

Chapelle

Friday, March 2, 2001

W horizons seen nurse practitioners

LLAND
CLE-JOURNAL

University will benefit from
ing to expand the education
nurses in outlying areas.
al government has an-
\$1.5 million has been set
educate nurse practitioners
and rural areas of On-

t will be administered
universities —
— and is de-
crease the ca-

nurse practitioners, allow-
provide medical services
are fewer doctors and hospi-
t receive any money direct-

spokeswoman for Nurse
of Ontario, said the money
registered nurses in the field
et "extended class" licences
ertain duties without doctor

d step," Ree said. "I'm happy

more nurse practitioners can
with care in remote areas, be-
would be less pressure on
provide "everyday" services.
titioners can perform some
ies, including prescribing
ications, and ordering labo-
X-rays and some ultrasound
can diagnose minor or
esses without the supervi-
tor.

Regular registered nurses can't diag-
nose unless supervised by a doctor. To
become a nurse practitioner, a registered
nurse must have three to five years of ex-
perience and complete 12 months of aca-
demic and clinical training, Ree said.

Lorne McDougall, director of LU's
school of nursing, said the funding will
allow nurse practitioners to expand their
education. New courses in communi-
ty mental health, emergency nursing,
women's health, gerontology and
cancer care will be offered
through distance education,
McDougall said.

He said he didn't know when the
courses would be available because a pi-
lot program has to be developed and eval-
uated. About 12 nurse practitioners have
graduated from LU since 1994.

Ree said eight of 10 nurse practitioner
positions in Thunder Bay are filled.
Atikokan's hospital, a Kenora nursing
home, the Thunder Bay District Health
Unit and the Northwestern Health Unit
all have nurse practitioner openings, Ree
said.



Health units need more: Hampton

BY BRYAN MEADOWS
NORTHWEST BUREAU

NDP Leader Howard Hampton has called on the provincial government to increase funding to public health units.

"Public health units have been mandated to deliver new responsibilities . . . but the government has not provided the funding necessary for them to fulfill their responsibilities," Hampton states in a letter to Health Minister Tony Clement.

Citing a budget crunch, Hampton said the Northwestern Health Unit has been forced to cut a speech therapy program for adults it has provided for years; and it will no longer be responsible for administering two nursing stations in Minaki and Sioux Narrows.

"They estimate they need an-

other \$1.2 million to come close to delivering the services that the Ontario government has mandated the health unit to deliver," he said.

"We cannot afford to have any more health services limited or cut," he said, declaring that "we need a strong public health unit to prevent ailment and alleviate problems that we face with health care in this part of the province."

Also, Hampton noted that cash-strapped municipalities cannot afford to pay more for public health.

The province currently pays about 75 per cent of the health unit's \$7.5-million budget with the remainder paid by municipalities in an area stretching from Ignace to the Manitoba border.

The health unit increased the per-capita fee for the region's 19 municipalities to \$34.30, from \$33,

last month.

Medical officer of health Pete Sarsfield said earlier that the health unit "is falling backwards in all aspects of our work" due to a lack of provincial funding.

"If the province doesn't pay for the programs, don't pretend it's going to happen," Sarsfield wrote in a letter to Ontario's chief medical officer of health.

The Northwestern Health Unit has the largest geographical area in the province.

Hampton noted that the health unit is responsible for an area the size of Great Britain yet the government doesn't recognize that in its funding model.

The health unit provides a variety of services including water quality assurance, immunization, dental clinics, public health and illness prevention.

Day care spots rare

Problems in Dryden, Sioux Lookout cited in report

BY BRYAN MEADOWS
NORTHWEST BUREAU

Day care spaces are at a premium in Dryden and Sioux Lookout.

With waiting lists of more than 100 and 80 respectively, the communities' children resource centres are stretched to the limit.

While officials have termed it an "ongoing crisis" over the last couple of years, the problem most recently came to light in a review by the Kenora District Services Board.

"There just isn't enough spaces and the province isn't coming through with the capital dollars to expand or build new facilities," KDSB administrator Sten Lif said in an interview.

"This lack of space in a couple of communities is something that has to be dealt with if they want to attract new (families) to their communities," Lif said.

Dryden Mayor Sid Wintle said his city council is looking at concerns identified in the KDSB day-care review.

"One thing we may do is change the

hours of our day care to accommodate more people," he said, adding, "There has been no talks of expansion yet."

"... the province isn't coming through with the capital dollars to expand or build new facilities."

Sten Lif

Kenora District Services Board administrator

Even with 100 clients on the waiting list, Wintle said, the centre "is not full 100 per cent of the time."

Lif said the communities would have to apply to the province for funding for any expansion of day-care centres.

"We just contract the service. . . . The provincial money flows through the board and we administrate the program

to ensure it meets provincial standards," he said.

The KDSB review found day-care facilities in Kenora and Red Lake have an adequate or surplus number of spaces to serve clients.

The review said some municipalities, which are subsidizing the full-day rate of \$32 for child care, may be on the hook for more costs in the future.

In Dryden, the city pays \$7 per day for children whose families are not eligible for a provincial child-care subsidy.

Lif said municipalities could be in for more grief if they don't increase their rates.

The local subsidy for day care spaces "will fall increasingly on their taxpayers," he predicted.

The KDSB review also recommended some efficiencies in day-to-day operation of day-care centres to ensure better business practices, and noted that in some communities the facilities don't meet needs of clients who are on shift work.

It's difficult to accommodate shift workers because the centres aren't open 24 hours a day, Lif said.

Dryden taxes going up

MEADOWS
ST BUREAU

taxpayers will see municipal taxes a maximum of 2.25 per cent this year. The council approved a \$19-million budget last year which increases capital spending by \$3 million over last year and maintains important services. The council delayed implementation of a 2.25 per cent tax hike until more details are available about the provincial government's Bill 140, which caps some tax rates, and other downsides. There are some concerns in the budget, particularly with the loss of assessment from the industrial sector," finance chairman Brown told council. A tax rate bylaw will come later, once implementation of Bill 140 and (other costs) are clear, he said. Provincial legislation, which caps industrial and commercial tax rates in Ontario mu-

nicipalities according to a provincial average, became law last week.

City treasurer Paul Heayn told reporters that the city has asked the Finance Ministry for approval to increase the tax rate on large industrial properties so that it can recoup what it lost in reassessment.

The city faces a net reduction in revenue from property taxes of almost \$280,000 due to the reassessment of Weyerhaeuser's pulp and paper mill, which pays more than 50 per cent of Dryden's municipal taxes.

Brown said other municipalities are experiencing the same "anomaly."

"We hope the provincial government will address the problem in the near future," he said.

Brown said Dryden council will have to consider other options should taxation and costs associated with this budget not apply.

"Those options include a reduction in expenditures, increases in revenue, draws from reserves, a different tax increase, or a combination of all of the options," he said.

With a one-per-cent tax hike representing about \$72,000 in revenue for the city, that could mean an additional 3.9-per-cent hike in property taxes for Dryden ratepayers.

Mayor Sid Wintle said that increasing revenue through further taxation "is not something council wants to do."

The budget's proposed 2.25-per-cent tax hike will mean an average Dryden homeowner will pay about \$31 more in municipal taxes this year.

The 2001 budget lists \$5.1 million in capital spending, including \$1 million for a new auditorium; \$500,000 for renovations to the city's hydro and public safety building; and \$200,000 for arena roof repairs.

Last year, the city hiked taxes by 2.38 per cent in its \$14.9-million budget.

That hike was meant to cover a two-per cent hike in municipal staff salaries, some debenture costs and maintenance of existing programs and services.

Too few councillors show to consider tax hike

MEADOWS
ST BUREAU

Fort Frances taxpayers have to wait until Monday to see if a proposed two-per-cent increase in municipal taxes will stand. A council meeting Friday was supposed to decide on the hike, but it was canceled due to a lack of a quorum of councillors. In November, months ago, council approved the tax increase in its 2001 budget, but has delayed implementation until the effect of the provincial government's Bill 140 was clear. Provincial legislation, which caps industrial and commercial tax rates in Ontario municipalities according to a provincial average, became law last week. Fort Frances Mayor Glenn Witheridge said yesterday council will decide

FORT FRANCES

on the budget at its March 12 general meeting.

"We have some new numbers and new scenarios to figure out," he said.

Town administrator Bill Naturkach said earlier that the tax hike could be higher or lower, depending on the impact of the bill.

Like many Northern Ontario communities, Fort Frances has lost some of its tax base due to reassessment.

The municipality had to deal with about \$350,000 less in assessment from its large industrial properties, including the Abitibi-Consolidated mill.

A tax hike this year would be the first in three years for Fort Frances ratepayers, and only the second increase in nine years.

Three years ago, council hiked taxes by almost six per cent to cover millions in debentures for a new auditorium and second arena.

Dryden budget boosts money for roads

NORTHWEST BUREAU

Spending by the City of Dryden on road maintenance will increase by about 50,000 this year to \$524,000.

The decision makes up part of the city's \$19-million budget, approved by council on Monday.

The 2001 budget increases capital spending by \$3 million over last year and maintains city services.

The major road construction projects include \$250,000 for improvements on West River Road; \$100,000 for surface paving on east Dryden roads; and \$5,000 to move the CP Rail crossing Sandy Beach Road.

The 2001 budget lists \$5.1-million in capital spending.

Projects include: \$1 million for a new auditorium; \$500,000 for renovations to the city's hydro and public safety building; \$200,000 for arena roof repairs; and \$94,000 to replace three police vehicles and to buy new communications equipment.

Other capital expenditures include:

- \$115,000 to replace equipment at the Barclay fire station.
- \$110,000 for a new sander and snow blower.
- \$10,000 to improve the government dock.

- \$400,000 to improve the city sewer plant.

- \$100,000 to build a new landfill cell.

The city also plans to spend \$488,000 on commercial and residential development, including \$177,000 for roads and services on Wice Road, \$100,000 to complete roads and services in the Norwill Industrial Subdivision, and \$50,000 to develop more lots in the Forest Park subdivision.

Council has delayed implementation of a 2.25-per-cent tax hike for local ratepayers until more details are provided about the provincial government's Bill 140 and other downloading costs. Bill 140 caps taxes for some sectors.

Chronicle - Mar 7/01

ners who require welfare take hard hit

en kicked off welfare
n I-owe-you.
ed that his name be

irmed homeowners
consecutive months
elling their home —

under new provincial legislation.

That one-year period is expiring for many people in the region, Dana Heinrich, acting program manager in Thunder Bay, said.

The lien on the house stands, even if the welfare recipient dies, Heinrich said.

The Armstrong man said he received a letter cancelling his social assistance because he wouldn't agree to a lien.

A heavy equipment operator looking for work, the man doesn't feel he should have to pay back the \$14,000 he received in benefits last year.

"I worked for years to finally build this house. I'm on welfare because I'm stuck."

Welfare recipients who own their homes didn't have to pay back assistance under the former General Welfare Assistance program, replaced by Ontario Works in April 1999.

The change makes it clear that social assistance is a "last resort," Heinrich said.

Those who own homes "don't get assistance free and clear."

However, a spokesman for a non-profit advocacy group for low-income earners said all social assistance recipients should be treated the same.

"Sometimes if you do own a house you're going to run into problems," said Kari Ranta-Ojala, of Thunder Bay Coalition Against Poverty (T-CAP).

Forcing those who sell their homes to pay back benefits will prevent them from getting back on their feet, which is the purpose of social assistance, he added.

"Especially in Armstrong. . . . He may not be able to sell his house for a lot anyway. This is not helping him to get ahead."

Heinrich admitted Ontario Works has been advising clients to go off welfare for a month to get around the 12-month consecutive rule.

But, she added, changes are in the works to eliminate the "loophole" and order repayment in cases of home sales where the owner has collected welfare for 12 months in the last five years.

Homeowners who apply for social assistance must agree to a lien before they are issued a cheque.

Chronicle - Nov 7/01

Municipal leaders welcome health unit review

OWS
EAU

ern Health Unit board
operational review of
unit.
nsive review is some-
eaders have called for
e of years, citing rising
ability.
o find out where they
ayor Sid Wintle said at
Monday.

Wintle said the review will help determine the mandate and efficiency of the health unit in delivering programs and services.

Health unit board chairwoman Ingrid Parkes could not be reached yesterday to comment on the review.

Municipal leaders served by the health unit say they are finding it increasingly difficult to pay for the unit's increased level of service mandated by the province.

This year the 19 municipalities served

by the health unit will pay \$34.30 per capita. That's \$1.30 more than what they paid last year.

Medical officer of health Dr. Pete Sarsfield had wanted a \$38.14 per-capita levy, but the board refused, questioning whether area municipalities could afford that.

Sarsfield, who has been criticized by some municipal leaders for his financial stance, maintains the levy increase approved isn't enough to pay for all programs mandated by the province.

"I guess we'll get the rest of the funding from the province, the feds, or we just won't do them," Sarsfield said earlier.

He said he understands that municipalities have limited financial resources.

"I understand where they're coming from.

"Unfortunately we are falling backwards in all aspects of our work . . . primarily in the promotion of health," he said.

The province covers about 75 per cent of the health unit's \$7.5-million budget.

The remainder is paid by municipalities in an area stretching from Ignace to the Manitoba border.

The operational review will look at the health unit's provincially mandated programs and funding sources, administration effectiveness and efficiency, and governance.

Sarsfield said the health unit will use reserve funds of \$50,000 and will ask the province for matching funding to pay for the study.

Thursday. The "Four Widows" of Stratton took han, and Marché James.

Bell Canada pledges \$1 million for community projects

From Bell Canada

Bell Canada announced it is launching the Bell Community Development Fund to support economic and social programs in communities throughout Ontario.

The fund will award \$1 million over the next three years to projects that employ communications technology to improve the economic and social framework of the community.

The new Bell Community Development Fund will provide technical collaboration and financial support to economic development initiatives, as well as social and community development projects.

This new funding builds on the three-year, \$800,000 commitment that Bell made with the Bell Canada Economic Development Fund from 1998 to 2000.

"This new fund gives Bell an opportunity to provide support to both economic and social projects throughout the province," said Terry Mosey, President, Bell Ontario.

"We believe that by helping communities take their communications technology to the next level, we will help them to grow and prosper."

"The Bell Community Development Fund is a great way for us to demonstrate our strengthened and continuing commitment to On-

tario," added Mosey.

"Over the past three years, we've worked in partnership with Bell to support the highly successful Bell Canada Economic Development Fund," said Alex McLeod, President of the Economic Development Council of Ontario.

"This fund has given many community groups the opportunity to create or expand projects that use telecommunications to generate employment, create wealth, and promote economic growth."

"Based on the success of these projects we were excited to be working with Bell once again to provide further support to Ontario communities through the Bell Community Development Fund."

Mar 7/01



Pickle Lake

By Graeme Mackechnie

PICKLE LAKE, population under 500, number of lockups last year: 2762 and Sioux Lookout thinks they need a Substance Abuse Centre. Last weeks tragedy, Judy Masakeyash's death from exposure only emphasizes this need. It is time for the Councils from Mishkeegogamang and Pickle Lake to come together and act to combat this situation; perhaps a united front can lobby the government more effectively. It makes one think of what the social impacts of all weather roads to the isolated northern communities will be.

Speaking of roads, the Werner Lake road extension which will link Red Lake to Manitoba was in the paper again. I cannot see any Ontario municipalities benefiting. Red Lake may become a gas and sandwich stop for people driving in from the north. Kenora and Dryden will surely lose out over Win-

March 1 half load time already. I always equate half loads with melt down and Spring. I can't see anything spring-like about our weather yet but I certainly do appreciate the longer light hours.

Barbara Savage from PACE is in town to have a joint meeting with the Economic Development Council and the Municipal Council. The group will be reviewing the EDC mandate with the view of making the committee a little more active and pro active I hope.

I could not believe the generosity of our local sponsors who donated to our Pickle Lake Bonspiels. I helped Lucy Hoffman set out the prizes for the Kids Bonspiel. They were extravagant to say the least - prizes for all winners of the Annual Kids Bonspiel.

"A" Event: Brian Johnson, Norma Byrne, Gregory Pickett, Lizabelle Kwandibens.

"B" Event: Robyn Makela, Roy Hoffman, Javalaine

2% tax hike for ratepayers

Chronicle -
Mar 16/01

BY JULIO GOMES
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

They looked under every rock, they scoured through every bush.

In the end, city councillors were able to not only cushion the blow of a hefty tax increase for Thunder Bay homeowners, but they even reduced the impact of the "automatic" hospital-related payment.

At last night's special committee of the whole meeting, councillors waded through a \$258-million municipal budget that sees a total tax increase this year of only two per cent.

Originally, administration's proposal would have seen an increase of more than six per cent for residential and farmland property owners.

The net cost of all these items to the municipality — which includes everything from tourism initiatives to salaries and benefits for staff — clocks in at \$144.8 million. But by finding new sources of revenue, councillors were able to both pay for some new services and keep the municipal tax levy at last year's level of about \$95.9 million.

The operating budget process also included approval of telephone expenditures of \$47.5 million and \$8.9 million for waterworks operations.

This is the first tax rate increase in the past few years and since 1995 the tax rate has risen only 1.2 per cent.

The ability of council to hold the tax increase to about two per cent this year is due to two factors: better than expected financial returns; and the desire to tap deep into reserve funds.

The situation was helped by a savings

of \$500,000 in debt charges being earmarked for this year's operations. Plus, there was an additional \$100,000 left over from 2000 operations, bringing the prior year's surplus to \$1.3 million.

Councillors also decided to take \$1 million from the land development account, increase the dividend from Thunder Bay Telephone to \$10.042 million and charge Thunder Bay Hydro interest on its debt, which will generate \$900,000 in earnings.

The decision by council to give \$150,000 to Shelter House, reinstate holiday bus service (at a net cost of \$106,100) and maintain the bus routes in North and South Neebing (net cost \$142,400) meant another \$400,000 was added to the budget.

The net effect not only keeps the general municipal tax rate unchanged, but the extra funds cut into the cost of paying off the \$25-million contribution to the new hospital. The first installment this year totals \$3.47 million.

"Bottom line," city manager Brian MacRae said, is that these moves mean the city is at "the point where there is a two-per-cent tax increase, including financing for the contribution to the hospital."

In other developments yesterday:

- Councillors decided to withhold \$200,000 of the \$600,000 requested by the Thunder Bay Community Auditorium. The money will be held in escrow pending a review by the city manager.

Coun. Orville Santa said he wanted to see that local taxpayers "get good value for their money" while encouraging the Auditorium board to find ways to be "healthy and viable."

Count starts May 1

400 to be hired in NWO for census

BY DAVE LAMMERS
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

One of the oldest ways of collecting information, a census, goes out this May to every household across Canada.

Statistics Canada said Thursday more than 400 people will be hired in the Northwest to conduct the census in the region.

A census is held every five years in Canada, with a longer census held on years ending with a one — such as 2001.

However, census takers in most households — every four out of five — will only be asked their name, sex, date of birth, marital or common law status and relationship in the household, for example, husband or wife. The census also asks people to state their "mother tongue," or the first language they learned.

Those who receive the long census, determined arbitrarily, will be asked to answer 59 questions, including their religion, level of education and occupation.

That census takes about 20 minutes to fill out, Statistics Canada spokeswoman Sandra Ramsbottom said.

"It's fairly straight forward," Ramsbottom said.

Information gathered is made public and available to "anyone who can use the Internet," she said. She added confidentiality is guaranteed.

"Everything but peoples' names is put on a data base. We destroy the names."

Information is used to determine transfer payments between governments, Ramsbottom said. Funding for health care and housing is also determined by the census. Businesses rely heavily on census figures, she added.

Census Day is officially May 15, but copies of the census will be mailed out beginning May 1 and people are encouraged to fill it out early.

Those who refuse to fill out a census are subject to a fine of \$500 or three months in jail. A total of 85 per cent of forms sent out are returned.

The first census was held to count colonies before Canada existed, in 1666. The first Canadian census was conducted in 1871.

Thunder Bay's population in the 1996 census was 125,562. The average value of an owned dwelling in the city was \$135,000 — compared to the provincial average of \$177,000.

Dryden's population in 1996 was 6,711 and the population of Marathon was 4,791.

The 2001 census is expected to cost \$375 million.

The census will create 45,000 temporary jobs, including 225 in Thunder Bay and area, and a total of 420 across the Northwest. Statistics Canada is currently hiring and asks that resumes be faxed to 807-623-1094.



statcan.ca

ers want to 'reclaim' the land

OFAH survey on time limits to be shared with Snobelen

want the Min-
s to change the
g limit.
f Anglers and
Gallant said a

survey of OFAH members about Crown land camping has generated a lot of interest from Northwestern Ontario.

From the hundreds of responses the federation has received, he said, "there's virtually universal agreement that the 21-day camping limit is not appropriate."

The federation launched the survey last fall in response to concerns by campers in Northwestern Ontario and elsewhere about enforcement of the 21-day camping limit.

Gallant said the survey shows a majority of those who have responded want Ontario residents to be allowed to camp

in one spot for two to three weeks, then move on to a new site.

Survey results also show public recognition that overuse of a campsite can cause environmental damage in some instances, he said.

Gallant said he would use the survey results to draft a Crown land camping policy for consideration by OFAH's land-use advisory committee by April 15.

"Then, we can proceed with lobbying efforts on government to get change," he said.

Gallant noted that Natural Resources Minister John Snobelen "was briefed on

the issue" by a few members last month at OFAH's annual meeting.

"Snobelen seemed to be open in amending the policy," Gallant said, adding that the federation "plans to strike while the iron is hot" on the issue.

"We plan to deliver a number of good recommendations for Snobelen to consider," he said.

Under the Public Lands Act, a person can only camp on Crown land for a total of 21 days, regardless of how many times they relocate to other sites.

Violators could face a fine of up to \$5,000.

Chronicle - Mar 19/01

Councillors do their part to keep tax hike in check

on page A1

ity also has to start pay-
lion contribution to the
at payment totals \$3.47
come from local proper-

nistration had proposed
rease of \$4.55 million, of
ion would support mu-
s.

But through some good financial luck and the desire of councillors to use other sources of cash, the budget only calls for an additional \$1.85 million to be raised this year.

Based on the full service municipal tax rate, that works out to a two-per-cent increase.

The difficulty relates to efforts by the provincial government to keep a lid on business taxes.

The city is hoping the hospital debenture repayment can also be collected from the commercial, industrial and multi-residential sectors.

A request was made to the Ministry of Finance, but the city has yet to receive a reply.

If the government doesn't agree with this course of action, then the entire \$3.47 million will have to come from the residential, farmland, managed forest

and pipeline property classes (which make up about three-quarters of all properties).

The other issue relates to the hard cap provision of Bill 140. The regulations for this act, which continues to shield the business classes from tax increases, have not been distributed to municipalities, which will use them to determine tax policy and how the tax burden should be shared.

Of particular concern is how the regulations will impact on Thunder Bay, which has seen a substantial decrease in the taxation base as a result of province-wide reassessment last year.

Once all the information is available and council sets out the tax ratios, the 2001 bills can be prepared.

It's at that time that property owners will find out exactly how much they owe in taxes this year.

City tax picture not quite clear yet

AA:87

Chronicle - Mar 19/01

BY JULIO GOMES
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Thunder Bay homeowners who may be breathing a sigh of relief that the municipal tax levy is only going up two per cent may want to hold off on the celebrations.

While it's correct to say the amount to be raised from local ratepayers is about two per cent more than was raised in 2000, it's far from certain who will end up paying how much this year.

"There are all of these unknowns," Carol Busch, the city's general manager of finance, said of the murky picture.

The complex, ever-evolving process of crafting an operating budget concluded early Friday morning after a six-hour meeting of city council and senior managers.

That session followed budget deliberations on Feb. 21 and 22.

When it was all said and done, councillors approved a budget

that calls for more than \$258 million in gross expenditures. The net cost to the municipality — the amount the city has to find funds for — works out to just over \$144 million.

The three major sources of funding are provincial grants (\$21.7 million), other revenues (which accounts for \$14.5 million) and local tax payments (\$104.6 million).

The other sources of revenue include payments from the casino (\$1.5 million), penalties and interest on taxes (\$1.7 million), telephone department dividend (\$10.04 million) and contributions from the land development account (\$1.45 million).

There are a myriad of sources under the category of taxation.

Railway companies pay for rights of way, and there are payments in lieu of taxes (\$6.8 million), but the biggest amount comes through municipal taxes.

• Continued on page A3

It will cost you more to golf, dump your junk

THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

While Thunder Bay property owners may be pleased with a modest tax hike, local residents didn't get off too easily when council approved a \$258-million operating budget Thursday.

Along with a modest hike in the municipal tax levy, councillors also OK'd increases to a variety of user fees.

They are:

- The cost of riding a bus will go up May 1. Except for the \$2 cash fares and the \$180 semester pass for college and university students, all other discounted passes will increase by \$2.

- Tipping fees at the John Street landfill go up 10 per cent in July, bringing the cost per tonne to \$30.25.

- The cost of getting criminal record searches done by police will bring in \$37,200 in revenue to the force.

- The community recreation division will increase fees for admission, memberships and instructional programs, which will bring in an extra \$8,400.

- Fees to the Canada Games Complex will increase five per cent; adult and minor hockey leagues will see ice rental costs rise \$1.

As well, green fees at golf courses will jump by \$3 for a round of 18 holes while an adult triple season pass will now cost \$686.

Boaters using the marina will see full service dock fees increase by \$1 per foot of boat.

- The parks division has increased fees at cemeteries by three per cent.

Adult rental fees for sports fields and outdoor ice surfaces will also go up three per cent.

In all, these increases will bring in an extra \$593,000 to the city this year.

prisoner escorts, security under fire

MEADOWS
BUREAU

municipality of Owen Sound has
a city council for support of
directing the provincial gov-
ernment to pay for prisoner escorts and
security.

The cost is a considerable
to transport prisoners from
Dryden court," Dryden Mayor
presented the motion to the Dryden Po-
lice Board for consideration.

from Owen Sound council
costs for prisoner transport
security should be the sole re-
sponsibility of the province.

downloaded responsibilities
huge, added financial burden
on municipalities (which have a police
court facilities) and their tax-
payer letter states.

Dryden council wants input from
the public before deciding whether
to support the motion.

to be a given.

Mayor has said that moving peo-
ple forth from Kenora District
court appearances in Dryden is a
cost for the Dryden Police

getting stung on overtime,"
Mayor Bob Gould said earlier.
primarily) becoming a taxi
service and forth from Kenora," he

three-month period last
year prisoner escorts meant \$10,000
in officer overtime compared to

police share duties for prison-
ers with the Dryden OPP de-
partment must provide an officer in
charge for security.

and there are additional costs
to "dread" on a police van.

Meanwhile, local police are hoping
that demands take the place of the
prisoner rides from Kenora.

Mayor told it's coming but when
it comes," Deputy Chief Shayne
said.

Chronicle - Mar 20/01

Hochstetler, Harvey
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Pickle Lake ON
P0V 3A0 2001-06-30

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more than 25,000 readers.



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Postage paid at Dryden, Ont.

The Dryden Observer

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\$468⁸⁸



Telemedicine coming to northwest Ontario

Telemedicine in Northern Ontario got a big boost yesterday when the federal government pledged \$8.5 million to the cause.

Robert Nault, Kenora Rainy River MP and minister for Northern Ontario announced yesterday in Thunder Bay that the federal Ministry of Health will invest \$8.5 million in the Northern Ontario Remote Telecommunications Health (NORTH) Network.

The money allows the project to move into its second phase increasing the number of sites where telehealth services are available.

Andrew Skene, Chief Administrative Officer for Dryden Regional Health Centre stressed the local hospital will be part of these developments.

"It's quite exciting news actually," he said.

Skene stressed the project which has been dis-

cussed for several years is still in the early development stages.

"We need the equipment and a site to work out of. These are things we've been looking at in the hospital's development," he added.

The newly developing service allows distance access to more than 30 medical specialties, offer health education activities and make delivery of telemedicine to a number of First Nations

communities possible.

Telemedicine uses videoconferencing technologies and medical instruments such as digital stethoscopes and patient examination cameras to allow professionals in distant cities to examine a patient as if he or she were on site.

The project, which will be implemented over the next two years includes more than 70 partners including: 40 hospitals and health cen-

tres; five first Nations communities; more than 14 patient care, specialty and research programs in Ontario; telehealth programs in Manitoba and British Columbia; corporate sponsors; federal and provincial government departments and educational organizations.

The network, administered through Sunnybrook and Women's College Health Sciences Centre in Toronto, is designed to provide rural and remote Ontario communities with access to medical services, including consultations in numerous medical specialties, distance education activities for health care providers and educational programming for community groups and organizations. NORTH Network is also expected to support the Rural Health Professional Students and Medical Residents Training Program. Planners also hope to see it develop applications for diagnostic imaging services such as retinal screening, teleradiology and digital mammograms. ★

Council to look at budget again before ratification

• Continued from page A1

According to the Municipal Tax Sales Act, the city can now register a tax arrears certificate against such a property.

If cancellation price is not paid before the redemption date — one year from the date of registration — the property may be advertised for sale.

In all, a tax certificate will be registered against 184 properties that have 1998 balances of more than \$100. These accounts represent \$3.14 million in unpaid taxes — or 2.1 per cent of the entire 1998 tax levy.

In other matters today:

- Administra-

tion is recommending a process that will see councillors involved in matters related to Freedom of Information requests.

The new procedure would see denials or severance of information under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act come to council, along with a summary from the city clerk of the recommendation.

This procedure will be used for the next six months and a report will be prepared showing the volume of records and the related costs.

In 1999, 104 requests were made under the MFIPPA legislation.

- The Thunder Bay District Health Unit wants to give councillors some food for thought — a light snack, that is.

As part of Nutrition Month, the dietitians of Canada are promoting healthy eating habits and they have offered to provide councillors with a small nutrition break at a future meeting.

- Councillors are to ratify the minutes of the March 12, 15 and 19 meetings.

The March 15 session was the marathon third round of budget deliberations. But prior to ratification, councillors will have additional information to consider.

Administration will prepare a detailed breakdown of expenditures related to city council operations and the mayor's office (a combined \$436,000). As well, a line-by-line accounting of the tourism division's operating budget (\$611,00 net cost) will be presented.

Mar 26/01

Council eyes bad debt

Unpaid bills from 2000 total almost \$650,000

BY JULIO GOMES

THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Hot on the heels of putting together a \$259 million operating budget, Thunder Bay councillors will now deal with the flip side: writing off bad debts.

At today's committee of the whole (administrative services) meeting, councillors will consider reports that deal with uncollectible accounts and properties in tax arrears that might be put up for sale.

A report from revenue manager Rob Colquhoun says nearly

\$650,000 is regarded as uncollectible and will have to be written off. That amount is a slight increase from 1999, when uncollectible accounts topped \$643,000.

The unpaid bills from 2000 include general accounts (\$20,000), business taxes (\$60,500) and overpayments of welfare assistance (\$60,800), as well as telephone (\$496,417) and cellular service (\$73,000).

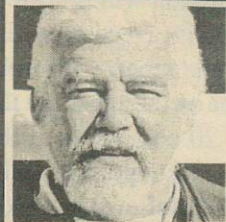
The major contributing factor affecting bad debts for Thunder Bay Telephone and Thunder Bay

Mobility is short term or transient residents as well as personal and business bankruptcies.

Colquhoun says these amounts should be written off because "all avenues of collection have been exhausted." However, he notes that collection efforts will continue and several thousand dollars eventually are paid up.

The revenue division also has a report on property tax accounts that have been in arrears since 1998.

Chronicle - Mar 26/01
Continued on page A3



Pickle Lake

By Graeme Mackechnie

SPRING is here, minus 18 this morning with a wind, but it's bound to warm up because summer is not far off. Fred Koper tells me he knows it's spring as his shotgun shells are starting to sell – time is close for the spring migratory bird hunt.

I heard that Ed Dupuis was fishing with a grappling hook – trying to catch his

snow machine. Thanks to Chinny's help he was successful and was able to fish it out of the drink and actually drive it back to Pickle Lake – guess who ran out of gas. Jeremy Miller has joined the honorary ranks of the Polar Bear Club, first man to go swimming in 2001 – he was on Ed's snow machine when it sank.

I understand that there

are plans in the works to have the Osnaburgh Clinic manned on a 24-hour basis – cost-wise I don't know if that would be practical but it would be a boon to the community.

Pickle Lake is still raising money to buy an X-ray machine. We also have to investigate what courses an operator would have to take in order to use it. Our town staff have been investigating different options and costs but we still need your donations. Linda Pickett's grandson Michelle broke his leg sliding – that or even a suspicion of a break entails

a trip out to Sioux Lookout for an X-ray.

Welcome to new Pickle Lake residents Dave and Eadie Simpson. Dave is working for Wasaya and Eadie is our new kindergarten teacher. Some come and some go; Nicole Etherington is slated to move – we're losing our Bearskin agent to Sioux.

Bradley Brothers has another drill camp set up near Pickle Lake – I saw their grocery order and it was substantial to say the least.

Debbie Hill has always been our proofreader but just in case I'll remind her to dot her I's and cross her crosses. Her KDSB report will be a welcome diversion for Mayor and Council.

Speaking of Council, it's budget time and our town council has been meeting to combat rising costs, especially with water and sewer – changes influenced by Walkerton have driven costs up. Councils in all communities have no choice but to comply with new regulations.

If we get another week out of our winter roads I'll be surprised – they were already closed down to transport traffic for a few days but with the cold weather they have firmed up again. Don tells me that Pickle Lake Auto has been installing truck springs by the pallet load – a sign of rough roads.

Is there really a Matthew Haw or does he exist only on weekends? Matthew, make your presence known! I know there's a job waiting out there for you, perhaps. The Kids Fun Night is always looking for volunteers!

Our ambulance service has been busy lately. There seems to be a lot of calls – what is up? Must be our aging population. Speaking of aging population, Dave Seaton and Sheila have en-

Sioux Bulletin - Nov 26/01

Fingers crossed as fire season dawns

AA:87
Chronicle - Mar 31/01

BY BRYAN MEADOWS
NORTHWEST BUREAU

Regional Fire Centre managers in Dryden are keeping their fingers crossed.

The 2001 fire season begins Sunday and if it's anything like last year, there may be some celebrating.

"At this point it's looking good," fire information officer Deb McLean said yesterday.

"The amount of snow on the ground is above average in most areas compared to the last four years," she said, noting that "it's looking like there will be no early fires this spring."

"Last year was a washout," McLean

said, of the cool, wet weather that kept the fire season under control.

In fact, it was one of the quietest fire seasons on record with only 241 fires recorded in the Northwest fire region; an area stretching from about Marathon to the Manitoba border.

A total of 5,327 hectares of forest was blackened in 2000, compared to 263,917 hectares by 491 fires the previous year.

The ministry didn't have any large northern fires in 2000, no evacuation of communities and only one small highway closure near Vermilion Bay when a fire jumped the Trans-Canada Highway.

Of the 241 fires, more than half were human caused, while the remainder were ignited by lightning.

On average the Northwest region of the province records about 700 fires annually.

Ontario received more than \$9 million back from the U.S. Forestry Service for six weeks of firefighting work by Ontario crews.

"It was money already paid to our people," fire information officer Thomas said, adding that the province sent 725 firefighters and equipment to Montana and Manitoba to help fight fires there.

Thomas said the ministry budgets about \$28 million a year "to meet a general level of fire preparedness, plus another \$18 million for extra firefighting costs."