

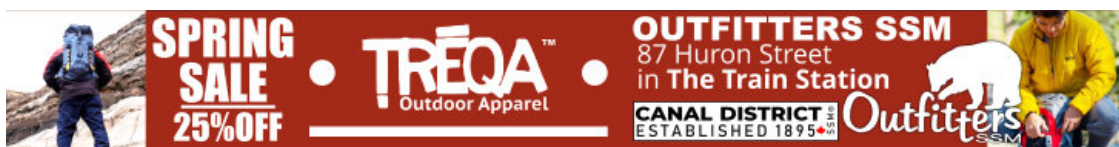
Millroy: Seamless transition? Smooth transition? I would say not so much

By **Doug Millroy** - August 16, 2022 @ 6:00 am

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It's moot now since the transfer of the Infant and Child Development Program and the Preschool Speech and Language Program from Algoma Public Health to THRIVE Child Development Centre took place a couple of months back.

But I would like to offer some thoughts on the move just the same, the main one being that it should be done better if such a move is contemplated at some other agency in the future. One of the main things that should be addressed is transparency. The workers and families involved should be informed every step of the way about what is taking place.



In the issue at hand the programs, one of which specializes in providing services and resources for families with children who have a delay in development, were to leave APH at the end of April but families had not been informed by December, when I first reported on it.

They were still in the dark when I reported in February that the programs would be going to THRIVE which, according to its website, helps children with physical, communication, and developmental differences, including children with autism spectrum disorders.

I said at the time that I didn't believe it was fair to the clients not to be told until about a month to go before the change whether they were going to be part of the same program with the same people or whether they were going into a totally new environment, as turned out to be the case.

And I said those who have staffed the programs surely deserved the same courtesy, rather than simply being told they are done at APH as of March 31.

Genevieve Oger, Team Lead, Media, with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, in an email had told me, "The ministry will announce the new organization to take over as lead agency in the delivery of these programs in the Algoma District in the coming weeks.

"Both Algoma Public Health and the new lead agency will work together to ensure the transition for children and their families is seamless."

And Sault MPP Ross Romano told me pretty well the same thing, "Since the local health unit no longer intends to deliver this program, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services is working with a new agency to take the lead on this program," he said in an email. "Both the ministry and Algoma Public Health will work with the new lead agency to ensure a smooth transition for families."

Seamless transition? Smooth transition? I would say not so much.

The program left APH at the end of April but it didn't begin at THRIVE until the beginning of May.

And in the meantime the workers in the program had to apply for their jobs at THRIVE and undergo an interview, even though some of them had 20-plus years of experience in the field.

In a "seamless" or "smooth" transition one would think the workers would have been told they were moving with the programs or at least that they had a chance to do so.

So in the final analysis for me, it was not so much that it was done but how it was done. Actually I probably will never understand why APH wanted out. After all, although it wasn't a mandated part of its operation, it nevertheless was still funded by the ministry and was of great service to many young families in the community, the latter something this APH board and others before it haven't seemed to grasp, considering a few years back the Ontario Ministry of Health asked for the resignations of five returning members of the board, including its chairman and vice-chairman.

In regard to the ministry it is easy to see why it was so ready to go along with APH's exit. It could see itself saving money because THRIVE only pays about 65 percent of the \$40-plus an hour the workers in the program were making at APH,

As I said up top, this is all moot now but it was just something I felt I had to get off my chest.

OUR CITY COUNCIL of the day is obviously wedded to relocating the bus terminal from Dennis Street to Huron Street, but I would suggest that since it is in lame-duck mode, since a civic election is to be held this fall, that it leave it all to the new council.

I would also suggest that if it doesn't, then it should be made an issue during the election, voters letting those councillors seeking re-election know what they want.

A poll taken by SaultOnline in June of last year showed over 67 percent of respondents didn't want the bus terminal to move. A poll by SooToday conducted a couple of months earlier found overwhelming support for building new on the present location, 656 votes favouring that idea compared to just 124 votes favouring a transfer to 111 Huron.

As well, a poll of Sault Ste. Marie's Downtown Association members conducted by Executive Director Salvatore Marchese found the proposed move was overwhelmingly disliked by the members who responded.

SaultOnline also reported that Michael Nanne provided two full pages of people and businesses who were opposed to the move of the terminal. Notable names included Soo Greyhounds, SK Group, Queens Tarts and Salvation Army.

And if you spend any time with talking to people in the community, I doubt you will come in contact with many who favour the move.

I am not wedded to any proposal and haven't been from the start, although I do like the possibility of using the former Agawa Canyon Tour Train terminal at the Station Mall as suggested by Coun. Matthew Shoemaker.

My main thrust here is simply that, considering the heavy expense involved in all proposals, all decisions from here on in regarding the bus terminal should be left to the next council.

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After 61 years in the news business, 41 of them associated with The Sault Star as editor, Doug continues to share his passion for writing as a columnist since retirement.