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West Nipissing This Week



Eight inducted into Sports Hall of Fame... page 9

Couple strikes gold at provincial tourney... page 9

WN students sweep at chess tourney... page 5



Highway 144 to Gogama was quite the mess as CN crews scrambled to clean up after the derailment March 7, and Nickel Belt MP Claude Gravelle needed a police escort to get to the smoke-infested, worried community.

Gogama derailment sparks more safety concerns over energy transport in Northern Ontario

BY ALLISON ROY

TRIBUNE

Nickel Belt MP Claude Gravelle was at an event in Sudbury when he received the news about the train derailment involving crude oil in Gogama, a community located 80 km south of Timmins off of Highway 144, on March 7. He also had an event scheduled in West Nipissing that evening, however that didn't stop Gravelle from travelling to Gogama with Nickel Belt MPP France Gelin, before driving back to Sturgeon Falls for a 6 pm engagement.

The derailment and subsequent oil spill into the river - the second in the area in just two weeks and the fourth in Northern Ontario - had Gravelle so concerned that he cut short his two-hour event in Sudbury to just 15 minutes, and headed immediately to Gogama, meeting up with Gelin along the way.

"The police had to meet us at the road block and from the road block they took us to the community centre in Gogama where everybody was situated," he recalls. "The OPP were there, the fire chief, the Gogama

board chair was there, and they gave us a debrief."

Gravelle says he was unable to speak with many residents in the community because they were told to remain indoors due to the thick smoke.

Gravelle spoke with officials as well as CN workers, and says everybody was really cooperating and working together, however he still has serious concerns about rail safety and the transportation of crude oil and other hazardous products through Northern communities, including West Nipissing.

"If the second one had happened two kilometers west of the actual site, it would have been right downtown Gogama and then we would have had not only an environmental tragedy, but it would have also been a human tragedy," Gravelle deplures.

He points out the general store, the restaurant, and the museum, along with other amenities, are all located downtown, by the railway tracks.

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Study to identify what and why people buy elsewhere

BY ALLISON ROY

TRIBUNE

What are WN consumers buying outside of the community and why? That's what the WN Chamber of Commerce wants to know, and they have been working with Laurentian

University students in an effort to find the answers. The results will help local businesses better respond to customer demand by identifying gaps and opportunities for growth.

Jolene Lisk, project manager, says the West

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T.J. MacGregor, husband of teacher Lynn, caught the biggest fish of the day during the first annual JAN Fishing Derby on March 8.

Teachers bond while ice fishing

BY ALLISON ROY

TRIBUNE

They traded the classroom for an ice hut and got a top grade for camaraderie. Staff and families from Jeunesse Active and Ecole secondaire publique Northern got together for their first ever JAN (Jeunesse Active Northern) Fishing Derby, which was a big hit with everyone and expected to become an annual event.

Held on Sunday, March 8, out in Lavigne near Oak Island, the event was or-

ganized by the French public school board's West Nipissing engagement committee. Stacy Lafleche, coordinator for student engagement, says the derby was scheduled from 10 to 3 p.m., however everyone was having such a great time that it ended up running until 5 p.m.

"We were trying to find something to increase the partnership between the staff at Jeunesse Active and Northern,"

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West Nipissing Council Report

Meetings held February 17 and March 3 Youth Friendly WN

Renee Anne Paquette, Coordinator of Community Services for the municipality, presented the WN Youth Committee to council and spoke about a new initiative proposed by the group. In attendance for the presentation was Sandee Guindon, Community Health Promoter, North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit, West Nipissing Police Service's Inspector Ray St. Pierre, Melanie Hebert, committee secretary, youth Ariana Shank, Nicholas Sénécal and Riley Renaud, and Celeste Auger-Proulx from the West Nipissing Community Health Centre.

Hebert and Sénécal talked about their proposed application to have WN designated as a Youth Friendly Community for 5 years. Sénécal said this would help to keep youth in the community, be a great marketing tool for the municipality, and build a healthier, stronger community. It was explained that there are 16 criteria to meet in order to receive the designation.

Going around the table, council was receptive to the initiative, giving the group the go-ahead.

WN using social media

Council approved the Social Media Policy for the municipality and authorized the Director of Community Services, Stephan Poulin, or his designate to open social media accounts on behalf of the town. The resolution came after council discussed increasing their use of social media at the Committee of the Whole meeting on February 10.

During that meeting, Poulin had presented council with a draft policy, saying that further entering into the social media realm would assist with marketing and communication efforts. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Google Plus and LinkedIn were identified for use by Poulin.

Jug Curling fundraiser

Council proclaimed the Annual Jug Curling Tournament in Verner as a community event. The event, being held on March 20, is a fundraiser for the Verner Figure Skating Club. According to documentation, on May 2, they will be hosting another fundraising event featuring a hypnotist.

Closed meeting

At the end of the February 17 meeting, council proceeded into a closed session to discuss a proposed or pending acquisition or disposition of land by the municipality or local board.

Committee of the Whole, March 3

Bid to bring back driving tests

An update was provided on the OGRA/ROMA Conference that took place in Toronto from February 22 to 25, where council and staff met with three provincial ministries.

CAO Jay Barbeau explained that they had requested a meeting with the Minister of Government and Consumer Services, David Oraziotti, with regards to Service Ontario, however shortly prior to the meeting, they were informed they would be meeting with a manager from the Ministry of Transportation, who was responsible for the contract of driving test centres.

Council wanted to have a driving test centre back in Sturgeon Falls. There are 56 driv-

ing test centers in the province and 39 travel points where tests are done on an occasional basis. WN delegates suggested that WN receive at least a travel point, however the manager explained that this would have to be negotiated with a nearby driving test centre.

"What kind of business case would we be making to have a company incur additional cost to go somewhere they're not going now? We thought it might be a public issue where the government would say that 'yes, West Nipissing residents deserve to be served better,'" Barbeau shared, adding that it was not the place to make that pitch as the individual stated they had ongoing contracts with the corporations and were not going to change them. He said the issue must be addressed at a different level and in a different manner.

Au Château upgrades may cost \$30 million

At the same conference, a meeting was held with the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care with regards to the reclassification of Au Chateau, as long-term care homes throughout the province are required to do upgrades.

Council received information from the Au Chateau suggesting upgrades could cost anywhere from \$24 to \$30 million and that funding from the government would cover 45 per cent. WN delegates stressed that privately owned homes were being funded at the same level and that those owned by municipalities should have increased funding. The response from the Minister, Dr. Eric Hoskins, was that they were funding 100 per cent, however in today's dollar and over 25 years.

"If you look at the cost of borrowing, because we need to borrow the entire money up front, pay for the whole thing, even their share, and then receive their portion on a trickle basis for 25 years," the funding will certainly not cover 100% of real costs, Barbeau explained. He said the fight needs to be taken to a different level.

It was also suggested the town should let Au Château hold the loan on their books so that it does not affect the municipality's borrowing capacity and rating, however the ministry said this was not going to happen. However, Au Château Administrative Director Jacques Dupuis said this was false. Barbeau said the issue will be brought forward at a later council meeting and that a firm step needs to be taken, as a group with other municipalities, in order to sway the Ministry.

Slow approvals for infrastructure work

Director of Operations Marc Gagnon explained that he and council members met with the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, Glen Murray, with regards to the long process in reviewing environmental approvals for construction work.

"We had a great conversation and acknowledged that there is a long wait time, we understood and understand that there is an enormous amount of applications being brought forth to their approvals branch and limited resources to review them," he said, adding that when they do start to review, it is a quick turnaround.

The minister asked what could be done differently, and it was suggested that municipalities be able to have third parties approve storm sewer and sewer system projects. Gagnon said the minister would be considering the suggestion.

Study to identify what and why people buy elsewhere

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Nipissing Business Growth Initiative began in the Fall, with two reports being completed by third year Commerce students at Laurentian University.

The Leakage Analysis and the Market Feasibility study will determine business gaps, opportunities and niche markets in West Nipissing, Lisk shares.

Students interviewed approximately 60 business owners with regards to their purchasing decisions, asking whether or not they bought their office equipment and other supplies and services locally.

On Tuesday, March 10, a consumer focus group was held at the West Nipissing Information Centre, where 16 participants were questioned about their shopping habits. The individuals, ranging from young professionals to retired people, were given clickers to respond to each question, for example whether they purchased most of their groceries in West Nipissing or outside the community.

With the clickers, the data was gathered instantly, and respondents who purchased a product outside of the community were asked why and where they purchased the product.

"So the Leakage Analysis is what are the products that people are purchasing outside of the community and why, and then the Market Feasibility study, that's sort of identifying if a business was to open up here, would it survive, is it feasible for the population that

we have here," Lisk explains.

She adds she was pleased with the turnout March 10 and thought it was a productive session.

"The feedback that I received from the students indicated that they did receive the necessary data that they needed to draw accurate conclusions on what products community members are purchasing outside of the community and why," she states.

She says the results of the study will be shared with the community as well as local high schools as a way to promote and inform students about entrepreneurial opportunities here in West Nipissing. The study is expected to be completed by the end of March and released by the Chamber approximately a month later.

"The municipality could use these study findings, for example, as a recruitment tool, so if there is a specific industry or sector that we're missing here in West Nipissing, they could maybe seek out a business like that," Lisk points out, adding that the municipality is one of the project partners.

"The results of the study are going to benefit the local commercial sector as well as the community as whole," she concludes, adding it will "identify potentially profitable retail sector activities and also may reveal some of the current barriers that existing businesses have been facing when they are looking at possibilities of diversification and expansion."



West Nipissing Police Beat

SUBMITTED BY THE WN POLICE SERVICE

Between February 27th and March 12th, the West Nipissing Police Service (WNPS) logged 288 calls for service. Among those were 45 assistance calls, 29 9-1-1 calls, 9 noise complaints, 8 alarms, 7 thefts, 3 unwanted person calls, 3 drug offences, two domestic disturbances, one fraud and one mischief.

On February 27th, officers were dispatched to a Quesnel Rd residence regarding a snow machine that collided with a garage. The complainant said that after she heard the crash, she went outside and spoke with the driver. Upon learning that police were on their way, the male driver left the scene. Officers obtained the identity of the suspect and later attended his residence. The 42-year old driver was arrested and charged with Mischief along with numerous Highway Traffic Act offences including Careless Driving, Failing to Remain and Driving a Motorized Snow Machine While License Suspended. He was later released on a Promise to Appear.

On March 1st, the WNPS received a complaint from a Church St. resident regarding an assault. Police obtained a statement from the female victim who gave details of an assault at the hands of her boyfriend, which had occurred earlier in the day, and revealed these assaults had been occurring for the past few months. The suspect was queried and he was found to have court ordered conditions "to keep the peace and be of good behavior". The 28-year old was arrested and charged with one count of Assault and one count of Breach of Proba-

tion. He was kept in custody and brought to bail court.

On March 3rd, police attended a department store located on William St. regarding a shoplifter. Upon arrival, the suspect was identified and spoken to. He denied taking anything, but staff witnessed the theft. The 45-year old male was eventually issued a Provincial Offences Notice for Trespassing and was told not to return.

On March 6th, WNPS received a fraud complaint from a local business owner. He told police that he received a call from someone claiming to be from Greater Sudbury Utilities saying that his payment was overdue and that if he did not pay within the hour, his hydro would be shut off. The suspect added that payments could only be done through Pay Power reloaded, which is similar to a gift card. The business owner quickly recognized this to be a fraud and did not provide a payment. He then called police to advise them of this fraud.

Between March 7th-9th, police received numerous complaints regarding thefts from vehicles within the town of Sturgeon Falls. Items stolen range from spare change, wallets and in one instance, a gym bag containing specialized gym apparel, more specifically weight lifting shoes. Police collected footprint impressions but have not yet identified a suspect. These thefts are still being investigated.

The West Nipissing Police Service has been warning residents observed pushing ice on the road. Some people have been chipping away at the built-up ice in their driveways and then pushing the ice chunks onto the road. This causes a road hazard and can be dangerous for vehicles as they drive by. Residents should be

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