter. According to Maslow, it is not until these lower-level needs are met that individuals can move on to the next level of needs including the need for safety, health and well-being, steady or improved employment, love and belongingness, and the sense of self-worth, social recognition and accomplishment.

The Board and staff of the Rainy River District Social Services Administration Board pride themselves on working with the most 'at risk' and disadvantaged families and individuals in our communities – those who are seeking the most basic level of need - food on the table, a roof over their heads and the means to sustain food and shelter.

Supported by the Board, the staff at the DSSAB go above and beyond expectations to improve the lives of vulnerable children, families and seniors in our communities. This past year presents many examples, as witnessed in the Annual Report below – for example, the implementation of an outreach program provided by a variety of community partners to serve the families and children residing at 6th Street and Webster Avenue in Fort Frances; the dedicated efforts of staff to begin the process of assisted living at Riverview Manor in the Town of Rainy River and throughout the district; the placement of defibrillators in public places throughout the district; the various partnerships created to increase employment opportunities for our clients throughout the district, working with others in our communities and throughout the Province to fight the devastation of poverty – the list goes on and on.

"The ache for home lives in all of us, the safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned" (Maya Angelou)

Once again, my sincere 'thank you' to the staff of the DSSAB for making the difference and caring; to the Board members who have the tremendous task of balancing the costs to the needs of families who must rely on the social services provided by the DSSAB; and to all of the individuals and families we serve who let us know when we have helped and how we can improve, and keep us aware of the tremendous need in the Rainy River District.

/Donna Dittaro, CAO

2009 HIGHLIGHTS

Land Ambulance

- The second round of automated external defibrillators (AEDs) were placed in schools throughout the District including Rainy River High School, Fort Frances High School, Atikokan High School, J.W. Walker, Robert Moore, Crossroads, Sturgeon Creek, Donald Young, North Star, Riverview, Mine Centre, RR District School Board Office, Atikokan Separate School, St Francis, St Michael's, and Our Lady of the Way Schools.
- A two year lease/purchase agreement was completed in January to finalize the purchase of the Emo Ambulance Base.
- A CPR Awareness Event was held at the Memorial Sportsplex; free CPR course kits were provided by the Ontario Heart & Stroke Association.
- Nine Confederation College Paramedic students completed first- and second-year ride-outs with our paramedic staff in Fort Frances – approximately 288 hours total ride-out time per student.
- We continued to work with the Association of Municipal Emergency Medical Services of Ontario (AMEMSO) to form standing advisory committees for standards & quality assurance. Dan McCormick, our Health Services Manager was re-elected as Vice President of AMEMSO.
- The Ministry of Health & Long Term Care (MoHLTC) approved one-time funding for enhanced driver licenses for paramedic staff.
- We are working with our partners in the United States on issues resulting from limitations imposed, due to strengthened border crossing sanctions.
- We continue to work with municipalities and the Northwest Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) on the use of ambulances for non-emergent (low-priority) transfers.
- We were approved for an additional 13 AEDs to be placed in nine First Nation locations and four fire departments – exact locations to be announced in 2010.
- A new Base Hospital Committee was formed for the District as a result of the amalgamation of 26 Base Hospitals to seven. We advocated with our Northwestern partners to keep the Thunder Bay Base Hospital, as the Province's original intent was to have one Base Hospital in Sudbury for both Northwestern and Northeastern Ontario.
- H1N1 was a priority in the fall; all staff were fitted for N95 masks and screening protocols were implemented.
- The Board began its first Collective Bargaining for a new paramedic contract in September.
- Two new double-stretcher ambulances were received in December to replace two van-style vehicles which will be used as supervisor vehicles or be surplus. The new vehicles have enhanced safety features such as higher visibility striping, LED emergency lighting, directional light-bar for highway use, and a back up/patient compartment camera.
- Three Emergency Response trailers were placed into service, replacing one 1998 Emergency Support Unit. These units will be stationed in Atikokan, Fort Frances and Rainy River, thus separating our emergency supplies across the District and decreasing our operating costs.
- Work commenced on the addition to the Rainy River Ambulance Base. The addition will house the second ambulance, the emergency trailer and additional inventory.
- Twelve new defibrillators have been purchased and will be placed into service in 2010.

Child Care/Best Start

"Opening the Door to New Opportunities"

- The RRDSSAB and Best Start Network continued to move forward with the Best Start HUB initiative in 2009. Best Start HUBS in the Rainy River District were provided with \$42,008 of 100% provincial funding to continue with their work on HUB development from the Ontario Early Years Program.
- Renovation and occupancy of the new Child Care site in Rainy River at 310 Government Road was completed in July of 2009. The move into the consolidated site, which will provide Child Care, Toy Lending Library/Resource Centre and Best Start HUB services all in one central location, will be a great asset to the children and families in the west end of the Rainy River District.

- Fee Subsidy for families in need, based on income testing, saw an increase in the numbers served for 2009. A total of 217 children, representing 173 families, benefited from Child Care *Fee Subsidy* for Child Care Services, including Nursery School Programming; this is an increase of 34 from 183 children served in 2008. Our Best Start Fee Subsidy allocation (100% provincial) for 2009 was increased by \$16,000.
- The following Table reflects the total monthly average number of children receiving *Fee Subsidy* at the end of November 2009, by age group and Municipality, with a comparative from 2008.

Total Children Receiving Fee Subsidy 2008/2009 Average Monthly Comparative as at November 30/09				
Number of Children by Age Group				
	2008	2008	2009	2009
Age Group	# of Children	%	# of Children	%
Infant (0-18 mos)	4	3.17%	5	3.91%
Toddler (19-30 mos)	14	11.11%	22	17.19%
Preschool (31 mths – 4 + yrs)	43	34.13%	34	26.56%
JK (3.8 to 5+ yrs)	24	19.05%	21	16.41%
SK (4.8 to 6+ yrs)	20	15.87%	11	8.59%
School Age (5.8 + yrs)	21	16.67%	35	27.34%
TOTAL	126	100.00%	128	100.00%
Number of Children by Applicants Municipality				
	2008	2008	2009	2009
Municipality	# of Children	%	# of Children	%
Town of Fort Frances	71	56.35%	63	49.22%
Town of Rainy River	5	3.97%	7	5.47%
Township of Alberton	0	0.00%	1	0.78%
Town of Atikokan	38	30.16%	45	35.16%
Township of Chapple	1	0.79%	3	2.34%
Township of Dawson	2	1.59%	2	1.57%
Township of Emo	0	0.00%	1	0.78%
Township of Lake of the Woods	2	1.59%	2	1.57%
Township of LaVallee	4	3.17%	4	3.13%
Township of Morley	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Township of Watten	2	1.59%	0	0.00%
TOTAL	126	100.00%	128	100.00%

2009 Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program

- The Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program budget of \$66,097 was increased by \$1,707 (100% provincial funding) and was utilized in 2009 to support District food banks, the Homelessness Prevention Program and a Supportive Housing Program. At the end of the 2009 third quarter, 48 households experiencing homelessness, 33 households at imminent risk of homelessness and 1018 households at risk of homelessness were served. *Risk Definitions* for homelessness are: *Experiencing Homelessness*: households that are homeless obtain housing; *Imminent Risk of Homelessness*: households in danger of eviction remain housed, and *At Risk of Homelessness*: households at risk of homelessness are stabilized.

Ontario Works

"Creating Opportunities & Independence"

- On 01 January, 2009, the Province assumed 100% of the administrative costs for the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). Municipalities were no longer billed for direct delivery of ODSP, program & policy

- supports for the ODSP and Ontario Works (OW), and technology costs, including the Service Delivery Model Technology (SDMT).
- Municipalities also realized a full 12 months of cost savings as a result of the implementation of the Ontario Child Benefit (OCB). OCB was implemented in August, 2008 whereby the children's portion of the basic needs allowance was removed from social assistance allowances. Removal of this allowance saw a reduction in OW General Assistance payments and savings to the municipal share in 2009.
 - OW staff participated in career and job fairs held in both Atikokan and Fort Frances, in order to assist our participants in marketing themselves, establishing important employer contacts and identifying available jobs and training.
 - In response to concerns expressed by the Northern DSSABs regarding their inability to 'keep up' with the many changes and amendments to the Province's OW Directives, the Ministry of Community & Social Services (MCSS) conducted a review of legislative authority that could be implemented in a short timeframe. As a result, MCSS allocated the total amounts for incentive funding for the Consolidated Verification Process (CVP) in the amount of \$13,232 and Enhanced Family Support Initiative (EFSI) in the amount of \$12,000 without the requirement of having to achieve previously-established targets for the year.
 - As recommended in the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal & Service Delivery Review, the Provincial-Municipal Human Services Implementation Steering Committee (HSISC) was formed to discuss concerns with the present OW cost of administration funding formula. An internal working group of the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) of which the RRDSSAB is a member, was formed to develop a new social assistance administrative funding structure. The group agreed that any formula must be based upon sustainability, affordability, equity, accountability, stability, and flexibility. MCSS Regional Manager, Frank Malvaso, met with our Board in October to inform the Board of possible changes in the funding formula in the coming years and the potential for a negative impact on Northern DSSABs without consideration of our unique circumstances. Mr. Malvaso advised that the "Rainy River District has done very well compared to other areas in Ontario with respect to the Ontario Works Program [which] is a reflection of the CAO and staff."
 - MCSS announced the allocation of time-limited funding for 2009/10 to provide Enhanced Employment Services (EES) for vulnerable persons. The funding is intended to support OW and ODSP participants in addressing barriers to the labour market. The individuals targeted are those with disabilities including mental health and/or substance abuse issues, at-risk youth, older workers, Aboriginal persons, newcomers to Canada, persons fleeing domestic violence, and homeless persons. We received \$25,521 in 100% provincial funding under this new initiative.
 - As of 01 December, 2009, social assistance recipients received a 2% increase. What does this mean? As of December 1st, a single person receives \$221 for his/her basic needs and \$364 to pay for shelter; a couple with two children is entitled to \$438 to pay for the family's basic needs and \$674 for shelter.
 - Total # of OW Intakes from January to December: 394.
 - Total # of cases granted eligible to receive OW from January to December: 309.
 - The average monthly # of participants for OW was 222.
 - The average monthly # of cases terminated/closed was 28.
 - As of 30 September, 2009:
 - 10.98% of the caseload received employment income.
 - 13.3% of the caseload exited OW to employment.
 - Average length of time from exit due to earnings to re-entry to social assistance: 9.64 months.
 - 11.61% of participants return who exit due to earning.
 - Average length of time to employment: 9.84 months.
 - One of our service goals for 2009 was to increase opportunities for employment and achieve outcome targets, in order to retain full funding. As of the 3rd quarter in 2009, we have fallen a bit short - looking at a minimal recovery of \$495.00 from the municipal share. It is noted, however, that we have exceeded our targets significantly in "average amount of employment earnings" and "average amount of earnings at exit". Our OW staff are to be commended on the excellent job they have done this past year for our clients, despite the challenges caused by the significant decline in employment opportunities.
 - We exceeded our expectations to form partnerships and collaborate with others to provide our clients with all available resources in gaining skills, training and employment. We meet quarterly with our community

partners to share information, provide program updates and plan how to better serve those individuals and families who require our services.

Social Housing

"Beyond Bricks & Mortar"

- 400,000 people in the Province of Ontario benefit from Social Housing. In our District, the DSSAB is responsible for 299 units.
- 297 units underwent conversion from aluminum to copper electrical connections. The conversion has provided us with assurance that all tenant units are up to standard and health & safety issues have been addressed. Fortunately, funding for the project was secured 100% from the Province under its Capital Repair initiative.
- Housing staff assumed property management responsibilities for Flinders Place in 2009 – the financial component was assumed in March with full property management in April. We have enjoyed an excellent working relationship with the Flinders Board. From all reports, the tenants and Board are happy with the services they receive, including those from our excellent Maintenance Team.
- The Ontario and Federal governments jointly invested over \$1.2 billion in social and affordable housing. Of this amount, \$704 million was invested for the Social Housing Renovation & Retrofit Projects (SHRRP). The funding is intended to stimulate the economy across the North and rest of the Province. Service Managers were invited to identify construction-ready SHRRP projects to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH). Federal criteria limited the projects to those which had originally been built with federal or federal/provincial funding.
- We invited all of our Non-Profit Housing Providers to submit written requests outlining their health & safety or energy efficiency needs.
- In June, 2009, MMAH announced funding in the amount of \$585,988 for 2009/10 and \$721,860 for 2010/11 for the Rainy River DSSAB, under SHRRP.
- Working with the municipality and several community partners, we moved closer to seeing a pilot project for assisted living in the community of Rainy River. The Riverview Manor: Aging at Home Proposal was submitted to MMAH, under the Affordable Housing Program (AHP) Rental & Supportive Housing Component with an estimated renovation cost of \$436,000 to be covered under the 100% provincial SHRRP funds. Following the initial submission, we were provided with an opportunity to meet with Minister Jim Watson, MMAH in April. Minister Watson was impressed with our Aging at Home concept and fully supported our efforts to pursue funding of the project. DSSAB staff then met with Kathleen Blinkhorn, Assistant Deputy Minister, MMAH when she visited Fort Frances in June – she was extremely pleased with our DSSAB's integration of social services and fully supported our ideas to assist seniors to stay in their homes and prevent unnecessary long-term care placements. Later that month, we were notified that the Riverview Manor renovations project was allowed under our SHRRP allocation. An environmental assessment, including a hazardous/dangerous substance survey were required and completed for that particular project, which will be submitted to MMAH in early 2010 so that we may proceed as quickly as possible.
- We have worked closely with the Northern Independent Living Services (NILS) to secure support services for the Riverview Manor: Aging at Home Project. NILS has completed a needs assessment and will soon submit a funding proposal to the Local Health Integrated Network (LHIN) for funding consideration. We are very excited about the possibilities this presents for seniors and individuals requiring a bit more assistance to stay in their homes.
- The housing staff continues to work closely with other organizations in the community to provide outreach services at our family units at 6th and Webster in Fort Frances. The Grand Opening was held on 22 June, 2009 with all partners present including the United Native Friendship Centre, the Fort Frances Children's Complex, the Northwestern Health Unit, Metis Nation of Ontario, Fort Frances Public Library, Family & Children's Services, and RRDSSAB program staff.
- The Second Annual Housing Provider Information Session was provided by DSSAB staff to our Non-Profit Housing Providers in June. Topics included the new Ontario Human Rights Code, basics for Board

governance, pets in housing, unit inspections, and unit move-ins. The staff is to be commended for providing an excellent training session.

- 24 homes in our District were renovated under the Northern Home Repair Program, during the first wave of funding ending August 31st. DSSAB staff requested an additional \$500,000 under the Northern Home Repair Program for the next two years which targeted 20 additional homes. MMAH has since granted our DSSAB \$125,000 for 2009/10 and an additional \$375,000 for 2010/11 through 100% provincial dollars.
- In July, we received an additional \$7,500 to continue with our Rent Bank Program which assists individuals and families struggling to afford rent costs.
- We have submitted a Business Case to MMAH for under-spent funding from previous years in our Strong Communities Rent Supplement Program, totaling \$44,168. To date, we have not been approved, therefore we continue to actively recruit landlord participation in our District.
- An Operational Review was conducted by DSSAB staff for Morley Municipal Housing. Morley has provided an excellent housing service to their tenants, as reflected within their review. All directives have been met within deadline.
- Property Management Agreements continued with Fort Frances Municipal Non-Profit Housing Corporation, Faith Housing, Atikokan Native Non-Profit Homes and our new contract with Flinders Inc. Our contract with Columbus Place ended December 31st.
- Our Maintenance Team, under the leadership of Rick Bliss, has had another extremely successful year. With the addition of our new maintenance staff and our ability to complete the majority of the work required with our own staff, we have been able to complete the following: window installations, floor repair & installations, unit inspections, move-in/readiness protocols, balcony repairs, Queen Street Manor renovations, interior and exterior painting, fence repairs, three-season room completion at Lady Frances, patio repairs and updates, etc. Our aging buildings and the results of deferred maintenance have been and will continue to be our main focus. Preventive maintenance will be a priority.
- The housing department recognizes the value and importance of staff training & development. Some of the training provided this year included Residential Tenancies Act, Rent Geared to Income Certificate Courses, Duty to Accommodate, Accessibility Standards training, First Aid/CPR, Domestic Violence training, Building Maintenance and Property Management-specific courses, MMAH database [AIMS] training and provincial training opportunities for maintenance and tenant matters.
- Tenants repeatedly express their appreciation to the Tenant Liaison Officers, Eligibility Review Officer/Family Support Worker, Housing Clerk, Maintenance Team and management staff for the quality of homes they are being offered, the quick response of our custodians and maintenance staff, and the clean, safe environments they can call 'home'. One tenant who found herself in an apartment full of water sent us a letter to pass on her thoughts and appreciation: *".....I could not have asked him to do any better. He was very kind and considerate....I know everyone complains and I do too but I also think praise should be given when due and these three men did an outstanding job as far as I'm concerned. Please let each one of them know I wrote this note and thank them again for their help and kindness."* This is our focus – this is what it's all about!

Provincial Land Tax Reform

- PLT was implemented in 2009. Unincorporated property owners received their first new tax bill, reflecting the use of current value assessment.

2009 Budget Summary

	2009	2008	
Bd Admin	54,800	54,800	
DSSAB Admin	298,724	254,698	
Ontario Works	6,946,096	7,964,454	
Child Care	1,380,944	1,354,059	
Best Start	1,215,506	807,350	100% Prov.
NCBS	0	27,300	
Homelessness	66,097	64,801	100% Prov.
Land Ambulance	6,332,357	5,438,979	
Rent Bank Fund	13,514	0	100% Prov.
Social Housing	3,013,782	2,980,947	
Affordable Housing Program	529,965	324,900	100% Prov.
	19,851,785	19,272,287	

*The overall budget increase for 2009 was 3.01%, however the Municipal share increased by only 1.06%, due to 100% Ministry-funded budget increases, an increase in provincial funding for land ambulance and the use of reserve funds.

Administration

- We have developed a new accessibility policy for customer service, as required by the Province of Ontario, which addresses the core principles of independence, dignity, integration, and equal opportunity. Our staff have long recognized and respected the challenges of many individuals we serve and work diligently to address accessibility issues each day. Given that we offer services to everyone in the District, including seniors and individuals challenged by physical, mental or intellectual disabilities, or addictions, we must be cognizant of accessibility issues facing others.
- All staff and Board members were trained on the customer service standard, including external contractors. Under the direction of our Customer Service Committee, materials were developed for staff reference and areas of concern identified in our physical locations. We will continue to address the best means possible to serve any individual challenged by accessibility issues.
- All human resources policies were reviewed and approved in April.
- The Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee and relevant staff members became WSIB-certified in October.
- Our DSSAB staff was re-certified in CPR/AED and Standard First Aid early in the year.
- Harassment training was provided to all staff in November/December.
- Our fantastic Finance Team worked with all departments and the Board throughout the year to ensure the DSSAB complied with the new tangible capital assets policy.
- The Privacy Officer and CAO received access and privacy training from the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, Ontario.
- The Board began the process of updating its procedural bylaw.

Thank you to all of our staff and Board members for working together to provide the best services possible to those individuals and families in the Rainy River District who rely on us for their basic needs.

Respectfully Submitted by:
Donna Dittaro, CAO

RRDSSAB Board Members

2009 RRDSSAB Board Members and Area of Representation, as at 31 December, 2009

Linda Armstrong, Dawson

Dennis Brown, Atikokan

John Callan, Rainy River Central

Wade Desserre, Rainy River West

Ross Donaldson, LaVallee

Deb Ewald, Rainy River

Mike Ford, Alberton

Gary Gamsby, Morley

Gary Judson, Emo

Michael Lewis, Rainy River East (Chair)

Rick Neilson, Chapple

Valerie Pizey, Lake of the Woods

Sharon Tibbs, Fort Frances (Vice Chair)