

Feb 1/01

CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Meaty lineup awaits KDMA delegates

BRYAN MEADOWS
NORTHWEST BUREAU

It's a diamond jubilee of sorts. More than 75 delegates are heading to Kenora to discuss municipal matters at the 60th annual Kenora District Municipal Association meeting.

KDMA president Ingrid Parkes said some interesting sessions and debate are expected Friday and Saturday at the Best Western Lakeside Inn.

Topics include the benefits and drawbacks of district and area services boards; recycling in the Northwest; and report on the Kenora District Services board.

Delegates will debate the issues with a panel made up of Indian Affairs Minister Bob Nault (L-Kenora-Rainy River), provincial NDP Leader Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River) and possibly Northern Affairs Minister Tim Hudak.

On Saturday delegates will focus on health issues including the shortage of health-care professionals in the North.

The meeting wraps up with KDMA business and election of the executive.

own serves up icy package draw doctors

SLUTCHEY
ORE BUREAU

t by an Ottawa-area hospital
rthwestern Ontario doctors
ear to be having much of an

body is facing the same situa-
body's competing for a short
) supply," Todd Stepaniuk,
nistrator at Perth and Smiths
ict Hospital, said.

uk placed an ad in The Chroni-
al and other newspapers in an
find two doctors for his hospi-
hs Falls, 75 kilometres south of

offers physicians more than
a salary, a signing bonus, and
or a year at an office across the
in the hospital.

epaniuk said he's had no in-
om doctors in Northwestern
which is plagued by a physician
of its own.

hile, recruiters in Thunder
saw the Smiths Falls ad say
ation packages offered in the
e in the ball park.

uk we're competitive, but some

communities throw in extra things," said
Joanne Lacourciere, community devel-
opment officer with Health Sciences
North.

Lacourciere said there wouldn't be
any Thunder Bay clinics offering free of-
fice space, but some rural ones might.

She said a doctor working on a fee-for-
service basis in Smiths Falls would have
to work just as hard as a Thunder Bay
physician to earn \$300,000 a year.

Stepaniuk said he wasn't trying to
steal doctors from the North, adding
there are shortages in other provinces
like Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

According to statistics compiled by
Lacourciere's office, the City of Thunder
Bay is short 21 doctors, and the rest of
Northwestern Ontario is down by 23.

Mark Balcaen, executive director of
Kenora's Lake Of The Woods District
Hospital, said he wasn't worried by the
Smiths Falls ad.

Balcaen said most doctors relocate be-
cause they have a family or work-related
connection there.

Ads, cold calls and high-price head
hunting firms rarely work when it comes
to recruiting physicians, said Balcaen,
who has tried all three.

Chronicle - Feb 1/01

Boshcoff, Mayors push for Northern medical school

BY I KELLY
CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

fight for a Northern medical school is going to the highest in the Health ministry. Mayor Ken Boshcoff and the heads of four other Northern communities will get a chance to present their case before Health Minister Elizabeth Witmer.

They got that assurance yesterday from Minister of Northern Development and Mines Tim Hudak who met the mayors and other municipal officials in Tim-

Boshcoff and the mayors of Ste. Marie, Sudbury, North Bay and Timmins and mayors of other smaller Northern Ontario municipalities urged Hudak to use his influence in the cabinet in favour of a medical school.

The school would have campuses at Lakehead University and Laurentian University. Hudak made no promises but said he will try to arrange a meeting within a few weeks with Witmer.

Boshcoff confirmed in his (Hudak's) mind how unified the mayors are behind the medical school, Boshcoff said from Tim-

"The weight of the argument is growing substantially that this is the only viable solution," Boshcoff added.

He said he can't recall when so many people have been behind an issue in Northern Ontario.

"If we don't present a solid case, the government will follow the path of the least resistance," Boshcoff said.

"There is strength in numbers and we're speaking with a united voice.

"From Kenora to Temiskaming everyone is lined up behind the medical school," he said.

"We have to keep pushing on this."

Witmer apparently still hasn't received a copy of the George Report, an expert panel's study of Northern health issues including doctor shortages and a Northern medical school.

A leak of the report suggested Lakehead and Laurentian will have a satellite medical school that will be operated by McMaster University and Ottawa.

The Northern mayors are opposed to anything but a full-fledged, degree-granting medical school located in Northern Ontario.

Chronicle - Feb 2/01

Dryden budget in works

N MEADOWS
EST BUREAU

oming down to crunch time for council.

reasurer Paul Heayn said yesterday the council will receive a first draft of the 2001 budget this weekend.

"We're trying to hold the line . . . try to find some economies of scale and efficiency" within all departments, Heayn said of the budgeting process.

Heayn noted that "there's (definitely) no want spending increases this year."

Heayn declined to say if ratepayers will face a tax increase.

Last year the city hiked taxes by 2.38 per cent, citing a two per cent hike in municipal staff salaries, some debenture interest and maintenance of current projects and services.

In 1999, taxes were increased by 1.9 per cent. However, ratepayers saw a slight reduction in their taxes due to a 10 per cent drop in school property taxes.

The Dryden council will review the 2001 budget at a committee of the whole meeting on Feb. 19.

Budget approval could come as early as March 5, Heayn said.

There could be some interesting decisions as council has to look for additional revenue from other sources, reduce expenditures, or raise taxes due to a reassessment of Weyerhaeuser's pulp and paper mill.

The city faces a net reduction in revenue from property taxes of about

\$266,000 in 2001 because the mill's property assessment has been lowered by \$430,000.

Assessment hikes in pipeline and residential properties are responsible for offsetting the mill's reduction, Heayn said.

Weyerhaeuser's mill pays about 52 per cent of Dryden's municipal taxes. That's more than \$3 million annually according to the city's 2000 budget document.

Heayn noted that Dryden is not alone in its assessment problems.

Almost every one-industry town is in the same boat, he said, noting that the city has advised the ministries of Municipal Affairs and Finance about the problem.

"We hope they can give us the tools so that there's no decrease (in tax revenue)," Heayn said.

"If they allow us to readjust our tax ratios for large industrial . . . and bill the mill the same as last year" there won't be a problem, he said.

If not, Heayn said the drop in tax revenue will have to be raised from other sources.

With a one-per-cent tax hike representing about \$65,000 in revenue for the city, it could mean a three to four per cent increase in property taxes for Dryden ratepayers.

Heayn has stressed that raising taxes is only one option open to city council.

Finding other revenue sources or reducing expenditures are two others, he said.

Diabetes program proposed

Metis Aboriginal Association (OMAA), and the Dryden Native Friendship Centre (DNFC). Funding is being requested under a program called MOAUIPP (Metis, Off-reserve Aboriginal and Urban Unit Prevention and Promotion). Diabetes centre coordinator Alison Dove says the proposal, called "The Healing Trail: A Passageway to Diabetes Prevention and Control," will benefit all involved. "We'll have the opportunity to work together rather than in competition," she said.

OMAA and DNFC will be active partners in the delivery of the program. Dryden hospital will act as host agency and manager of program funds. The diabetes centre will contribute office space, equipment, resource materials, professional services and expertise.

The goal is to increase awareness about the seriousness of diabetes at the community level and the importance of prevention and control. An urban aboriginal and Metis diabetes education program will be established, community-based health workers and volunteers educated, in order to develop support mechanisms to provide long-term care in their communities.

Among the proposed projects:

- Develop curriculum to

improve health of those with diabetes and their families;

- Implement regular diabetes screening clinics;
- Establish community visits and outreach programs;

• Promote healthy eating and physical activity within the communities;

• Seek elders and those with diabetes to act as leaders in their communities;

• Develop and obtain culturally appropriate diabetes teaching materials, kits and presentations;

• Establish an off-reserve aboriginal and Metis support group. ★

Pinecrest warns of levy hikes

(continued from page 1)

which became a factor in building the Dryden long-term care home, completed last year.

Kevin Queen, Pinecrest's chief administrative officer, observed that a government study in 1993 indicated government grants for patient care should have been \$120 per day.

"We've cut so much, we are basically a labour force providing care. We're out of options," he emphasized.

Queen said both Pinecrest's Dryden and Kenora facilities have waiting lists of 65 people, while Northwood in Red Lake has a waiting list of 45.

The Pinecrest board has set its 2001 budget at \$10 million. Municipal levies provide \$1.1 million of revenues. Dryden's share of the levies is set at \$301,506.



On the Horizon

MON.-FRI. - 9:30-6:00 p.m.
WED. 9:30 (7:30 effective Feb. 7)
SAT. 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. - New drop-in hours at the Toy Library/Resource Program, 113 Albert St. Come out and join the fun! 223-7145. tf

EVERY MONDAY - Monday Morning Crafters 9:00-noon. Hospital Board Room (upstairs). Newcomers welcome. Joan 938-2324. tf

FIRST TUESDAY - of the month: Royal Canadian Legion Ladies Auxiliary meeting at 7 p.m. tf

THIRD TUESDAY - of each month. New date and place! Sunset Country Quilter's Guild, 7 p.m., Masonic Hall. New members welcome. tf

TUES.-FRIDAY & SATURDAY - Tuesday-Friday, noon-5 p.m., Saturday 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Rick's Dryden & Dinorwic Flea Market now open. Corner of Hearst and King. Ph. 223-2599, 938-1074. n7

WEDNESDAY - 7:00 p.m. Dryden Humane Society meets the third Wednesday of every month at the Patricia Centre. Everyone welcome to attend. tf

EVERY WEDNESDAY - 7:30 p.m. Sunset Country Psychiatric Survivors meeting, Apt. 1, 87 King St. For more info call 223-2056. tf

SECOND WEDNESDAY - 7:30 p.m. Amateur Radio Society of Dryden meeting, 2nd Wed./month, Barclay Hall. tf

EVERY THURSDAY - 7:30 p.m. Manic Depressive and Depressive Group of Dryden meeting has moved to the United Church.



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Feb. 20

Free delivery

Pinecrest warns delegates of possible hike in levies

By Warner Bloomfield
Pinecrest Homes for the Aged may need to raise municipal levies in the near future, if it doesn't receive more money from the provincial government. Ed Alcock, chair of Pinecrest's board of directors, issued that warning to the Kenora District Municipal Association at its annual meeting in

Kenora last week. "Unless we receive more funding from the province, we are rapidly reaching the point where we will not be able to reduce costs without jeopardizing the clients we serve, and at that point we may be forced to increase our municipal levies," Alcock stated. At present, per diem funding for the board's

three homes is \$95, the same as it was in 1997. Pinecrest administers three facilities — one in Kenora, the Northwood Lodge in Red Lake and the Dryden long-term care home. Since 1997, Alcock stressed, the level of care required has increased as have construction costs, (continued on page 2)



Dryden Mayor Sid Whittle and Coun. Joe Delaney listen to a presentation at the Kenora District Municipal Association meeting in Kenora, last week. Staff photo

All-weather road

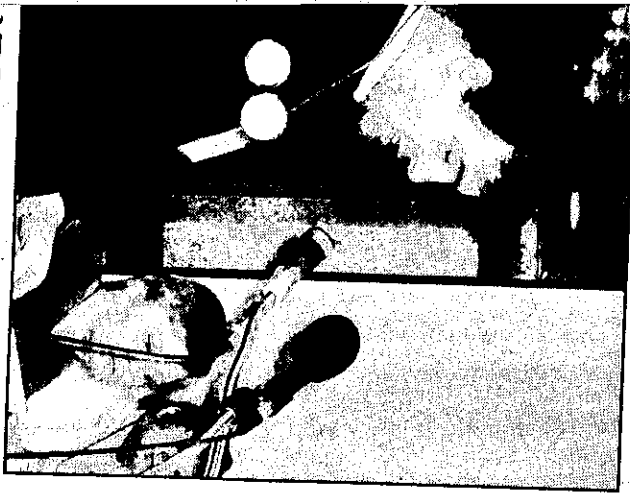
Connection for remote First Nations

By Warner Bloomfield
The federal government is asking local municipalities for input on a planned all-weather road, which would serve remote First Nations in Northern Ontario. Kenora-Rainy River MP and Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Robert Nault told the Kenora District Municipal Association he expects to see plans for an all-weather road start to take shape this summer. He said his department and provincial ministries have been discussing the

proposed road in recent weeks with the interested First Nations and both governments are optimistic it can be a reality in the near future. "I don't think there will be any physical work this summer, but we should be able to get into full blown environmental assessment and discussions on where it should go," he said in an interview following his presentation at the KDMA conference. Nault added the government wants area municipalities to be involved in those discussions, since they will be affected by the creation of a road system, connecting the remote First Nations with the rest of the province. "We want to sit down with all of the stakeholders," he said. He said recent studies indicate there are a number of areas where these small generators can be placed in Northern Ontario to provide hydroelectric power. The plan coincides with efforts to eventually link the remote communities to the provincial power grid. "We believe they could become a net exporter of hydro power," he told KDMA. Nault stressed such power plants do not involve dams and so should not pose a threat in regards to flooding. *

Hydroelectric systems

Nault is also optimistic about a plan to provide hydroelectricity to remote communities through run-of-the-river generating stations.



MP Robert Nault speaks to delegates at Municipal Association annual meeting. Staff photo

Minister asked to back Northern medical school

This letter, submitted by Kenora-Rainy River MPP Howard Hampton to the media, was sent to Northern Development and Mines Minister Tim Hudak.

Recent media reports indicate that the Expert Panel chaired by Peter George, may shortly release its finding. The speculation is that the Panel will not recommend the creation of a medical school in the North.

You know how critical this issue is for Northern Ontario. You know that too many Northerners in too many of our Northern communities do not have family doctors, or nurse practitioners, and the nursing shortage continues to wors-

en. The agreement your government signed with the Ontario Medical Association last year, has done absolutely nothing to address this problem. Neither did the few initiatives announced by our Minister of Health in December 1999, in response to the report on recruitment and retention done by Dr. McKindry.

The strategy that has proven successful in keeping doctors, nurses and health care providers in the North, is the Family Residency Program in Sudbury and Thunder Bay. I was

pleased to be part of the government which created the program. You know the Northern medical school proposal builds on the work

being done at these two sites now. That proposal is sound, practical and workable, and I believe it would address the serious recruitment-retention problem we face with respect to nurses, nurse practitioners and family doctors. Merely adding more spaces at existing medical schools, (as I fear the Panel will recommend), will do nothing to meet the health care provider needs for Northern Ontario communities.

As Minister of Northern Development and Mines, I'm calling on you to do the following:

- 1) publicly announce your support for the proposal for a medical school in the North;
- 2) encourage your Minis-

ter of Health to release the Panel report so we know what was said about this important issue;

- 3) agree that funds from the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation will be available for possible capital construction, renovations, and technology purchases to support the Northern medical school;

- 4) involve health care providers and community representatives, including aboriginal representatives, from all areas of Northern Ontario in the development and implementations of the medical school program, so that it will address the unique and urgent needs of our communities.

*Howard Hampton
Kenora-Rainy River MPP*

Letters to the editor policy

TBayTel snares wireless licence

BY ANDREW HRKAMP
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Thunder Bay Telephone has won the licence to provide state-of-the-art wireless communications in the North.

TBayTel won a \$600,000 licence to operate third-generation wireless communication for wireless Internet, e-mail and high-speed data and message systems from Parry Sound north to the Manitoba border.

"This allows to provide increased bandwidth which is used to provide these features," finance manager Gary Armstrong said.

The federal government awarded licences to TBayTel and some industry heavyweights — including Rogers Wireless, Bell Mobility and Telus Communications, who bid for larger service areas — late Thursday.

TBayTel was the only bidder

for the Northern Ontario licence.

Armstrong said "the potential will be driven by the demand from industry or residential customers who want this technology."

"This licence is for the channel that provides those services," added Earl Hoeg, manager of wireless services for Industry Canada.

Hoeg said third-generation wireless technology can send a page to a wireless phone at 2,000 kilobits per second, compared to second-generation wireless technology's 144 kilobits per second.

It also increases download time to fractions of a second, Hoeg said.

Armstrong said many of the third-generation technology services haven't been developed yet. He added TBayTel would have to

HIGH TECH

New wireless technology enables speedier communication

spend some money on software and hardware but not huge amounts.

Armstrong said TBayTel already has the infrastructure to support third-generation wireless technology through Thunder Bay Mobility.

TBay Tel officials have said in the past that if successful, the utility would implement the technology as soon as possible in the North.

Its bid was \$600,000, of which 20 per cent is due within 10 days.

The remainder must be paid to Industry Canada within a month.

Sixty-two licences were awarded by online auction.

The auction was expected to raise between \$1 billion and \$2 billion for the federal government. Bidders were charged a fee to participate.

Chronicle - Feb 3/01

Dryden council boosts host of user rates

BY BRYAN MEADO
NORTHWEST BUREAU

Dryden residents will pay more today to dump garbage, get a ride with handi-transit and flush toilets.

City council last night approved new tipping fees, transit fares and sewer surcharges that in some cases more than double current rates.

Starting today, volume-based fees for garbage disposal at the Barclay Hall Road landfill jump to \$10 from \$5 for a car trunk full; a large trailer load to \$18 from \$5; a level half-ton load to \$18 from \$9; and a heaping half-ton load to \$25 from \$9.

"If we don't do something soon, the site will have to shut

down prematurely," city engineer Tom McConnell said.

Other changes include restricting landfill use to cars, utility trailers and half-tons, and for residential-waste only.

The landfill will be open Friday and Saturday, 1-6 p.m.

City residents can pay \$1.50 a bag for curbside garbage pickup instead of hauling it to the Barclay Hall Road site, or Dryden landfill south of the city where weight-based tipping fees are charged.

"The goal is to preserve the (Barclay) landfill for as long as possible for people in east Dryden," Dryden Mayor Sid Wintle said.

Council also endorsed new Dryden Handi-Transit System

es.

Effective today, fares rise to \$3 per trip from \$2; and student fares will be set at \$3 per trip with a \$1-per-kilometre levy on one-way trips of more than three kilometres.

That surcharge increases to \$1.50 per kilometre on Sept. 1.

The Keewatin-Patricia District School Board and Northwestern Catholic District School Board opposed the student-fare hike, claiming it would more than double round-trip costs.

Coun. Brian England said the fare increases are in line with what other municipalities charge for handi-transit services.

In 2001 the city will provide a \$61,000 subsidy to the one-bus system which is equipped with a

wheelchair lift.

Handi-Transit serves about 300 clients a month.

Council also approved new sewer surcharge rates for residences.

The surcharge jumps to 55 per cent of the water rate from 49 per cent as of Jan. 1, 2002, and to 60 per cent on Jan. 1, 2003. (There was a five-per-cent hike in the sewer surcharge last month.)

That means the residential sewer surcharge will increase to \$11 in 2002 from today's \$9.80 per month; and to \$12 in 2003.

The city charges \$20 a month for water services.

The rate hikes will "make the utility user-pay" and help build a reserve fund for capital improvements, England said.

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Chronicle - Feb 6/01

Director Emergency Medical Services

District of Kenora

Do you want to be the Senior Manager in the Emergency Medical Services Group in one of the most beautiful areas of Ontario, better known as Sunset Country, where the lakes and rivers shimmer in the summer and the landscape sparkles in the winter? It's an area where the right person can mix relaxation and recreation with the intensity of developing and operating what we expect to be one of the most unique and forward thinking pre-hospital systems in North America.

The Kenora District Services Board directly operates 6 ambulance services and administers and governs three contracted ambulance services over a broad area in Northwestern Ontario. We work in an open environment which promotes a culture of trust and responsibility sharing with other Board managers and staff. The person we are looking for to fill this position is someone who can support this culture while developing a vision, goals, and objectives for the ambulance system and move it towards a proactive, community based, high profile organization.

If you think you have the vision, marketing ability, and temperament to work with a diverse group of stakeholders, and if you want to make this ambulance system a known success story in North America then send us your resume by 4:00 p.m., Wednesday, February 14, 2001.

You will report directly to the Chief Administrative Officer who expects you to perform your job in a supportive but relatively independent environment - and who will hold you to expectations. Ideally you will have a thorough knowledge of the Ambulance Act and Regulations and other applicable legislation; you'll have excellent interpersonal and communicative skills, and have experience working with CAOs, Boards of Directors, and government officials at a strategic level. Of course, you will have the demonstrated organizational, administrative, analytical and decision making skills expected of someone capable of fulfilling this role. Your education level will include a post secondary degree in the area of Emergency Health Services or Business Administration, or experience and education considered equivalent.

If you're looking for a job as a manager of an ambulance service in a small geographic area - this isn't for you. But if you can think outside the box and envision pre-hospital care in a new, proactive, high profile, community care environment send your resume to:

Sten S. Lif
Chief Administrative Officer
Kenora District Services Board
14378 Highway 17 East
Box 97 Site 108 RR#1

Hochstetler, Harvey
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The Dryden Observer

103 Year No. 30, DRYDEN, ONTARIO — TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2001

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services board concerned

New ambulance regulations potentially costly

By Warner Bloomfield

provincial regulations could increase the Kenora Services Board's costs for operating local land ambulance.

KDSB's chief administrative officer, Sten Lif told the board which met last week in Kenora, that the Ministry of Health was introducing new standards for ambulance attendants. Within two years, attendants must have a certificate from a two-year course or a four-year home study. The new qualifications will effectively disqualify many volunteer attendants now working throughout the district. Among communities utilizing volunteer para-

medics are Ear Falls and Red Lake.

If the new regulations stand, the KDSB will likely have to replace the volunteers with full-time paramedics. The process of recruiting and paying them will cost the board additional money.

The situation is complicated even further because there is a shortage of qualified paramedics in Ontario, resulting in a competition for their services; just like other health care professionals.

"There are some delivery agencies aggressively recruiting paramedics with additional wages and incentives. The Kenora district will feel pressure to meet those offers," he said.

Kenora Mayor David Canfield observed it was another example of the province downloading services on municipalities and then changing the rules, thus costing communities more money.

Lif called on the Kenora District Municipal Association (KDMA) to request the provincial government to delay the regulations, while rural districts like Kenora adjust to the new reality.

He added the KDMA should also lobby the government to make the required courses available at Northern Ontario community colleges. The program is currently only available in Southern Ontario.

☆

Ignace council decides to look for full-time CAO

AN MEADOWS
WEST BUREAU

There are changes coming to an administrative service agreement between Ignace and Dryden.

The council plans to hire a chief administrative officer/treasurer by April. Mayor Suzanne Smith said yes. The decision to hire a CAO comes from discussions between Dryden's city manager and her council.

"We felt the township is best suited to having someone on-site full time," she said.

Administrative staff from Dryden have worked in Ignace three days a week since Arthur Osborne left the Ignace CAO post July 20.

"Overall we've been happy with the agreement. . . . We are going to continue to work with Dryden and are appreciative of their help so far," Smith said.

The agreement to buy administrative services and

share some equipment on a contract basis was worked out by Ignace's previous council and endorsed by the present one.

It did not affect the six employees at the township office.

Ignace council started looking into alternatives last spring after Osborne announced his resignation.

Dryden city manager Jamie Umpleby said the decision for Ignace to hire a CAO/treasurer is a mutual one.

"(The agreement) was taxing the city's resources a bit," he told council this week.

"We're moving down the road (from the agreement) to help Ignace find a CAO," he said.

Ignace will continue to share some services with Dryden, such as building inspection and accounting services.

Harris to shuffle cabinet today

THE CANADIAN PRESS

TORONTO — Premier Mike Harris will name Jim Flaherty to the role of finance minister as part of a cabinet shuffle to be announced today, The Canadian Press has learned.

Flaherty, 51, was first elected in his riding of Whitby-Ajax in 1995 and has been Ontario's attorney general since June 1999. He is to be replaced by David Young, a newcomer to cabinet.

Flaherty was among a short-list of candidates expected to replace Harris's longtime confidant Ernie Eves, who resigned as the province's treasurer last week after serving in the post for nearly six years.

A government source confirmed the moves on condition of anonymity.

Consumer and Commercial Relations Minister Bob Runciman will be minister of economic development and trade, replacing Al Palladini, who cited personal



Premier Mike Harris

reasons when he stepped down from cabinet two weeks ago.

Health Minister Elizabeth Witmer will move to environment, an important port-

folio as the province seeks to bolster its credibility on water and air-quality issues. She will replace Dan Newman, who is moving to northern development and mines.

Chris Hodgson, a friend of the premier who has long been considered his potential successor, will take over municipal affairs and housing from Tony Clement, who will succeed Witmer in health.

Ministers said to be staying put include Colleges and Universities Minister Dianne Cunningham, Education Minister Janet Ecker, Natural Resources Minister John Snobelen and Labour Minister Chris Stockwell.

Ecker will take over government house leader duties from Norm Sterling, who takes Consumer and Commercial Relations from Runciman. Cabinet newcomer Brenda Elliott becomes intergovernmental affairs minister.

Stoney Creek backbencher Brad Clark

will take over the Transportation portfolio from David Turnbull, who will be named the province's solicitor general.

Departures from cabinet will include Agriculture Minister Ernie Hardeman. He was expected to be replaced by Brian Coburn, a backbencher who represents the riding Carleton-Gloucester.

A lawyer by trade, Flaherty has held several positions in the Harris cabinet, including two stints as labour minister and one as solicitor general. But his brief turn as the province's top legal eagle has earned him a reputation as one of Harris's possible successors.

Flaherty, who clashed frequently with the legal community during his stint as attorney general, is known in government circles as someone who doesn't back down from a fight.

"We don't have many people at the very top who are able to defend (government policy)," said one government source.

Environment Ministry needs overhaul: new report

THE CANADIAN PRESS

TORONTO — Ontario's Environment Ministry is outdated and the province lags behind other jurisdictions in protecting the quality of air, water and soil, says the latest damning environmental report to hit the government.

Valerie Gibbons, an independent consultant commissioned by the government after Walkerton's tainted-water crisis last May, calls for a complete overhaul of the province's approach to environmental protection.

"Ontario is behind the progress in many other jurisdictions, and the gap

approach."

Ontario Premier Mike Harris acknowledged the criticism and said the report's recommendations would be carefully considered.

"(The report) is critical in suggesting that for the last couple of decades the Ministry of the Environment — including under our watch — has been stuck in this old mould and has not progressed," he said. "The report is one that we will be reviewing and looking at how we can implement some of the key recommendations."

Harris, whose government has been dogged by negative environmental assessments since taking power in 1995,

"When we tried to bring major change, it was resisted very vigorously ..."

Premier Mike Harris

On the Environment Ministry

wanted to hang on to the status quo, by a number of interest groups who wanted to hang on to the status quo," he said.

Liberal environment critic Jim

this ministry have been the sole responsibility of Mike Harris," he said, adding that staff has been cut by a third, and funding by at least 42 per cent since the Tories were elected.

NDP environment critic Marilyn Churley said she fears the report will weaken even further the role of the ministry within government.

"Gibbons is playing the stalking horse for her political masters," she said. "The report uses rhetoric from new-edge environmental thinking, but the intention is to go even further to reduce the power of the ministry."

Bradley agreed, saying the report's use of the term 'modernization' gives the

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Facility waiting lists growing

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of increasing

spaces for all ages in both
communities.

Lynn Carlson, Dryden
Children's Resource Centre
director, said its child care
program currently has
more than 100 names on a
waiting list. At present, 54
children attend during the
day, with that number ris-
ing to 69 when including
after-school services.

She added any decision
to increase capacity in Dry-
den would have to take into
consideration the need for
capital investment.

"We have little room for
expanding according to leg-
islation," she said, stressing
any significant increase in
capacity would mean build-
ing additions.

Other recommendations
contained in the report are:

- increasing hours of
operation at some facilities
to enhance service to work-
ing parents, such as week-

(continued on page 2)

Dryden Observer - Feb 13/01

Portage child are aces een

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Municipalities to consider forming Area Services Board

By Warner Bloomfield

The Kenora District Municipal Association (KDMA) is discussing the possible formation of an Area Services Board.

The Kenora District Incorporated Rate Payers Association proposed a working group be formed to discuss the idea, at the recent KDMA annual general meeting.

Such a board would replace the current district services board and assume additional responsibilities, such as the power to set rates. Under provincial legislation, the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines must have requests for Area Services Boards submitted before March 31, 1972.

While the KDMA does not oppose the formation of an Area Services Board, it does wish more time to study the possibility before commitment.

Kenora Mayor David Bloomfield noted many rate payers could view an Area Services Board as another level of government imposing new taxes.

Bill Blower of rate payers group stated government studies indicate form-

Taxes combined

Anthony Nickel of Wainwright township, another proponent of the area board, said that far from adding another tax to regional residents, it would help to combine several different taxes most already pay. He pointed to voluntary fees for local roads boards and fire services, as well as provincial and education property taxes, all of which could be administered by the new board.

Nickel said only two thirds of unincorporated residents currently pay the voluntary fees. Bringing these taxes under an area services board would mean collecting from a greater number of residents, he stressed.

Under provincial law, district services boards and area services boards are governed by different ministries. While Northern Development and Mines is responsible for area services boards, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs oversees district boards. A district services board has no power to tax and administers Public Health, Child

Dryden Observer - Feb 13/01

City taxes shooting up 6%

BY JULIO GOMES
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Homeowners and people with farmland in the family will be hardest hit by a tax increase proposed in the City of Thunder Bay budget.

City manager Brian MacRae provided council with an overview yesterday of the 2001 operating budget, which calls for more than \$93.4 million to be raised through local taxation — \$1.08 million more than last year.

Paying for old and new services, as well as the contribution for the new regional hospital, means most property owners will

see a tax increase of more than six per cent.

While the city has faced challenges over the years, "this year's challenges are extraordinary," MacRae told councillors.

The result of years of cuts in expenditures by senior levels of government and downloading new responsibilities to the city means the municipality is bearing the brunt of "these challenges," he said.

Administration has crafted a general municipal budget that will cost the city \$144.4 million.

To achieve that, staff is proposing measures that include:

- Repay \$3.47 million as part of

the city's \$25-million contribution to the hospital.

- The city's share of slot machine revenues from the casino is \$1.5 million.

- Thunder Bay Telephone will provide a dividend of \$9 million.

- \$1.5 million will be transferred from the special circumstances reserve.

- The surplus from 2000 operations is to be about \$700,000.

- Fee hikes at golf courses, arenas, sports fields and for buses.

- The \$500,000 hydrant maintenance charge will result in a new \$14 charge on all 36,600 water accounts.

- Tipping fees at the John

Street landfill will increase on July 1 to \$30.25 per tonne from \$27.50.

The hospital debenture repayment automatically hikes the property tax rate by 3.8 per cent. The rest of the budget requirements translates into a 1.2-per cent increase in the full service tax rate.

That only applies to the commercial, industrial and multi-residential sector, whose increases are capped under provincial regulations.

The full impact of the increase will be spread out over the residential, farmland, managed forest and pipelines property class-

es, which will see taxes increase another 2.4 per cent.

"Significant administrative cuts have already been made to bring this budget into balance," MacRae said. "It is increasingly imperative that we set our priorities very carefully, given our inability to continue to absorb cuts in funding and maintain the existing levels of service."

The presentation was made to give councillors, especially the newcomers, time to work their way through a 264-page budget booklet.

Councillors will debate the operating budget at a special meeting Feb. 21.



Pickle Lake

By Graeme Mackechnie

IF YOU HAVE LIVED here longer than two years and haven't been a volunteer for at least one of these years you're not pulling your own weight. If you have children and haven't accompanied them to a Friday Kids Fun Night at the Community Hall, shame on you. Your help is not only wanted, it's needed!! Hats off to Bernie Curtis and the Lions. Bernie is spearheading efforts to

get the Ice Worm Festival back. If you would like to help – perhaps sponsor an event or supervise games, a chili cook-off or contribute ideas, phone Bernie at home 928-2058.

By the time this article hits the press the annual Women's Curling Bonspiel and dance will be over. Again this year, participants are coming in from all over. We even have people flying in to watch. If you think

that's wild, you should see the women in action. Again this popular tournament almost went by the boards except for a new volunteer, sports minded Terry Bather. My hat is off to you too. On the same weekend the hockey tournament is taking place – action in Pickle is on for this weekend.

Spider Resources is up near Webequie – exploring for diamonds. Diamonds and Paladium are the hot items in the mining field recently. A new group taking over the old Umex claims in Nov. 2001 are looking at precious metals as well.

Jaime Miller, our strategic planner, has been working hard in our community to arrive at a vision for Pickle Lake's future. The participation has been great – better than some of the other towns Jaime has been in, but we need your input. There will be more focus group meetings and questionnaires. Please fill them out and plan on attending a meeting. That means you B.D.

Council was well represented at the recent KDMA meetings in Kenora. A hot issue was the proposed extension of the Werner Lake Road from Manitoba into Red Lake. One would wonder how this would affect business in Kenora and Dryden. I would think government should fix up our existing roads before putting tax dollars into new ones.

Council recently had a

dinner meeting with Osnaburgh band council. It was interesting to hear that more and more companies are acknowledging Mishkeegogamang's existence and touching base with them; recently both DeBeers and Buchanan Forest Products have been in for talks.

"Land for Sale." Six islands on Lake St. Joe – unheard of. Land was, and is, a scarce commodity in this area. The prices are unbelievably cheap. I wonder if the land is open for commercial development?

If you need a job and are willing to work, Wasaya has positions available – with jobs open in dispatch, load control, load master, cargo and shipping and receiving. No one in town who's qualified should be without a job.

Mishkeegogamang is

having the grand opening of their new state of the art school on April 19. M.P. Bob Nault will be up for the occasion and will be meeting with council. If I'm not mistaken, the access road will be a hot topic, as will land development north of Pickle Lake.

Manitoba-Red Lake road link envisioned as economic booster

BY BRYAN MEADOWS
NORTHWEST BUREAU

The mayor of Machin is a little anxious about the possibility of a new road linking Red Lake to Manitoba.

"While it could be advantageous to Red Lake, there could be disadvantages to other communities," Arnie Bratland said this week.

"I'm not totally against (Werner Lake road) but I would like to see a study done first" on the pros and cons of the project, Bratland said.

About 40 kilometres of bush stands between forest access roads along the Werner Lake route west of Red Lake.

The road proposal has for more than a decade been put on the government backburner due to a lack of funding.

At a Kenora District Municipal Association meeting two weeks ago, Machin delegates voted against a resolution supporting the highway link. Ear Falls and Kenora delegates reportedly supported the motion.

"In a forum such as that, a resolution should benefit all (communities in the region)," Bratland said, adding he isn't convinced the road will help Vermilion Bay.

He said the province shouldn't be investing in new roads when "money needs to be put into existing roads."

Red Lake businessman and former councillor Rick Smit said he doesn't like such "parochial" banter.

"Vermilion Bay should be working on economic development initiatives within its jurisdiction, rather than trying to stifle economic aspirations of

another," Smit said.

He said he believes the road would benefit the whole region.

Whatever gas-sale revenue Vermilion Bay might lose from Red Lake-Winnipeg travellers, he said, "will more than be made up for in enhanced tourism opportunities from a new circle route from Winnipeg to Red Lake, Vermilion Bay and Kenora."

Smit, First Nations representatives, Red Lake Mayor Dunc Wilson and others have set up a committee to work on funding and construction of the road.

They're hoping to tie the proposal to an all-weather road network being considered by remote First Nations. "It's a natural fit," Smit said.

He said he felt the Werner Lake road would provide a crucial transportation link for delivering products and services to the Far North.

With White Dog First Nation coming on board last week, eight First Nations support the project.

"I think we've made substantial progress on the road link," Smit said.

"We're closer now than we've ever been."

The Werner Lake committee wants to convince the Ministry of Natural Resources to realign a forest access road in the Whiskey Jack Forest.

Wilson said the committee wants the road to run farther south to provide access and a strategic location for the road to Manitoba.

He maintained the present road location — between the south end of Sidney and Rowdy lakes with a temporary Bailey bridge to protect remote tourism outfitters — provides no future access to Manitoba and crowds logging against Woodland Caribou Provincial Park.

While a more southerly road would add a few kilometres to the log haul, Wilson said, "It would tie into our futuristic view of how development should proceed in the area, with a road west and a road

Chronicle - Feb 14/01

Premier Mike Harris shuffles his cabinet further to the right

THE CANADIAN PRESS

TORONTO — Ontario Premier Mike Harris shuffled staunch neo-conservative Jim Flaherty into the plum finance portfolio yesterday in a sweeping cabinet overhaul that signals a fortified right-wing direction for the province's governing Tories.

Flaherty was also named deputy premier in just one of several high-profile moves that suggest a shift toward greater social conservatism following years of fiscal restraint.

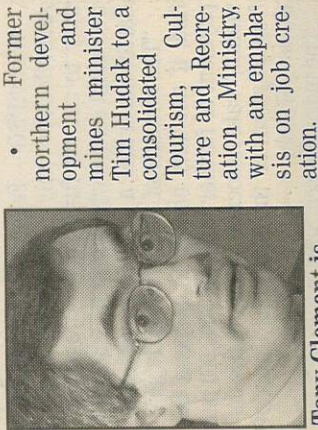
"Our new team is prepared to make the tough decisions that are going to be needed to keep Ontario strong," Harris said after his new cabinet was sworn in by Lt.-Gov. Hilary Weston.

"I took very talented people, those I thought were best suited to the challenges we were going to be faced with in the future."

Longtime Canadian Alliance supporter Tony Clement, who played a key role in bringing the Tories to power in Ontario in 1995, was assigned to the health portfolio, where he's expected to take a hard line on soaring health-care spending.

Former health minister Elizabeth Witmer, considered by some to be one of Harris's strongest cabinet ministers, moves to environment. The province is keen to shore up its image following the E. coli outbreak last May in Walkerton, Ont., which killed seven people.

Witmer will also head up a special cabinet committee on the environment and will use an independent audit of the min-



Tony Clement is health minister.

Leader Howard Hampton said the shuffle shows an ideological shift to the right that doesn't bode well for health spending, education budgets or social programs.

"This is a hard-right cabinet," Hampton said. "This is a cabinet that's all about tax cuts for corporations and the well-off, and more hardship for the average Ontario citizen."

Not so, insisted Clement, one of the few ministers who lingered after the ceremony to talk publicly about the shuffle.

"Mike Harris has always been a very common-sense, conservative premier, and he's always tried to find the best, most practical solution in accordance with the wishes of the people," said Clement.

"You could just as easily say this is a pragmatic cabinet as an ideological cabinet."

McGuin-ty dismissed Witmer as a "sedative" whose impenetrably drowsy media style will be used to deaden interest in an area where the government is considered most vulnerable.

Former northern development and mines minister Tim Hudak to a consolidated Tourism, Culture and Recreation Ministry, with an emphasis on job creation.

Both McGuin-ty and NDP

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Ontario cabinet's new lineup

BY THE CANADIAN PRESS

Members of the Ontario government cabinet were shuffled yesterday. Here is a complete cabinet list:

- Premier: Mike Harris
- Finance: Jim Flaherty
- Education, House Leader: Janet Ecker
- Health and Long Term Care: Tony Clement
- Associate Health: Helen Johns
- Community and Social Services, Children, Francophone Affairs: John Baird
- Attorney General, Native Affairs: David Young
- Solicitor General: David Turnbull
- Correctional Services, Consumer and Business Services: Norm Sterling
- Labour: Chris Stockwell
- Management Board of Cabinet: David Tsubouchi
- Transportation: Brad Clark
- Training, Colleges and Universities, Women's Issues: Dianne Cunningham
- Environment: Elizabeth Witmer
- Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs: Brian Coburn
- Citizenship, Seniors: Cam Jackson
- Economic Development and Trade: Bob Runciman
- Energy, Science and Technology: Jim Wilson
- Intergovernmental Affairs: Brenda Elliott
- Municipal Affairs and Housing: Chris Hodgson



CP PHOTO

Newly appointed Finance Minister Jim Flaherty laughs as he applauds at the swearing in ceremony of cabinet yesterday in Toronto.

tions, both from the media and from the inquiry itself.

Newcomers to cabinet include lawyer David Young, who takes over for Flaherty in the high-profile attorney general's job; former cabinet minister Brenda Elliott in intergovernmental affairs; Stoney Creek

"I performed, I think, exceptionally well in the government," Clark said. "I think I've very clearly shown the premier I have the capabilities to do the job."

Ousted were former agriculture minister Ernie Hardeman and Margaret Mealand, the minister responsible for

'A bare bones budget'

• Continued from page A1

• The effect of the swap of services with the province — officially called Local Services Realignment (LSR) — continues to be felt, particularly in upgrades to area highways and the cost of new buses.

• Arbitration awards have also taken a bigger bite out of the budget. Firefighters won a wage increase of 13-per-cent covering 1998-2000 and employees at the seniors' homes got nine-per-cent for the period June 1998 to June 2001. These settlements have added an extra \$1.1 million to the city's costs.

As well, benefit costs have escalated, along with Workplace Safety and Insurance Board charges. Even ordinary items such as gasoline and diesel fuel purchases have impacted the bottom line, to the tune of an extra \$565,000.

In the end, the budget developed by administration only allows the city to maintain the services it is now providing, MacRae said.

"Is it a bare bones budget?" Mayor Ken Boshcoff said. "Very much so."

As well as having to authorize a tax increase — 2.4-per-cent or 6.2-per-cent, it's a given that a lot of people will not be pleased — Boshcoff is concerned because councillors earlier this week were in a giving mood.

Along with reinstating holiday bus service (an estimated \$106,100 cost), councillors also halted the proposed elimination of bus service in Neebing (\$142,400) and pledged new funding to Shelter House-Thunder Bay (\$150,000). That's almost \$400,000 in new, unaccounted expenses.

"We're adding things that were first cut. We're adding the frills back into the package," Boshcoff lamented. "By adding all these things in, it really doesn't give us much room to manoeuvre."

make a combination of the two. On Wednesday night, Thunder Bay residents will find out how they manage this tightrope act.

"At this stage it's impossible to tell how chaotic it will be," Boshcoff said of the looming budget session.

A taxing surprise

THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

The recent provincewide reassessment has caught the city's property owners by surprise — especially those who own homes and farmland.

As a result of provincial legislation, the commercial, industrial and multi-residential classes have been protected from "unfairly high" increases in taxation. That means in Thunder Bay, any increase in the tax rate will be borne by the residential, farmland, managed forest and pipeline property classes alone.

City officials have written to the Minister of Finance outlining the impact and consequences of reassessment. City manager Brian MacRae said they want to be able to adjust the tax ratios so the impact of reassessment will be spread out on an equal basis across all property classes.

The city is also asking that increases in taxes due to the hospital debenture be excluded from the cap on tax increases to commercial, industrial and multi-residential properties. This is due to the fact a plebiscite supported an increase in property taxes to fund that \$25-million contribution.

As a result, MacRae expects the

'Financial challenges' ahead as taxes rise in Thunder Bay

BY JULIO GOMES

THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

As Thunder Bay homeowners stare at the prospect of a property tax increase of more than six per cent and as councillors prepare to put together an operating budget, the situation isn't so grim, the city's top administrative official says.

"Are we in dire straits? No. But we certainly do have some financial challenges in terms of our ability to sustain service levels," city manager Brian MacRae said in a recent interview.

On Wednesday, councillors will sit down and work through a 264-page booklet that consists of \$144.4 million-worth of municipal activities, as well as \$47.5 million in gross telephone department expenditures and \$8.9 million for waterworks operations.

The latter two are self-financed: telephone through its profit-generating land and cellular services and waterworks through water bills.

The general municipal budget, which covers everything from staff at the mayor's office and firefighters to the arts and heritage funding program, relies primarily on taxation to pay the way.

While councillors will have to decide which expenditures they will give their blessing to, local residents have already been warned they are facing a tax increase of the kind they haven't seen in years.

But MacRae said the initial shock of a possible 6.2-per-cent hike for homeowners should be put in perspective.

"Six-per-cent sounds like a big number right off the top," he conceded. "But 3.8-per-cent of that relates to the hospital (debenture). It was certainly understood from the outset the \$25-million contribution (toward construction of the new regional hospital) would be repaid through an additional tax levy. So in essence the tax increase is 2.4-per-cent."

That anticipated 2.4-per-cent increase applies only to the residential, farmland, managed forest and pipeline property classes. Due to province-wide reassessment and government legislation that caps increases to the commercial, industrial and multi-residential segments, homeowners will pick have to up the full tab of an additional \$1.08 million in taxes.

In total, administration is proposing a municipal tax that will raise \$93.4 million from all property owners.

"We're talking, over and above the hospital (repayment), a modest increase in tax revenues," MacRae stated.

Perhaps the most surprising thing about the tax situation facing local ratepayers is that this comes as no surprise to city officials.

"Yes, we knew," MacRae said, "and we have been indicating for a number of years there were fewer dollars available in reserves, that the level of provincial subsidies was continuing to decline, and that we were less and less able to absorb the impact of inflation... without impacting services."

The general municipal budget, which covers all city departments as well as outside boards such as Development Thunder Bay and HA-GI Transit, again "presents new challenges and opportunities" for the municipality.

More than a dozen significant factors have had a bearing on it, including:

- The reassessment of properties to a value as of June 30, 1999. An across-the-board drop in assessment saw the total value of properties decline from \$6.1 billion to \$5.8 billion. The result on the tax base is a decrease of \$5.5 million.

- Repayment of the \$25-million loan for the new hospital begins this year. The impact of raising the 2001 installment of \$3.47 million is a 3.8-per-cent increase in this year's tax rate.

Chronicle - Feb 18/99 on page A3



Brian MacRae

Hochstetler, Harvey
BOX 14
Pickle Lake ON
POV 3A0 2001-06-30



The Dryden Observer

103 Year No. 32, DRYDEN, ONTARIO — TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2001

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City of Dryden

Administration to recommend tax increase

By Warner Bloomfield

Senior administration is recommending an across-the-board tax increase to Dryden council for the coming year.

City manager Jamie Umpleby told The Dryden

Observer yesterday, Dryden's 2001 balanced budget is now in draft form and before councillors for their consideration.

"Right now, we are recommending a small tax increase," Umpleby said.

He added he plans to formally present a budget to council for approval at the March 5 regular meeting.

The city manager stressed spending will remain fairly consistent with last year's, which

called for just under \$15 million in spending. In 2000, council increased taxes by 2.38 per cent.

This year, the city faces a number of challenges. Among them is a reduction in industrial tax assess-

ment of approximately \$350,000. While some slight increases in residential and commercial assessment offset that a little bit, Umpleby noted the net result is a drop in tax rev-

(continued on page 2)



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Finish time: 1:30 p.m.

Tax increase recommended for city

(continued from page 1)

Additionally, the province's Bill 140 limits how municipalities may increase their taxes. That legislation sets out tax ratios comparing residential to commercial and industrial rates and caps those ratios.

The City of Dryden is still awaiting official word on where it stands in regards to those numbers, Umpleby said.

"We don't know where we stand. It could be a problem for the city," he explained.

Finally, the city is waiting to hear what level of grants it can expect from the province's Community Restructuring Fund.

That is a pool of money the province distributes to help towns and cities adjust to the municipal restructuring exercise undertaken in recent years.

While Dryden is still in the dark about the money coming from this fund, it does expect higher expenses in many of the jurisdictions downloaded from the province as part of restructuring.

turing. This includes such areas as child care, land ambulance, Northwest Recycle Association and the Northwestern Health Unit. "It's certainly not revenue neutral. That is a bit of a misnomer," Umpleby observed. ☆



Chronicle - Feb 22/01

The moments in get discussions

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Coun. Mary Roy had earlier
tabled a resolution that would see
\$148,800 chopped from the police
budget. That decision was also
put aside to March 5.

The heated words didn't end
there. After the police budget was
discussed, some councillors
asked for a 10-minute break. The
break at about 9:10 p.m. angered
one councillor.

"This is ridiculous — a smoke
break," said Coun. Bill Scollie,
turning to the media and city
staffers. "That's how much value
they have for your time."

He stormed out of council
chambers and did not return.

When the meeting resumed,
Coun. Ken Whent complained the
264-page budget booklet only pre-
sented bottom-line figures. He
would have preferred more spe-
cific cost breakdowns.

City manager Brian MacRae
said the operating budget primar-
ily deals with salaries and inci-
dental office expenses. But ad-
ministration would only be able
to offer a breakdown by each de-
partment, since details for each
division or program could reveal
individual salaries, he said.

Deliberations continued late
into the night.

Water safety serious business

Chronicle
Feb 23/01

Environment Ministry representative details rules

BY JIM KELLY
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

The message from yesterday's overview of Ontario drinking water regulations was loud and clear: the government takes water quality very seriously.

"Drinking water is very important to this ministry," Ministry of Environment program co-ordinator Ron Campeau told a Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce seminar at Travelodge Thunder Bay.

"If you break any laws, please don't break any laws related to water," Campeau told his small audience.

He said a special investigation and enforcement branch of the ministry enforces infractions of the Ontario Water Resources Act.

"Each time you're convicted, the fine increases," he said.

Campeau discussed exemptions to the Ontario Water Resources Act (OWRA) and the criteria for certificates of approvals for water treatment plants.

For example, if a waterworks is used only for supplying water for agricultural, commercial or industrial purposes, it is exempt from OWRA regulations and no certificate of approval is required.

However, if a plant supplies water to more than five residences, it is subject to the regulations and a certificate of approval is required.

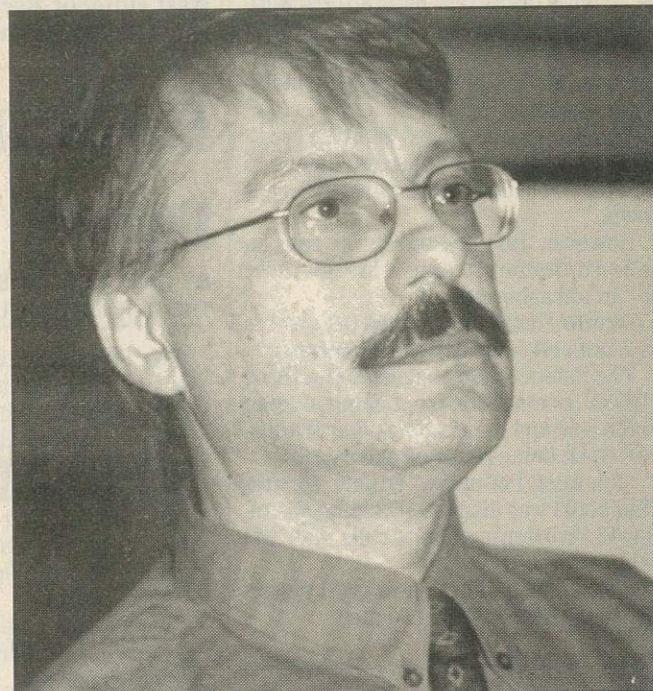
He talked about a notification requirement in which the owner of a water treatment plant must notify the ministry or a ministry laboratory when water supply problems arise.

The lab would then contact the medical officer of health.

"Notification requirements must be immediate," Campeau said.

The public must also be notified quickly — usually through the media.

Campeau said residents can access the city's Web site to get quarterly reports on the state of the water supply. It was Thunder Bay's last quarterly report for October-December which showed the wa-



Environment Ministry program co-ordinator Ron Campeau stressed the importance of abiding by water quality laws during an address in Thunder Bay yesterday.

ter had a trihalomethane (THM) level over the provincial standard of 100.

THMs are a group of chlorination byproducts linked, after long-term exposure, to bladder cancer and other types of cancer. They are formed when chlorine combines with organics (decaying vegetation) in water.

The bottom line is the public must be informed on water issues, Campeau said.

He said the owner of a waterworks must provide everything from quarterly reports to copies of the certificate of approval.

17,000-plus sign petition

BY JIM KELLY
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Northwestern Ontario has flexed its muscles in demanding the province take immediate action to alleviate the critical shortage of doctors and other health care professionals.

The proof is in a 17,000-name petition called A Community Letter to Premier Mike Harris.

The petition calls for provincial support for immediate short-term solutions to retain the physicians already here and to recruit new family doctors and specialists to seriously understaffed areas.

The petition, the brainchild of Mayor Ken Boshcoff and Mended Hearts, a regional cardiac support group, was presented to Councillors Bill Mauro and

Orville Santa at a city hall news conference yesterday.

Boshcoff will deliver the petition to new Health Minister Tony Clement soon.

Included among the 17,000 signatures are 5,000 gathered by Mended Hearts.

"The residents of Northwestern Ontario must stand together as a unified force demanding more medical professionals and better health care in Northwestern," said Emile Chiasson, president of Mended Hearts.

"We must show the premier that this serious crisis is moving to a state of disastrous proportion."

Chiasson challenged unions, businesses, social clubs, charities as well as ethnic and aboriginal groups in Northwestern Ontario to add more names to the petition.

There is also action on other fronts to recruit physicians and other health care workers. That's where Sheelagh Hendrick fits in.

The 20-year employee of the city is on a two-year contract during which she will work with recruiters from Health Sciences North, Thunder Bay Regional Hospital and St. Joseph's Care Group.

The recruiters will take care of the professional end, meaning the hiring of health care professionals, while Hendrick will handle lifestyle and community responsibilities by helping doctors and others adjust to life in Thunder Bay.

As the community relations co-ordinator, Hendrick will introduce new arrivals to the recreational, educational and cultural activities in Thunder Bay.

Budget squeeze ahead for town council

BY CARL CLUTCHEY
NORTH SHORE BUREAU

Marathon town council may have a tough time making good on a pledge not to raise taxes this spring if a looming revenue shortfall becomes a reality.

The mill town may have \$586,000 less to spend this year because of a drop in the value of overall property assessment.

Town chief administrator Ian McQuarrie said combined residential and industrial assessment has been reduced to \$162 million from \$181 million — the result of reassessments and successful property tax appeals.

The town collects about \$5 million in taxes a year from local residential, commercial and industrial sources.

The \$586,000 could be offset by a budget surplus carried over from 2000, but

MARATHON

the town may need that money for other purposes, McQuarrie said.

Coun. Harold Griggs said council will lobby the province for help to make up for any shortfall because it resulted from government changes to the assessment system.

Griggs said it would be "very difficult" to find nearly \$600,000 worth of cuts in this year's budget in order to ensure a zero tax increase.

"If we had to cut, I guess we would, but I'd rather go to the government and say you set the ground rules," Griggs said.

If taxes go up, the burden could fall on the homeowner because the province has put limits on how much municipalities can tax industries.

Town managers have already been instructed by council to aim for zero per cent this year.

Some business people admit town operations are fairly lean, but maintain there may still be some room for trimming during next month's budget deliberations.

Retailer Cheri Carruthers said if the town does face a big shortfall in revenue, then it may have to reconsider the amount of money going out to recreational groups.

"If we're going to be that short, then we have to take a look at these gifts," Carruthers said. "Do people want tax increases or gifts?"

Though recreation accounts for a big chunk of the town's budget, Griggs said he would not be in favour of eliminating or reducing hours at the local pool or ski hill.

Chronicle - Feb 25/01

Sioux Lookout OPP lock-up numbers rise in 2000

Harmen Meinders
STAFF WRITER

THE Sioux Lookout OPP have compiled the statistics for the arrests and lock-ups that took place in Sioux Lookout last year. Some numbers are up and others are down for a number of reasons said detachment Staff Sgt. Doug Squires.

The number of cause disturbance charges laid jumped from 193 in 1999 to 771 in 2000. Squires said a big part of the reason for

this is that many violations considered liquor violations in 1999 were classified as cause disturbances in 2000.

"It was determined that a lot of liquor violations were disturbances," said Squires. "Although liquor was an underlying factor they were disturbances."

He also said that the OPP has undergone a tactic change when dealing with liquor related offences.

"Fines under the liquor act would be minimal whereas with a cause disturbance there is a criminal

charge laid," he said. "We can get better results and there is more of a deterrence factor. It is our hope that by having this deterrent in play the number (of cause disturbance charges) will go down."

When he first looked at the 2000 statistics and compared them to the 1999 statistics Squires said he was surprised by the jump in the numbers of disturbance charges but he was not surprised to find that liquor was an underlying factor in most of them.

Sixty-six per cent of all assault charges involve liquor and 62 per cent involve adults. Of the adult assault charges 92 per cent involved males which leads Squires to believe that there are a lot of men in Sioux Lookout who cannot handle their liquor. He also said every assault of a police officer in 2000 involved alcohol.

The OPP are looking into ways to combat the problems alcohol causes in Sioux Lookout said Squires.

"We are presently working on strategies to see if

there is anything else we can do to reduce the alcohol problems in Sioux Lookout," he said, adding that he hopes to work with other agencies in Sioux Lookout to develop strategies to deal with the problem.

"This is not solely a police problem," said Squires. "The OPP are a collector of the end result of the devastation

caused by alcohol. The community as a whole holds the key to these problems."

Squires said "the big stick approach" isn't the answer and that the community as a whole must deal with the root causes. However, he added that the police will take the "big stick approach" if nothing else is done.

Sioux Lookout OPP Statistics 1999 and 2000

	1999	2000
Sexual Offences	37	51
Weapons Offences	51	35
Robbery	5	4
Assaults	267	326
Assault Police	24	50
Thefts/Break-ins	299	307
Frauds	26	34
Disturbances	193	771
Property Damage	140	158
Drugs	27	45
Bail Violations	158	257
Liquor Violations	2044	1897
Other Investigations	246	296
Impaired Drivers	65	56
Motor Vehicle Collisions	193	196
Total number of lock-ups	3027	3585

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FORT FRANCES

Budget/tax review set

BY BRYAN MEADOWS
NORTHWEST BUREAU

Fort Frances ratepayers may know by the weekend whether a proposed two-per-cent hike in municipal taxes will stand.

Two months ago, town council approved the tax increase in its 2001 budget, but has delayed implementation until the effect of the provincial government's Bill 140 was considered.

The legislation, which caps industrial and commercial tax rates in Ontario municipalities according to a provincial average, became law this week.

Fort Frances administrator Bill Naturkach said yesterday council will review the numbers at a meeting Friday.

"(The tax hike) could be higher or lower depending on the impact of the legislation," he said.

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 Abitibi-Consolidated's Fort Frances 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 pay for millions in debentures for a new auditorium and second arena.

Ratepayers in Dryden and Thunder Bay also face tax increases this year.

Fort Frances council is expected to approve the 2001 municipal budget at a meeting Monday.

Councillors roll up sleeves to cut expenses

BY JULIO GOMES
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

First, a high-tech aerial photography project was shelved. Now, the glossy pages of the telephone book are getting a second look.

But as Thunder Bay city councillors prepare to resume budget deliberations March 15, some are prepared to examine everything in hopes of reining in a hefty tax hike.

"We'd like to bring (this year's tax increase) down to maybe one per cent over the hospital (repayment)," Coun. Ken Whent said. "The direction of everybody sitting around (the council) table is to identify enough savings to significantly minimize the increase that's going to come."

At Monday's meeting, councillors displayed a willingness to find savings, no matter how small. The plan to update the city's aerial photography library would have cost only \$86,200.

On the other item, telephone general manager Sharon Hacio will provide a report March 12 on the 78 pages of community information that is included at the front of the phone book.

That section, which costs about \$200,000 to produce, could be deleted or scaled back, and most people wouldn't care, Whent said.

The idea has supporters, not just among the new councillors who have

pages in the Thunder Bay directory are "essentially a source of community pride."

Whent doesn't want to stop there. He said with additional information councillors have been receiving, more savings may be possible.

He said councillors will ask in-depth questions to ensure expenditures such as \$600 chairs and \$4,200 work stations are absolutely necessary.

The proposed operating budget calls for \$258 million in-gross expenditures, to be funded in part by a municipal tax levy of \$96.9 million. That's \$1.08 million more than last year. Combined with a \$3.47-million repayment of the hospital loan, that means a 6.2-per-cent tax increase for residential property owners.

On top of that, council saved bus service in Neebing, ordered buses to run on statutory holidays and pledged \$150,000 to Shelter House. The new commitments will make the budget process even more difficult, Boshcoff said.

"To pay for all these other things, the money has to come from somewhere," he said.

"Some things will have to be cut because the tax increase is unacceptable," he added, pointing to a possible reduction in services such as snow clearing.

The pledge to find savings in every facet of operations is commendable, Boshcoff said, but eventually the cuts will hit more basic and significant ser-

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DRYDEN

Council tussles with 2001 tax rate

BY BRYAN MEADOWS
NORTHWEST BUREAU

Dryden ratepayers will face a small tax increase this year.

Mayor Sid Wintle refused to say how high a tax hike property owners could expect, only that the figure would be discussed during a committee of the whole meeting on Monday.

Wintle said councillors were to inform finance chairman Bill Brown by yesterday if they had "any more ideas" for the budget.

City treasurer Paul Heayn said earlier that administration attempted "to find some economies of scale and productivity" within all departments to reduce expenditures in the budget.

Last year the city hiked taxes by 2.38 per cent, citing a two-per-cent hike in municipal staff salaries, some debenture costs and maintenance of current programs and services.

Wintle said council may approve the 2001 budget following the committee of the whole meeting.

In its budgeting process, Dryden council has had to deal with a reassessment of Weyerhaeuser's pulp and paper mill.

The city faces a net reduction in revenue from property taxes of \$266,000 because the mill's property assessment has been lowered by \$430,000.

Assessment hikes in pipeline and residential properties are responsible for offsetting the mill reduction, the city says.

Weyerhaeuser's mill pays almost 52 per cent of Dryden's municipal taxes. That's more than \$3 million annually, according to the city's 2000 budget docu-