

# Business property tax increases' new limits set

Ontario Finance Minister Eves announced today that the province's business education cut will be accelerated in 2001, resulting in a 10 per cent increase for businesses of all sizes. The province also introduced new limits on property tax increases to five per cent a year, replacing the

existing 10-5-5 limits which end Dec. 31. For 2001 and subsequent years, all municipalities would be required to limit reform-related tax increases on commercial, industrial and multi-residential properties to five per cent per year. The limit remains in place until properties reach their current value assessment.

Dryden finance director Paul Heayn pointed out Friday, that the five per cent is over the 1997 figure, for 20 years. Municipalities are provided with mitigation tools to meet the limit on tax increases: a cap, optional property classes, graduated tax rates, municipal tax reductions, and phase-ins. For example, a cap would limit tax increases to five per cent above the previous year's annual taxes, rather than basing the limit on the pre-reform act 1997 taxes.

## Property owners' assessments used to calculate taxes

Four million property owners should be receiving their property assessment notices this week. The assessments are based on the estimated selling price of a property and are used by local municipalities to calculate property taxes for 2001 and

will remain relatively the same," explained Larry Hummel, vice-president of property values for OPAC.

He added that anyone, who thinks their property has been valued incorrectly, can contact the local property assessment office and ask for a reconsideration of their assessment.

The next valuation date will be June 30, 2001, for taxes due in 2003. Beginning with 2006 taxation year, OPAC will base all valuations on a rolling average of the previous three years.

Property owners should realize that their assess-

Certain property that is classified in the commercial, industrial or multi-residential property class would be excluded from the limit, such as:

- property in territory without municipal organization;
- farmland awaiting development;
- property subject to payments in lieu of taxes;
- certain generation and transformer facilities.

The limit doesn't apply to property in the residential, farmland, managed forest and pipeline property classes.

According to the government, municipalities would have increased flexibility to reduce high property taxes, by moving to reduce the tax

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n Observer - Nov 21/00

rate voters' list is one thing  
Lemieux would like to see  
addressed before the next  
municipal election.

"I'm suggesting the par-  
ties meet and see if there is  
some way of fine-tuning the  
process," Lemieux said.  
Those parties would  
include the Ontario Proper-  
ty Assessment Commis-  
sion, the two local school  
boards and the municipali-  
ty.

The clerk said she had  
received very few com-  
plaints about the process.  
Most calls had to do with  
ensuring the ballot  
remained secret, she said.

The vast majority of vot-  
ers delivered their ballots  
in time. As of Thursday, city  
hall had received only three  
late ballots in the mail. Ten  
ballots were listed as  
spoiled.

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# Treasurer holds his breath over mill's tax break

BY BRYAN MEADOWS  
NORTHWEST BUREAU

Dryden may have to look for additional tax revenue following a reassessment of Weyerhaeuser's local pulp and paper mill.

City treasurer Paul Heayn said yesterday an assessment review board has lowered the mill's property assessment.

While he won't know the exact figure for two weeks, Heayn said he has been "talking with mill officials here, and they've given me

## DRYDEN

some comfort level.

"(While) it is substantial, (the mill reassessment) is no where near the problem Marathon had," he said.

Marathon had to pay a \$1.6-million tax refund to Marathon Pulp Inc. in 1998 due to a mill property reassessment.

The Marathon mill had argued for years that its buildings were over-valued for tax purposes.

Weyerhaeuser's mill pays 52 per cent of Dryden's municipal

taxes. That's more than \$3 million annually, according to the city's 2000 budget document.

While the assessment for tax purposes "didn't change appreciably," Heayn said even a one-per-cent cut can affect other municipal taxpayers.

"When one property owner pays 52 per cent of the tax revenue, any change impacts greatly on other tax revenue sources," he said.

"As treasurer of the municipality I can appeal their reassessment," Heayn said.

He said the city has other options if the mill assessment isn't appealed.

"There are some other assessments that may increase this year which might offset the mill's reduction," he said.

Heayn said the revenue decrease could be shared by other commercial and residential ratepayers in the form of a tax increase.

He said he felt the drop in the mill property assessment "is manageable."

Dryden mill spokesmen

weren't prepared to comment yesterday.

When the Marathon mill won its property tax appeal for 1996 and 1997, the total value of its buildings was reduced to \$10 million from \$14 million.

The situation in 1998 left Marathon in a financial hole and highlighted the fact it had virtually no rainy-day fund for such emergencies.

The province agreed to help pay the refund after the town proved it had taken steps to trim its operating budget.

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## Ambulance negotiations continue

BY BRYAN MEADOWS  
NORTHWEST BUREAU

Kenora district land ambulance service delivery negotiators are being tight-lipped about progress, if any, in talks held over the past three weeks.

"We hope to provide recommendations to the board one way or the other" following two more days of talks next week, Kenora District Services Board administrator Sten Lif said yesterday.

KDSB officials and representatives of four district hospitals met for a second time last week to try and iron out a multi-year agreement to continue land ambulance service after Jan. 1.

That's when municipalities take control of land ambulance services across the province as part of a provincial downloading exercise.

Lif said negotiators "hope to finalize things next week."

He refused to provide details about the negotiations which are being held under a media blackout.

"We'll see what we get next week," he said.

The KDSB is expected to make a decision on land ambulance delivery at a Dec. 14 meeting.

Last month the board rejected a proposal from a Manitoba firm to provide a privately-run land ambulance service.

### HEALTH

Meeting today about KDSB providing land ambulance service on its own

Officials have tried since then to negotiate an agreement with the four hospitals which are providing service in the Dryden, Kenora, Sioux Lookout, Red Lake and Ignace areas.

Meanwhile, the KDSB is pursuing certification from the Ministry of Health to provide land ambulance services directly should negotiations with the hospitals fail.

The board and ministry are to meet today to go over certification criteria.

The KDSB has assured the public and paramedics that there will be a publicly-run land ambulance service as of Jan. 1.

While the KDSB has negotiated agreements with Sioux Narrows and Pickle Lake, it has failed in talks with the four district health centres which have issued layoff notices to all ambulance atten-





# Pickle Lake

By Graeme Mackechnie

HERE would seem to be another mass exodus from Pickle Lake particularly from Wasaya. Dave is leaving for so we will also ia and baby. Wardo g the ranks and I

imagine Janelle will be going too. Linda Peake is off to Keswick sometime in the near future. Tom Meilleur is leaving the Wasaya ranks as well. Bob Bileski has his hands full with staffing problems; with no more hair to pull out in frustration what is next - Glen's?

A belated happy birthday to Linda Pickett and Ivan Trudel! Dec. 9 is a busy day starting with the Lions "Breakfast with Santa," the R.C. Church Craft and Bake Sale and the Wasaya Christmas fling. This Wasaya Christmas party promises to be bigger and better with a now experienced team, Bob and Glen manning the helm.

Bob Nault did pay a visit to Pickle Lake. I knew it would pay off for the Liberals. Bob was re elected!

Bob visited the Lions Craft and Bake Sale - everyone in town must have been there. I believe he ended up holding one of the winning draw tickets. Thanks for the visit - we know we're not forgotten now.

Last time I inquired Canterra had 40 loads out of the Pickle Crow Site. I believe this phase of the bulk sample should be completed soon. I haven't been out to the site but I understand that they have quite a trench blasted out. Avalon has been working up at Lilypad Lake. It would be interesting to see if their stock is doing anything. I do know that our Northern Store has been doing a good business providing their supplies.

Natasha Menard and Ryan Mousseau will soon be tying the knot. Erica Graham is off to Africa to be married over the Christ-

mas holidays and Carla??

Volleyball is in full swing at Crolancia. Tuesday night at 7:00 pm everyone is welcome, so come on down. The ice is finally staying frozen in the arena. Harold got three floods on it yesterday and our rink. Mark was flooding during the night. Eric Brazeau is making the ice in the curling rink so be sure to stop in and tell him what he's doing wrong or...lend a hand.

Council has decided to have outgoing Mayor Jim Dalzell's name inscribed on our community plaque in recognition of his many years on council! I hope Jim doesn't drop his volunteer activities as the kids always enjoy being ye at by him at our Friday Night Fun Night. Wasaya is also looking for a Head Shipper and Receiver as Albert Van De Kraats has left for Dryden

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