

To: Mayor and Council of the Town of Fort Frances,
Letter to the Editor – Fort Frances Times
et al.

Re: **Extending Front Street Westerly**, and LaVerendrye Parkway, from Victoria Ave. to Central Ave., and possibly to the Fort Frances Cemetery.

While I submitted my views and thoughts of extending LaVerendrye Parkway's walking and bicycle paths easterly and northerly and ultimately to the Couchiching Band Office a few years ago, apparently to no avail, I still believe it a viable and desirable asset to both communities. I now wish to submit my views and thoughts on a westerly, viable and desirable asset.

The current mill site owners are immersed in a massive demolition undertaking, all well and good we hope and assume. However, there should be a planning process prepared for when their current demolition undertaking is said and done, namely the natural westerly extension of Front St. and LaVerendrye Parkway along the riverbank's edge. Current Google satellite imagery can be viewed showing that on most of the river's edge, at least from Victoria Ave. to Central Ave. there is already a road of sorts, albeit for past mill operations purposes only. From Central Ave./Church St. northerly, actual mill infrastructure currently sits on the immediate shoreline, but is in process of demolition. From the Power Station at Central Ave. and Third St. W., westerly, once again, a road of sorts is present, or can be visualized, extending to the Fort Frances Cemetery.

It would appear that a timely review is now required, if not already contemplated, and options considered for pursuit, or not.

Some of the issues would appear to be:

1. When the paper mill company first contemplated its existence, governments of the day were eager to assist and encourage the plan. The exact extent of what they brought to the table is unknown to me, other than the obvious 1905 Power Agreement, from the town's point of view. A thorough and proper research of original title and government decisions should be undertaken as it may be highly informative. But the concept of a 'land and rights deal' comes to a reasonable mind for the encouragement and assistance for such an exciting mill proposal, and if so, it is possible that

certain lands and rights were given in exchange for the private sector developer to proceed. So, given today's status of the property, it begs the questions around the concept, if there was such a granting, and considering that a functional mill is no longer there, nor can be by virtue of new title restrictions imposed by Resolute, that a reversion of such lands and rights should now appropriately be reviewed. On this point however, it is likely that only the original footprint of the original mill would be the subject of such a review. The many subsequent land acquisitions over the many years would likely be all normal commercial transactions only, without similar re-acquisition rights to be considered.

2. Additionally, post original construction, there were many varied street closures granted by the Town for the various operational expansion needs of the mill – and these closures should also be now reviewed for similar re-acquisition. Closed portions of Central Ave., Church St., Mowat Ave., and Sinclair St. come to mind – these closed streets formed an integral part of the municipal lay-out providing services and access to the varied pieces of adjacent private lands. These 'adjacent private lands' are about to be re-introduced post demolition.
3. An engineering and planning/zoning review of the adjacent river's edge roads and lands needs to be undertaken for the benefit of over-all community planning needs, including remaining mill lands. The alternative of no planning creates an unpleasant vision of uncontrolled and haphazard development in our future.
4. The Town's relationship with the current property owner is also crucial, and whatever it is, fruitful dialogue can be pursued and or hoped for, or not. The town has powerful expropriation rights at its disposal, and while it may not be preferred, it is a tool that should be considered to ensure the proper development of the community's interests on behalf of its citizens.
5. And the last issue, but not the least, is a future vision for the International Bridge (and Canada/USA Customs) requirements. As the initial purpose of the bridge included the means to deliver paper mill products to the U.S. market (which is now redundant), its future, non-the-less, requires its inclusion as part of the aforementioned issues. While I was Town

Administrator, I recall being tasked to write a report on the possibility of the Town acquiring bridge ownership – the report was done but the consideration of sale was withdrawn. The list of interested parties that would have needed to be consulted was extensive.

In conclusion, please envision the shoreline landscape pre mill, and now if you can, envision the same shoreline landscape in a few years from now. Imagine the possibilities – does the phrase ‘boundless’ come to mind?

Bill Naturkach, Fort Frances.

April 24, 2021.