

# 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 5, 2005

Hon. Ralph Klein  
Premier of Alberta  
#307, 10800 - 97 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B7

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Dear Premier,

Thank-you for your response (dated December 14). Unfortunately, you are unable to answer my query in both my Sept 7<sup>th</sup> and Nov 23<sup>rd</sup> letters. My question was, "What will be done to identify the ministry responsible for facilitating special needs transportation?"

A report by Nichols Applied Management titled "Funding of Specialized Transportation Service in Selected Municipalities" concludes, "... high priority demands for service (e.g. rides to medical appointments) are being met." I am deeply concerned about this statement. I can attest that five rural transportation providers in the Calgary region regularly deny high-priority trip requests (dialysis, specialist appointments, post-hospital follow-up, chemotherapy) because of lack of capacity or resources.

As I mentioned in my September letter, we helped Alberta Health save about \$250,000 by providing transportation that facilitated shorter hospital stays & outpatient follow-up for just a handful of Albertans. Transportation for a few other rural passengers helped both Childrens Services and Alberta Seniors to each save about \$150,000 – \$170,000. However, \$550,000 in total savings is just a starting point. We still have the rest of our passenger list to assess. We also have to consider the costs for Alberta Health when local rural residents had to move back into acute care hospitals because we couldn't meet their medical transportation "high priority" needs.

If our findings are typical, then 75 special transportation programs across Alberta have saved Alberta Health over \$19 million in 2003. Your government also saved \$13 million when special transportation providers helped facilitate the Alberta Seniors "ageing in place" strategy by providing rides to local community supports. This is only a part of the total contribution of Alberta's transportation providers. There are still many travel purposes we have to research. This community effort provides at least \$30 million of annual savings to three Alberta departments. The final total could be as high as \$60 million when all Alberta departments are assessed.

It is remarkable that organizations make these savings for Alberta. A 2003 survey found 66% of providers felt that Alberta didn't support their work. Although the province makes funding available to municipalities to distribute as per local priority, there is no guidance to ensure municipalities fund local transportation that benefits the province. There is no accounting to describe how much Unconditional Municipal Grant Program funding actually goes to transportation efforts supporting your government's initiatives.

To re-iterate my previous requests, would you please identify who is responsible to facilitate special needs transportation? Alberta's special transportation organizations need to know who to express their concerns to. Many stakeholders have waited over three-years for this pending review. What will be done to identify the minister responsible?

Sincerely,

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Paul Siller  
Transportation Manager

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Appendix

A short (incomplete) list of Alberta communities with specialized transportation programs.

- |                      |                      |                          |
|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Airdrie*          | 29. Ft Saskatchewan* | 57. Provost*             |
| 2. Athabasca County* | 30. Fox Creek        | 58. Raymond*             |
| 3. Barrhead          | 31. Grande Cache     | 59. Red Deer*            |
| 4. Bashaw*           | 32. Grande Prairie*  | 60. Ryley*               |
| 5. Beaver Lodge      | 33. Hardisty         | 61. Rimbey*              |
| 6. Bonnyville        | 34. High River*      | 62. Rocky View, MD       |
| 7. Bow Island        | 35. Hinton*          | 63. Spruce Groove*       |
| 8. Brooks*           | 36. Innisfail*       | 64. St Albert*           |
| 9. Calgary*          | 37. Lac La Biche*    | 65. St Paul*             |
| 10. Camrose*         | 38. Lac St. Anne     | 66. Stettler*            |
| 11. Canmore*         | 39. Lacombe*         | 67. Stoney Plain*        |
| 12. Cardston         | 40. Leduc*           | 68. Strathcona County*   |
| 13. Cartstairs*      | 41. Legal            | 69. Strathmore*          |
| 14. Castor           | 42. Lethbridge*      | 70. Sylvan Lake          |
| 15. Claresholm*      | 43. Lloydminster     | 71. Taber                |
| 16. Clear Hills, MD  | 44. Magrath          | 72. Three Hills          |
| 17. Coaldale*        | 45. Mayerthorpe      | 73. Tofield*             |
| 18. Cochrane*        | 46. Medicine Hat*    | 74. Two Hills            |
| 19. Cold Lake        | 47. Milk River       | 75. Viking               |
| 20. Consort          | 48. Morinville       | 76. Wetaskiwin           |
| 21. Didsbury         | 49. Nanton           | 77. Wheatland County     |
| 22. Drayton Valley   | 50. Newell County*   | 78. Wood Buffalo         |
| 23. Drumheller*      | 51. Olds             |                          |
| 24. Edmonton*        | 52. Oyen             | Note:                    |
| 25. Edson            | 53. PaintEarth       | * indicates contact with |
| 26. Elnora           | 54. Picture Butte    | Rocky View Regional      |
| 27. Evansberg        | 55. Pincher Creek*   | Handibus within past 18  |
| 28. Fort MacLeod     | 56. Ponoka           | months                   |

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