

Para transit still under siege

Although it is a new year, the County still appears to be making statements and decisions that leave it vulnerable to human rights complaints and now judicial action through the Ontario Municipal Act.

Those of us depending on Para transit have been told that there is now “a bylaw saying same day service is only for medical.”

As of January 1, 2014 the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations clearly state that same day service is to be implemented when available. This is not on-demand service, but rather, if someone wants to travel in the afternoon and a vehicle is available, then the trip can be booked in the morning.

The provincial law further states in section 71 that if same day service is not available, then people with disabilities are able to book trips up to 3 hours prior to the end of the published time of the service. In the County, Para transit runs until 11 PM so if same day service is not available, people with disabilities should be able to book for the next day up to 8 PM of the day before.

Given that the current service provider does not have dispatch capability which was an element of the Request for Proposals for the Para transit service, the logical conclusion is that we should have access to same day service.

Section 72 of the provincial law states that there can be no trip restrictions and no policy or procedure that restricts trips. This was clarified to the County by the County Solicitor when attempts to restrict trips were made in 2012.

If this is a bylaw, then it appears to be vulnerable to judicial action through the Ontario Municipal Act, section 273 which prohibits an illegal bylaw. It makes sense that a bylaw that violates another provincial law is an illegal bylaw.

If these are arbitrary decisions or statements made by ill-informed people that are then carried out, the County needs to manage the contract for Para transit and provide clear communication within its own staff and elected officials, the service provider and those of us using Para transit.

The Accessibility Advisory Committee, as per provincial law, is to be consulted on decisions related to Para transit.

Those of us using the service need an accessible website with accurate and up-to-date information including what the transportation standards in the provincial law are.