

Thursday, March 2, 2006

# oney rolls in r seniors' facility

IN CHEKKI

RONICLE JOURNAL

y build it on Thunder Bay's south side, people 55 years older will come.

is what is expected at a \$4.5-million fitness and recreation facility to replace the Herb Carroll 55 Plus Centre.

ew 25,000-square-foot centre is to go up on the Chapples property beside the Friendship Garden three years from now. It will be much bigger and better than the outdated and crowded Herb Carroll centre, its visionaries said Wednesday.

Herb Carroll centre can't accommodate all interested users on the north side who need access to activities for exercise, well-being, crafts, said John Reguly, co-chairman of the fundraising committee for the planned centre.

Herb Carroll site has 6,000 square feet of useable space with many rooms and is sometimes "packed" with up to 150 people a day, Reguly said.

There is no space for outdoor activities and no parking, he said.

Thunder Bay 55 Plus Centre — a larger city-run facility on the north side — says about 10 per cent of its visitors are from the south side, Reguly added.

"Herb Carroll is packed," he said. "It just can't serve anyone."

Herb Carroll centre can't expand because it is housed in a seniors apartment complex, Reguly said.

The new centre would offer more activities, Reguly said, including space for games, crafts, food preparation, fitness, and music.

The new centre would also be open outdoor space and quick access to public transit and bus stops.

Ball, a city manager who oversees the 55 Plus Centre, said the new city-run centre would model itself after the north-side facility.

When it opened in 1991, it was designed for 250 people a day. It now attracts up to 400 a day, Ball said, noting that its 22,500 sq ft of space is being tested to accommodate the city's growing number of older adults.

Currently, about 23 per cent of the city's population is 55 or older, and that number is expected to hit 32 per cent by 2010.

Meanwhile, the city has allotted \$200,000 for the new centre, and the fundraising committee has collected \$120,000 of its share.

Most of the money would come from the city and provincial sources.

The fundraising committee is trying to get people to back the

# Ontario MLA on bridge sale, says Hampton

BRYAN MEADOWS  
RTHWEST BUREAU

The Liberal government is closely watching developments on the sale of the International Bridge in Fort Frances and is prepared to provide "any assistance" municipal officials may require, says Transportation Minister Harinder Singh.

However, NDP Leader Howard Hampton suggested Wednesday that the "government is completely lost and missing in action when it comes to the bridge linking Ontario to Minnesota at Fort Frances-International Falls."

Hampton, who is also the local MPP, said that representatives of the two communities, Canada and U.S. government met two weeks ago and came out in support of a publicly-owned bridge — "Ontario was nowhere to be found." During question period at Queen's Park Wednesday, Hampton urged the government to do whatever is necessary to purchase the bridge so it becomes a publicly-owned asset rather than a private toll bridge.

Parry Sound-Muskoka MPP Norm Miller echoed those sentiments, and asked why the province doesn't help Fort Frances purchase the structure or take over ownership of the bridge which registers about 900,000 crossings annually.

Responding, Takhar told the legislature that the government "thinks the bridge is important."

"When we found out the bridge may be put up for sale, we started having discussions with the local mayor and the federal officials," he said.

"My officials actually talked to (Fort Frances Mayor Dan Onichuk Tuesday afternoon) and he has not made any formal request for assistance of any sort at this point in time, but I want to assure (Miller) that we'll be more than pleased to work with the mayor and the local municipality and even across the border to sort out this issue."

"We think if the municipality needs any assistance, we will work with them," Takhar added.

U.S. owner Boise Cascade and

Canadian co-owner Abitibi-Consolidated announced in November that they plan to sell the 290-metre structure.

Some people are worried that new private owners could let the bridge deteriorate or hike tolls.

Current tolls, collected only on northbound traffic, are \$6 per car, more for trucks, but officials on both sides of the border wouldn't mind if the tolls were scrapped altogether.

Onichuk has said he would prefer to see the bridge "go into public hands."

The International Bridge is the only highway crossing between Baudette, 113 kilometres by road to the west on the U.S. side, and Pigeon River, south of Thunder Bay.

Thursday, March 2, 2006

# Municipal tax hike varies with assessment

WILSON  
LE-JOURNAL

Thunder Bay finance officials  
up the numbers on the 2006  
hike, including the impact  
ers hit by large increases in  
y assessments.

ue manager Rob Colquhoun  
l tax rate for homeowners  
47281, after taking the 2.25  
overall tax hike approved by  
and adjusting it with the 7.3

per cent increase in overall residential  
property assessments in Thunder Bay.

Residents can figure out their own  
2006 tax bill by simply multiplying their  
home's latest assessed value by  
0.01847281.

Colquhoun said the city doesn't reap a  
windfall from the big jump in property  
assessments conducted by the province.

"We can't do that," said Colquhoun.  
"You can't budget for a surplus, you're  
budgeting for your requirements and  
you raise the taxes that are sufficient to

meet your requirements."

The residential tax rate in 2005 was ac-  
tually higher than in 2006, at 0.01948847.

The city lowers the rate to offset the  
rise in assessments, and then factors in  
the tax levy increase.

"Because the assessments went up,  
tax rates had to fall," said council fi-  
nance chairman Coun. Mark Bentz. "It  
gets complicated, there's so many num-  
bers involved."

The result is that an average home  
valued at \$112,000 which saw its assess-

ment rise 7.3 per cent, up to \$120,200, will  
see its property taxes go up slightly, from  
\$2,183 to \$2,221, or 1.74 per cent.

Some councillors have received phone  
calls from residents complaining about a  
20 per cent jump in assessments.

Under that scenario, a \$112,000 home  
reassessed at \$134,400 would see its taxes  
jump 13.7 per cent, to \$2,483.

Meanwhile, a similar home which ex-  
perienced no change in assessment  
would see a 5.2 per cent drop in taxes, to  
\$2,069.

Bentz said assessments should be  
"normalized" over the next few years as  
the province now does reassessments an-  
nually instead of every two years.

"There are many properties in the  
city that may be under-assessed right  
now, and there may be many that are  
over-assessed," Bentz said.

Reassessments are conducted by the  
Municipal Property Assessment Corpo-  
ration. Residents with conc  
their MPAC assessment ca  
calling 1-800-263-3237.



## velling down liquor road

IIS is an open letter to the people of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, to Aboriginal people living in Thunder Bay and area and anyone concerned with the direction our people choose to travel.

For generations, the First Peoples of Canada have been struggling for equality. Our ancestors fought European armies, religion and corporate encroachment so that the Aboriginal people living in the 21st century, can live. I believe the struggles of those who went before us have left contemporary First Nations people with a heavy burden — the burden of maintaining a still-vibrant culture and making the nation progress as the world advances into the future. After all the injustices Aboriginal people in North America have suffered, we've gained many rights. Although there is a erosion of those rights that have been fought so hard for, we're still active in the preservation of our culture and our traditional ways of living. Many Aboriginal people in Northwestern Ontario are living a healthy, positive mixture of the old ways and the new world, and this is good. But the struggle isn't over.

I'm not protesting the not-guilty verdict from Wesley (Chronicle-Journal, Feb. 24), pleading with the leaders of the Aboriginal community at large to focus on the serious issues at hand. With our history of pain, are our young people travelling down the liquor road? Why are "girls," "parties," "being tough and cool" the priorities for the young Aboriginals? How do we become stronger than the billboards advocating booze consumption and the television advertisements advocating "getting 'stuffed'?"

In the old days, there were rites of passage into manhood and into womanhood. We had vision quests. And although we have lodges, etc., now, they are not the forefront of our internalized cultural identity. Right now, it seems that "being Indian" is enough to pass for cultural awareness. I say we need to re-learn how to be warriors and to be a people, men and women. Because until then, we're merely lemmings marching towards the cliff of self-seeded assimilation.

**Chris Walte**  
(Ojibwa)

# Weyerhaeuser presents 'first list' of employees to be affected by shutdown

NORTHWEST BUREAU

The "first list" of those employees affected by the permanent shutdown of No. 1 paper machine and woodroom at Weyerhaeuser's Dryden mill was given to unionized employees on Friday.

The list outlined who the 110 job cuts might impact on April 30, pending further talks between mill unions and the company on enhanced retirement and benefit packages.

"The list is out now, but the parties are still meeting to see what the final numbers will be," and if an enhanced severance package can be negotiated, Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union national representative John McGinnis said Friday.

McGinnis explained that if an en-

hanced package could be arranged then more of the older employees might opt for early retirement, allowing younger workers to remain employed.

Last month Weyerhaeuser cut about half a dozen management staff in advance of the paper machine shutdown.

Weyerhaeuser's vice-president of Ontario operations Norm Bush has said the company plans to produce more value-added paper products at the Dryden mill "with a different grade mix, which will hopefully get a higher price in the marketplace."

"Our whole focus going forward is to get (the mill) competitive," he said.

With the layoffs, manpower at the Dryden mill will be reduced to 685 employees.

# ks experience to fill seat

un. Joe Delaney

a steep learning curve," said, that council felt it r to appoint someone with

ed 5 1/2 years on council, ed last month after taking Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

Delaney said his new job as division manager for the organization's 480 small-business members in Keno-

ra-Rainy River was seen as "a conflict of interest," as the watchdog and lobbying organization deals with some municipal issues.

Council is hoping to fill the vacancy by March 15.

Meanwhile, businesswoman Charlotte Pesola is now serving on Ignace council.

Pesola was appointed by council two months ago following the November resignation of former mayor Hugh Broughton, for personal reasons.

Coun. Dennis Smyk was appointed to the top post by council shortly after Broughton's departure. Pesola fills Smyk's council seat.





## PICKLE LAKE

By Graeme Mackechnie

After a long absence Carlo Catlarelo has returned to Pickle Lake. Carlo spent 20 years teaching at the Haileybury School of Mines. He is better known to us old timers as the former mill super at Umex Thierry Mine in Pickle Lake. Carlo is back to supervise things at the Pickle Crow venture. I understand that four local residents have been hired on here and that the ship now flies the "Jolly Roger." N.A.R. Environmental Consultants Resources Inc. will be holding an open house to hear all concerns on their proposal to dewater the pit and underground at Umex Mine.

I wonder if the "Hole in the Wall Gang" ever hid out at the Winston? Police inquiries have routed to recent employees. They must be centering their attention on the Winston.

I heard that they were charged again with a liquor infraction. If I were Boris I might begin to feel persecuted.

Congratulations to Andrea and Andrew Both on the arrival of their daughter Emily. Welcome Allison Unrau, our new OPP cadet and a fresh volunteer for "fun night." Both Allison and her boyfriend Jon Moore came out to help with the kids on Friday. Hurray and welcome, Jon.

Phyllis and our mayor Roy were in Toronto to complain about, above all, our policing costs. So far the government has given us an additional \$40,000 to defray a \$587,000 cost. Yahoo!

Our condolences to the Louis Spade family on his recent death and to the Frank Summers family on Frank's

sudden and unexpected death. Frank ran Northland Petroleum for years and will be sadly missed. We also extend our sympathy to Edith Kakekayskung on the loss of her house.

A welcome, also to our new doctor - Joshua El Batrik. Yes it is unbelievable but little Pickle Lake was able to find a doctor thanks to our community friend Ed Navala and of course Doctor, already I can see

your beneficial effects on our town - see the people exercising, people getting rid of their tobacco habit, and the Windsor salt mines may go broke if people stop using salt. When May 31 rolls around and the provincial smoking ban comes into effect we'll be ready.

Winter roads are now going full steam. Fuel is going up non-stop as the bands attempt to fill their

fuel farms and stock pile enough for the coming year. The season for winter roads will be a short one as our weather has not been cold enough to make good ice. Daylight hours are getting noticeably longer and sun melts ice.

I was in Sioux Lookout for a P.A.C.E. meeting. Dick MacKenzie was kind enough to give me a tour of the new hospital site - yes there is a site and it is

being cleared. Sioux looks to be growing but what they need is a big bucks entrepreneur to put in a subdivision. Where is the vacant housing?

I stayed at the Forest Inn while in Sioux Lookout - impeccable service and such friendly, helpful, accommodating staff.

Before I forget, thanks to Mary MacKenzie for a good tour of City Hall. So that is where all the tax dollars go.

Saturday, March 11, 2006

# Mining has 'ripple effect'

BY WARD HOLLAND  
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Forestry, mining, provincial politics and new international rules are having an effect on hunting and trapping in Northwestern Ontario.

Luke Hunter, an adviser with Nishnawbe Aski Nation, says trap lines are being destroyed by mining and forestry operations, especially in southern NAN communities.

"There's basically a diamond rush," Hunter said this week. "And there's a ripple effect."

Junior mining companies are showing up near NAN communities and the communities haven't been consulted, Hunter said.

He cited a November 2005 Supreme Court case that says companies must inform aboriginal people if they intend to do work at their communities.

"That case provided direction for government to consult First Nations regarding treaty and aboriginal rights," he said. "Part of those rights involve hunting and fishing."

Henry McKay, a trapper from Kingfisher Lake First Nation, said a proposed recreational park on the Pipestone River

near his community could have an effect in a few years.

"What I understand is they won't allow us to go hunting and fishing there," McKay said.

Other aboriginal communities along the same river — including Wunnumin Lake, Summer Beaver and Webequie — could also be affected, he added.

A three-day conference for NAN trappers, hunters and anglers concluded Thursday in Thunder Bay. About 60 people from across Northern Ontario attended.

Also discussed was Bill 11, the Provincial Parks and Wilderness Areas Act, which has had first reading at Queen's Park.

Hunter said there are concerns about how more parks and protected wilderness will affect hunting and trapping. It could also restrict commercial hydro-electricity developments, he said.

Conference delegates were also informed about new European Union international trapping standards, which come into effect in 2007. Many trappers will have to buy new equipment to meet the standards, Hunter said.

"If they don't use an approved device, they can't market their furs," he said.



# Ont. to give First Nations slice of province's gaming revenue

THE CANADIAN PRESS

TORONTO — Ontario's First Nations communities have won a bigger share of the provincial gaming jackpot in a deal that could end years of litigation over the government skimming proceeds from a popular aboriginal casino.

Starting in 2011, aboriginal communities will get a 1.6 per cent share of nearly \$6 billion in gross revenue collected annually from all provincial gambling, including casinos, lotteries and racetracks.

That's a windfall believed to be worth about \$100 million per year and will come on top of revenue already earned from another Ontario casino.

Previously, Ontario's aboriginal communities received net revenue from just one casino — Casino Rama, located near Orillia, north of Toronto — worth roughly \$92 million in the 2004-05 fiscal year.

First Nations will also get \$155 million in "bridge funding" over the next six years before the deal kicks in.

The deal between the province and the Ontario First Nations Ltd. Partnership, which still needs to be ratified by year's end, will effectively end a decade of court disputes over how much money aboriginals should get from the province's commercial casinos.

In 1998, First Nations launched a court challenge of the former Conservative government's decision to grab 20 per cent of gross gaming revenues from Casino Rama — a so-called "win tax" that adds roughly \$100 million annually to provincial coffers.

The province collects the same 20 per cent take

from its three other commercial casinos — Casino Windsor, Casino Niagara and Niagara Fallsview Casino Resort.

That percentage will still flow to the government, but the new deal compensates aboriginals who, for years, have argued the province takes too much from Casino Rama, which sits on native land.

"Any time we can sit down with the province and work out some kind of agreement... it's an achievement," Ontario Regional Chief Angus Toulouse said following a signing ceremony at the legislature.

"It shows that both parties are sitting down and listening to one another and agreeing."

Aboriginal funds from provincial casinos are split up between more than 130 native communities in the province, where they are used to pay for health care, education and other needs.

"This is actually a tremendous departure from the past and it's a wonderful precedent that we're establishing," Premier Dalton McGuinty told a news conference.

"It gives all the First Nations, for the first time ever, access to reliable, stable funding derived from provincial gaming revenues, as opposed to those that are specific to a particular site."

Former Liberal premier David Peterson, who mediated discussions between the province and aboriginals over the past year, said the agreement in principle will go far in improving relations between the two sides.

"There's some pretty ugly past in all of this," Peterson said. "We really had to get over a lot of lawsuits that were flying around."

## Federal gas tax funds come through

March 16, 2006

The City of Thunder Bay has received its annual instalment of federal gas tax funding.

The allocation of \$2.1 million has been included in the 2006 city budget, but the transfer was only made official this week.

The five-year New Deal for Cities and Communities program was announced last year by the former Liberal government. The city's share of gas tax revenues will grow to \$2.8 million in 2007, \$3.5 million in 2008, and \$7.1 million in 2009.

Mayor Lynn Peterson said the money will be used to address the city's urgent infrastructure needs.

# critics predict more casualties of downloading

er Bloomfield

be surprised if municipalities take similar to that y Pickle Lake last

is the prediction of Democratic Party and Kenora-Rainy PP Howard Hamp-

le Lake may be the mmunity to hand McGuinty the keys. nately, it's not like the last," he says.

Pickle Lake has actually hand over s to the municipali- s seem to be pulling om its pocket.

arch 13 the munic- ncil and Mayor Roy n told the province o more interest an out loans or hiking leanwhile the com-

s financial reserves n dry and there is om left to borrow

province has offered ad a loan for infra- re projects, but n says that option n the table in his or

council's opinion.

"It's a recipe for failure. You can't get loans for basic infrastructure," he says adding loans and grants at the end of the fiscal year to cover shortfalls does not allow for any sort of decent financial planning.

Infrastructure projects for which loans were offered include repairs to the sewage treatment plant and essential road-work.

Hoffman point out he and the municipal councilors have not quit or retired.

"It's basically status quo until we hit the financial wall," he says, explaining the municipality is now waiting to see if the province steps up with a long-term financial solution.

The main challenge facing Pickle Lake is the cost of policing. Provincial regulations put the weight of responsibility for that service on municipalities. However for Pickle Lake, a community of 350 that price is more than half a

million dollars to maintain an OPP detachment. That works out to well over \$2,000 per person - the highest cost in the province.

Pickle Lake simply can't afford its police service.

Hoffman points out other municipalities are facing similar pressures but have yet to hit the same breaking point as his community.

Dryden councilor Bill Brown, who is a former president of the Kenora District Municipal Association says he feels for Hoffman and his colleagues. While Dryden does not face the same pressures as Pickle Lake and other small towns the frustrations associated with downloading are always present.

"I think the potential is there for the same thing elsewhere. I'm not sure if it's throughout the province or just in the northwest but I hear the same sentiment all over the place," he says.

He points to municipali-

ties struggling with the cost of land ambulance throughout the region. While there has been some movement from the province on this issue, it is still a point of controversy for members of the Kenora District Services Board as municipalities must pick up the bulk of the bill for standards set at Queen's Park.

Hampton agrees.

"Pickle Lake's despera-

tion typifies the crisis conditions many Northern communities are facing because Dalton McGuinty is making municipalities and municipal taxpayers subsidize provincial programs and services," he says.

Pickle Lake's mayor hopes his community's announcement last week generates some focus on the issues.

He is optimistic. The province is scheduled to release its budget later this week and he has heard rumbling there could be some changes in municipal funding.

"It'll be interesting to hear," he says.

Officials with the Ontario Ministry of Finance were contacted to make comment but did not reply.

# First Nations-mining plan flawed, says expert

Friday, March 17, 2006

The province's new mining strategy won't work in the Treaty 9 region, says Nishnawbe Aski Nation's mining expert.

Recognition of treaty rights, land titles, the duty of the Crown to consult and benefit sharing all need improvement, David Peerla said.

"We are facing a multitude of First Nation grievances triggered by mining exploration that could at any time lead to an explosive conflict," he said.

Peerla was responding to a series of announcements by the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, including an educational video meant to help improve relations with aboriginal communities.

Conflict between native communities and miners came to a head last month when a junior mining company tried to go ahead with exploration without permission from the First Nation claiming rights to the land.

While Platinex has retreated from its million-dollar development project, which it hopes will result in a platinum mine, the company feels caught in a bigger battle over jurisdiction between aboriginal communities, the province and Indian and Northern Affairs.

Platinex said it has the necessary approvals from the province to continue the work at Big Trout Lake, but the First Nation says it has a right to refuse further development based on its right of consulta-

tion established in a Supreme Court ruling.

In the case of Mikisew Cree First Nation, the court decided the Crown had not made sufficient effort to consult the band regarding construction of a winter ice road, which would pass through the community.

While mining is booming in the province, Peerla argued First Nations haven't benefited.

"Underlying the well of despair in the communities is a history of broken promises, discrimination, the intergenerational effects of poverty and political exclusion that First Nations have been shouting about for years," he said.

Wednesday, March 22, 2006

# Renewable energy worth a few bucks

BY WARD HOLLAND  
THE CHRONICLE JOURNAL

People interested in generating energy from the sun, wind and other renewable resources were thrilled Tuesday with the Ontario government's latest announcement.

The Ontario Power Authority will buy electricity produced by wind, biomass or small hydroelectric facilities for 11 cents a kilowatt-hour, and from solar panel systems for 42 cents a kw-h, Premier Dalton McGuinty said in Cambridge.

"I think it's a wonderful step, because it's going to stimulate the industry for sure," said Jane Oldale, a Neebing township resident. "It'll make people realize that it's not just the big utility companies that can produce and sell power."

Rene Larson, a Thunder Bay lawyer who owns and operates WindSun Energy Inc., supports the government plan.

"It's a step in the right direction," Larson said. "Instead of five or six cents, they'll give producers 11 cents per kilowatt-hour."

The Ministry of Energy said the program will come into effect in the next few months.

Before, utility companies would allow homeowners to put energy back into the province's electricity grid, but not sell it. The new system allows those people to get paid.

"They can actually make money," said ministry spokesman Ted Gruetzner.

Until now, it was too costly for small, renewable producers — like farmers, rural land owners, community groups,

First Nations, business owners or municipalities — to sell energy to the grid, the government said.

"We're taking a bold new step that will allow hundreds of small local renewable energy producers to get into the energy market," McGuinty said.

Oldale said if the government's plan catches on with the public, the need to build gas-fired and nuclear plants will be reduced.

Oldale said her life partner Frank Ilczyszyn sells and installs solar and wind energy systems primarily to people who aren't connected to the Hydro One grid.

However, he has installed two net metering systems — one in Marathon and one in Murillo — for people who want to tap into the grid. "It's not all that hard," she said. "It's just getting the right kind

of meters your utility company will require."

The cost to install solar panels on a home is between \$30,000 and \$35,000 to produce eight or nine kilowatt-hours per day, she said.

The typical Thunder Bay household uses 25 to 35 kilowatt-hours per day, she added, but it's not hard to reduce that to 10 by conserving energy. Solar panels have 25-year warranties, she said, but many are 50 years old and still working fine.

Tim Wilson, a customer services manager for Thunder Bay Hydro, said the utility will help anyone who wants to participate in the government program.

Regulations set by the Ontario Energy Board and Electrical Safety Authority have to be followed, Wilson said.

April 3, 2006

# Borealis complex gets \$15 million

THE CANADIAN PRESS

SAULT STE. MARIE, Ont. — Sault Ste. Marie has received a \$15-million commitment from the province for a new tourist attraction.

Northern Development Minister Rick Bartolucci announced the investment, which was allocated to the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. for the Borealis at Gateway project.

Other features include a performing arts theatre, restaurants and an ice hotel.

The money will be used to help pay for the tourist component of the \$54-million destination tourism project developed by Toronto-based developer Philip Garforth.

The Borealis complex will feature rain forests and tropical forests in climate-controlled environments, a glacier exhibit, tree mazes and caves.

Other features include a performing arts theatre, restaurants and an ice hotel.

Borealis will be the largest tourism attraction in Northern Ontario once it is completed and is expected to draw 200,000 visitors annually.

Borealis is further expected to create 1,500 jobs, about half of which will be part-time, once it is operating.

## Sault receives \$15M for tourism attraction

THE CANADIAN PRESS

SAULT STE. MARIE — The City of Sault Ste. Marie has received a \$15-million commitment from the province for a new tourist attraction for the Northeastern Ontario city.

Northern Development Minister Rick Bartolucci announced the investment Friday, which was allocated to the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. for the Borealis at Gateway project.

The money will be used towards the tourist component of the \$54-million destination tourism project developed by Toronto-based developer Philip Garforth.

The Borealis complex will feature rain forests and tropical forests in climate-controlled environments, a glacier exhibit, tree mazes, and caves.

Other features include a performing arts theatre, restaurants and an ice hotel.

Borealis will be the largest tourism attraction in northern

Ontario once it is completed and is expected to draw 200,000 visitors annually.

Borealis is expected to create 1,500 jobs of which about half will be full- and part-time jobs once the destination is operational.

The Sault will be the only community in Northern Ontario to capitalize on the funding which was announced by the former Mike Harris government in 1997 as a tourism booster.

Other communities, including Thunder Bay, have been unable to develop concepts or find developers for projects that meet the criteria of creating jobs and increasing tourism.

Thunder Bay's Portside project had a \$15-million commitment from the Heritage Fund before the plans fell through in the summer of 2001.

Saturday, April 1, 2006

## Wolfden strikes deal to acquire strategic gold project in Northwest

THE CANADIAN PRESS

THUNDER BAY — Wolfden Resources Inc. (TSX:WLF) has struck a deal to acquire a gold prospect in Northwestern Ontario.

The Thunder Bay miner said Wednesday it had signed an option agreement to acquire a 100 percent interest in the PQ North Property, which is near the Musselwhite gold mine owned and operated by Barrick Gold Corp. (TSX:ABX) and Kinross Gold (TSX:K).

Under terms of the agreement, Wolfden will pay the property owner, Doug Parker, \$80,000 over three years and perform a minimum of \$400,000 on exploration on the property over four years. Parker will keep a two percent royalty interest on any gold production, which Wolfden can buy out for \$1 million.

Wolfden has acquired a strategic land position adjacent to one of North America's major gold mines," said Ewan Downie, president and CEO of Wolfden. "Based on previous drilling and surface exploration, the PQ North Property is believed to have excellent potential to host gold zones similar to those being mined at Musselwhite."

Wolfden has a diversified portfolio of advanced stage mining properties in Canada.

On the Toronto Stock Exchange Wednesday, Wolfden shares closed unchanged at \$1.25.

Thursday, March 23, 2006



# It's a slaughter: ombudsman

## Report slams provincial property assessment agency

THE CANADIAN PRESS

TORONTO — Appealing a property assessment in Ontario is a "David versus Goliath" battle against a byzantine, self-important Crown corporation that's been thwarting frustrated taxpayers for years, the province's ombudsman said Tuesday.

Andre Marin's scathing report on the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. describes the property assessor as an elitist operation with a "superiority complex" and "questionable practices" that result in thousands of incorrect evaluations each year.

Such assessments are critical in determining a homeowner's property tax bill.

Despite being a Crown corporation, Marin said MPAC acts like a private, independent business that doesn't appreciate challenges to its appraisals of 4.4 million Ontario homes and hides information about its analyses from taxpayers who want to appeal.

"In one corner you have the average citizen, with scant information on his property

### APPEAL

How Ontario homeowners can appeal property assessments to the Assessment Review Board for the 2006 tax year:

**Deadline:** Was March 31, now extended by 90 days so homeowners can review an ombudsman's report on assessment system changes.

**Cost:** Roughly \$75.

**Contact:** 1-800-263-3237, or visit [www.arb.gov.on.ca](http://www.arb.gov.on.ca) for more information.

and very little additional useful information to make his case, facing an adversary in the other corner with a full bank of relevant data — collected at taxpayers expense," Marin said in releasing his report.

"This is not a match-up, it's a slaughter. — and it's happening in tens of thousands of cases every year."

Marin said MPAC has agreed to accept 17 of his 20 recommendations — including providing homeowners with more detail about their assessments to prevent errors — and intends to review the other three.

The report comes just days before Friday's deadline for Ontario homeowners to appeal their 2006 property assessments, which arrived in mailboxes last fall. Finance Minister Dwight Duncan will table legislation today to extend the deadline by 90 days.

"We take his recommendations very seriously," Duncan said.

Extending the deadline could lead to a flood of appeals. A 1990 reform of Manitoba's property assessment system led to record-high appeals in the city of Winnipeg.

Marin launched his review of the corporation after hundreds of complaints from homeowners poured in last fall, when assessments spiked an average of 14.35 per cent. Many complained about poor customer service.

• Continued on page A4

Wednesday, March 29, 2006

## Appeals process all wrong: Marin

• Continued from page A1

"Yes, attitudes have got to change," acknowledged Debbie Zimmerman, who became the corporation's chairwoman just a year ago.

"We've agreed that we've got to make this work better. It's taking a heck of a lot of pushing by the 15 board members to turn this ship around, but we intend to."

Duncan has asked MPAC to report back to the government on how much it would cost to implement Marin's recommendations, and said he wants feedback on the report before the 2006 assessment process begins later this year.

Marin urged the province to pay close attention to one problem in particular: an appeals process that puts the onus on the taxpayer to prove an appraisal is wrong, instead of requiring MPAC to prove its work is correct.

Even when a homeowner wins an appeal, MPAC often ignores the taxpayer's victory when future assessments are made, Marin said.

He recommended that Ontario examine Manitoba's system, which puts the onus of proof on those who made the assessment.

The corporation also ignores a property's actual sale price in its assessments, preferring the mass appraisals that its computer system is designed to generate — a system that reminded Marin of something out of a George Orwell book.

"It smacks of the novel 1984 — that the computer will govern."

Bob Tapp of Waterfront Ratepayers After Fair Taxation said the report doesn't tackle the "fundamental inequity" that results in assessments in some areas jumping dramatically more than in some of the province's hottest markets.

Tapp's own Parry Sound-area home's assessment soared 60 per cent last year.

He is backing Conservative finance critic Tim Hudak's private member's bill, which calls for a five per cent annual cap on assessment hikes.

But it was Hudak's Conservatives, under former premier Mike Harris, who instituted the current system — a point the governing Liberals seized on Tuesday to defend themselves from a barrage of Opposition criticism over Marin's report.

# With no large tax base the town just can't afford it

*Continued from front*

province uploading land ambulance costs, providing funds for roadwork, and replenishing funds is a clear message lobbying by the Municipality is being heard by the province.

It was indicated in the Municipal Services Delivery Review that the condition of local roads was of great importance to residents, but with which they felt a low level of satisfaction.

In addition to more than half a million dollars the Municipality will receive through Move Ontario, the Municipality is still waiting to hear the status of a COMRIF application to receive approximately \$4.6 million to be used for road repairs.

"This was a surprise... it gives us money to work with now," Kiepek said.

Her hope is that now federal funding will get a move on.

Commenting on the issue of roads, Kiepek said, "It's always been a priority of council. We've wanted to get at it and there just hasn't been enough left over to do more than maintenance. And as we were trying to keep up with maintenance, our roads were actually becoming in more disrepair so this is good news."

Councillor Dennis Leney, the Municipal representative on the KDSB commented, "The money that came back was from the province finally

uploading some of the cost which is supposed to be a 50/50 basis, which it hasn't been for the last several years for land ambulance service."

He added there is a need to upload more. "Everything has to be uploaded.... it's just too much money for small communities like Sioux Lookout. With no large tax base we just can't afford it."

Municipal treasurer Peggy Dupuis said she is currently in the process of

putting all the budgets that have been submitted by the Municipality's various departments together into a single package for review.

She and CAO Merlin Dewing will then go over each department's budget with the department manager.

After that, the budget will be submitted to council for recommendations.

Dupuis said she expects the budget to be taken to council before the end of the month.

In regard to the newly

announced money for the Municipality, Dupuis said that since she is still working on the budget, she is not sure what impact that money will have.

Mayor Kiepek added that the province is still working to find what is needed to bring Sioux Lookout and Pickle Lake in line with northern municipalities and what they pay per household for policing.

"The lobbying is paying off. It isn't over yet, but it's a start."

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# aster treats with lot of zeros for <sup>AA87</sup> ne Municipality of ioux Lookout

Tim Brody  
STAFF WRITER

"S said good things come  
n threes and Sioux Lookout  
mayor Cathy Kiepek couldn't  
e more.

Recently, the Municipality  
d out it will receive over  
million dollars from various  
ces.

The Municipality will receive  
7,175 from the Kenora District  
ices Board as a refund.

This represents the  
municipality's share of the  
4/05 deficit in the land  
ulance program.

The Ministry of Health and  
g-Term Care has provided  
ling to the KDSB through a

recently announced 50/50 funding  
process to be spread over three  
years until "true" 50/50 funding  
is accomplished in 2008.

The Municipality will also  
receive \$566,912 through the  
Move Ontario – Improving Roads  
and Bridges budget initiative  
announced in the provincial  
budget on March 23.

The Municipality will receive  
a Special Assistance Grant of  
\$350,000 to replenish reserves  
that went toward lowering last  
year's increase in taxes.

The loss of funds meant the  
cancellation of capital projects in  
2005.

Mayor Kiepek said the

*See WITH on page 6*

## Pickle Lake mayor thrilled with interest in local mine

Tim Brody  
STAFF WRITER

**A**FTER threatening to turn over the operation of the community to the provincial government,

Pickle Lake mayor Roy Hoffman said it's about time some good news came his community's way.

That good news came in the form of Richview Resources Inc. holding an open house in the

community April 4 in which residents could learn more about the company's plans to dewater the Umex Thierry Mine.

Located approximately 15 kilometres west of The Township of Pickle

Lake, the mine produced copper from the 1970s to early 80s. The site was closed in 1998.

The dewatering process is expected to take nine to 10 months to complete prior to underground exploration

work commencing.

"That," said Hoffman, "is very good news for the community."

Once the exploration work begins, advanced exploration is likely to create 10 – 20 jobs plus spin-off benefits.

The company will be looking for copper, but when it was open in past years the mine also produced some nickel and a little gold and silver.

The dewatering process is slated to get underway in May.

# Cemetery rule clashes with tradition

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James Thom  
Wawatay News

A Mishkeegogamang family was granted special permission to bury a loved one in Pickle Lake's Pine Ridge Cemetery last month.

However, family members don't think special permission needed to be granted in the first place.

Members of the Wassaykeesic family said they believe in honouring their traditional culture, which follows a person be returned to the ground days after death, not weeks or months after.

"This has been an issue for our people for years," said Tom Wassaykeesic, whose uncle Simon Wassaykeesic was buried.

Wassaykeesic said a policy discouraging winter burial at the Pickle Lake cemetery goes against his family's cultural beliefs.

"Our people have been told if your loved one dies, they won't be buried until the end of winter.

"It's against our culture ... to put people in cold storage. We bury our people in a reasonable amount of time."

The experience of trying to honour his dead uncle's wishes left Wassaykeesic frustrated.

"All we were doing was trying to carry out Simon's wishes of being buried in Pickle Lake ... and we had to fight it out with (the cemetery board) to make it happen," he said. "Why should another family have to go through what we did?"

The reason Wassaykeesic

and his family think winter burials are not allowed stems from possible damage done to the cemetery.

"I don't think there would be that much damage," Wassaykeesic said.

However, cemetery board official Carolyn Hochstetler said damage to plots is only part of the reason winter burials are discouraged.

"One of the reasons being, there is too much damage done to the grass from machinery exposing lawn to frost damage," she said, in a letter sent to Wassaykeesic dated Feb. 16, 2004, explaining the board's position. "Another reason being that during the winter months, it is difficult to determine the exact location of each cemetery lot, due to snow covering the surveyed reference points."

Cemetery board chairwoman Debbie Chartrand elaborated further.

"The board made a decision years ago to discourage winter burials, but they are not banned," she said. "The reason we came to that decision was we did a winter burial one year, were unable to find the exact plot because of the depth of snow and ruined two plots."

Chartrand said because mistakes like that can happen, it's not worth the risk.

However, she's hopeful a solution to the lingering issue will be resolved by next winter.

Among the options the cemetery board are considering are leaving a certain area of the cemetery open allowing for easier access.

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Wawatay - May 4, 2006

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# Wasaya Airways LP opens Timmins base

Wyce Hunter  
Wasaya News

Wasaya Airways LP opened a new base in Timmins May 15.

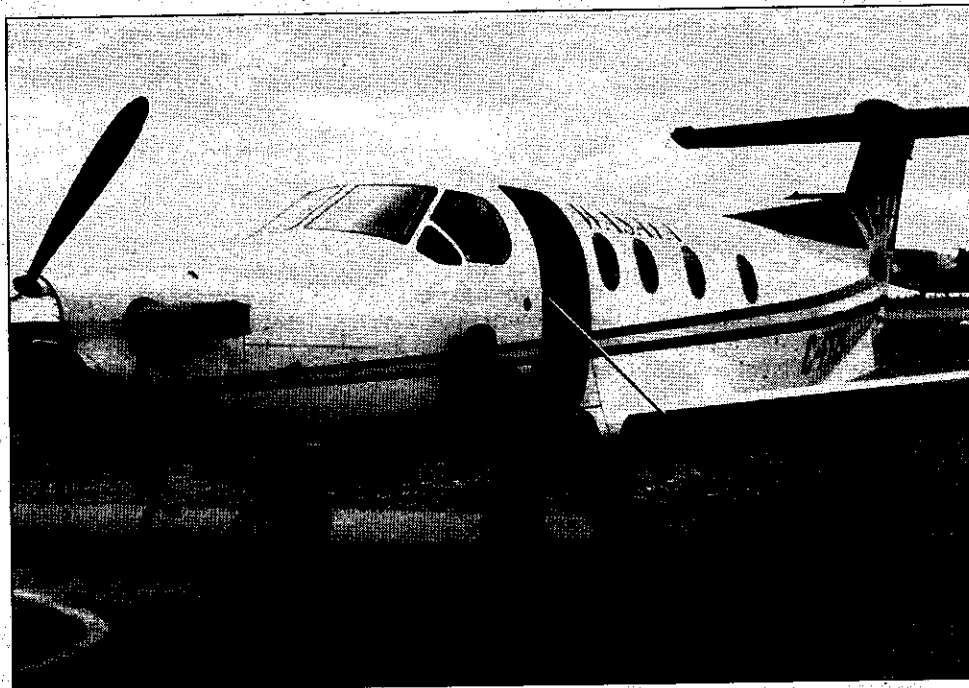
President and chief executive officer Tom Morris said Wasaya recently acquired a Cessna PC-12 aircraft, which can be easily converted into a combination passenger/cargo service for its Timmins operation.

Wasaya's newest operation includes a 3,600 square foot hangar space, offices and passenger waiting lounge.

The PC-12 comes equipped with executive leather seats which can accommodate up to nine passengers.

Chartered flights will include destinations such as Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie, Moosonee, Attawapiskat, Fort Albany, Kashechewan, Hearst, North Bay and Peawanuck.

"The Timmins base will come under the direction of the Charter Sales group of Wasaya Airways LP and will be overseen by Sean Davies, charter



sales manager," Morris said.

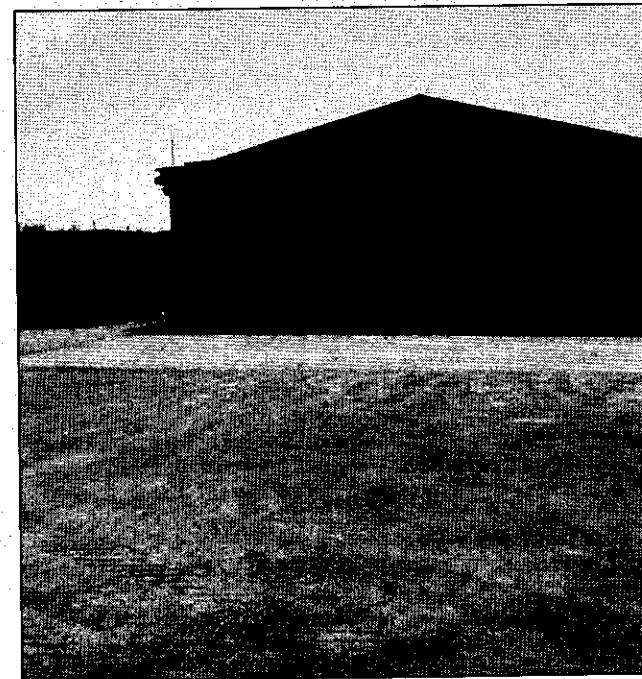
Daily operations will be administered out of the Thunder Bay system operations control centre.

Wasaya's has four other bases. Its headquarters is located in Thunder Bay.

Sioux Lookout, Red Lake and Pickle Lake also have Wasaya

bases.

A grand opening in Timmins is scheduled for June. Wasaya is 100 per cent First Nations owned.



submitted photos

Left: A Wasaya Airways pilot moves a plane toward the hangar at the new facility in Timmins, On.

Right: The new hangar is seen from a wide angle.

Wasaya News - May 18/06

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