

## **INTERCITY BUS SERVICE IN NORTHERN ONTARIO**

### **Issue**

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation is examining how people travel between communities by intercity bus, and this review may result in changes to the regulations that govern the operation of intercity bus services across the province, and in particular in Northern Ontario.

### **Background**

Even though intercity bus service is an essential service for many residents of Northwestern Ontario, successive governments have allowed the service to be reduced and in some areas eliminated as the regulations moved away from a concept of cross subsidization whereby operators on a particular route used the profits from the more lucrative routes to subsidize the service to the more remote parts of the province.

Only Minaki, Sioux Lookout, Collins and Armstrong have scheduled rail passenger service and only Fort Frances, Kenora, Dryden, Sioux Lookout, Nakina and Thunder Bay have scheduled air passenger service (other than the remote First Nation communities). Residents without a personal vehicle must rely on family, friends or in many cases non-urgent transportation by Emergency Medical Service paramedics for transportation to major centres particularly for health reasons as intercity bus service is either inadequate or non-existent.

The Ministry of Transportation has been conducting an analysis of the multi-modal transportation needs of northern Ontario for the past three years and is approximately one year away from completing the study and recommending a plan for northern Ontario.

The Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association has requested that the Ontario government set aside future infrastructure funds for the implementation of the Multimodal Transportation Study. It would be prudent for the northern Ontario portion of the current study of intercity bus service to be suspended and referred to the Multimodal Transportation Study for incorporation into the long term plan.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

That NOACC call on the Ministry of Transportation to refer all matters related to any reform of the intercity bus transportation regulations applicable to Northern Ontario to the Northern Ontario Multimodal Transportation Study and further that:

The Ministry of Transportation Multimodal Transportation Study pay particular attention to the manner in which all modes of passenger transportation can be enhanced throughout Northwestern Ontario.

*Adopted by the membership: September 24, 2015*