

Rocky View Regional Handibus Society

Transportation for Community Needs

P.O Box 3235, Airdrie, AB T4B 2B5
Tel: (403) 948-2887 Fax: (403) 948-2802
www.rockyviewbus.ca

January 12, 2005

Yvonne Fritz
Minister of Seniors and Community Supports
425 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton T5K 2B6

Dear Minister,

I read with interest your interview in the Calgary Herald advertising feature (Jan 10). I was particularly moved by your quote, "I'd like to see all necessities of life for seniors made available so they don't have to move if they don't want to." The article then further quotes your list of many community services necessary for a senior to "age in place" except for one, transportation.

Transportation is an often forgotten community necessity. It is not universally provided across Alberta. In the riding to the east of your district lies the municipality of Chestermere. There is no handibus service in Chestermere save what we can provide within our limited means. Chestermere Council has been approached on numerous occasions to support handibus operation, however remains uninterested. Meanwhile the Calgary Health Region refers all Chestermere residents to us and we provide service when we can. Eventually the Chestermere seniors have to move to Calgary facilities.

This situation repeats across Alberta. While some municipalities provide transportation from the local property tax base (e.g. Calgary), other municipalities do not provide funds ("let 'em move to Calgary," remarked one rural elected official). Several "Made in Alberta" strategies for community support assume that transportation will be there. No member of the Executive Council is actually responsible to ensure such transportation exists.

We are aware of the long promised inter-ministerial review of special transportation funding. We were first informed of this "pending" review in August 2001. In 2003, our government funds dropped to their lowest level (10% of expenses) while we provided almost \$500,000 of savings to Alberta Health, Alberta Seniors and Alberta Childrens Services. In 2004, demand for transportation grew by a further 30%. Donors are asking why the province doesn't contribute. Other donors are turning us away as they feel our operation is not sustainable.

If "Aging in Place" is a key strategy of your department, what will be done to ensure that an accessible transportation infrastructure for seniors with mobility impairments will exist on the community level in municipalities across Alberta? Does your entire "ageing in place" strategy rely on the kindness of strangers to provide transportation for Albertans under your care?

I am enclosing some media clips and a copy of our 2003 survey of Alberta special transportation providers (self-funded for \$500). I look forward to hearing your strategy to ensure community transportation will be available for your programs.

Sincerely,

COPY

Paul Siller
Transportation Manager