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West Nipissing This Week



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SF Rod & Gun Club Pike Fishing Tournament organizer Eric Savage with first place winners Richard Trottier (centre) and Larry Masales, who took home \$12,000 for their catch May 28.

Lots of fish, lots of waiting at Cache Bay pike tourney

BY JENN JEDYNAK
SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

The absence of a permanent dock in Cache Bay made the 34th annual Sturgeon Falls Rod & Gund Club Pike Tournament a bit of "shit show" according to some participants, but the plentiful fish was a nice consolation. It was the first time in its 34-year history that the Cache Bay dock wasn't in use for the tournament, held on May 28. With what's left of the existing structure in a dangerously dilapidated state and the rest of it floating somewhere out in the lake after dislodging during the Spring ice breakup, there was a last minute effort by the municipality to find a suitable alternative. That alternative came just days before the event, in the way of a temporary floating dock at the site of the Cache Bay boat launch. "It was an amicable solution," says tournament organizer Eric Savage resignedly. Last year, tournament organizers were assured

a new dock would be in place by this year's event. However, the town said they experienced delays due to the fact Cache Bay is a significantly important protected wetland and approvals by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Oceans and Fisheries Canada were taking longer than anticipated. The temporary dock, though "better than nothing" according to some, proved to be a challenge for volunteers and fishermen alike. At between 60-80 feet long, the dock was far shorter than the main dock's 150 feet. "It was a shit show," one angler was overheard saying of the bottleneck that occurred when tournament participants descended on the dock at the end of the day to check in and have their catches measured. Boats lined up three to four lines deep on both sides of the dock, resulting in long wait times and making it difficult to manoeuvre out afterwards. The result was a long wait for participants, and some

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What West Nipissing wants New report identifies gaps and opportunities

BY ISABEL MOSSELER
TRIBUNE

What's missing in West Nipissing, and how can existing and new businesses fill the gap? That's what the WN Chamber of Commerce wanted to know, and it's the subject of a new

report released by the organisation last week. The Chamber's West Nipissing Leakage Analysis and Market Feasibility Study was launched Thursday, May 26 at an "after hours" event held at É.s. Northern S.S. It was the first

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Race gives students a taste of real business world

BY BRAD AUBIN
TRIBUNE

If you were in the downtown area of Sturgeon Falls last Thursday, May 26, you may have noticed teams of students running around from business to business.

The 12 students were a part of the West Nipissing Chamber of Commerce's first 'Entrepreneurial Amazing Race'. The race was part of the Youth Entrepreneurship Symposium hosted by the

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Mitch Deschatelets of Leisure Farms shows Shawn Page and Chloé Mailloux a thing or two about planting potatoes during last week's Chamber of Commerce Entrepreneurial Amazing Race.

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New report identifies gaps and opportunities

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of a partnership with Jean-Charles Cachon and Luc Lagrandeur, professors of Business Strategy & Marketing at Laurentian University, who utilized the study as a class project. Their aim was to determine how many consumer dollars were leaking out of West Nipissing as people shop elsewhere, as well as opportunities for retail diversification and expansion that would see more dollars staying in the local economy.

Over the course of 2015, students in Cachon's class undertook surveys, questionnaires and focus group discussions to gather their data. They found that the main reasons people shop outside of West Nipissing are fairly typical, as they cited better pricing and variety for many products and services. Institutional procurement also came under scrutiny, as did the problem of visibility for many retailers.

The study, in its executive summary, made numerous suggestions: establish a higher-end restaurant in or near Sturgeon Falls with marked visibility on Hwy 17; organize an annual forum where grocery retailers and restaurants can meet with local farmers and growers to facilitate local sales; more reports on local economic issues in local media; encourage local institutions to unbundle their tender offerings and encourage local business to bid on smaller contracts; publicize the advantages of starting a business in this community; encourage local businesses (retailers, restaurants, etc.) to sell gift cards in various denominations to encourage more local purchasing; assist local business owners to evaluate and improve their marketing strategies; improve retail hours; and develop a strategy to encourage businesses and institutions to buy locally.

The report also focused on opportunities for starting or expanding a business in the area, by catering to the needs identified by consumers that are not currently being met. Opportunities mentioned in the document included engaging the mining supply sector. The study notes that there are 500 mining supply firms in Northern Ontario (only one in West Nipissing), and 72% of the jobs they create are in Sudbury and North Bay. It's a market WN may be missing out on. "West Nipissing has the benefit of having land available at relatively low cost compared to these cities."

In the agricultural sector, the study acknowledged a well-

organized supply chain, mostly thanks to the Verner Co-op. Unexploited opportunities in agriculture included distribution of product, including organic foods and non-timber forest products. It was noted that the provincial and federal governments are more inclined to favour large producers rather than smaller farms, which are more prominent in this area, with the suggestion that politicians at all levels be engaged to address the negative impact of such policies.

Tourism opportunities were derived from a separate report— Tourism Labour Market Initiative – North-Eastern Ontario 2014— which focused primarily on training and personnel issues, including the difficulty in recruiting workers because of low wages in this sector. Local tourism operators were encouraged to examine alternative labour sources to remedy this problem, such as "mature age workers, Aboriginal workers, long-term unemployed, persons with disabilities and foreign workers. . . ." The executive summary concluded, in bold print, "It would be very important that, in the future, either the Chamber of Commerce or local Economic Development authorities endeavour to monitor the publication of reports and information relevant to the local economic sectors and their preoccupations. It would also be important to organize regular consultations between agencies and groups interested in economic development in West Nipissing and adjacent regions."

The report also acknowledges that competitive cities such as North Bay and Sudbury have an attractive draw on local consumers; residents living further than 20.6 km west of Sturgeon Falls will likely shop in Sudbury, while those 12.8 km east of Sturgeon Falls will more likely shop in North Bay. Within these limits, shopping takes place in either West Nipissing or North Bay.

The report indicates that the advantages to anyone wishing to start or expand a local business in West Nipissing includes the high level of transient traffic on Hwy 17, the high number of cottages, freight rail opportunities, bilingual population, relatively low housing costs, lower utilities such as water/sewer (as compared to North Bay), lower housing and property costs and taxes. However, the larger communities boast more industrial park choices, faster internet, regional public transportation, larger markets, better hours of operation, faster process-

ing of industrial permits, better skilled work force, more choice in shopping and restaurants.

The study asks 'Can West Nipissing piggyback on Greater Sudbury's success?' Sudbury has seen a dramatic upward trend between 2006 and 2011, especially with the expansion in the mining supply sector and research facilities. "West Nipissing is right in this corridor with only one firm belonging to the Mining Supply Sector, while Greater Sudbury has about 350 firms and North Bay about 80 firms in this sector", reports the study.

The study suggests that the business community develop a "shop local" campaign promoting the positive effects of purchasing locally. The focus groups responded to questions by saying "residents would like to be able to buy gift cards that support local businesses and activities such as swimming, skate sharpening, etc. Local companies and organizations should invest in gift cards and retailing them in their own stores or even in retailers such as pharmacies and corner stores or gas stations."

The document is now available to anyone, online at the chamber website or in document format at their office, notes WN Chamber president Patrick Keough. "I'm very pleased that this study is now available to local businesses, potential investors and the general public. It provides a good backdrop of the state of affairs in West Nipissing, clarifies some of our problems, and identifies where opportunities exist for new investment as well as barriers that current businesses are facing when looking at diversification and expansion. We hope this study will be the basis for some very good communication and partnerships when it comes to economic development in this region. The more information we have, the better, and the better quality the information we have in place, the better our planning will be. The WN Chamber of Commerce is totally engaged in improving the economy of the region, and we thank Professor Jean-Charles Cachon, Professor Luc Lagrandeur and their class for their strong work. Now we can move forward and make plans based on unbiased, good information. There's lots of good information in this study for everyone interested in the well-being of West Nipissing. I encourage everyone to read it," he concludes.



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