

Monday, September 11, 2006

Senior OPP staff in region shuffled

NORTH SHORE BUREAU

Several senior management changes are under way at various provincial police detachments across Northwestern Ontario.

At the Nipigon detachment, veteran OPP Sgt. Brent Anderson has been appointed local commander. The detachment includes a satellite office in Schreiber.

Out-going Marathon OPP Staff Sgt. John Kendrick is to become a traffic specialist based out of the OPP's Thunder Bay regional headquarters.

The process to find a new Marathon commander

is just beginning, said OPP regional spokeswoman Sgt. Deb Tully in an earlier interview.

Meanwhile, interviews are being conducted to find a new commander for the Thunder Bay detachment, which is separate from regional headquarters.

That process hasn't been completed, Tully added.

Also, Mike Armstrong, the OPP's Northwestern Ontario regional commander, has been promoted to the position of chief superintendent.

Armstrong is to remain at Thunder Bay headquarters, Tully added.

Monday, September 11, 2006

Fluoride vote expected

Dryden council to decide on plebiscite tonight

NORTHWEST BUREAU

Dryden city council is expected to approve a plebiscite tonight on whether fluoride should be added to the municipal water supply to help prevent tooth decay.

The Northwestern Health Unit has submitted a 1,114-name petition to the city calling for council to authorize a plebiscite on November's municipal election ballot.

The health unit launched the petition a year ago with the help of four dental offices in Dryden. It needed 10 per cent of the city's population to sign the petition so that the proposal could become a question on the ballot.

"As far as we're concerned, we've met the requirements of the Fluoridation Act and Municipal Elections Act to get the question put on the ballot," Dawn Sauve, the health unit's program manager for preventive dental services, said.

City clerk Colleen Brosseau said it's pretty much a done deal that council will approve the plebiscite.

Under the Fluoridation Act, she said, council must place the question on the ballot if a petition is filed that represents 10 per cent of eligible voters. The petition from the Northwestern Health Unit does that, she said.

Council has rejected the fluoride option twice since 2003, as well as a plebiscite on the issue.

Those decisions came following presentations by dental consultant Dr. Peter Cooney who explained that most scientific studies support fluoridation, as do many health organizations.

The city's fluoridation unit broke down in 2001 and wasn't reactivated due to safety concerns for staff who handled the chemical and the cost of a new system. Before that, fluoride was added to municipal water for more than 40 years.

Mayor Anne Krassilowsky said that "there is so much evidence for and against it, and then there's the issue of medicating those who don't want it."

Cooney said the Northwestern Health Unit has noticed an increase in tooth decay among school children since the city quit adding fluoride to the water.

As for concerns about handling the chemical, health unit spokesman Bill Limerick said he considers that "a non-issue."

The health unit maintains that fluoridation is a safe and cost-efficient way of reducing dental disease and the costs of dental care.

Studies indicate that fluoride combines with tooth enamel to make teeth stronger and more resistant to decay.

The Thunder Bay District Health Unit has no municipality in its jurisdiction that adds fluoride to the water.

In the Kenora-Rainy River region, Fort Frances, Kenora, Atikokan and Sioux Lookout have fluoridation units in their water treatment plants.

Tuesday, September 12, 2006

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Tourists shocked after triple-slaying at popular hotel

TORONTO (CP) — Tourists expressed shock and dismay while police worked overtime at a downtown Toronto hotel Monday after three people were found brutally stabbed in a scene described by one detective as a "bloody mess."

The body of a male victim was discovered in the 19th-floor hallway of the downtown Delta Chelsea hotel, just steps from a bloody scene in Room 1908, where the bodies of a man and a woman were also found.

The names of the three victims, all believed to be in their mid-30s, were not immediately released.

Toronto police Det. Sgt. Steve Ryan described the crime scene as "horrific," with blood spattered on the carpet, wall and door of the hotel room.

"It's a bloody mess," Ryan said outside the hotel.

Suitcases were also found in the room, he added.

Ryan said a double murder-suicide was a "real possibility," but he stressed the investigation was in its early stages and refused to rule out the possibility that a fourth person was involved.

Police were called to the hotel at about 4:30 a.m. after a security guard on patrol discovered the man's body in the hallway.

Hotel guests in the vicinity heard "a ruckus (and) loud voices," Ryan said.

Dryden considers another slogan

BY BRYAN MEADOWS
NORTHWEST BUREAU

The city of Dryden may go from being Unique, Progressive, Confident, Proud, Ontario's Leading Small City, to Dryden — The Wilderness City.

The latter is a new brand, or slogan, that council is considering that would identify the city and help groups market the community to outsiders.

Some might call it an identity crisis, others maintain it is just a marketing change that's needed to stimulate more outside interest in the pulp and paper town.

The concept is part of a joint effort by an ad hoc committee consisting to develop a brand or consistent marketing tool for Dryden to be used by the community as a whole.

Mayor Anne Krassilowsky said Monday that she likes the catchy slogan.

"It's close to what the city wants to portray and it invites tourism," she said.

Coun. Gwen Keefe said she felt it's something that everyone can get behind.

"I think it's a good brand. We're proud of being in the wilderness.

"The wilderness is why people come here. We're close to the outdoors... it's more than attracting tourism, it's promoting a way of life in Dryden.

"It's kind of down to earth."

The marketing concept Welcome to My Wilderness City was outlined to council by John Alcock, president of the Idea Marketing Group.

Alcock told council that a very competitive environment exists in Ontario aimed at attracting inward investment (visitors, tourism, investment, attracting medical staff), and the community needs to develop a marketing position to attract a target audience.

That position needs to be available, believable, attainable and defensible as well as simple to capture the emotions of the target audience, he said.

The Dryden — The Wilderness City concept involves recreation and tourism, business adventures, culture and community amenities, and quality of life.

September 12, 2006

Nurse admits to sedating to co-workers

THE CANADIAN PRESS

GRANDE PRAIRIE, Alta. — Months of fear and suspicion ended for a group of nurses at a small northern Alberta hospital Monday when one of their own pleaded guilty to making them sick by secretly slipping them medication.

Sarah Christine Bowes originally faced 56 charges covering eight offences, including administering a noxious substance and mischief endangering life.

The 28-year-old pleaded guilty to 12 of the counts, including four of administering a noxious substance to her co-workers at the Queen Elizabeth II Hospital.

The plea blindsided some people who had worked with the li-

censed practical nurse. She pleaded not guilty to all charges in April. Monday was supposed to be her preliminary hearing.

"I'm quite shocked and surprised, actually, that she pleaded guilty," said Don Brandford, local representative for the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees.

"I've met her on many occasions, and she's such a nice girl. All her co-workers liked her. It just blows me away how or why someone could do this."

Several people in the courtroom began to cry quietly and tissues were passed around as the nurses — who had lived in a charged environment on the hospital's surgical wing for almost two years — listened to her admit guilt for the first time.

Energy break fair game

THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

While concerns about possible repercussions from a regional pricing electricity strategy linger, at least one major Northwestern Ontario company says it's not too worried about the issue.

"I've run across this comment from time to time, but I think it's mostly from people speaking off the cuff," Buchanan Forest Products spokesman Hartley Multamaki said Friday.

"I don't perceive it as a real issue."

Some have suggested that if the province implements a program that lowers energy costs for Northern Ontario, American forestry companies would interpret it as a subsidy in favour of Ontario operations — something they say could jeopardize the recently signed Canada-U.S. agreement on softwood lumber.

Multamaki said the charge wouldn't stick because there would likely be comparable programs in the U.S. to any program that may be developed in Ontario.

However, Multamaki said he couldn't rule out the possibility that some American forestry lobbyists might try and make an issue out of it.

"Let's be honest here. Anything can be seen as a subsidy."

Meanwhile, a coalition of nine North Shore mayors on Friday renewed its call for immediate regional energy pricing.

In a statement released by Terrace Bay Mayor Mike King, the group says

Calling regional pricing a subsidy could be tough sell

the Ontario government is taking too long to study the issue and "each day brings new closures and threats to all Northwestern Ontario resources-based industry."

Northern forestry companies, buckling under the highest energy prices in North America, have for years been calling for a break on how much they spend on electricity.

Advocates of a regional pricing program say prices would reflect the lower demand for electricity in the North, as well as its surplus of power compared to southern Ontario.

In an earlier interview, MPP Michael Gravelle said regional pricing won't be viewed as a subsidy because all industries — not just forestry — will benefit from lower energy costs.

Gravelle (L-Thunder Bay-Superior North) said those who have suggested otherwise were simply "flailing" during their opposition to the Canada-U.S. softwood lumber agreement.

The agreement is expected to be passed in the House of Commons later this month.

September 16, 2006

Voters list easy to access

THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

With the Nov. 13 municipal elections approaching, the city of Thunder Bay is making it easier to determine if you are an eligible voter.

Just go to the city of Thunder Bay website and enter your last name and address. Also available is the latest list of candidates and information on the nomination process, voting locations and key dates. The link is: www.thunderbay.ca/election

A copy of the voters list is also available for viewing at the city clerk's office on the third floor of city hall and also at Thunder Bay public libraries.

NAN blames climate change for flooding of communities

THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Five NAN First Nations nestled on Hudson Bay and James Bay are being hit by spring flooding on a regular basis but have been left out of a federal plan to combat global warming.

"Our early spring requests and invitations to work with the Minister of Environment while the Conservatives developed the made-in-Canada plan were ignored," Nishnawbe Aski Nation Grand Chief Stan Beardy said Wednesday in a news release.

The reference is to the government's proposed Clean Air Act, to be announced later this month.

Bardey added: "Climate change is one of the main factors of spring flooding in NAN's coastal communities and without a strategic plan to reduce (air) emissions... we could lose these communities altogether, not to mention the cost to repair and re-build along the way."

September 16, 2006

Wednesday, September 20, 2006

THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

AROUND THE REGION

Next court date set for band members

Three Grassy Narrows band members appeared in court Monday to answer charges of mischief in connection with a pair of roadblocks in Northwestern Ontario in July.

Bonnie Swain, Chrissy Swain and Adrienne Swain were all told to return to court Oct. 16, when their case would be discussed.

They weren't asked to enter a plea.

A total of 12 people were charged with mischief following a demonstration at English River Road on July 26 and the obstruction of the Trans-Canada Highway on July 13.

The blockades were part of a protest of clear-cutting north of Kenora.

The other nine are to appear in Kenora court Oct. 10.

Property tax break offered in Dubreuilville

While some small Northwestern Ontario towns are hiking property taxes, Dubreuilville is lowering them — at least for those erecting new homes or commercial buildings.

Those who build a house on a vacant lot will pay no property tax for three years — a value of about \$4,500.

The francophone community of about 1,000 has a dozen empty lots it's trying to fill, town economic development officer Patrick Dionne said Monday.

About 450 people work at the local Buchanan Forest Products lumber mill. That's down from a peak of 600 employees.

September 21, 2006

Valley votes against softwood deal

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Kenora MP Roger Valley voted against the controversial softwood lumber deal Tuesday.

After months of consultation, Valley decided to oppose the agreement, despite local support.

"I cannot in good conscience put the forestry industry in a position that leaves \$1 billion in the hands of American lumber lobbyists who will in turn use our money to fight against the Canadian industry," he said.

Conservative strategists used a ways and means motion Tuesday to introduce the accord on the second day of the fall session. MPs in the House of Commons voted 172-116 in favour of the motion — the first step in the formal approval process.

The strategy made it even more difficult for Valley to vote in favour of the government, despite support from local producers at Kenora Forest Product.

"They needed this deal to survive," Valley acknowledged.

Mill manager Rod McKay has stated many times the company hopes their rebates from tariffs held in trust will help



Kenora MP Roger Valley

finance expansion plans. Last month, he said delays in government decisions were bringing the plant to the brink.

Valley agreed, saying he hoped the plant would have its refund before Christmas, even though some industry analysts have said it could be more than

two years before payments are made.

"If that's the case, more jobs are going to be lost in Northwestern Ontario," Valley said.

Thunder Bay-area Liberal MPs Joe Comuzzi and Ken Boshcoff indicated they would vote in favour of the deal.

The Conservative government promoted the deal as a long-term solution that would provide stability in the industry and continued access to the American market.

"Today's vote represents one last chance for the opposition Liberals and NDP to put politics aside and stand up to support an agreement that is backed by two national governments, all of the major softwood lumber-producing provinces and a clear majority of Canadian producers," said a press release on the Conservative party's web site.

For his part, NDP leader Jack Layton vehemently opposed the deal, describing it as a sell out of Northern Ontario.

"This is a total failure," Layton said during a recent trip to Thunder Bay.

"One billion dollars left on the table in Washington and the Bush administration now has a direct say in how we manage our forestry industry," he added.

Group says clear cuts hurting NWO habitat

THE CANADIAN PRESS

TORONTO — A group called ForestEthics is accusing the Ontario government of allowing massive clear-

cut logging in caribou habitats in the province's boreal forest.

The group cites satellite images from the United States Geological Survey which allegedly show five clearcuts, all larger than the maximum 260 hectares.

The area, the Trout Lake Forest in Northwestern Ontario, was logged as late as May 23, the group says.

A spokeswoman for Natural Resources Minister David Ramsay says the ministry is checking into what specifically occurred in the Trout Lake Forest.

But Anne-Marie Flanagan says current logging policies meet sustainable development standards and simulate a fire, leaving patches of trees untouched.

ForestEthics member Leah Henderson says much of Ontario's boreal forest

is slated to be logged or mined in the next few years, placing caribou in a fight for survival.

"These images of recent clearcuts are proof the Ontario government has been lying to the public by saying it keeps its clearcuts small," Henderson said.

The truth is much of Ontario's boreal forest is slated to be clearcut logged or mined in the next few years — and without the immediate protection of critical caribou range, the species is in for a fight for survival.

Flanagan said the government recently drafted a plan to save caribou herds.

"We've been working on protecting woodland caribou," she said. "We're looking at what affects the caribou and what we can do to help."

Knowledge way of the future, but it needs some help

BY SARAH ELIZABETH BROWN
THE CHRONICLE JOURNAL

A Lakehead University economist is calling on the province to create lower-tax areas in beleaguered Northwestern Ontario to help grow knowledge-based industries.

It's one of eight recommendations made by Livio Di Matteo in a report released Thursday that looks at strategies to attract "knowledge" jobs to the region.

The study was funded by the North Superior Training Board.

Knowledge economy jobs — researchers, educators, scientists, artists — have been increasing over the last 15 years, said Di Matteo.

More than 3,000 of those jobs — an increase of almost 24 per cent — have opened here since 1988, said Di Matteo.

But with a larger drop in overall employment, it hasn't fully cushioned the downturn in traditional industries like forestry.

The knowledge sector should be seen as a complement to the region's current mix of job activities

rather than a panacea, he said.

Rather than try to establish a silicon chip firm, growing the knowledge sector should involve research and development into things like better mining and forestry equipment, said Di Matteo.

Connected by communications technology, knowledge-sector firms are splitting research and development arms to different places based on cost advantages.

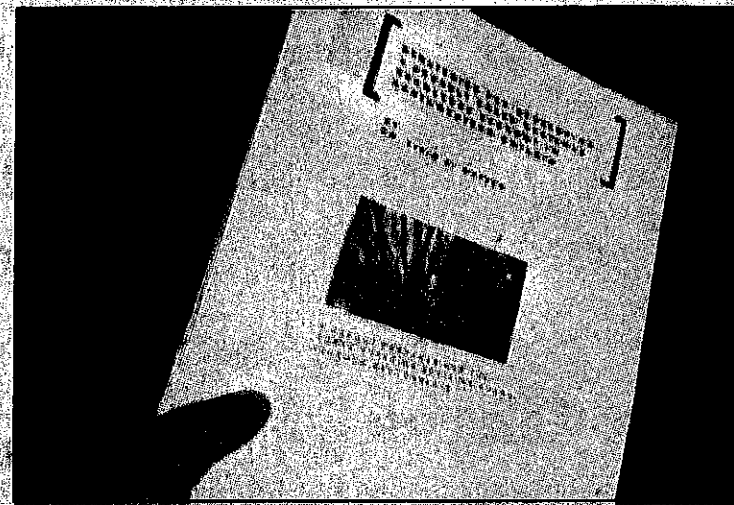
The trick, he said, is for the Northwest to attract some of the off-shoot firms.

He suggested creating research institutes to look into the region's assets and strengths — and then use them to market Northwestern Ontario to the "footloose" knowledge-based companies and workers.

And it's not enough to simply promote a "cool" location to attract knowledge industry workers, said Di Matteo.

He argues for old-fashioned incentives like lower living costs, tax incentives and a skilled workforce.

• Continued on page A4



SANDI KRASOWSKI/THE CHRONICLE JOURNAL

"Strategies for Developing a Broadly Based Knowledge Economy in Northwestern Ontario" prepared by Livio Di Matteo was released Thursday by the North Superior Training Board.

Municipalities have to change attitudes: report

• Continued from page A1

Fri., Sept. 22, 2006

He suggested the provincial government could do its part by making the Thunder Bay and Kenora-Rainy River districts a special tax region with provincial, personal and corporate taxes 20 per cent lower to reflect income difference between north and south Ontario.

And municipal governments must switch from viewing themselves as service providers and to being hosts of business, with a focus on providing economic incentives, he said.

Noting an increase in bankruptcies has left municipal governments with surrendered property and buildings, Di Matteo suggested municipalities donate the properties to groups in the arts, culture and sports sectors.

The buildings return to tax-paying status and create attractive areas in communities, which draw knowledge sector firms to set up shop there.

Education is the subject of two recommendations: ensure the public education system produces highly-literate young people who can problem-solve; and en-

courage more post-secondary participation.

Northwest residents are less likely to attend university, he said, though his study notes more college training on average in this region.

He suggested the university and college focus on helping downsized workers with new learning and training opportunities.

Francis Bell, the training board's co-chairman of labour, said school boards will have a hand in the economic shift.

In consultations with a community east of Thunder Bay, the employer and community leaders were shocked to learn a full one-third of laid-off forestry workers hadn't finished high school.

While they might have a tough time filling out an application, these workers in their 40s and 50s have highly-specialized skill and knowledge in things like quality control, he said.

Especially in small communities, getting those workers to the level where they can retrain or build on their knowledge at the post-secondary level will mean increased strain on adult education, said Bell.

Mayors want action 'now, now, now'

BY WARD HOLLAND
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Mayor Lynn Peterson said the provincial government gets an A for wood costs and a B for reducing red tape, but it gets an F for not having an energy policy.

Kenora Mayor David Canfield was saddened when a parliamentary assistant told him he didn't know that Northwestern Ontario has an energy surplus.

Dryden Mayor Anne Krassilowsky said

that Premier Dalton McGuinty is "holding up production" at mills by not reducing electricity prices.

And Greenstone Mayor Michael Power said Northwestern Ontario has become the "land of broken dreams" because so many forestry jobs have been lost.

The four mayors, speaking on behalf of the Ontario Forestry Coalition, had some very harsh and desperate words for the Liberal government on Friday.

They criticized McGuinty and his gov-

ernment for not doing enough to help the forestry sector and prevent the loss of jobs in the region.

They demanded that the government introduce an energy policy and reduce the cost of energy to \$45 per megawatt-hour immediately.

Peterson said there was once 4,127 sawmill and pulp and paper jobs in Thunder Bay with payrolls adding up to \$400 million. And 2,215 jobs have been lost, she added.

"We need to put a human face on this," the mayor said, her voice trembling. "These are real families with real jobs with real mortgages. This is bull. We've had enough."

"Soon, soon, soon doesn't work. Now, now, now."

Peterson said reducing energy prices to \$45/mW-h doesn't give forestry companies cheaper rates than Manitoba and Quebec.

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Saturday, September 23, 2006

Delay in lower energy prices will cost jobs

• Continued from page A1

"It just puts them back in the ballpark so they can compete," she said. "We're not asking for the moon here. We're asking for what needs to happen in our industries to make them competitive in the province of Ontario."

Canfield said he told cabinet ministers at a conference that Northwestern Ontario has about 1,000 megawatts of surplus power. He then asked the politicians what their plan for that power was.

After the question, Canfield said he met Jean-Marc Lalonde, the parliamentary assistant of the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

According to Canfield, Lalonde told him that he would have verbally embarrassed him by pointing out that there wasn't 1,000 megawatts of surplus energy in Ontario.

But Canfield shot back and told Lalonde that he would have embarrassed himself instead, because there is indeed surplus energy in the province.

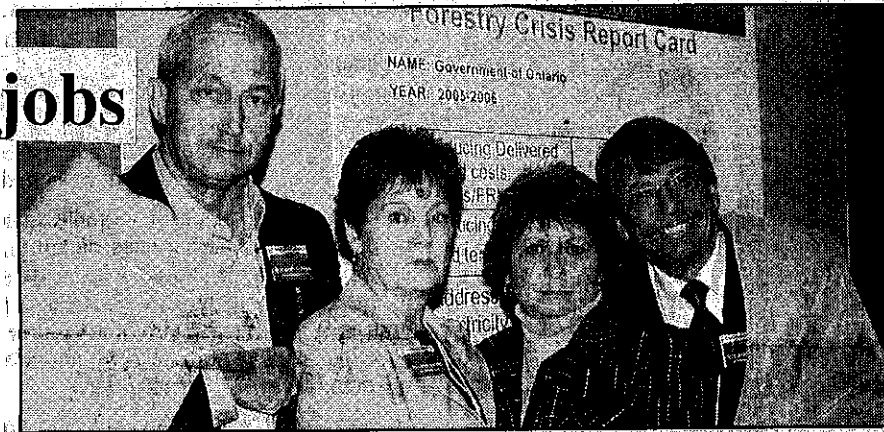
"My question to Queen's Park is: If this parliamentary assistant (of Economic Development and Trade) does not know that we have almost a thousand megawatts of surplus energy, what do the rest of them know? Or do they know anything?" the mayor said.

"That's sad. And we've got to ask everybody in Queen's Park and everybody in Toronto, do you realize that we have almost a thousands megs of energy and over a million people out of work in relationship to you."

"Would you stand for that in Toronto? I don't think so."

Krassilowsky said when she sees empty buildings and rows of for-sale signs, it means people don't have jobs or revenue, they aren't making mortgage payments and they are selling their boats.

"Job loss is devastating," she said. "It's stressful to fathers, mothers and children. It tears apart friends and com-



SANDI KRASOWSKI/THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

From left, Kenora Mayor David Canfield, Dryden Mayor Anne Krassilowski, Thunder Bay Mayor Lynn Peterson and Greenstone Mayor Michael Power are wrapped in a blanket during a conference of the Forestry Coalition.

munity. We cannot — and we don't — joke about that."

She said the province needs to have energy prices at \$45/mW-h.

"Further delay is more mill closures, more jobs lost, more outmigration," she said. "No half measures, please. No Band-Aid solutions. Premier McGuinty, get it done please. You're holding up production."

Power said he got several telephone calls from the premier's and other ministers' offices on Thursday to assure him that the government is working on the problem.

"Well, damn it, you've been working on it for eight months!" Power said. "It's time for a solution."

Power said the McGuinty government has to become more compassionate.

"We are becoming in Northern Ontario, if we aren't already... the land of broken dreams," he said.

"This is where you have lost your house. This is where families are under stress they can't cope with. This is where they've lost all of the things that they had hoped for and worked for and dreamed for."

The coalition asked people to apply more pressure to the provincial government by calling the:

- Premier's office, 416-325-1941
- Ministry of Energy, 416-327-3550
- Ministry of Natural Resources, 416-314-2301

Canfield delivers Parkview message 'loud and clear'

THE CANADIAN PRESS

KENORA

KENORA — Mayor Dave Canfield sent a strong message to Municipal Affairs Minister John Gerretson about Parkview Apartments when they met Thursday in Thunder Bay.

Canfield said he left no doubt about his feelings on the issue, as he described the tough economic times in Kenora and the responsibilities of the province.

"We got our message across loud and clear," he said, referring to the session.

The mayor was joined by the chairman of the Kenora District Services Board Brian Larson, Dryden Mayor Anne Krassilowsky and Sten Lof, chief administrative officer of the services board. They were attending the Northern Ontario Municipal Association regional conference.

The district services board defeated a resolution last month to accept a \$2.5 million tender for repairs

because member councils felt it remained the province's responsibility after downloading the building.

Gerretson has already offered to contribute \$900,000 towards the cost of repairs, but the offer has been rejected by the district services board since it's only 36 per cent of the estimated bill.

Council's delegate to the district, Coun. Rory McMillan, was hopeful after hearing details of the discussion.

"I always try and look at things with a glass half full point of view. I remain optimistic, because it has to be done," he said.

The minister hoped to have a response within two weeks. A recent report from the structural engineers hired by the board — A. F. Eshmade and Associates — said the situation at Parkview was urgent, due to the deterioration of the brick facade on the building and

its effect on the structural adequacy of the building. Canfield noted the local seniors coalition is also lobbying the government for more funding.

Tenants in the 72-unit building have been on edge since last summer, when the controversy over repairs began. While some temporary scaffolding was put up, in an effort to prevent bricks from falling on the heads of pedestrians, the long-term future of the building has been uncertain.

An emergency meeting of the services board on the issue Sept. 13 came to a 4-2 vote and after two members left the meeting — leaving the meeting a quorum to conduct a vote.

Friday, September 22, 2006

Unhealthy stereotype

A REPORT released by the Canadian Institute for Health Information suggests that rural residents are not living up to the healthy stereotype of a wholesome country life. They suffer illness and die, in fact, at noticeably higher rates than urban types. Smoking appears to be a culprit, but the rural lifestyle is also contributing. Some of this can be addressed by public health campaigns.

The CIHI study, pulled together from databases compiled on Canadians' health status, points specifically at high rates of smoking in rural areas, noting that this would contribute to the high rates of death from circulatory and respiratory diseases. Some 32 per cent of rural residents smoke, compared to 25 per cent of their urban counterparts.

As well, rural residents reported eating fewer fruits and vegetables than urbanites. Rural residents are more likely to report being overweight or obese, as well.

On the upside, rural residents reported fewer cases, overall, of cancer. Smoking bans in public places are likely to have had a greater impact on the lives of those in cities and larger towns. More urban residents work in offices that have been captured by non-smoking campaigns. Governments can redouble efforts to educate rural Canadians about the health risks of lighting up and aim cessation programs directly at them.

The more difficult finding of the CIHI study relates to children, who are more likely to die from injuries, specifically in motor vehicle accidents, and from suicides, compared to young people in cities. Driving is part of the routine of rural life, where farming families work the land, mass transit is not practical and people must get into a car to shop and run errands. A higher suicide rate will need some more interpretation, but the plight of aboriginal youth living on reserves that are often isolated and impoverished is well known.

Canadians who live down country roads or in isolated communities are hostage to the need to drive and therefore are at higher risk of the perils of the road. But eating, smoking and exercising habits can be changed to improve the likelihood of a longer, healthier life. The data reflect the skyrocketing rates of diabetes seen among Canada's aboriginal people. Governments can and should tailor health information and services to rural people.

Young native youth are killing themselves at an alarming rate and mental health services are an obvious necessity. The best hope to reduce the toll of suicide is through improving the social conditions in their communities. A good education is a lasting source of hope, a way to fight despair and depressing socio-economic conditions through opportunity. In communities where poverty, addictions and disease make homes tough places to be, governments should make school irresistible to children.

Wednesday, September 27, 2006

Liberals pressured on pricing for power

THE CANADIAN PRESS

TORONTO — Opposition parties want the government to immediately introduce regional hydro pricing, saying it would stop the bleeding of thousands of forestry sector jobs in Northern Ontario.

They attacked Premier Dalton McGuinty in the legislature Tuesday, saying he's failed to help the industry by lowering their electricity prices.

But McGuinty said outside factors such as declining prices for paper products and a strong Canadian dollar are to blame for continued paper mill closures.

"We have been working particularly closely with the forestry sector which is being buffeted by more than just circumstances that prevail here in the province of Ontario," he said in the legislature.

McGuinty, who earlier this year said he'd consider regional rates, said his government has put together a \$900-million package for capital improvements among other items.

"That's the kind of approach we've brought to dealing with the forestry sector... we'll keep

working with them," he said.

But NDP Leader Howard Hampton said mills have hardly seen a cent of the money. Instead, the sector has witnessed 25,000 direct and indirect forestry jobs lost in the last two years because of mill closures in Red Rock and Kenora among other communities, Hampton said.

"These are all communities that have been devastated by your policy of driving hydro rates through the roof for an industry that has to use a lot of electricity in the manufacturing process."

A growing group of mayors, industry leaders and labour unions in Northern Ontario

has been pressuring the government to reduce the northern industrial hydro price to 4.5 cents a kWh, arguing a lower rate would keep mills open.

Energy Minister Dwight Duncan said he was directed by McGuinty in February to look at the possibility of bringing in regional pricing.

"There are a number of issues," he said. "The government will have a full response soon."



Dwight Duncan

Thursday, September 28, 2006

Trial dates set for sex offender

Former minister, Boy Scout master charged

THE CANADIAN PRESS

A trial date has been set for convicted sex offender Ralph Rowe to answer to 56 sex-related charges involving boys in the 1970s and 1980s in Northern Ontario.

Rowe's lawyer Robert Sinding said two consecutive weeks Jan. 22-26 and Jan. 29 to Feb. 2 have been scheduled for his client's trial in Ontario Superior Court in Kenora.

The trial will be by judge alone.

Rowe, 66, who now lives in Surrey, B.C., is facing numerous counts of sexual and indecent assault, as well as two counts of buggery.

The acts are alleged to have taken

KENORA

place between 1971 and 1986 at several remote First Nations communities in Northern Ontario where Rowe served as an Anglican minister and a Boy Scout master.

In May, Sinding argued Rowe was entitled to a stay of the criminal proceedings on the grounds that court delays and an abuse of process had infringed on his constitutional rights.

The abuse of process claim arose out of a plea agreement in 1994, when the Crown promised Rowe only concurrent sentences and no further jail time for any similar allegations that arose after

those proceedings.

Rowe was convicted when he pleaded guilty to 27 counts of indecent assault and one count of common assault involving 16 boys at First Nations communities.

He was sentenced to six years in jail and served three.

In July, Superior Court Justice Erwin Stach rejected the constitutional challenge and ruled the trial would proceed.

However, Stach noted the Crown would have to honour the plea deal for any of the current charges that are "the same or substantially similar in level of seriousness to the charges already heard in 1994."

Thursday, September 28, 2006

Tourism project threatened

BY CARL CLUTCHEY
NORTH SHORE BUREAU

As Nipigon-Red Rock's economic prospects look increasingly gloomy, so too does the outlook for one of the region's more ambitious tourism projects.

Though the provincial government has committed \$1.5 million to Nipigon's stalled Paddle To The Sea proposal, the money has sat unused for 18 months.

That's because the project has yet to hear from other main government funders, like FedNor.

"We're still short about \$3 million," Nipigon Coun. Doug Huntus commented Wednesday.

"In my opinion," Huntus added, "if (the feds) really wanted to help us, they would pitch in the whole thing, because

all we can do is wait for funding."

Paddle To The Sea is the fictional story about a Nipigon-area native boy who carves a wooden boat that floats from Lake Superior to the Atlantic Ocean.

The town wants to take advantage of the story's enduring popularity by retelling it through outdoor exhibits and linking it with a downtown facelift.

But when Norampac announced this summer that it would be idling its Red Rock linerboard plant indefinitely, some began to wonder if the project was really affordable.

The Township of Nipigon has kicked in \$250,000 toward the project, but had to turn down a subsequent request for additional funds.

A FedNor spokeswoman was

unable Wednesday to provide an update as to whether that agency's contribution to the Paddle project is on the way.

Liberal MPP Michael Gravelle said he was surprised FedNor hasn't come through with an amount similar to the provincial Heritage Fund contribution, because "if one part comes through, the other usually does, too."

Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North) said he has asked the province to kick in extra money because even if FedNor announces a grant, the project will still be short.

"We're big supporters of this project and we want to see it happen," said Gravelle.

Thursday, September 28, 2006

Ontario says passport lobbying paid off

THE CANADIAN PRESS

TORONTO — Ontario Tourism Minister Jim Bradley says he's pleased the United States appears poised to delay a new passport requirement until June 2009.

A bipartisan committee of U.S. senators and representatives has agreed to a 17-month delay in requiring passports from everyone crossing into the U.S. by land.

Bradley says Ontario worked hard to convince Congress to delay the passport requirement beyond Jan. 1, 2008 because the Bush administration opposes any delay.

He says the province's lobbying efforts paid off because some of the people he spoke to in Congress are the ones leading the charge to postpone the new passport rule.

Bradley says the delay gives governments on both sides of the border a chance to explore alternatives to a pass-

port, such as a driver's licence with enhanced security.

Business groups on both sides of the border have also been lobbying Congress, warning the passport requirement could cost Canada \$2 billion a year, and the U.S. about half that.

Canadian officials have long argued the time frame for new ID is too tight to implement properly without causing havoc at the border.

And they've complained that U.S. officials haven't yet told them what documents other than a passport will be acceptable from Canadians.

Observers warn the 17-month delay is not a done deal, and that critics in the U.S. Congress may attempt to strip it from the legislation before it goes for a full vote.

The US\$34.8-billion funding bill authorizes new fencing along the U.S. border with Mexico and a study of the feasibility of erecting a security barrier along the Canadian border.

AA87

Friday, September 29, 2006

Wary bankers, stereotyping hinder natives

BY JIM KELLY
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Respect.

It's the one word that Tom Morris says is a major factor in fostering and achieving a level of success for aboriginal entrepreneurs.

Morris, president and chief executive officer of Wasaya Airways Limited Partnership, was one of the presenters Thursday to the standing senate committee on aboriginal peoples.

The committee is on a nationwide tour to determine the conditions that promote or impede successful economic development in aboriginal communities.

"We have greatly respected all those who have merited positions of authority through their hard work and we have strived to pattern ourselves after these role models," Morris told the Thunder Bay hearing.

"We have studied successful ventures and have endeavoured to utilize their strategies where possible and we have studied other business strengths and weaknesses, and we have learned to avoid the mistakes of those who have tried and failed."

Wasaya Airways LP started as a small float plane operation 17 years ago and now has a fleet of

19 aircraft and 270 employees. It provides passenger services, freight and fuel deliveries to remote communities, as well as charter services in North America.

The parent company is Wasaya Group Inc., a partnership among nine remote Northwestern Ontario First Nations.

Morris said partnerships are a key ingredient to the success of an aboriginal business.

Today, he said, Wasaya is a continued partnership between aboriginal and non-aboriginal employees, customers, levels of government and various agencies.

Morris said there have been obstacles to successful aboriginal entrepreneurship in Northwestern Ontario.

There are no revenue-generating agreements, no revenue from natural resources or land agreements.

"Therefore, the startup rate and the success rate for aboriginal business is poor," he said.

Morris said aboriginals have had to deal with a skeptical banking industry and stereotyping is one of the burdens they face on a daily basis.

• Continued on page A4



Senator Gerry St. Germain, left, listens as Wasaya Airlines president and CEO Tom Morris addresses the standing committee on aboriginal peoples Thursday.



Business world tough for aboriginals to crack

• Continued from page A1

Nishnawbe-Aski Nation deputy grand chief Terry Waboose agreed with Morris that First Nations, to achieve a vibrant sustainable economy must work in partnership with governments, the private sector and the public.

"We intend through development of strategic partnerships, to build relationships that will provide mutual benefits," he said.

But there have been challenges over the years, Waboose said.

He mentioned lack of application of treaty promises and an assault over the 100 years of the treaty relationship on culture, language, spiritual beliefs and

family structures.

Waboose said the most important need is for the provincial and federal governments to accept the spirit and intent of the treaties, and to share the land for the benefit of all NAN communities.

Self-government and control over lands and resources will allow aboriginals to build an economy and create wealth and self-sufficiency, he said.

Government programs will not likely meet First Nations' needs for a better quality of life and development of a real economy, Waboose said.

"The true engine of development will be driven by partnerships created for and by our First Nations and their people with the private sector."

He asked the senators to recommend short-term programs be scrapped and replaced with real investments in aboriginal development and institutions.

"If we are to survive and flourish, we need to reassert our jurisdiction, regain access to our resources and re-establish our self-sufficiency," Waboose said.

"The wheel must come full circle."

Committee chairman Senator Gerry St. Germain said the committee's report will show that leadership, partnerships with non-aboriginal corporations, education, revenue sharing and not mixing business and politics all contribute to successful economic development in aboriginal communities.

He added that First Nations taking control of their own destiny is paramount.

The hindrances include a lack of equity where aboriginals can't use their land as security for loans.

"Traditional lending institutions won't even look at them," St. Germain said in an interview during a break in the session.

Senator Nick Sibbeston said it's crucial that aboriginals own their land and the resources on them.

"They can use those as leverage with the big companies that want to develop them."

Sibbeston said aboriginals find themselves in a competitive business world that is difficult to crack.

"They come from a bush life to a very modern, technical, industrialized life and that's challenge," he said.



Sunday, October 15, 2006

Gas taxes go to local gov'ts

THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

The City of Thunder Bay along with some rural Northwestern Ontario communities are again benefiting from their share of a provincewide program to pump gas-tax revenues into public transit.

The city has received just over \$1.9 million — a planned increase of 0.5 per cent, or \$500,000, over last year.

Previous gas-tax funding in Thunder Bay has been used to purchase new low-floor buses and upgrade bus terminals.

A total of \$313 million has been provided to 86 transit systems across the province, which the government says has increased ridership.

Under the same program, Schreiber and Terrace Bay jointly received \$27,000 towards their shared operation of a specially equipped van for disabled residents.

Monday, September 25, 2006

Hey Dwight, it's not funny

WHY is the provincial government laughing at us and kicking us when we're down?

One could be forgiven for thinking as much last week following Energy Minister Dwight Duncan's feeble attempt at humour.

Duncan, who once aspired to lead his party, suggested Northern Ontarians could weather the winter in the face of high electricity prices by hunkering down with a blanket and a good bottle of wine.

Oh, that Dwight. What a card!

But come to think of it, it's probably Duncan who knows the most about fancy food and wine.

It was Duncan (not us thin-skinned Northerners) who caused a ruckus at Queen's Park not too long ago when it was learned that the said minister and his entourage chowed down on \$70-a-plate steaks during a European tour.

Nothing like inhaling a high-class meal that only Bill Gates could afford on the taxpayers' nickel. Isn't it just hilarious when that happens?

Meanwhile, Ontario's electricity prices, some of the highest in North America, are closing down or idling our wood mills faster than a bug light can zap a mosquito.

Maybe Duncan — whose ministry has yet to propose a life-saving regional energy policy despite years of prodding — thought he was just being smart when he made the remark about the wine. We have to admit he has a quick wit.

But someone who aspires to leadership is supposed to realize that what he or she says in public will often be taken literally and carefully scrutinized. This is called having good political radar.

After all, forestry workers who are losing their jobs, or have gone a year or more without a paycheque, can be forgiven for taking things literally.

As a hungry Tom Joad said in the Depression-era *The Grapes of Wrath*, "I'd argue easy."

This Christmas is shaping up to be one of the worst ever for many Northwestern Ontario families as their main breadwinners face the prospect of being unemployed, and all the despair and mental breakdown that often goes along with it.

There's nothing funny about that. Not in the least, Mr. Duncan.

Tuesday, October 17, 2006

Energy solution seems remote

AS I read more about the energy crisis facing the Northern region of Ontario, I have come to the conclusion that a quick and speedy resolution to this saga is nowhere near. We are still facing closures of sawmills and pulp and paper operations, with the loss of many jobs that come with it.

One of the certain truths about Ontario politics is that if it doesn't happen in the GTA (Greater Toronto Area), it doesn't count. Despite the many calls for politicians to deal with the desperate state of the Northern economy, mills are still closing and the cries fall on deaf ears.

The most important industries in Northern Ontario are electricity-intensive and have been hit hard by recent hikes in the cost of electricity. Although there are hydro dams in the North that are producing electricity at a rate of 1.5 cents per kilowatt-hour, companies are required to pay 6 cents kw/h. How can the provincial government justify this practice, knowing the current situation? The North should have a separate deal on hydro.

At the rate the mills are closing, I wonder if the forest industry will survive. In the span of one year, more than 6,000 jobs relating to the industry have been lost, resulting in millions of dollars being taken out of the local economy. It is quite apparent that the uncompromising McGuinty government has shown absolute lack of willingness to help struggling forestry firms reduce their power cost despite the many ideas brought forward by municipal officials in Northern Ontario.

Moreover, it's never wise to kick the electorate when they're down. During the last election, the McGuinty government made a lot of promises to people in Northern Ontario. It is fair to say that people are very disappointed because our elected Liberal MPPs are no closer to a solution.

The time has come for all parties to come together to resolve this crisis so that Northern Ontario can return to its days of glory.

Russell Twance
THUNDER BAY

Thursday, October 19, 2006

No quick fix for region's woes

IN HIS 30 years in business, Michael Atkins has acquired a lot of business savvy and doubtless has seen some pretty far-fetched ideas take hold. In a speech at the North Superior Training Board Adjustment Action Summit on Wednesday, the president of Laurentian Media Group floated one of his own: Northern Ontario should set up a regional government.

Northern Ontario is broken, Atkins bluntly states. Atkins, who once worked in Thunder Bay and whose company was based out of Sudbury, has a prescription for our ills: the key to avoiding becoming a Third World economy is to boldly take control of our destiny.

It's an intriguing concept that we will favour with some, but unfortunately it's one that doesn't look so rosy under scrutiny.

True, there are county governments in southern Ontario and quasi-regional bodies in larger Canadian urban centres. The latter, though, focus more on land-use issues and really don't get into promoting regional energy pricing schemes, for example.

A regional government automatically means you'll need a bureaucracy to make it function — and who really wants higher taxes to pay for more bureaucrats, or hear about more committees and attend more meetings?

What exactly would a regional government do that our area politicians — mayors and council members from towns all across the North to our MPs and MPPs — don't do already? We have, for example, the Thunder Bay District Municipal League, a lobby group that meets regularly to discuss key concerns and manages to get the ear of provincial ministers at their annual meeting.

The idea of setting up a regional government is more like doing something just to be seen to be doing something without actually accomplishing anything. Atkins' concept of a regional government sounds much like those frustrated calls we occasionally hear to break the North away from the rest of Ontario and set up our own province. As utopian as it sounds, it's fraught with unforeseen problems and, in the end, would probably not be worth the effort.

Mayor wins award for support of forest industry

NORTHWEST BUREAU

Thunder Bay Mayor Lynn Peterson has won a Wood WORKS award for her work in support of the forest products industry.

Peterson was presented with the Building the Future — Community Leader award at the sixth annual Wood WORKS awards gala in Toronto on Monday.

"Thunder Bay is home to numerous award-winning projects and Mayor Peterson has brought forward these projects as benchmarks for our communities to meet," Jamie Lim, gala co-host and president of the Ontario Forest Industries Association, said in a news release.

The Wood WORKS community leader award acknowledges an individual who supports the future of the forest products industry and stands out as a persuasive advocate for wood in their community.

Peterson's involvement with the Ontario Forestry Coalition was also mentioned by Lim.

"Mayor Peterson was one of the key leaders of the forestry coalition. She helped bring many other communities and industry leaders to fight for an important cause — the future of the forest industry," Lim said.

Past winners of Wood WORKS awards in the city are Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, École Secondaire Catholique de la Verendrye, Hogarth Riverview Manor and Sleeping Giant Provincial Park.

More than 350 industry and

community leaders, architects, engineers and politicians attended the gala which paid tribute to Ontario's state-of-the-art wood-based buildings.

Peterson was among 12 award winners in categories ranging from energy and cost-efficient

green buildings to large-scale community centres and wood champions who support and advance the use of wood in Ontario construction.

"(The) winners have demonstrated what a versatile and rewarding material wood is," Lim

added.

"By bringing together new wood technology with innovation and creativity, they have showed that wood is poised to move to the forefront as a viable, affordable and appropriate solution to many design problems," she said.

Wednesday, October 18, 2006

Gun law challenge put over to March

THE CANADIAN PRESS

A Northwestern Ontario man's constitutional challenge of the federal Firearms Act has been delayed until March.

The challenge, brought by Dryden-area resident Bruce Montague, had been set to begin Monday in Ontario Superior Court.

Montague was arrested by Ontario Provincial Police at a Dryden gun show on Sept. 11, 2004.

He is facing 53 criminal charges for a variety of weapons-related offences, including unauthorized possession and careless storage of firearms, explosives and restricted firearms.

His wife Donna is charged with unauthorized possession of a firearm and two counts of careless storage of a firearm.

Montague is challenging the Firearms Act on the basis that it, and the charges laid under it, violate several areas of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Justice John Wright remanded Montague's charter application until the week of March 12 to allow evidence to be recorded via written affidavits from the two witnesses for the defence.

A criminal trial by jury is expected to take place once the charter hearing is dealt with.

Prior to the decision to delay the hearing, Wright imposed a publication ban on all evidence pertaining to the charges or allegations against Montague until the conclusion of his criminal trial proceedings.

Wednesday, October 18, 2006

Police budget gets nod

BY JIM KELLY
THE CHRONICLE JOURNAL

Thunder Bay taxpayers will not be paying more for policing in 2007.

Police Chief Bob Herman told the Thunder Bay Police Services Board on Tuesday the operating budget calls for a 1.9-per-cent increase over 2006. That amounts to \$512,600.

But that will be offset by the capital budget of \$585,000, which is about half of what it was in 2006.

"The budget basically reflects the funding that's required to keep the (police) service at the level of strength that it is now," Herman said.

The board approved the police 2007 operating and capital budgets so they can be moved for endorsement by city council.

There were a few questions from board members about the \$27-million operating budget and the \$585,000 capital budget. And Herman said he expects a more thorough grilling by city councillors.

"Any time you put a budget forward to council of \$26 million, I would anticipate there will be some questions about it," he said following the meeting.

One area of concern is \$1.5 million spent annually for court security, Herman said.

About \$900,000 of that is spent on wages and benefits for officers who provide court security. The remaining \$600,000 goes to case management and clerical staff.

"This has been an issue with police services as well as the Association of Municipalities of Ontario," he said.

"We don't feel that because the buildings and justice system are run by the Ministry of the Attorney General, that municipalities should be responsible for paying for costs of security and prisoner transportation," he said.

The board discussed a community satisfaction survey that indicated citizens have a high degree of satisfaction with the Thunder Bay Police Service.

The survey, which was sent to 1,043 randomly selected households and businesses this past summer, asked questions relating to service delivery, interaction with police officers and perceptions of safety within the community.

About 460 surveys were returned, coded and entered into a database for analysis. "They certainly have identified some areas of concern such as property crime and traffic issues," Herman said.

Wednesday, October 18, 2006

Communities aim to boost forestry sector

NORTHWEST BUREAU

The City of Dryden has teamed up with area First Nations, business support groups and the Municipality of Red Lake on a proposal to help forest-based communities deal with the area's sagging forest products industry.

In response to a call for proposals from Natural Resources Canada's Forest Communities Program, the First Nation communities of Pikangikum, Wabigoon Lake Ojibway and Eagle Lake have partnered with Dryden, Red Lake, Patricia Area Community Endeavours Inc. and Chukuni Communities Development Corporation to develop a five-year business case called the Northern Forest Values Capital.

Leveraging the strengths of Pikangikum's Whitefeather Forest Initiative and the Two-Feathers Forest Products projects, the proposal is aimed at developing new value-added forest opportunities using innovative forestry practices and sustainable forest management.

"This dynamic group recognizes the need to engage and capitalize on the experience and enthusiasm present in our resource-dependent communities ... to

address the impact and circumstances affecting our resource sector while

building on individual community strategic plans," Alex Peters, steering committee member and president of Whitefeather Forest Management Corporation, said Tuesday.

The initiative's goals include:

- Supporting development of com-

munity-based forest enterprises incorporating cross-cultural skills and state-of-the-art technology.

- Combining the best of indigenous knowledge with western science to develop innovative forestry practices and integrated land-use management plans.

- Using the Northern Forest Values Capital "brand" to build awareness of forest issues, and develop regional and global partnerships.

The group will submit its proposal to Natural Resources Canada on Oct. 31. If approved, the project would start on April 1.

FORESTRY

Partnership formed in bid to secure federal program • support

Patience important with aboriginal customers, business audience told

BY JONATHAN WILSON
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Thunder Bay business owners who hope to increase their First Nations customer base should learn to be patient with aboriginal customers, and consider putting up Oji-Cree signs to make them feel more welcome.

These were some of the tips presented by facilitator Ron Kanutski to about 50 people who attended an information session Tuesday at the Italian Cultural Centre.

Kanutski, an Ojibwa tribal member of the Lake Helen band near Nipigon, thinks some of the participants might have been surprised by what they learned.

"Things are not quite that black and white," he said.

"Working with individual First Nations communities is unique, there's not one set process."

Kanutski said it might take some aboriginal customers up to four months to feel comfortable with a non-aboriginal seller, before they decide to make a purchase.

"People don't always make rapid decisions and one of the things when you're working with First Nations people is learning patience. Don't be pushy with people."

He adds that the process of winning a customer for life is the same with any culture.

As for putting up signage using Oji-Cree syllabics, Kanutski said all it takes is a little help from someone who knows the language to create such bilingual signs.

Customer reaction to the gesture will make the investment worthwhile, he said.

"If you want to make aboriginal people welcome, or if you do a business that is primarily with Oji-Cree customers, it would only be common sense to do that, to become comfortable using their language."

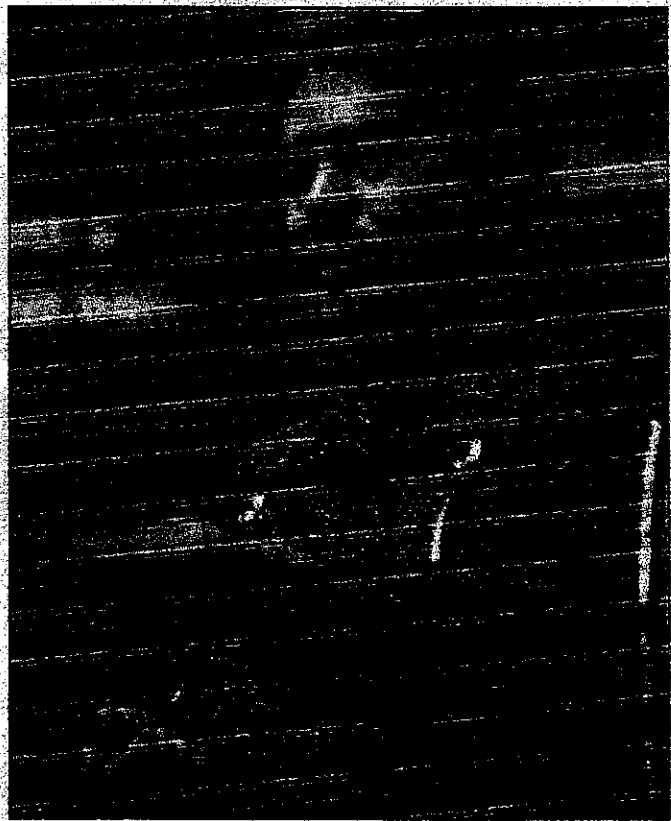
Kanutski points out that Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants of this area, and learning a few Ojibwa words is a good way "to help knock down walls."

"When you travel to Mexico, we always attempt to speak Spanish," Kanutski said.

"So when you're in your homeland, with your neighbours, wouldn't it be only respectable to use some of the language of the people that are from here?"

He pointed out that many of the names of rivers and lakes in the area already reflect that idea.

Business owner Hugh Cummins, whose company Meechim



BRENT LINTON/THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

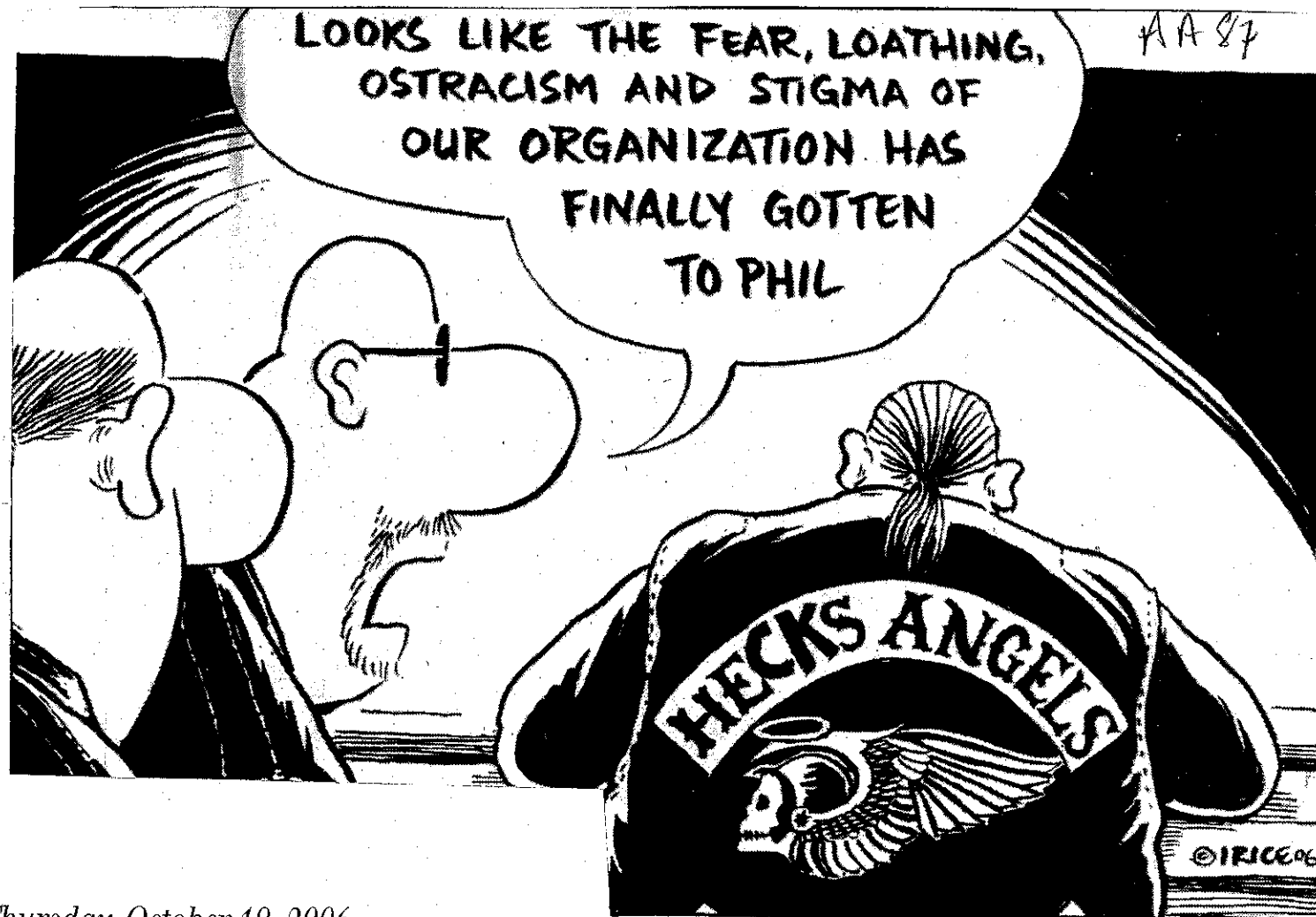
Ron Kanutski leads a seminar on aboriginal business Tuesday morning at the Italian Cultural Centre.

North connects grocery wholesalers with remote First Nations stores, said Kanutski's advice hit home.

"The message that Ron delivered today is not specific information," Cummins said.

"It's just a general life message about honesty and being straight forward."

Cummins said he's spent the past 15 years learning to adapt to the needs of his aboriginal customers, and said the key is in taking the time to discuss and learn what the customer needs.



Thursday, October 19, 2006

North can be saved

Region has to 'get control' of economy

BY JIM KELLY
THE CHRONICLE JOURNAL

Northern Ontario is broken, but Laurentian Media Group president and principal shareholder Michael Atkins claims he knows how it can be fixed.

He said Wednesday that Northern Ontario's mayors must take the first step to set up a regional government with a mayor at large and two councillors for each urban centre.

"We either take up our future or give it up," he said.

The regional government would have taxing and revenue sharing powers.

"It might not do any better, but at least we'd know who to blame."

Atkins knows of what he speaks.

The keynote speaker Wednesday at the North Superior Train-

ing Board Adjustment Action Summit has been a Northern Ontario businessman for 30 years and has been a keen observer of the regional economy.

The summit was organized to bring Northerners together to share information and develop strategies on how to lead the North to recovery.

"Northern Ontario does not work in Ontario," Atkins told his audience.

"It is wounded and it is sitting on a gurney in the emergency department," he said. "Northern Ontario's health is critical to my health."

A former reporter with the Fort William Daily Times-Journal, Atkins said he finds it almost painful to be at another conference dealing with an ailing economy.

"We should have seen this

coming a long time ago," he said referring to the stagnant economy.

"We shouldn't be having this meeting about what we're going to do. We should be doing better than we are today."

If Northern Ontario wants to get out on the road to recovery, Atkins said the first step "is to get control" of the economy.

Most business leaders and top executives report to someone in other parts of Canada or the United States and unions belong to national or international bodies, he said.

"We take our directions from a formula conjured up in Toronto. When you look around and see what we're in charge of, it's not a lot," Atkins said.

Madge Richardson of the North Superior Training Board said the summit will identify

practices that have worked elsewhere and may be solutions for the North.

"We want to start formulating a plan on how to recover," she said.

Richardson said regional energy pricing is part of the answer, but a key solution is each community focusing on a plan and incorporating that with other communities.

The board's Francis Bell said Northern Ontario has overcome challenges in the past and he's optimistic the economy will rebound.

"We believe in the community and we see people taking advantage of the changes, and it's resulted in new careers and new skills and more engagement in their communities," he said.

Chisholm puts family first after 2 terms as mayor

BY CARL CLUTCHER
NORTH SHORE BUREAU

The populist mayor who often found himself to be very unpopular says two terms is enough.

Manitouwadge's Darrel Chisholm said he agonized last week over the decision not to seek a third term, but in the end decided to put family first.

"It was one of the hardest decisions,

but you know, my kids are growing up, and I thought, 'Do I want to look back after four years and say I missed out on that?'" Chisholm said Thursday.

It wasn't hard for Chisholm, who once survived a council revolt, to pinpoint the toughest parts of what has often been a difficult mayoralty.

Manitouwadge's move to a gold-standard smoking bylaw and a requirement for homeowners to install water metres

turned Chisholm into a pariah in the eyes of restaurant owners and residential ratepayers.

"People called me at home — some times at two in the morning," Chisholm, a forest fire manager, recalled.

While he admits some business owners did see their sales drop after the smoking bylaw came into effect, he continues to defend the use of water metres.

The metres lowered Manitouwadge's

skyrocketing water consumption and also reduced property taxes by "shifting the water costs out of the municipal levy," he said.

Since the metres came in nearly a year ago, Chisholm said he's been paying about \$30 a month for water at his house, "and I've got two kids."

On the plus side, Chisholm said, about \$8 million worth of upgrades to the town's water and sewer system are near-

ly complete.

Even with Chisholm out of the running in next month's election, the mining town still has a three-way race for mayor.

"It's good to see new people coming in," Chisholm commented.

The next council will have to continue to focus on attracting new residents and promoting mineral exploration, he added.

October 28, 2006

Mayor al candidate charged

THE CHRONICLE JOURNAL

One of the candidates for mayor of Thunder Bay has been charged with possession of marijuana for the purpose of trafficking.

The Chronicle Journal has learned that Douglas Mackay, 53, was charged Sept. 11 after police seized almost nine kilograms of marijuana.

Depending on the quality, that amount

Mackay accused of pot possession

could be worth more than \$175,000 on the street.

City police spokesman Chris Adams says officers were called Sept. 9 to a Crown Street apartment by the landlord who had reportedly found marijuana in

bags in the unit of an evicted tenant.

Mackay, himself, confirmed Friday

world," he said then, citing the economic boost to the city.

Mackay ran unsuccessfully in the last federal election under the Marijuana Party banner in the Thunder Bay-Rainy River riding.

In the August Chronicle-Journal story Mackay described himself as a "pot grower."

According to Adams, Mackay is next due to appear in court Nov. 23.

First Nation declares emergency over water

TIMMINS, Ont. (CP) — Attawapiskat First Nation has declared a state of emergency to draw attention to its requests for help to improve water quality in the James Bay community.

The results of water-quality testing done by First Nations Engineering Ltd. in August and symptoms of health problems in children and elders have the band council and citizens concerned that water quality is deteriorating further.

Deputy Chief Miriam Wesley says the band council decided to declare a state of emergency because the community can't wait any longer to deal with its water issues.

Wesley says the province is sending representatives from the Ontario Clean Water Agency to examine Attawapiskat's water worries and a Ministry of Health team will conduct another water assessment on Saturday.

In a public meeting held Wednesday, residents complained to the tribal council of suffering from rashes and dizziness and a change in the taste of the drinking water.

Martel says gov't does nothing as forestry industry takes beating

SUDBURY, Ont. (CP) — A Sudbury-area MPP says the McGuinty Liberals are doing nothing as the forestry industry in northern Ontario is taking a beating.

The comments from the New Democrat's Shelley Martel come after the closure of two Domtar shops in her riding within the past month.

Over 250 people at the Espanola and Nairn Centre operations have been given pink slips.

The Espanola plant closed at the end of September, while the last day for workers in Nairn Centre was last Friday.

Martel says sky-high energy and hydro costs are making it very difficult if not impossible to keep the doors open at lumber operations.

Martel says all this is happening while Northern Development Minister Rick Bartolucci claims all is well in the north.

Friday, October 20, 2006

TERRACE BAY

Water upgrade may be off

BY CARL CLUTCHEY
NORTH SHORE BUREAU

Terrace Bay taxpayers may find out next month if they can avoid having to pay for another expensive upgrade to their drinking water system.

The prospect of spending more than \$3 million for three kilometres of pipe and a new pump house surfaced this spring when it looked like the local pulp mill might close.

The town has a new water treatment plant. But water from Lake Superior is pumped into the plant from a pump house owned by the pulp mill.

When it looked like the mill might shut down for good, the Ministry of Environment said the town might have to look at providing its own pump house as well as a long pipe to transport the water into the treatment plant.

The province was prepared to pay half the cost, but the project would not qualify for federal funding.

When the mill resumed operating last month under new owner Buchanan Forest Products, some locals wondered if the "status quo" could continue in terms of how they get their water.

Terrace Bay town manager Dick Beare said Thursday that town and Buchanan representatives will likely sit down to discuss the situation next month.

Under the current arrangement between the pulp mill and the municipality, the mill provides the town with raw water for free in exchange for treated water from the town's water plant.

Terrace Bay has spent \$8 million on a new drinking water plant after the province said the old one wasn't up to standard.

Former mayor back in the hunt

BY BRYAN MEADOWS
NORTHWEST BUREAU

October 27, 2006

IGNACE

Two relative newcomers and a former mayor make up the slate in Ignace's race for mayor.

Former mayor Suzanne Smith is taking another run at council's top post, on a campaign platform based on fair taxation and attracting new business to town.

Smith was beaten by Hugh Broughton in the last municipal election after her three-year term.

Business leaders Lionel Cloutier and Chicki Pesola both say they believe council must find ways to revitalize the town's economy and make it a more affordable place to do business.

The municipal election for council and school board trustees is set for Nov. 13.

DECISION 2006



Municipal — Nov. 13

Tax rates and services the priority

SUZANNE Smith says keeping property taxes within a manageable level, while maintaining programs and services, is the priority for the community.

If elected, she said, she'd work to keep the town's current business community healthy, and attract new businesses by developing an effective marketing strategy with the local economic development committee. She also supports community beautification and highway corridor improvements.

Smith, 58, maintains that her past experience in leading the municipality will help in completing current municipal initiatives, and resolving outstanding issues.

As well, she has an extensive background in volunteer work which will help her in decision-making. That experience includes former chairwoman of the boards of Mary Berglund Community Health Centre and Patricia Area Community Endeavours, a Canadian Red Cross Society and Safe Grad volunteer, and member of the Ignace Economic Development Committee and Ignace Substance Abuse Prevention Committee.

Smith said she hopes to lead a strong council which "has a teamwork approach to moving forward, resolving issues and working together to build a healthy prosperous community."

"(Only) a strong municipal council, working together toward common goals, will move Ignace forward, achieving success."

Aggressive promotion important

CHICKI Pesola wants to see council be "more aggressive in promoting our community" as a fun place to visit, an excellent place to live and a potential place to do business.

"This would provide our community with a larger tax base to draw from, thereby keeping our taxes in check," she said, adding Ignace leaders also have to be more vocal in support of the region's forestry industry.

"We are located between two mill towns, Dryden and Thunder Bay (and) we are feeling the effects from both sides."

Pesola maintained that her past 10 months on council has provided her with a lot of experience.

"The realization that your decision-making can affect many makes you realize just how important a roll you play."

As well, she said, her experience as owner and manager of the Northwoods Motor Inn the past 15 years has given her insights into staffing, financial planning, public relations and dealing with the ever-changing Northwestern Ontario economy.

"I am devoted to moving Ignace forward and seeing it prosper as a safe, affordable and secure community," she said. "I am a level-headed, determined and extremely dependable person who continuously and relentlessly works for the betterment of Ignace."

"As a lifelong resident of Ignace, I am very excited to be running for mayor."

Doors must be open for business

LIONEL Cloutier maintains that tough decisions about spending have to be made by council so that they address the "will of the people."

"Residents cannot accept any more tax increases while we see the town deteriorating and For Sale signs going up on more homes and businesses."

"Residents must get (some semblance of) confidence back in their community," he said.

"We need to revitalize our economy and make our community a friendlier and more affordable place to do business," he said, adding that to attract new industry and create new jobs, "We must be sensitive to their needs and when necessary offer incentives and assistance in establishing their markets."

Cloutier, 58, said his 35 years of business experience will help him recognize and lend support to the town's existing employers.

"Our local business people need assurances that the services that were included in their taxes won't be taken away (should) taxes increase."

He said he supports local efforts to reduce waste volumes through recycling; more health services for seniors and potential development of a senior housing project; cottage lot development; and the clearing of snow from sidewalks for safety reasons.



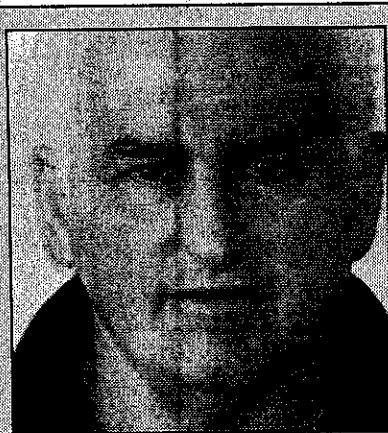
SUZANNE SMITH

- Ignace mayor 2000-03.
- Member of town council 1995-2000.
- Resident of Ignace for 35 years.
- Member Ignace Police Services Board and director Patricia Area Community Endeavours from January 2003 to February 2005.
- Recently widowed, she has four children and four grandchildren.



CHICKI PESOLA

- Council member since December 2005.
- Owner and manager of the Northwoods Motor Inn.
- Chairwoman of the Ignace Economic Development Committee.
- Secretary/treasurer of the Ignace Golf and Country Club.
- Married with three children and seven grandchildren.



LIONEL CLOUTIER

- Founding member of Patricia Area Community Endeavours.
- Former member of Ignace Economic Development Committee.
- Business owner for 35 years, currently part-owner of Ignace Tavern & Taxi and L&J Enterprises.
- Ignace resident for about 45 years.
- Married with three children and five grandchildren.

October 29, 2006

Forestry coalition wants in on energy talks

NORTHWEST BUREAU

The Ontario Forestry Coalition has asked the province for a seat at the table when energy is being discussed.

The coalition has learned that representatives from the premier's office and Ministry of Natural Resources have been meeting with select forestry industry players to discuss electricity pricing options that would lower Ontario's rates from the highest in Canada.

Coalition member Dryden Mayor Anne Krassilowsky has written to Premier Dalton McGuinty stating that "we have heard that government has been

in discussion with key representatives of the industry itself, and as leaders of municipalities deeply affected by the forest sector's future we have not been privy to any content.

"As leaders and major stakeholders we are asking (to be part) of this discussion."

Coalition members say they want a meeting as soon as possible with McGuinty to discuss their concerns.

Meanwhile, an energy plan for industry drafted by the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association calls for the cost of hydro in the region to be limited to 4.5 cents per kilowatt hour to reflect the regional surplus of power.

October 29, 2006

Public urination, spitting could net fines of up to \$300 in Calgary

CALGARY (CP) — Bad behaviour like urinating and spitting in public and even putting your feet up on a public bench won't be tolerated under a new proposal up for debate next week by Calgary city council.

In an attempt to protect the public's perception of Calgary as a safe city, civic officials have developed a series of fines ranging from \$50 for carrying a knife to \$300 for urinating in public.

"As our population hit a million, we were getting more and more people who seem to feel they can do whatever they want," said Ald. Craig Burrows, one of the supporters of the initiative.

"If we are all going to live together peacefully, we all have to have a social conduct that we all agree upon. And this bylaw will help in giving the basic responsibilities to being a citizen of Calgary," he said.

A city committee will review the proposed fines Wednesday.

If approved by council, legal staff

could set to work fine-tuning the wording for a draft bylaw.

Critics of the proposal continue to voice concerns about its intent.

Dermot Baldwin, executive director of the city's Drop-In Centre, believes the bylaw is aimed solely at the homeless and will only create more problems by levying a fine on someone who can't pay it.

"We're going to make them criminals and then point fingers at them and say 'that bunch of losers,'" he said.

The proposed bylaw targets fighting, urination or defecation, spitting, loitering and possession of a visible knife.

People can also be fined for standing or putting their feet on a table, bench, planter or sculpture.

Ald. Madeleine King says she hopes the bylaw helps efforts to improve the safety and vibrancy of the downtown.

"What's been found right across North America is the more you let bad behaviour go unchecked, the more it will take over," she said.

Health disaster waiting to happen

Health unit officials 'startled' by conditions at Pikangikum

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Health officials who inspected water resources at Pikangikum First Nation say they were "startled" by what they saw in the remote community.

"We were startled, upset. It was awful. This was a level of neglect that almost appeared purposeful," said Dr. Pete Sarsfield, medical officer of health for the Northwestern Health Unit.

Of the 387 houses on the reserve north of Red Lake, none of the homes is hooked up to the treatment plant, the inspectors said in a report.

There are 20 homes that have hauled water service and sewage service.

They use storage tanks for water.

The report notes the water is used only for cleaning and washing purposes.

Drinking water is mostly taken directly from the lake and the storage tanks are not usable in the winter because they freeze.

Sarsfield said he has never seen living conditions like this in Canada — infrastructure so bad people are constantly putting themselves at risk of serious illness.

"This is just begging for an outbreak of water-borne illness," he said.

Health care workers on the reserve were equally nervous about their health, said Val Mann, the health unit's director of planning and evaluation.

"They indicated that they felt there was an increase in specific disease areas, which they attributed to the water issue," Mann said.

The band does have a water treatment plant, which is working fairly well, the report stated.

There are trained workers and the treated water is safe to use, but it's everything which needs to support the plant output which they don't have.

There is no infrastructure to send water to the houses, and there is no knowledge of how to keep water containers clean, which are often just buckets stored on the counter.

Those who do get water trucked to their houses are not using the clean water for drinking.

With no infrastructure there is very little sewage control.

The store on the reserve, the police station and the school have toilets with septic systems, but they leach out and one goes to a poorly maintained lagoon.

"The lagoon discharges upstream of the intake for the water treatment plant and the community," stated the report.

The water used by almost all residents for drinking right out of the lake is contaminated.

Washrooms for residents include decrepit outhouses.

"The outhouses were old wooden things, they were terrible," said Sarsfield.

One picture in the report shows an outhouse full to the brim with refuse and toilet paper everywhere.

Sarsfield and Mann confirmed this is a common state.

"This wasn't going in to highlight one day, this is daily life. It was pretty eye-opening," said Mann.

"The outhouses were old wooden things, they were terrible."

Dr. Pete Sarsfield

*Medical Officer of Health,
Northwestern Health Unit*

"The pictures are what we saw and are very representative."

The federal government issued an at-risk report of First Nations across the country earlier this year to point out water systems which need repair.

Pikangikum was not on the list.

"How the hell can Pikangikum not be high risk?" said Sarsfield.

The First Nation is constantly on a boil-water advisory.

The health unit recommends the government take action immediately to create infrastructure for water and sewage to avoid major health problems on the First Nation.

October 30, 2006

Reeve faces 1st challenge since '97

BY JONATHAN WILSON
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

The 2006 municipal election in Shuniah is expected to settle the feud between a pair of strong-minded politicians who have battled over numerous issues during the past six years.

Incumbent Maria Harding, who has served 12 years as Shuniah reeve, and two-term councillor JP Fraser are going head-to-head for the top position on Nov. 13.

"One of us is going to be gone is the bottom line," said Fraser about the vote.

"People are going to have to decide if they want a council that's more community involved or very closed."

Harding insists she has no personal issue with Fraser, and resents anyone suggesting otherwise.

"If there is a feud, it is certainly not created by me," Harding said.

"I hope that this is over soon, and whomever the community elects, that's

SHUNIAH

DECISION 2006

Municipal — Nov. 13

fine."

Harding was acclaimed in 2000 and 2003. Her last election challenge was in 1997 when she defeated Bob Zale by a wide margin. She previously beat Sam Selgrad in 1994.

Along with the reeve competition, Shuniah's 2,348 full-time residents have two other races to watch this year.

The McTavish ward is up for grabs as incumbent Bill Bartley has decided to run for Thunder Bay city council.

His departure leaves former Shuniah

councillor Jo-Anne Hamelin, and political newcomers Alana Bishop and Robert Tindall in the McTavish race.

In the more-populous MacGregor ward, five candidates are vying for three seats on Shuniah council. Incumbent councillors Zale and Donna Blunt are joined in the race by first-time candidates Angela Calabiezzi-Kluensch, Ab Covello and Ron Giardetti.

2003 Shuniah vote results

Reeve - Maria Harding (acclaimed)
McTavish ward - Bill Bartley (acclaimed)
MacGregor ward - (Top 3 elected)
Bob Zale - 599
JP Fraser - 569
Donna Blunt - 559
Colin Griffin - 516
Jo-Anne Hamelin - 515
Bill LeCocq - 400
Ron DiGiuseppe - 298

Cottage conversion a priority for incumbent

AFTER 18 years on Shuniah council, Maria Harding says she still has some unfinished business to resolve.

The incumbent reeve's main priorities for the rural municipality over the next four years include cottage conversion, access roads for aggregate material, property standards bylaws and strategic planning.

The controversial cottage conversion issue has been debated nearly as long as Harding has been reeve.

Shuniah council addressed the issue in 2004, but has yet to amend its official plan to allow residents in certain areas to convert their seasonal cottages to full-time homes.

Harding said the Ministry of Municipal Affairs received Shuniah's bylaw and



Shuniah Reeve Maria Harding

sent it back with more than 30 changes.

"That is the stumbling point," Harding said.

"It has to be worked out with the ministry. We can pass any law we want. The ministry still has a say."

Harding said she hopes it doesn't take another term to resolve the situation, which she said will lead to "peace in the valley" when it's completed.

Another contentious issue is access to the McKenzie moraine, a pocket of valuable aggregate material used for road construction.

Some residents in that area have complained about gravel trucks passing by their homes. Harding said she wants to find a better way for people with aggregate material on their property to access it.

"We need to find a way of getting up in there without intruding on people's lives and standard of living," she said.

Challenger wants to hear from the people

REEVE candidate JP Fraser says there are many issues to address in Shuniah this election which "have been sitting on the backburner for years."

The top priority, he said, is having citizens involved in providing advice to council.

"I believe it's time to reinstitute community advisory committees," Fraser said.

"Over the last few years, these committees have gradually faded away."

The committees would keep council members better informed and assist the community with difficult decisions, such as cottage conversion.

After nine years of study, Fraser said it's time to allow cottage owners the opportunity to convert to full-time resi-



Shuniah Coun. JP Fraser

dences.

"There's been no real drive by the majority of council to push it forward," he

said.

Another major issue, Fraser said, is the Shuniah dump. The municipality was recently ordered to remediate the landfill area after auto shredder residue was dumped there several years ago.

Fraser said he objected to the dumping "which is now coming back to haunt us." He wants to see leachate containment systems installed to prevent lead from seeping into nearby wells.

Another priority for Fraser is implementing an economic development strategy to bring new businesses to Shuniah. He said council needs to expand the tax base, to take some of the pressure off residential taxpayers.

"Some residents have seen their taxes go up as much as 90 per cent because of higher assessment," he said.

New pit rules windfall for municipalities

BY BRYAN MEADOWS
NORTHWEST BUREAU

Thunder Bay area municipalities could benefit financially from changes in the provincial Aggregate Resources Act that result in more land being regulated and increased fees for gravel pit operations.

Effective Jan. 1, the act will be extended to private land not currently covered by regulations in southern Ontario and parts of central and Northern Ontario, including Thunder Bay District. Most private land in southern Ontario and all Crown land is already regulated.

Under the changes announced by Natural Resources Minister David Ramsay, annual fees for the aggregate industry will increase for the first time since 1990.

• Annual licence and wayside permit tonnage rate will rise to 11.5 cents per tonne, from six cents per tonne.

• Local municipalities will receive six cents per tonne, up from four cents, while upper tier municipalities will receive 1.5 cents per tonne, an increase of one cent per tonne.

• The minimum provincial royalty rate will increase to 50 cents per tonne from 25 cents. The rate for Crown-owned aggregate has not increased in more than 40 years, the ministry said.

By updating the fees, structures, Ramsay said, the province is getting fair return for the use of its natural resources and municipalities will receive additional revenue from aggregate operations.

The extra revenue generated will be used to enhance rehabilitation of pits and quarries, and allow the strengthening of compliance through the hiring of additional enforcement officers.

Designating new areas will mean that most significant aggregate resource production areas in Ontario will be subject to the act, Ramsay said.

"This will level the playing field, avoid unfair competition among aggregate operations and help protect the environment," he said.

Association of Municipalities of Ontario president Doug Reyecraft called the changes "a positive step forward" for rural municipalities.

"Municipal governments need help to offset the cost of wear and tear on local roads and bridges that come from aggregate extraction,"

Reycraft said in a news release. "(The) announcement will help us maintain the roads that transport this important resource."

Aggregates are any combination of sand, gravel or crushed stone, and are essential for construction and manufactured products such as glass and paint.

The Aggregate Resources Act provides for the management of aggregate resources, regulates aggregate operations, requires rehabilitation of land where aggregate has been extracted and minimizes the environmental effect of operations.

The legislation also calls for a public review of any potential environmental impacts resulting from new aggregate operations, and provides a system for monitoring, inspection and enforcement of regulatory requirements over the life of an operation.

Operations on Crown land are already subject to requirements under the Aggregate Resources Act.

Most private land in southern Ontario is also designated, but designation in Northern Ontario is limited to the Sudbury, Wawa and Sault Ste. Marie areas.

Tuesday, November 7, 2006

Fewer Americans head north

Tourism association marketing like crazy

BY SARAH ELIZABETH BROWN
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Despite more requests for information about the region this tourism season, the North of Superior Tourism Association is reporting a decrease in visitors.

The rising Canadian dollar and rising gas prices, uncertainty over whether passports are needed to cross the Canada-U.S. border and simply less time to travel are some of the reasons he thinks between seven and nine per cent fewer people are crossing the Pigeon River border from Minnesota compared to last year, said Bruce Fallen, NOSTA's executive director.

"You try, try, try to market, you do your best possible job at marketing in the Midwest," but it doesn't always translate into more people visiting, Fallen said Monday at the association's annual general meeting.

"We're not alone though."

Tourism groups across Ontario are noting declines in the number of Americans coming to Canada for a little rest and relaxation.

On the other hand, said Fallen, the North of Superior group got the word out about the region's attractions more than ever

this year.

More than 260 businesses belong to the association — up from about 150 two years ago.

Advertising revenue is up in Circle Tour publications, and the regional visitor guide and map.

Up to 15,000 people visit the tourism group's website each month — 450 per day.

In the coming year, the focus will be adding features to the website — blogs, contests or chat rooms — that keep potential visitors coming back.

And of the 3,000 website visitors who seek specific information, at least 20 per cent allow the association to pass on their contact information to tourism businesses.

"A lot of our members have said, 'We're getting more inquiries than ever before,'" said Fallen.

For Malcolm Leuenberger, owner of Leuenberger's Fly-in Lodge north of Nakina, that translated into about 100 new requests for details he's never had before.

He won't know until next year when clients check in if they found his lodge through the NOSTA website.

"It's a really good tool to use," he said of the site. "It's only going to improve when they get all the kinks worked out."

Thursday, November 9, 2006

Past mayor back in political arena

NOBODY would ever accuse Pat Richardson of mincing words. She has returned to the political arena with her familiar blunt, no-nonsense style following a surprising defeat in 2003 to Dave Bell.

Richardson, who was mayor for two terms between 1997 and 2003, says she is appalled by what seems to her a return to the town's free-spending ways.

According to Richardson, the facts speak for themselves.

At the end of her second term, "we had over \$4 million in the bank, and all the debts were paid. After only three years, savings have gone down by \$2 million and we're \$2.5 million in debt.

"It's creative book-keeping," Richardson fumes. "There's no way we should be in this situation."

Richardson makes it plain that Marathon Pulp Inc. is paramount to the town's future.



PAT RICHARDSON

- **Age:** 64. Married with three children.
- **Occupation:** Retired bank worker.
- **Political Experience:** Former two-term mayor. Long-time school board chairwoman.

"It's important that they pay taxes to us so we can keep on going."

Richardson says it's a disgrace that the town's senior citizens were forced to

do odd jobs this summer just so they could have a place to meet.

"If this is the way we look at our seniors, then it's wrong," she says.

Richardson says the provincial government has to be made to understand that Northern Ontario municipalities face unique challenges and therefore need special funding.

But Northerners need to be realistic about their goals and shouldn't put too much stock in tourism as an economic saviour, she says.

They should also be wary of potentially hare-brained schemes, such as regional recycling programs that could never operate because of the high price of transporting recyclable material in the North.

"Recycling is important, but the reality is we are in the middle of nowhere," Richardson says.

Energy rebate proposal under fire

THE CANADIAN PRESS

A reports suggests Northern Ontario's beleaguered forestry industry is about to get a break on industrial hydro prices.

CBC radio says the McGuinty government has approved a rebate for pulp, paper, lumber and sawmill operations in the region, a move at least two Northern Ontario leaders say is headed in the wrong direction.

The report says the plan would only go ahead with industry support and could be announced next week.

Kenora Mayor Dave Canfield and NDP Leader Howard Hampton say an energy rebate program isn't the answer.

They both favour a regional energy pricing policy.

"I'm still advocating for the \$45 all-in," said Canfield, referring to the price for a megawatt-hour municipal leaders

are demanding.

Meanwhile, some in the government are reportedly concerned the move will set a dangerous precedent, and won't stand up to challenges from U.S. companies under NAFTA.

Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River) went a step further, saying the rebate proposal is part of a strategy that would help a few forestry companies, but wouldn't solve forestry problems and their impact on the Northern economy.

He said the Liberal government "will try to dress this up as something quite impressive, but I think it's pretty clear this will be a deal for a few select players.

"For the overall Northern economy, and the mills not involved, they'll continue to see jobs destroyed and more economic hardship," he said.

About two dozen mills have shut down in the region, eliminating 80,000 jobs, since the forestry crisis began about two years ago.



Howard Hampton

Political rivals go head-to-head in court, too

BY JONATHAN WILSON
THE CHRONICLE JOURNAL

The two candidates for reeve in Shuniah are quietly battling it out in court while they campaign against each other on the election trail.

Incumbent Maria Harding and challenger JP Fraser are named as applicant and respondent, respectively, in a conflict of interest case still to be fully argued in court.

Documents obtained this week by The Chronicle Journal — through the public legal website www.canlii.org — indicate the two longtime foes are mired in a

bitter dispute dating back to the start of the year.

"She accused me of being a partner in the fire chief's business," Fraser confirmed.

"It is not personal," responded Harding.

"There was an opportunity to right all this and I wished that it had been avoided."

A preliminary court ruling delivered by Justice Helen Pierce in June indicates the dispute began when Shuniah administrator Eric Collingwood noticed Fraser's name tied to fire chief David

Drainville's business, at the same time the chief's position was being voted on.

Fraser, who previously voted on "several" issues involving Drainville, denies the conflict of interest allegation.

"I am not a partner or an employee or anything else," he said.

"As a personal favour, I built a website for him. It's like changing a flat tire for a friend."

But Collingwood — acting under the municipality's ethical behaviour bylaw — brought the issue to the rest of Shuniah council, which voted in March to pursue conflict of interest pro-

ceedings against Fraser.

Shuniah's solicitor was to handle the case. Harding volunteered to launch the court application as a private citizen, with the municipality paying her legal bills.

Fraser challenged the legalities of those moves. Justice Pierce ruled in Fraser's favour that a municipal solicitor cannot work against one of its own councillors, nor can the municipality cover Harding's legal bills. Both rulings are under appeal.

Harding said she supported pursuing the case, but regrets having her name tied to the application.

"If I'd known the end result, I wouldn't have been the one (volunteering) when the request came to move forward with it," she said.

"This was the advice we were given, so I'm sitting here with the consequences."

In September, Fraser's attempt to have the matter quashed because of its potential effect on this month's election was denied by Justice John Wright.

The case is expected to be back in court in March.

• Continued on page A4

Court action seen as political payback

• Continued from page A1

Both Fraser and Harding had attempted to keep the court proceedings quiet.

"I don't want to drag this into the election campaign," Harding said. "It's not good for Mr. Fraser or myself."

She added that the decision by Shuniah council required three votes, and she was only one of them.

Fraser blames Harding for moving the application. He said the legal battle is "very indicative" of the strained relationship between the reeve and him since he was first elected to Shuniah council in November 2000.

In 2005, Fraser challenged Harding with conflict of interest allegations when she voted on a possible sale of beachfront property to the Eldorado

Beach Campers Association.

Harding owns the Eldorado Beach Bed & Breakfast.

"I felt that it would be a benefit to her business," Fraser said, "and therefore (she) should not have been involved in that."

Harding had obtained a legal opinion that she was not in a conflict of interest.

Fraser sees the court application as political payback.

"I do one thing, she does something else," he said.

Harding said she wants to rise above such attacks.

"I don't relish in mudslinging. It is unfortunate that it is happening," she said. "I will not lower myself to that level of publicity."

Harding acknowledged she may have called Fraser a "troublemaker" in the past.

"If I say it, I say it in front of his face, I don't say it behind his back."

Race for reeve/A9