

County of Brant Determined to Eliminate Para Transit

As a community member of the now dissolved ad hoc Specialized Transportation Service (Para Transit) committee I am writing this letter to the Editor to make clear that those of us from the community did not approve in any way the currently proposed transportation scheme by the County.

Our last meeting was July 31 and our committee was dissolved at the August 14 Community Services committee meeting. We are no longer being advised of or consulted on any matters relating to the proposed Para transit scheme. We have not received any correspondence directly related to the proposed transportation scheme since August 7, 2012 when the County asked for more time to complete tasks requested by the ad hoc committee.

As of October 1, 2012 the contents of the agenda on the County web site for the ad hoc committee meeting of July 31 are not the agenda contents approved by the ad hoc committee at that meeting. The minutes on the County website for the July 31 meeting of the ad hoc committee are not approved minutes as we have not met since July 31 and are not accurate in that they are missing several items approved by the ad hoc committee for inclusion in the July 17 meeting minutes (all of the missing items came from community members).

The proposed transportation scheme is not cost effective or sustainable, does not meet the needs of people with disabilities and ignores the transportation standards in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, Integrated accessibility Standards, part IV – Transportation (Ontario Regulation 191/11). Even based on modest numbers of seniors and people with disabilities being able to purchase the total amount of travel coupons per month, the transportation scheme will be over budget in a few months.

Each time community members asked questions related to affordability, sustainability and the needs of people with disabilities the answer was that the County did not have to provide Para transit and could stop it any time they want (which is true but does not answer the accountability questions and does demonstrate a lack of commitment to seniors and people with disabilities.)

The ad hoc committee was told by the County that “many Counsellors don’t see the need for para transit and want it eliminated,” and “if someone needs more than the allotted amount each month to go to work, they could move.” One Counsellor stated during a Community Services Committee meeting that “people with disabilities need to learn how to budget their money just like everyone else and if they can’t afford the luxuries, they need to rethink their lifestyle.”

It is not clear when accessible affordable Para transit became a “luxury” in Canada.

We want and need an accessible, affordable and sustainable Para transit service. Other rural municipalities have accessible, affordable and sustainable Para transit services so this is not an impossible dream.

Why isn't the County looking at an affordable and sustainable model of Para transit service delivery?

Why is the County determined to eliminate Para transit for seniors and people with disabilities when the number of seniors and people with disabilities is increasing in the County?