

District Services Board Notes

Surplus in the works for DSB

According to finance manager Connie Morphett, the Manitoulin Sudbury District Services is projecting an (unaudited) surplus of \$245,080. The services board is under budget by \$100,238 in Ontario Works allowances, \$87,538 in child-care administration, \$7,071 in social housing and \$59,007 in emergency medical services (ambulance).

The audited statements will not be available until late spring, at which time the board will decide what to do with the surplus; whether to divvy it up among member municipalities or to add it into the 2012 budget.

CAO Fourth Quarter Activity Report

DSB CAO Fern Dominelli gave the board his fourth quarter report, noting that since the October 16 implementation of 24/7 staffing at the Mindemoya EMS base, statistics show the station is being "better utilized" than in the past. The Little Current station, he added, has decreased in usage since Mindemoya increased its staffing.

Mr. Dominelli noted that the board would be keeping an eye on how the Mindemoya station also affects the one in Gore Bay, which could see an increase in staffing in 2013.

Central Manitoulin councillor Derek Stephens told the board he has heard that call times from Mindemoya are faster.

Mr. Dominelli noted that the DSB was allocated \$1,015,176 toward social housing projects for a four-year period, from August 2011 to March 2015. However, he noted, the DSB actually requires \$6.9 million to meet the needs of the Espanola and Noelville capital projects.

Minister turns down DSB request for meeting

In November 2011, the DSB passed a motion to request a meeting with the Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister Kathleen Wynne to discuss the Investment in Affordable Housing allocation shortfall. Minister Wynne wrote to the board on January 31, declining to meet with the board, citing a "heavy schedule of commitments" and suggesting the DSB speak to the Municipal Services Office Team. The board will continue to try and schedule a meeting with the minister.

More on non-urgent patient transfers

The DSB wrote Ministry of Health and Long Term Care Minister Deb Matthews, including in the correspondence four letters of support from the Manitoulin Health Centre, Espanola General Hospital, Chapleau General Hospital, Sudbury General Hospital and the North East Local Health Integrated Network (NELHIN).

The letter outlines a business case for the DSB

for a two-tiered EMS system that encompasses both emergency and non-urgent patient transportation.

Minister Matthews replied to the DSB, noting and that the report was shared with the appropriate staff that her ministry will review and consider the proposal. She informed the DSB the Ministry of Health, along with the Ministry of Transportation, are examining the regulation of non-ambulance medical transportation and that the DSB would be consulted in the review process. The minister also encouraged the board to share the business case with the NELHIN,

which they did, as the letter of support sent to the minister indicated.

Mr. Dominelli explained the NELHIN would be approached again regarding the business case, as the DSB has heard it has funded similar cases in Nipissing and Thunder Bay.

The Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association (NOSDA) annual general meeting was held in January, with a resolution on the issue of non-urgent patient transfers.

The resolution requests that the government of Ontario, and the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, work with NOSDA to

"place a level of importance on this topic with the aim of providing a made-in-the-North solution," acknowledging that many Northern Ontario EMS units are providing non-urgent transportation, a service not specifically within their legislated mandate.

NOSDA also passed a resolution requesting a meeting with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing due to the Northern Ontario-wide funding shortfall in excess of \$95 million resulting in part to the loss of the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP).

Fire/medical response

EMS chief Michael MacIssac spoke to the board on the topic of fire crew response to medical emergencies, a subject that is being pushed by the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association (OPFFA) and the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs (O AFC).

"EMS ambulance funding has increased significantly and demands for even more provincial and municipal funding grow louder, but service hasn't improved accordingly, as critical response time benchmarks continue to go unmet," a joint release from

the fire associations reads. "The OPFFA and the O AFC—union and management—are joining together on this issue because we believe it's time to seriously look at utilizing the existing resources of the fire service, including the firefighters trained in cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and defibrillator use, as a key to efficiently and effectively improving emergency medical response times in Ontario."

Mr. MacIssac noted that while this is an issue in large urban centres with full-time firefighters, it has little relevance within the

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 DSB catchments area, as all of the fire departments are volunteer, "so an increase in calling out the fire departments does have additional true costs associated whereas in urban centres, full-time firefighters are paid on site and must respond when advised to."

"The current tiered response arrangements within our area vary greatly, dependant on the needs and will of the local community fire departments," he continued. "These arrangements are in place for the betterment of the citizens within the communities and for the ability of the fire departments to attract more volunteers."

The DSB currently has 14 different tiered response agreements with multiple municipalities through the fire departments, as well as agreements with the OPP and United Chiefs and Councils of Manitoulin Anishnaabe Police Service.

Review of Social Assistance in Ontario
 Donna Moroso, director of Integrated Social Services for the DSB, updated the board on the findings of the Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario. The Commission released its discussion paper on February 3 which contained four key features of effective services and supports: consistent assessment and case management; integrated pre- and post-employment services and supports; access to the same level of services for people with disabilities; and strong connections with employers.

Approaches for these features could include: improved provincial/municipal/First Nations collaboration; that municipalities/First Nations deliver all employment services; or Employment Ontario delivers all employment services.

Mr. Dominelli noted that

it didn't make any sense to have two different offices delivering to the same clients, as those who are clients of one social assistance program are often also clients of another.

"The clients and structures are in place already," he added.

Mr. Dominelli explained that the report's recommendation of an audit-based verification for clients makes more sense, would be easier for staff and meshes up with recommendations made in the Drummond Report.

As it stands now, he said, those on Ontario Works receive drug coverage, but the working poor don't, unless they apply for a Trillium grant. "As soon as they (Ontario Works clients) get a job, they lose those benefits and childcare and rent subsidy goes up—it's what we call the 'welfare wall'," he said.

Drummond Report

Mr. Dominelli spoke to

the board about some of the recommendations of the Drummond Report, noting that it was now a matter of 'wait and see.'

While the report called for the end of full-day Kindergarten, the government has said that it will be maintained, he said.

When it comes to social housing, the report recommended that Ontario approach the federal government for "adequate, stable, long-term federal funding."

On the topic of income testing, Mr. Dominelli said that many of the income-tested ministries have their own rules, as was aforementioned.

There were no recommendations based on EMS, nor will the DSB know how much funding they will receive until the budget is passed.

The report recommended social programs be fully integrated, with Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and Ontario

Works (OW) combined and growth maintain at 0.05 percent/year.

"A single, streamlined entity for OW and ODSP has its benefits, as long as it's revenue neutral," he said. "Centralizing income testing and payment systems also has its benefits, but the DSBs should be involved. Once they achieve the 0.05 percent/year (\$2 billion), then look at modifying the program."

"As the economy gets hit, our caseload goes up," Mr. Dominelli stated, speaking about the Drummond Report's recommendations on employment and train-

ing services. "Right now, Employment Ontario is ready to deal with 'job ready' individuals, not those who are dealing with addictions or family violence. Therefore, big changes have to come."

"The DSB builds the program around the client, but Employment Ontario's not like that—you have to fit into one of their pigeon holes to move forward," the CEO added.

As far as the extension of social assistance program uploading, the DSB will "need to see," noting that the report recommended this wait until 2020.