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## NEWS LOCAL

# Ministry of Health sides with hospitals that Kenora District Services Board bills are not permitted under Ambulance Act



By Jon Thompson, Kenora Daily Miner & News  
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Starting in November, district hospitals and long term care homes will be invoiced for transporting patients with non-life threatening illnesses or injuries according to a new policy approved by the Kenora District Services Board.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is siding with the Lake of the Woods District Hospital in the battle over who pays for non-emergent ambulance transfers.

The Kenora District Services Board (KDSB) intends to keep sending hospitals the bills and the hospital intends not to pay them.

The KDSB, with its counterpart in the Rainy River District, has hired a consultant that will determine a long-term plan for the costly transfers. All seven hospitals west of Thunder Bay have agreed to participate in that process but the KDSB says the ministry has declined its invitation because of the services board's September decision to begin billing hospitals for the transfers in November.

"They (the ministry) will not participate in a process where there's a threat of a breach of the Ambulance Act, in their opinion," said Dan McNeill, the chief executive officer for the KDSB, adding the ministry has told the services board it will join the conversation if KDSB ceases sending invoices to the hospitals.

Addressing the board, which approved the decision, McNeill said, "We wanted to put you on notice that we may be sanctioned, of which is of an unknown nature."

A spokesman for the ministry said it is encouraged that the KDSB and hospitals are seeking a solution but insisted the Ambulance Act is clear that the municipalities are responsible for ensuring the proper provision of land ambulance services.

"The ministry informed the Kenora DSB that their proposed plan to bill hospitals for the provision of non-emergent ambulance service is not permitted under the Ambulance Act and that if Kenora DSB proceeds with its plan, it will be in contravention of the Act," the spokesman said.

Local hospital president Mark Balcaen has been publicly defiant on his intention not to pay any invoice. He was unavailable for

comment on Wednesday.

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