

## Sabrina Pandolfo

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**Subject:** RE: Access to Transportation for Medical Appointments in Temiskaming Shores and Area

**From:** Tania Osborne <[taniades@hotmail.com](mailto:taniades@hotmail.com)>

**Date:** March 26, 2024 at 5:37:56 PM EDT

**Subject:** Access to Transportation for Medical Appointments in Temiskaming Shores and Area

Good Evening community members,

I am reaching out to you to discuss a matter of considerable concern regarding access to transportation for medical appointments in Northern Ontario. Please note that this email contains detailed information, and I hope you will take the time to review it in its entirety as this is a very important matter for our community.

As a director of Community Cancer Care, we have observed a concerning trend amongst our clients facing challenges in attending medical appointments for cancer treatments (Locally or in Sudbury, Toronto, Ottawa, etc..). The issue exacerbates when considering the limitations of Northern travel grants, which frequently fail to cover accommodations and travel expenses entirely. In addition, with the closure of Daffodil House, a vital resource for affordable lodging, the financial burden on patients has substantially increased. Moreover, while the travel grants partially cover transportation expenses, the actual cost of services like taxi services and accessible transportation through home support far exceeds the grant's allocation, leaving patients with a significant financial gap to bridge. Fortunately Community Cancer Care has been able to provide some assistance to member of our community by covering a portion of accommodation and travel costs. However, it's essential to acknowledge the limitations imposed by funding caps, which restrict the extent of assistance we can offer. Additionally, our current support system primarily caters to individuals with cancer diagnosis, leaving out those facing similar challenges without a specific cancer diagnosis. It's crucial to recognize that the financial assistance we provide serves as a temporary Band-Aid rather than a sustainable solution to the broader issue of access to affordable healthcare services and transportation in our community. Addressing these systemic challenges requires collaborative efforts to ensure equitable access to care for all individuals in need.

As you know, this issue significantly impacts the well-being and health outcomes of individuals in our community, and I believe it requires urgent attention and collaborative effort to find viable solutions. Community Cancer Care would like to take part in assisting our community with exploring a collaborative effort to find viable solutions.

Transportation barriers can have serious implications, particularly in rural and remote regions like ours, where access to healthcare facilities is limited. Many residents face challenges in attending medical appointments due to a lack of reliable transportation options. This issue not only affects individuals' ability to receive timely medical care but also contributes to increased healthcare costs and overall health disparities.

In light of these concerns, I propose that we convene a meeting or forum to brainstorm and explore various possibilities to address this pressing issue. I believe that fostering partnerships and leveraging existing resources could be a key to developing sustainable solutions. Here are some ideas we could consider:

1. Partnerships with Local Transportation Providers: Collaborating with local transportation companies or community organizations to establish dedicated medical transport services for individuals traveling to medical appointments. (e.i: Purchasing a van and collaborate with a service to establish medical transport).
2. Ridesharing Programs: Implementing ridesharing programs tailored to meet the specific needs of medical appointments, such as coordinating rides through a mobile app or partnering with companies to provide subsidized or free rides for medical purposes.
3. Community Volunteer Networks: Mobilizing volunteers within the community to provide transportation assistance for individuals in need, possibly through a formalized volunteer network or partnership with existing volunteer organizations. (Canadian Cancer Society has a volunteer program “Wheels of Hope” however there are only 3 volunteer drivers locally and a need for advertising-have the posters and media posts to be dispersed-please reach out if you are able to assist spread the recruitment advertisement via social media or want access to the poster)
4. Government Support and Funding: Advocating for increased government support for increased government support and funding to improve transportation infrastructure and services in rural and remote areas, with a specific focus on addressing healthcare-related transportation needs.

These are just a few initial ideas, and I welcome input and suggestions from all stakeholders involved in this discussion. I propose that we schedule a meeting or conference call at your earliest convenience to begin exploring these ideas in more detail and developing a collaborative action plan moving forward. Please let me know your availability, and feel free to suggest additional stakeholders who should be involved in this discussion.

To facilitate further dialogue and collaboration, I have compiled a list of individuals who I believe are key stakeholders in addressing transportation challenges for medical appointments in our region in addition to information and conversations had when exploring possibilities for partnerships.

- **Ontario Health Representative**
- Contact: Lynne Kinuthia, Consultant, System Strategy, Planning, Design and Implementation, Nipissing & Timiskaming, Ontario Health North East, [lynne.kinuthia@ontariohealth.ca](mailto:lynne.kinuthia@ontariohealth.ca) T 647.953.9812
  - *"Thank you for bringing this concern forward. We are discussing it internally at Ontario Health and we will get back to you." Lynn*
- **Canadian Red Cross**

- Contact: Chelsey Mercier-Dubord RPN: Team Lead, Community Health and Wellness [chelsey.mercier-dubord@redcross.ca](mailto:chelsey.mercier-dubord@redcross.ca), T 705-674-0737 ext.7217 | F 705-674-4310 | C 279-377-9085

- Currently offer two short-term transportation services **upon discharge from the hospital only.**

1. Priority Assistance to Transition Home (PATH)-2wk program upon discharge
2. My Way Home-6wk program upon discharge

*“This service is not able to offer transportation outside of the time frame upon discharge or to individuals in the community who have not been recently hospitalized as it is Timiskaming Home Support that has the local contract and the services are not able to overlap.”*

- **Temiskaming Home Support THS**

- Contact: Crystal Paige Operation and Finance Manager and Transportation Team Lead, [cpaige@homesupportservices.ca](mailto:cpaige@homesupportservices.ca), T 877-318-9678 ext. 2211

\*Services **60yrs+**. THS has the local contract to offer services for door-to-door local and long-distance accessible services. They have 2 vans for Temiskaming Shores and area and 2 vans for Kirkland Lake area. On boarding as a THS client is a requirement, and eligibility is determine on an individual basis. The fees are based on the client’s notice of assessment at a 3 tier rate level effective as of April 1<sup>st</sup>: Tier 1: \$2.5/km, Tier 2: \$3/km, and Tier 3: \$3.50/km. *e.i: Primary Cancer Care Centre is located at Sudbury Regional Hospital 458km round trip (\$1,145-\$1,603) in addition to the cost of the distance between the client’s home and THS. Other major Cancer Centres used are located in: Toronto, North Bay, Timmins, Ottawa, and Barrie.*

- **Canadian Cancer Society: Wheels of Hope**

- Contact: Jennifer Martin, Manager Transportation Services, [jennifer.martin@cancer.ca](mailto:jennifer.martin@cancer.ca), T 365-889-1481
- Contact: Christie May, Sr. Transportation Specialist, Air Daffodil, Rural & Remote, [Christie.May@cancer.ca](mailto:Christie.May@cancer.ca), T 1-888-939-3333

- Provides people living with cancer rides to and from their cancer treatment appointments. Dedicated volunteer drivers donate their time and use their own (or Society owned) vehicles to help people living with cancer get to the hospital or cancer centre.

*\*There are registration eligibility, an annual fee, and there are currently limited volunteers that services this area (need to promote this service to have more volunteers to access this service).*

- **Temiskaming Health Unit: CSWB Steering Committee**

- Contact: Cameron Lamothe, Public Health Promoter [lamothe@timiskaminghu.com](mailto:lamothe@timiskaminghu.com) T 705-647-4305 ext. 2236
- Contact: Dr Corneil, Medical Officer of Health he Temiskaming Shores Area
  - Health & Wellbeing Workgroup: Emphasis on Health services delivery & accessibility
  - ROMA Rural Ontario Municipal Association, Fill the Gaps Closer to Home Improving Access to Health Services for Rural Ontario

## **ROMA Rural Ontario Municipal Association**

Contact: Mayor Robin Jones, Village of Westport Chair, ROMA, [roma@roma.on.ca](mailto:roma@roma.on.ca),  
[rjones@villageofwestport.ca](mailto:rjones@villageofwestport.ca) T 416-971-9856

Contact: Councillor Mark Wilson Temiskaming Shores, Board of Directors 2023-2027,  
[mwilson@temiskamingshores.ca](mailto:mwilson@temiskamingshores.ca)

- ROMA is the rural voice of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. Policy, research and advocacy activities are undertaken by ROMA through AMO.
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- ROMA Executive summary of Fill the Gaps Closer to Home. Improving Access to Health Services for Rural Ontario:
- **“Travel Burden --- both time and money --- is much higher in Rural Ontario.** Even before the onslaught of temporary Emergency Department closures, residents in large portions of Rural Ontario lived more than 30 minutes from the nearest Emergency Department. This simple indicator signals increased travel costs, time commitments, and potentially worse health outcomes for Rural Ontario residents.” P.4

“The implications of the disparity for rural residents are profound and are reflected in explicit gaps in service availability, resident-specific travel burden, extra costs to access services in often distant locations, severe strains on existing services that are already overloaded, and reduced levels of community well-being.” P.14

### **“Travel Burden Falls More Heavily on Shoulders of Residents of Rural Ontario**

Travel Burden<sup>27</sup> refers to the *distance* or *time* that a patient must travel, whether by ambulance, by family or friends, or by self-transport. Regardless of travel mode, longer distances or times mean greater costs and inconvenience. This means that travel burden is a key factor in assessing “real-world’ access to health services for residents of Rural Ontario.” P.35

“Although there are relatively few Canadian studies of the relationship between travel burden and access to health services, a recent study of overall access to health services in British Columbia has highlighted “the existing inequities between rural and urban patient access to health care and how these inequities are exacerbated by a patient’s overall travel-distance and financial status.”<sup>29</sup> [Underlining added] The same study noted that the research uncovered “physical and psychosocial impacts of travel as well as delayed or diminished care seeking.” [Underlining added]. P.36

“In parts of the province where the spectrum of community services option has significant gaps or where specialty physicians may not be present at all, patients may have to travel long distances to access these services. The absence of sufficient numbers of family physicians means more than a half million residents lack access to the same level of healthcare services as exists in urban areas. As a result, the continuing deterioration of primary care is an equity issue.” P.58

## **Local Government**

John Vanthof MPP for Timiskaming-Cochrane, [jvanthof-co@ndp.on.ca](mailto:jvanthof-co@ndp.on.ca)

Jeff Laferriere, Mayor City of Temiskaming Shores, [jlaferriere@temiskamingshores.ca](mailto:jlaferriere@temiskamingshores.ca)

Angela Adshead, Mayor Cobalt, [aadshead@cobalt.ca](mailto:aadshead@cobalt.ca), [cobalt@cobalt.ca](mailto:cobalt@cobalt.ca)  
Doug Metson, Mayor Englehart, [dmetson@englehart.ca](mailto:dmetson@englehart.ca), [admin@englehart.ca](mailto:admin@englehart.ca)  
Stacy Wight, Mayor Kirkland Lake, [clerk@tkl.ca](mailto:clerk@tkl.ca)  
Dan O'Mara, Mayor Municipality of Temagami, [dan.omara@temagami.ca](mailto:dan.omara@temagami.ca)  
Jean Marc Boileau, Mayor Township of Armstrong, [mayor@armstrong.ca](mailto:mayor@armstrong.ca)  
Sharon Gadoury-East, Mayor Town of Latchford, [jallen@latchford.ca](mailto:jallen@latchford.ca)

### **Other**

Lt Robbie Donaldson, The Salvation Army, [Robbie.Donaldson@salvationarmy.ca](mailto:Robbie.Donaldson@salvationarmy.ca)  
Rikki Fortier, VP Patient Services Temiskaming Hospital, [rfortier@temiskaming-hospital.com](mailto:rfortier@temiskaming-hospital.com)  
Local Service Clubs: Lions and Lioness, Rotary, Chevaliers de Colomb, L'Age D'or, Golden Age Club, Knights of Columbus, Club Richelieu, Royal Canadian Legion and Ladies Auxillary

### **Bus Service**

- Willard Bus Lines, [willardbuslines@gmail.com](mailto:willardbuslines@gmail.com) T 705-563-2805
- Stock Transportation, [info@stocktransportation.com](mailto:info@stocktransportation.com), T 1-888-952-0878

### **Taxi service**

DK Taxi Service, T 705-647-7111

In town: \$4 initial charge, additional \$2.25/km, waiting charge \$1.25/min, Minimum pickup and delivery \$15

Out of town (Set fares) E.g. New Liskeard to Sudbury \$900+tax Return

- All-Wright Private Charter, [allwrightgroup@fibreop.ca](mailto:allwrightgroup@fibreop.ca) T 705-650-3327
- Set fares. E.g. New Liskeard to Sudbury \$798 Return

Thank you for your attention to this important matter, and I look forward to our collective efforts to improve access to transportation for medical appointments in Northern Ontario.

Best regards,  
Tania Osborne  
Vice Chair, Community Cancer Care  
(705) 622-2033

