



Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association

Kenora, Rainy River and Thunder Bay Districts

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Andre Marin
Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario
Bell Trinity Square
483 Bay Street, 10th Floor, South Tower
Toronto, ON M5G 2C9

Dear Mr. Marin:

REVIEW OF NON-URGENT PATIENT TRANSFERS IN ONTARIO

The Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) represents the interests of 36 municipalities from Kenora and Rainy River in the west to Wawa in the east. Our mission is “to provide leadership in advocating regional interests to all orders of government and other organizations.”

For some time now, NOMA has been concerned with the lack of a non-urgent patient transfer service in Northwestern Ontario. I am pleased to take this opportunity to provide information that I hope will be helpful in your review of the current services that are provided across the Province.

Non-urgent Patient Transportation concerns have become increasingly frustrating and expensive for municipalities. Municipalities in the Northwest, either directly or indirectly through their District Social Service Administration Boards, are currently directing and funding Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to provide emergency service that aligns with police and fire services.

Each time a non-urgent transfer request is filled there is a compromise in the ability of EMS to provide emergency service. In many of the smaller rural communities, there is only one ambulance at any given time. Currently a staffed ambulance is leaving the municipality for hours, even a day at a time to deliver non-urgent patients - leaving the municipality without mandated EMS vehicle and paramedic staff which multiplies risk, liability and cost to the municipality.

In many of these cases, an ambulance that is in transit with a non-urgent patient will be called back to the community to assist with an emergency, leading to significant delays for the emergency patient, and often leaving the non-urgent patient stranded.

The provision of non-urgent transportation by EMS is not only highly inefficient and ineffective, but also unreliable, causing frustration on all sides. In some of our communities as much as 50% of their emergency service funds are being used to provide non-urgent transfers. This is unacceptable and unaffordable. The solution to this problem is a separate program, similar to that in Southern Ontario,

which would focus on non-emergency transportation. The current system where EMS funds intended for emergency services are being used to provide non-emergency transportation is not in the best interest of either the patient or the taxpayer.

In January 2010, our Board met with the Northwest Local Health Integration Network CEO, Gwen Dubois-Wing, to outline our concerns regarding the lack of service and the excessive cost of providing non-urgent patient transfers using the EMS. At that time, Ms. Wing indicated that the LHINs are not mandated to provide transportation.

In February 2010, representatives of our Board met with the Honourable Deb Matthews, Minister of Health and the Honourable Michael Gravelle, Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry to outline the issue and to offer our help to develop a suitable solution. Minister Matthews asked us to come back to her with some possible options for consideration.

We again met with Minister Matthews and Minister Gravelle in August 2010 and provided to them a document that outlined three possible systems to address the issue (attached). We are awaiting a reply from the Minister and we will be requesting another meeting in early 2011 to further discuss the proposed solutions and to advocate on behalf of our members regarding this important and financially challenging issue.

We are hopeful that your review of these services will result in a full report on the provision of non-urgent patient transfer services in Ontario that will shine a light on the challenges we face in Northwestern Ontario.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,



Anne Krassilowsky
President
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Enclosure

c. Hon. Deb Matthews
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