



Impact of 09 Provincial Budget

The recently announced provincial budget has major implications for individuals and families applying or receiving services through the Rainy River DSSAB. Although not all local issues were addressed, there were major strides made in significant areas which will affect our clients and tenants in a very positive way.

The province introduced various means to attack poverty and the struggles of low income families. The Ontario Child Benefit will rise from a maximum of \$600 to a maximum of \$1,100 per child per year in July. For local families, this measure helps to reduce the impact of the loss of National Child Benefit Strategy (NCBS) funding which our district municipalities once paid to support recreational and early intervention services for low income families. In addition, the province has introduced the establishment of community hubs in selected low-income neighborhoods. Although we may not see the funding directly in our district, the lessons learned from these hubs may be applied to the initiative currently being undertaken by our children's services and housing staff at our 6th & Webster Family Housing location for families residing there.

The budget also allowed for \$700 million over two years in new skills training initiatives and enhancements to existing programs, including \$90 million to expand literacy and basic skills funding. Hopefully, that funding will assist our Employment Support Services through Ontario Works to help people achieve the shortest route to employment – many who are dealing with exceptional challenges.

In the fall of 2009, the basic adult allowance and maximum shelter allowance for Ontario Works recipients will increase by another 2%. For a single parent with two children aged five and seven, these changes would increase their annualized income to \$22,730 (an increase of \$1,110 over 2008 rates). The increase will be absorbed by the province until January 2010, at which time the increase will be shared with the municipalities. Following the recommendations of the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal & Service Delivery Review, the province has committed to reviewing social assistance with a goal of removing barriers and increasing opportunities for those attempting to move into employment.

The province has matched federal dollars allocated in the January 2009 federal budget for social housing retrofits and new builds. Our housing department is extremely pleased to hear about the various funding allocations introduced. Funding will be available to repair housing units and make them more energy efficient; to create new affordable housing for low-income seniors and persons with disabilities; to extend the Affordable Housing Program; and to continue with the Ontario Rent Bank. All of these initiatives could have major implications for our district. Our DSSAB, along with the rest of the provincial service managers, have long ago argued for funding to support our aging housing stock. The staff is extremely excited by the potential extension of the Northern Home Repair Program (part of the Affordable Housing Program) in our district. Numerous district families have benefited from this program to date – a funding initiative which allows them to repair/renovate their homes so that they can address the changing needs of their family members and allow them to stay in their homes. The continuation of the Rent Bank is another welcome announcement in our area, as families struggle with payments to support their basic needs for food and shelter. Lastly, our staff, working with their community partners, will continue to seek all funding sources available through this budget to move forward with “assisted living” projects in our district!

Although the province did not discuss its role in the funding of Best Start or other child care initiatives, it did call on the federal government to initiate new funding for child care. Details for our 2009-10 fee subsidy will be available shortly – these funds enable families to access child care while they are employed or attending school. The cost of child care administration has been an issue locally, since the transfer of child care to the municipalities from the province. It is a major issue for many, if not all, child care service managers presently. The integration of child care with other services under the RRDSSAB is the major support for the administration of this valuable program in our district. We will continue to work with our provincial counterparts to lobby the province for its share.

The province did also announce funding for social agencies which serve low income and vulnerable populations to undertake repairs and improve security, accessibility, and energy efficiency at their social service facilities – the program details are unknown at this time.

Luckily, certain items currently exempt from PST will continue to be exempt from the provincial portion of the new single sales tax, including children's clothing & footwear, children's car seats and booster seats, books, and diapers. Several of our district families are already stretched beyond their means so this is welcome news. Unfortunately, the new sales tax may have some financial implications for construction costs of new affordable housing units and on the daily operations of housing providers. Currently, costs are kept down because of certain exemptions and rebates however, at this time we are unaware as to whether these exemptions and rebates will continue to apply to our providers.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA 2005)

DSSAB staff is participating in training and information sessions on *the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* in relation to employment standards and our duty to accommodate individuals with disabilities. Concerns relate primarily to additional costs which will burden the municipalities and small organizations. We will continue to keep abreast of developments in this area through our various sources including the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association and the Ontario Non Profit Housing Association.

Human Resources

The following Human Resource activity has taken place since last reported:

Name	Title	Status	Start/Effective Date
Bob Cooke	Paramedic	casual	02 March/09
Gary Winik	Maintenance II	PFT	16 March/09
Wendy Tilbury	Finance Clerk	PFT	16 March/09
Greg Shoemaker	Maintenance II	PFT	20 April/09

Respectfully Submitted,
/d Dittaro