

# Nfld. politicians ousted for unpaid taxes

BY MICHAEL MACDONALD  
THE CANADIAN PRESS

ST. JOHN'S, Nfld. — More than 130 local politicians in Newfoundland — including 21 mayors — have been thrown out of office for failing to pay their municipal tax bills on time.

Earlier this month, provincial officials said only two dozen councillors and mayors were fired because of a new law that prohibits municipal politicians from holding office if they owed taxes as of Jan. 1, 2000.

But that number swelled as the provincial government continued to collect late-payment notices from municipal managers.

In some cases, the amount of tax owing is less than \$50. One town has lost half of its six-member council.

Provincial officials have refused to release a list of the mayors who lost their jobs, citing privacy concerns.

When asked about the province's zero-tolerance approach toward tardy ratepayers, the municipal affairs minister said Tuesday she had no choice.

"It's the law," said Joan-Marie Aylward. "I've had numerous requests to make exceptions, but I don't have the ability to make exceptions."

Derm Flynn, president of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities, said he agreed with the intent of the revised law but suggested many councillors simply needed a bit more time to pay up.

"People just didn't take the act seriously enough . . . It's very surprising," said Flynn, who is also the mayor of Appleton, a town of 700 west of Gander.

"In most cases, these are volunteers getting no pay. But that in itself doesn't

Chronicle - Feb 23/00



# Underserviced title sought for Dryden

## Dryden Cares committee pursues medical designation

The Dryden Cares committee continues to pursue initiatives on several fronts in support of local physician recruitment efforts.

The committee is developing an application urging the Ministry of Health to designate Dryden as an underserviced area. The designation provides provincial grants to help underserviced communities attract physicians.

Committee chair Marilyn Burns anticipates the group will complete and submit its application for the underserviced area designation by the end of March.

"It puts us at a disadvantage in the region as Kenora, Fort Frances, Sioux Lookout and Red Lake are designated as underserviced," she related. "So when they go recruiting, they have the advantage of being able to offer physicians the additional incentive of \$10,000 a year over four years."

Burns noted as fewer family physicians practise in Dryden, the workload on those who remain increases, due in part to the lack of visiting specialist services or referrals across the region.

The group is also launching a publicity campaign this week seeking letters of support from area residents regarding the declining level of health care services in the community. ☆

## Tell your story

*The Dryden Observer* is interested in hearing from area residents about their experiences with health care. What problems did you face:

- in obtaining examination and treatment;
- in travelling for specialist care;
- length of time you had to wait before treatment;
- and number of times you had to travel for care?

Other factors which can be noted:

- hardship on family members or friends, who may have to accompany you;
- financial burden of accommodation, missing work time;
- what cost was covered by Northern Health Travel grants and medical insurance and what was paid out-of-pocket;
- age and condition of patient.

## Township fined \$10,000 for work site violations

NORTHWEST BUREAU

The Township of Ear Falls has been fined \$10,000 for safety violations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

The township pleaded guilty in Red Lake Ontario Court of Justice last week to two counts of failing to ensure that construction measures and procedures under the regulations were followed during the installation of a new water main in the township's light industrial area.

Justice of the peace Marjorie Pasloski also fined project supervisor Ronald Underhill \$1,250 on each count.

A Ministry of Labour news release says the charges stemmed from an Aug. 4, 1998 incident in which a ministry investigator saw an employee working in a nine-foot deep trench with unsupported walls.

The excavated material was piled at the trench edge, also a contravention of construction regulations, the release says.

Chronicle - Mar 1/00



# Pickle Lake

By Graeme Mackechnie

WHAT can I say - by the time the news hit the things had changed. The timing cancelled the Pickle Lake Hockey Tournament and dance - apparently there was another tournament in Thunder Bay. Abby Brazeau med in to say he came in second in the Men's Bonspiel. Abby forgive! You are number two. We had our Northern Advisory Committee

meeting; the two hot topics were customer service and the quality of produce. I think the committee was surprised how little control the store manager actually has; things are dictated from Head Office just like Eatons.

The Ladies' Bonspiel was a success - the girls really know how to have a good time! Lisa and her work crew deserve a big hand for their efforts. I have rarely seen a dance so well attended. Disc jockey

Theodore Mishenene and his minions did an excellent job with the music and lights. Out of town guests curling in the spiel were Nicole & Natalie Rice, Grace Seguin, Shelby Zawada, Josette Roch, Gwenda Wilson, Trina Dingwall, Nikki, Jen Pickett and Donna Wing. Shelby says come down next year. "You too can have a real hoot!" Donny Macklin flew in from Thunder Bay for the Ladies Bonspiel as well. Winners were: "A" event Debbie Chartrand rink, "B" event Norma Byrne rink and "C" event Lucy Hoffman rink.

Maria Palawaran and Dave Connell are the proud parents of a bouncing baby girl, Ireland. And Tammy

and Mark Scott are the new parents of a baby boy - Logan James. Congratulations!! Mark and Dave will be soon trading in their BIG BOY TOYS for the regular kid kind.

Louise Slemko was in town for a visit to her old stomping ground. Unfortunately Louise rolled her vehicle just outside town on her drive in from Thunder Bay. Fortunately Louise wasn't hurt but the borrowed vehicle didn't fare as well.

The Township is trying to raise \$57,000 to purchase an X-Ray machine. At present everyone who has to have an X-Ray taken has to get themselves to Sioux Lookout, an expensive and time consuming

undertaking. All donations are welcome at the township office. I myself am donating \$100.00 and challenge other councillors to top that.

The recreation Committee is holding a spaghetti dinner at the hall on March 18 at 5:00 p.m. The price is so low for this dinner that you should be ashamed if you don't attend. And NO Ed, it's not all you can eat.

And now for the winners of the Annual Kids Bonspiel; "A" Div. Jodi Carson rink, "B" Div. Patrick Hoffman rink, "C" Div. Alex Lawson rink. 48 kids participated. Thank you Lucy and your volunteer crew.

Keep your eye on that

Jonpol stock. Maybe they will hit something big at Pickle Crow.



Sometime Friday evening, 18 February 2000, someone stole an envelope containing five hundred dollars (\$500.00) cash from a Youth Rally at the Legion in Sioux Lookout. The money had been sitting on a table in the main hall when it was taken.

Anyone with information about this or any crime should call Northwestern Ontario Crimestoppers at 1-800-222-8477 (1-800-222-TIPS). You could earn a cash reward. You do not have to give your name.

Sioux Bulletin

March 1/00

# Goldcorp backs road project

*Chronicle  
Mar 4  
2000*

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Goldcorp Inc. owner and CEO Ronald McEwen has thrown his financial weight behind the Werner Lake Road project.

Goldcorp contributed \$100,000 to a budget to see if the idea could get support.

Building a road west from Red Lake to Manitoba was raised at the Kenora District Municipal Association conference in Ear Falls and received unanimous approval.

The meeting was held in early February.

McEwen said if the three levels of government would get behind the idea, it would create business and open up the area for more forestry and mining operations.

The creation of Werner Lake Road would mean a northern route into Manitoba.

"There would be a tremendous amount of traffic on this road, it would be a huge artery in the North, opening the region for further recreation opportunities," said McEwen.

## Uncle's warm mitts

Taylor Johanson receives help from uncle Art Wilson in putting on gloves to keep her hands dry. She was enjoying an afternoon at the Dryden Chamber of Commerce Ice Masters Fishing Tournament at Flat Rock last Sunday.

Warner Bloomfield photo

# Municipalities pay more to public health service

The Northwestern Health Unit (NHU) needs more money this year to deliver provincially mandated programs and the organization is looking to municipalities to help foot the bill.

The health unit's board of directors approved its 2000 budget Feb. 18, including a \$1.27 per capita hike from municipalities.

The increase raises the municipal rate from \$31.73 to \$33 per resident and

increases the City of Dryden's contribution by \$9,818 to \$255,123. The increase will generate an additional \$70,000 in revenue across the district. The health unit is also drawing \$150,000 from its reserves, to accommodate this year's total budget of \$7,367,590. The \$450,000 reserve fund is normally used for NHU response to health and civic emergencies in the district.

Dryden Mayor Roger

Valley noted the increase isn't a large amount compared to previous years. However, he added that if the NHU board was planning to increase the per capita rate, the municipality should have been informed.

"There were no discussions between the NHU and council," Mayor Valley said. "We understand that costs go up, but we don't want to return to the days

(continued on page 2)



# Municipalities pay more to health

(continued from page 1)  
where increases are mandated without consultation."

NHU administration team leader Wayne Har- chard said the province pro- vides 70 per cent of the health unit budget and increased its contribution by 23.7 per cent this year. The Ministry of Health also calls the shots on mandated programs the health unit must provide.

"The provincial health status report noted the bur-

den of preventable injury and illness is higher in the northwest than the rest of the province," he said. "These are things the health unit is trying to pre- vent."

The NHU will allocate the additional revenue to offset inflation, pay wage increases and to hire more staff, including: a full-time health inspector, a full-time health promoter, a part-time nutritionist, and a part-time accounting clerk.

★

# Sandy Beach limit to stay at 70 km/h

Sandy Beach Road and area residents challenged a motion before Dryden city council and won. At Mon- day's (Feb. 28) meeting, a delegation submitted a pre- sentation and petition opposed to lowering the road's speed limit to 50 km/h from the current 70 km/h.

The council motion had already passed first and

required to make the motion a bylaw. Instead, council unanimously defeated the public works department recommenda- tion and committed the city to bringing Sandy Beach Road up to standard. City engineer Tom McConnell said Dryden will have to spend more than the \$200,000 previously invest- ed to bring the road up to

the Victorian Order of Nurses.

Nursing, administration, dietary, maintenance and activity departments move from Patricia Gardens to the long-term care residence. The program transfer requires staff to apply for jobs with the new employer, the District of Kenora Home for the Aged, which manages long-term care homes in communities across the district, such as Pinecrest in Kenora and the new Eden facility.

District homes for the aged executive director Kevin Queen is aware of



**Keewatin-Patricia**

**Keewatin-Patricia I  
Regular Bo**

**Tuesday, M  
7:00**

**Sprucedale  
Dryden**

*The public can access this  
meetings when held out of  
the Dryden Warehouse at 26  
site on the second Tuesday  
open when the meeting*

*The site for all Committee  
Lillian Berg School in  
the fourth Tuesday of  
The public is u*

**Norma Ewen  
Chairperson**

# Time spent at work merits good pay: mayor

BY CARL CLUTCHEY  
NORTH SHORE BUREAU

## MARATHON

The amount Marathon taxpayers pay their local politicians has come under budget for the second year in a row.

But while town council appears to be keeping a lid on travel and other expenses, there are no plans to bring the mayor's salary in line with what other North Shore communities pay.

In a report highlighted by Marathon Mayor Pat Richardson this week, council's total 1999 remuneration is pegged at almost \$52,000.

The amount, which covers salaries and travel expenses for Richardson and four councillors, came in at \$32,000 under budget.

"You never know what (the cost) will be, so you have to budget for the worst-case scenario," Richardson said.

Richardson's base salary is about \$16,500 — roughly twice the pay, on average, earned by her counterparts on the North Shore.

White River's mayor earns

\$6,000, while in Terrace Bay the pay is \$9,000.

The City of Dryden, whose population is 40 per cent larger than Marathon's, pays its mayor \$11,000 before expenses.

Richardson defended her salary, saying she spends at least half a day at town hall five days per week.

After two years on the job, "I think it's fair compensation," she said. "I don't think \$16,000 is out of line."

Opinions on the mayor's salary differ.

"I do feel (the amount) is excessive when you compare it to other communities," said former Marathon councillor and local merchant Julie Sparrow.

"This is nothing against (Richardson) or the job she's doing," Sparrow said. "It's a matter of whether the mayor's job is worth that much."

Sparrow, who failed to get the previous council to lower the

mayor's compensation, said \$12,000 would be a fair amount.

Marathon Chamber of Commerce past president and restaurant operator Sandra Svenkeson said she doesn't think \$16,000 is high in light of the time commitment required to be the town's mayor.

"This is an elected position, not a volunteer position," Svenkeson said. "That's not to suggest (the salary) should go any higher."

Sparrow said she thinks people would still run for council if there was no salary, and only travel and other expenses were covered.

"You learn so much," she said, reflecting on her experience in town politics. "I just about fell over when they told me you get paid for this."

When Richardson took office in 1997, she made a point of ensuring council's expenses were well publicized — something she said wasn't done by the previous administration.

Chronicle - March 2/00



# City returns to municipal league

*Thunder Bay pulled out 6 years ago over membership fees*

BY DAVE LAMMERS

THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Thunder Bay is back in the league.

Mayor Ken Boshcoff said Sunday the city's rejoining the Thunder Bay District Municipal League which consists of 18 other area municipalities was a matter of "mending fences."

Thunder Bay pulled out of the league that bears its own name six years ago, citing financial reasons.

Boshcoff said league membership fees have since dropped to \$2,400 a year from around \$16,000.

"It's nice to be able to talk to (Thunder Bay) again," Shuniah Reeve Maria Harding said Sunday at the Municipal League's annual meeting.

The league deals with issues including provincial downloading of services to municipalities in the district.

Topics at the weekend session in Thunder Bay included the privatization of highway maintenance and amalgamation of municipalities recently carried out in other areas of Ontario.

Harding said Shuniah will survive

any bid by the province to amalgamate outlying municipalities with Thunder Bay.

"The people of Shuniah would like to stay the people of Shuniah and probably will," she said.

"There is a democracy in the province — I hope it's practised."

Boshcoff said member municipalities

have to work together to solve common problems.

He added a provincial proposal for area services boards that looks at combining services of municipalities may be a step toward restructuring.

The league is opposed to the proposal.

Harding dismissed the proposal as "a different way of doing business."

Chronicle-Journal  
Mar 6/00

# y council deserves ter pay: committee

MEADOWS  
BUREAU

citizen's committee wants  
r city councillors.

something wrong when)  
are paid less than students  
rgers," committee spokes-  
a Madden told Dryden coun-

community has the lowest tax  
r council receives 35-45 per  
n their counterparts in other  
rn Ontario communities,"

amittee, we'd like council's  
to review their stipends and  
with recommendations."  
agreed to the committee re-

remely difficult for elected  
discuss the issue of compensa-  
n Mayor Roger Valley said.  
r receives an annual \$11,200  
the city, while councillors  
half that.  
rs also receive \$100 per day

## DRYDEN

for meetings, or \$50 for half-day civic du-  
ties.

Madden said she began researching  
the local council's pay after a newspaper  
report last fall listed what others.

"I began to feel that the citizens of  
Dryden were not treating their mayor  
and council very fairly," she said.

Madden said the eight-member citi-  
zens committee consists of a broad cross  
section.

Valley, who is retiring from municipal  
politics this year, said "it is time to dis-  
cuss the issue."

"I agree with you totally. It is some-  
times embarrassing to say what we  
paid."

Coun. Brian England said council  
compensation is a tough issue.

"(But) we have to ensure that there is  
adequate compensation . . . so that we  
can attract a large number of qualified  
candidates for the job," he said, adding  
"you have to give up a fair amount of  
time to serve on council."

Chronicle - Mar 7/00



# Pickle Lake couple \$1 1/4 million richer

SPECIAL TO THE  
BULLETIN

BY GRAEME MACKECHNIE

**T**HE last time I saw Bob Courchene he wasn't just "whistling dixie," he gave me a heart rending rendition of "That Old Gal of Mine." Bob's wife, Pam, bought a \$5 dollar Keno ticket that brought home \$1,250,000.

Pam's ticket buying habits have been a subject of some humor in Pickle Lake but now some of us are laughing out the

other sides of our faces.

And what did Pam do last week? She went to play Bingo! Both Pam and Bob said it hasn't really sunk in yet. There are no plans for retirement either. "We are going to take care of our kids," said Bob. "And I guess we can afford to buy our grandson Andy a windshield for his snow machine, if we can find a good used one!"

Congratulations Pam & Bob from your bestest friend in the whole wide world,...and your other acquaintances too!

*Sione Bulletin*

*Mar 8/00*

Mawataj

March 9, 2000

# Mushkegowuk wins workfare appeal

Harris says  
we'll find  
other ways to  
force workfare  
onto First  
Nations

First Nations won't  
have to impose the  
province's work-for-welfare  
rules on their own  
people, according to an  
Ontario Court of Appeal  
ruling. But that won't  
stop the province from  
trying someone else to  
administer the program  
for them.

That's the so-called  
non-win ruling, handed  
down on February 28.  
The province had  
appealed the August  
court decision that said  
workfare legislation  
interfered with the self-  
government of First  
Nations.

The court took care to

"We are pleased that  
the court has recognized  
the independence of  
First Nations govern-  
ments in the context of  
social assistance,"  
Martin said of the part  
of the ruling that says  
First Nations don't have  
to be administrators for  
provincial laws they  
don't agree with.

But the ruling doesn't  
go far enough, he says.

"The province has said  
it could force First  
Nations to implement  
workfare and it is now  
clear that that is legally  
wrong," he said.

And Martin says he's  
willing to go to the  
Supreme Court on the  
workfare issue, if  
Ontario Premier Mike  
Harris continues to  
ignore the constitution-  
al right to self-govern-  
ment.

For its part, the  
provincial government  
has said they will not  
abandon their workfare

for-nothing policies of  
the past.

"We don't want to let  
anyone down," he  
added.

Baird said the  
province hasn't yet  
devised a plan to get  
workfare into First  
Nations that won't  
administer the program  
themselves.

But Harris said out-  
side agencies could be  
hired.

"If a band decides they  
won't deliver the pro-  
gram, or don't want to,  
then we'll deliver it," the  
premier said.

Martin says there isn't  
enough work to go  
around in First Nations  
communities, so making  
people find jobs to justi-  
fy their welfare cheque  
simply won't work.

The appeal court rul-  
ing is based on the 1965  
federal-provincial wel-  
fare agreement which  
requires the province to  
obtain First Nation's



# Sveinson resigns from council

*(continued from page 1)*  
and difficult time," the mayor recalled. "You're moving on to NORA and I'm sure you will do great things for that organization as well."

City administration is reviewing options regarding the vacancy for the remaining months of the current council's term in office. The seat could be filled either by election, appointment or remain vacant pending municipal elections in the fall. ★

Ruled ineligible

# Keith Sveinson resigns from Dryden council

By Reg Clayton

Coun. Keith Sveinson resigned from Dryden city council at its regular meeting Monday evening (March 13).

Last week, council granted Sveinson a temporary leave of absence, while he determined whether he could continue serving the municipality after accepting a position as coordinator for the Northwest Ontario Recycle Association (NORA).

Sveinson received a response from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing that his new job rendered him ineligible to serve on council.

"Anyone who works for such a board is ineligible to serve on council," Sveinson related. "Council was being put into a situation where either I resigned or they

lates that an employee of the municipality or of a local board is not eligible to be elected or hold office as a member of council.

NORA falls within the definition, as the association is supported financially by member municipalities who also appoint representatives to its board of directors.

Council accepted Sveinson's resignation with regret. Mayor Roger Valley and councillors noted Sveinson's extensive contributions during his 15 years of public service on the current Dryden and the former Township of Barclay councils. Sveinson was first elected to office in 1983 and served as a councillor on both municipal boards, as well as Barclay reeve.

Valley commended the councillor for his wit, good humour and foresight par-

Dryden Observer - Mar 14/83



# Homelessness groups funded

The Kenora District Services Board has allocated \$60,000 to four area organizations working to address the problem of homelessness.

The four organizations are: the Kenora District Fellowship Centre, the Kenora Mayor's Committee on Homelessness, the Red Lake Emergency Shelter Corporation and the

Sioux Lookout Out-of-the-Cold Program.

"This brings a total of \$100,000 that has been allocated to organizations dealing with homelessness in the past two years throughout the Kenora district," stated services board administrator Sten Lif.

Sioux Lookout Out-of-the-Cold Program steering committee member Marilyn Koval says the funding will help the volunteer organization in its efforts to keep the shelter open three nights a week during the coldest months of the year.

"The shelter continues to receive enormous support from the people of Sioux Lookout, the surrounding communities, and communities in the north, reflecting a widespread concern about homelessness and the risk people face in Sioux Lookout of freezing to death in winter," Koval said. "In

fact, the program has run exclusively on the generosity of volunteers from the Sioux Lookout area who have provided over 1,500 hours to keep the shelter open Friday to Sunday, 8 p. m. to 8 a. m., during the coldest months of winter."

The Sioux Lookout shelter has provided accommodation to more than 700 overnight visitors since it opened for the winter season on Oct. 15. It attracts about 20 people nightly during February and March. ☆

*Orinda Observer  
Mar 14/00*

# Northern telecommunications get \$5 million in funding

THE CHRONICLE JOURNAL

The province announced \$5 million in funding to boost telecommunications in Northwestern Ontario Thursday.

A total of \$16 million will be divided among centres in Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, North Bay and Timmins.

"We're hoping to put Northern communities on a more level playing field and make them equal partners in the information age," Premier Mike Harris said in a video conference session from his home riding of North Bay.

The funding provided to the Northwest represents one quarter of the \$20 million required to

complete the multiyear project in the region. The rest is to be raised by utilities partnering in the project and other government grants.

The telecommunications network, which includes wired and wireless communications, includes high speed Internet access and videoconferencing.

The technology is to be delivered by utilities in the North, including Thunder Bay Telephone and Dryden Telephone.

Applications include distance education and telemedicine — the diagnosing of patients from afar.

Ron Saddington, chief executive officer of Thunder Bay Regional Hospital, said such ad-

vances will benefit remote communities in the North that currently have "no health care to speak of."

The 807 telephone area code network includes communities in the areas of Kenora, Red Lake, Fort Frances, Dryden, Thunder Bay, Armstrong, Nipigon, Terrace Bay and Geraldton.

Harris said the telecommunications network will boost job creation and the overall economy in the region.

Les Mayes, chairman of 807-Net, said the prosperity to be gained from the so-called information highway compares to the growth of industry as a result of the Trans-Canada Highway and national railway.

Chronicle - Mar 17/00



# Welfare-to-work policy 'a good thing'

JOURNAL

about Thunder Bay's minimum targets for placements rage on, one main is the welfare-to-work policy has been of benefit to

a good thing," says Flaherty, whose placement group led to a paying

you're a young mother home with the child, it be forced into it. But if you're not, you should do it." Flaherty, who has done two placements and now juggles

over. "I'm right now because of the program," she says.

people involved in "workfare" programs in Thunder Bay compared to the

who are interested in opportunities are growing. Flaherty, acting program manager under Bay's Ontario

we don't call it "workfare" — we call it "workfare" in Flaherty. "We try to give people an opportunity to get off the welfare system. Most people do that. It's not a derogatory

Ontario Works, which is a social welfare Act in May 1994. It's not only welfare but also social assistance. In order to secure a placement, able-bodied participants must be one of three compo-

support: while they are on welfare, they can receive help



BRENT LINTON/THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

**Sharon Klumpner of the Thunder Bay and District Humane Society holds a shelter cat, a frequent companion while she works**

skills — "with the hope that at the end of the placement there will be some type of employment potential there," says Flaherty.

Both Klumpner and Rocheleau are examples of how community placement can help them get off welfare.

"For me it was a success because it got me back at working," says Klumpner.

The single mom with daughters ages nine and seven spent nine months helping staff at the Thunder Bay and District

Judy Atkinson.

"We think it's an excellent program." The humane society now has three others on placement.

But while Klumpner has now gotten off social assistance — or received that vital "hand up" instead of a "handout," as government officials have termed it — it has come with drawbacks.

"When I found out I didn't qualify anymore there was a joyous moment," she recalls. "But when I found out the

person now," says Klumpner.

Not that she wasn't before. She did lunchroom supervision at her daughters' school, was involved in her local church and was a caregiver for her ailing mother and an elderly gentleman.

All of which made her feel like a contributing member of society.

"I did those other things to help my community," she says. "There might be more of a sense of pride (now with this job). But I've always been proud of myself."

Rocheleau and her two kids had been on social assistance since November 1994. When her marriage ended, all three of them had to go through counselling because they were an "emotional wreck."

Over that time, she volunteered at the Shelter House as a cook and has since done two community placements. Last month, she secured two part-time jobs and is taking various courses to upgrade her skills.

"They brought up my self-esteem so much and made me a better person," she says of these experiences.

"I recommend that to anybody: go out and do something to get your self-esteem back," she added. "Try your hardest to get off the system."

## Workfare in selected regions

	Caseloads with mandatory requirements	Minimum target (15% of Mandatory Caseload)	Total Activity	% of minimum target
Ottawa	22,732	3,410	577	17%
Thunder Bay	2,288	343	65	19%



# 'Common Sense' welfare numbers bewildering

BY JULIO GOMES  
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

It's been almost five years since the Common Sense Revolution swept across Ontario and nearly two years since the welfare system was renamed Ontario Works.

The most controversial aspect of delivering social assistance has, of course, been the concept of welfare-to-work. But while the requirement that people perform unpaid community service in order to keep their support has become a contentious issue, so has the numbers of how many people are actually involved.

But the concept popularly known as "workfare" is one component of what's available to Ontario Works participants.

Along with community participation, welfare recipients can receive employment supports (such as job-search services and travel allowances) and employment placement (referral to a job placement or employment development agency).

In order to receive support, recipients need to develop a participation agreement, which will outline how they will try to find a job.

Community placements are opportunities to, as the provincial government says, "contribute to your community while you learn basic work and life skills."

Flaherty admits the level of participation in the community placement component is not as high in Thunder Bay as other cities are reporting because there has been a resistance on the part of community and non-profit groups to get involved.

The latest stats from the Min-

istry of Community and Social Services (April to December 1999) show that Ottawa and Thunder Bay are at the bottom in terms of meeting the province's target for participation in community placement (15 per cent of caseloads with mandatory requirements.)

Thunder Bay's rate is listed at 19 per cent, compared to almost 400 per cent in Kenora and 600 per cent in Timiskaming.

Overall, the participation rate is 74 per cent of the minimum target.

Why is Thunder Bay's performance rate so low?

Flaherty suggests it's because Thunder Bay is "pretty diligent in how we record our statistics."

For example, a placement has to involve a minimum of 17 hours of work a week and not all volunteer activities count.

But one group disputes the level of participation. The Canadian Union of Public Employees is preparing a study to try to get "a real handle" on the numbers.

"Those numbers are absolutely bogus," says CUPE Ontario president Syd Ryan of the high rates of participation. "I can guarantee you there are very, very few people in this province working for their welfare cheque."

He says that anything in Ontario Works is included in the participation numbers, such as involvement in a training program, and "minor little projects" such as clearing trails and painting buildings.

As well, municipalities may

## WORKFARE

Five years into Mike Harris' 'Revolution,' work-for-welfare's success remains in dispute.

feel under pressure to report high numbers because the ministry has tied funding to provincial targets.

Municipalities that exceed the target are rewarded will be rewarded with additional funding. Those that do not meet their targets (as of March 31) will

have funding cut for the new fiscal year.

But a ministry spokesman defends the program and the participation rates.

"We're pretty confident the numbers are accurate," says Dan Miles, press secretary to Minister John Baird.

He says there are checks and balances in the system to make sure the numbers are not fudged.

"The bottom line is there are municipalities across Ontario that are doing a tremendous job getting community placements," says Miles.

Flaherty says the situation in Thunder Bay is improving. While those who are in the system (the majority of people leave before they spend six months on assistance) are the more difficult to serve, they are finding more opportunities and ideas for community placement.

To date, nearly 70 local groups are involved in this particular aspect of the program.

"I would say the number has steadily increased," says Flaherty.

But will it be enough to meet the minimum target and avoid a financial penalty?

Success stories/A3

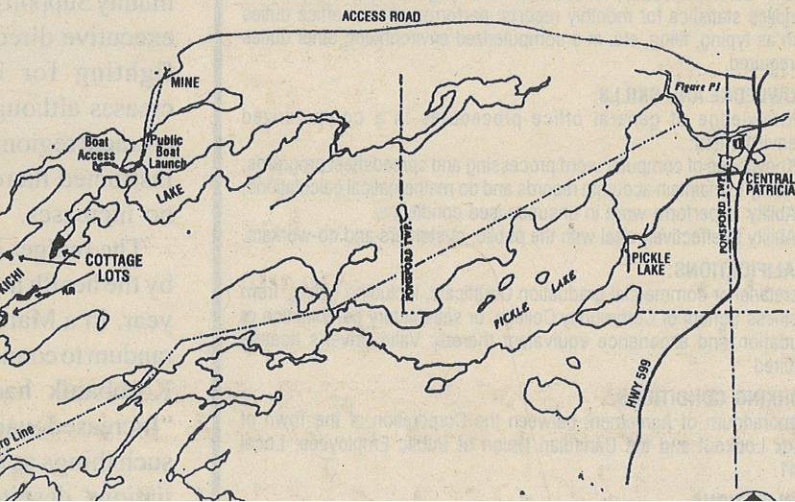
Chronicle - March 19/00



## Purchase of Crown Lands on Kapkichi Lake by the Township of Pickle Lake

require any further information, please contact **Karl Hopf**, Town Superintendent at:

Ministry of Natural Resources  
P.O. Box 309  
Sioux Lookout, Ontario P8T 1A6  
Tel: (807) 737-5041  
Fax: (807) 737-181 3  
Attn: Joe Muli, Senior Technician



### *Town staff to be shown appreciation*

Sioux Lookout town council will hold an all-staff appreciation event instead of observing Secretaries' Day April 26.

At its regular public meeting March 15 council endorsed a recommendation made by clerk Mary MacKenzie that council express appreciation to staff for their year-long service and dedication." In a March 1 memorandum, he noted that Professional Secretaries' Day has been somewhat controversial.

"In 1999, rather than having a Support Staff Appreciation Day, council sponsored a staff barbeque for all staff. This was very popular."

Council will hold an all-staff event soon and the administrative/human resources assistant will be given responsibility to come up with suggestions for it.