

Child Care

Dr. Charles Pascal, special advisor to the Premier, has released his much-anticipated report on a new child and family service system for Ontario. The vision includes an integrated system for 0 to 12 year olds with the child and family at centre. It places the DSSABs in a leadership role, with its focus on local service system management and multi-year planning. The report suggests that DSSABs would provide systems management for a network of Best Start Child and Family Centres for children 0 to 4 years of age and would be given the authority to develop, with partners and in a shared arrangement with the province, multi-year Early Years Service Plans. Existing resources, governance and mandates of existing child care, family resource and early intervention services would be re-engineered into a consolidated service management system. The RRDSSAB has always supported integration initiatives which free up administration dollars to re-direct to service. Transitional funding is recommended to support program reorganization.

The implementation of the plan would begin the school year 2010-11 with a three-year time line; special initiatives for rural and remote areas, and transitional funding are recommended. Phase I of the process would include the appointment of a new Deputy Minister of Education and the establishment of an Early Years Division within the Ministry of Education. We do have copies of Dr. Pascal's report available or you can access it at www.ontario.ca/earlylearning.

Child care in the Town of Rainy River was identified as a service gap in our original 1999 *Child Care Transfer Plan*, prior to the devolution of child care from the province to the RRDSSAB. Well, ten years later, we have achieved our goal - Rainy River Playschool is ready to go!! Special thanks to Mildred Beck, our Children's Services Manager and the dedicated staff and board of the Rainy

River Playschool for all of their hard work and determination! It has been a tremendous amount of work for them but well worth their efforts. According to the Licensing Inspector from the Ministry of Children & Youth Services: "this centre is absolutely beautiful and absolutely functional....one of the nicest Best Start sites I've seen and something that the staff and community can be very proud of". Well done! They do plan an open house for some time in August – please visit if at all possible so they can show off their new, beautiful facility for families and children.

Social Housing

On 09 June, 2009, Jim Watson, Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing (MMAH) announced an agreement between the provincial and federal governments for a social housing renovation and retrofit program. The program will see \$704 million invested over the next two years in the rehabilitation and renovation of social housing, and presents opportunities that service managers have not seen in many years. These dollars offer us opportunities to maintain and repair our housing stock, apply energy efficiencies, reduce operating costs and improve the lives of our tenants, including those challenged by various disabilities.

There is a 'use it or lose it' provision whereby funding may be reallocated, if not used within required timelines. Dianne Lampi, RRDSSAB Housing Manager will be updating the board at its next meeting on the Social Housing Renovation & Retrofit Program (SHRPP) and the Affordable Housing Program Extension. We have been allocated approximately \$1.3 million over the next two years, under the SHRRP. Sandra Weir, Non-Profit Housing Manager and Dianne are currently preparing business cases and take-up plans for various projects throughout the district.

Interestingly, the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) recently released suggestions for service managers to bring to the Ministry's consultations on a long-term affordable housing strategy. OMSSA's #1 Principle is "housing is much more than the bricks and mortar" which fits with our DSSAB's vision statement for Social Housing "*Beyond Bricks & Mortar*". It is great to see we are on the same track and part of a system that recognizes the importance of a more holistic approach to social housing.

We have received a response from Minister Watson regarding our letter describing the large discrepancy between funding of Northern and Southern Ontario, and the ever-increasing deficit in capital funding. Minister Watson points out the recent funding announcements under the SHRRP and acknowledges our unique challenges in Northwestern Ontario. We will continue to make our concerns known to the Minister.

Ontario Works

Ontario Works has been attempting to stay on top of the many, many changes to the Ontario Works directives these past few months. Shelley Shute, OW Manager has been working closely with her staff to ensure that changes are implemented and local discretion is exercised where possible. OW staff are participating in the Outreach Program at 6th and Webster by offering budgeting, life skills and pre-employment programs on-site. This is such a wonderful opportunity to reach people!

Land Ambulance

Dan McCormick, Health Services Manager, has met with the Chief's Secretariat and members of the Big Grassy and Big Island First Nations to discuss placement of automated external defibrillators (AED) in their respective communities. All

are pleased to have such a valuable life-saving service available to their residents. Dan and his staff continue to work hard to ensure AEDs are available across our district. Thank you!

We are currently in the midst of a call for tenders for the renovations to the Rainy River ambulance base and hope to get started there as quickly as we can.

Atikokan Labor Adjustment Board

Dianne Lampi, Shelley Shute and I travelled to Atikokan this week to meet with the Board Chair and staff of the Atikokan Labor Adjustment Board. It allowed us an opportunity to describe our various services, including our integrated intake system and to clarify how one can access DSSAB and other services which could assist Atikokan residents currently affected by lay-offs and a lack of financial resources. The meeting was extremely productive and useful for both parties. We look forward to a continued working relationship with the Labor Adjustment Board, as we attempt to help families and individuals through these difficult times.

Annual Staff Meeting

On 04 June, 2009, RRDSSAB employees met for their annual staff meeting. Peggy Loyie, Executive Director of the Rainy River District Victim Services Program, presented an excellent overview of their services. Several employees received long-term service awards including:

- Arthur Collins 5 years
- Kim Cousineau 5 years
- Leanne Eluik 5 years
- Stacy MacIntyre 5 years
- Ryan Mosley 5 years

- Sherri Potter 5 years
- Sheila Faykes 20 years!
- Marty Emond 25 years!!

We are very fortunate to have such dedicated long-term employees who provide excellent services to the most vulnerable in our communities. Congratulations from the Board and Management!

A very special thank you to the Ontario Works staff for coordinating the meeting this year. Shelley and folks presented the very first *RRDSSAB Survivor Challenge*. Congratulations to Leanne, Greg, Trevis, Terry, and John for winning! Great team work! (*I heard a rumor that it was filmed and could be used in the future*) 😊

Human Resources

There is no Human Resource activity to report this month.

Welcome to our newest Board member, Rick Neilson representing the Township of Chapple!

Farewell to Peter Van Heyst, the outgoing representative from Chapple who has served on the Board since its inception in 1998! He has been a valuable and loyal contributor to the board and has been an excellent representative for his community! We will miss you Peter. Be well and keep in touch!

Respectfully Submitted,
/d Dittaro