

RRFDC ACTIVITY REPORT

July to September 2014

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Fort Frances:

The RRFDC continued to move forward with the enhanced economic development project and “The Path Forward” action plan.

- Supported the Fort Frances Economic Development Office (FFEDO) with Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) meetings and numerous projects.

Economic Development Activities for 2013/2014

1) Forestry

The RRFDC continued to look for a consultant to assist us in helping our Timber Harvesters. The project is to assist them in adjusting to the new Resolute Forest Product’s timber harvesting system.

The RRFDC has also contracted a Forestry Specialist, Mr. Mike Willick, to assist us and Council in our effort to change the Forest Tenure process with the region.

2) Mining – Industrial and Residential Preparedness

In light of the business opportunities arising from the proposed New Gold mine, the RRFDC hosted a Mining 101 – Understanding Mining Operations session for local businesses on September 24th which featured Grant Goddard, the General manager for New Gold’s – Rainy River Project. Over 60 people attended and the session ran over as there were many people asking questions on the proposed mine.

Fort Frances Industrial Park and Other Property

We also continued to advertise the future opportunities related to the New Gold – Rainy River Project by highlighting industrial park lots and electricity prices. We

believe that both Fort Frances and the District will benefit from the new mine in two ways:

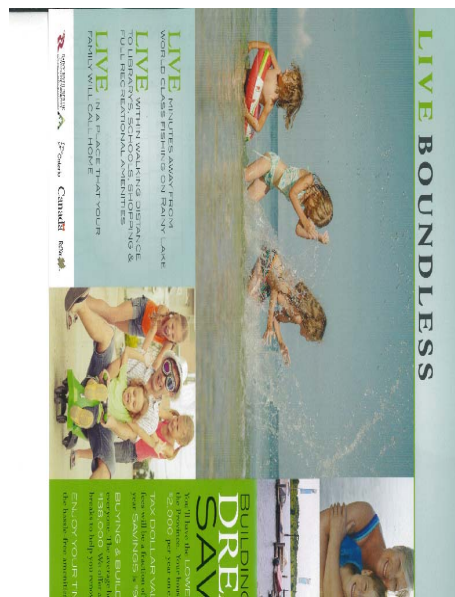
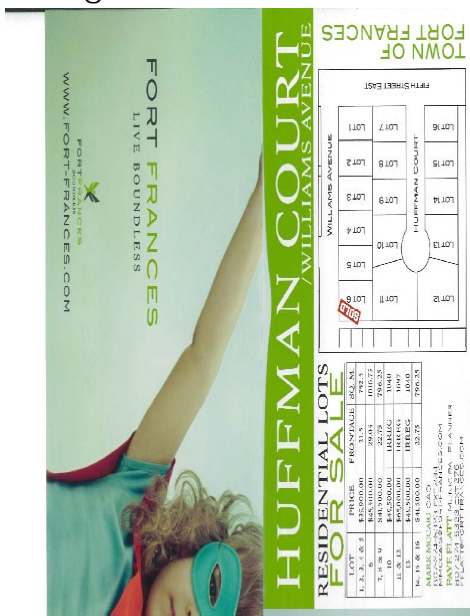
- We will be the location of choice for some smaller auxiliary industries who service this mine and perhaps some Iron Range mines.
- By becoming residence of choice for the workforce. Largely all the work that has been done over the past few years on social media and internet presence promotes us as the great place to live that we are, is to set the stage to inform these potential new residents.

Condominium Development

The RRFDC has had some initial talks with condominium developers from the Kenora area, but due to the permanent closure of the Resolute mill this spring, they are reluctant to move forward at this time. If the region's economy changes due to the opening of the New Gold mine or a re-start of the pulp mill they may be interested.

Huffman Court

The RRFDC assisted Council in developing the signage and marketing materials for the new sub-division. The marketing piece seen below has been distributed to residence across Northwestern Ontario. In light of the proposed New Gold mine we are positioning the Town as "The Place to Live" for the families of the long term employees



coming to work at the mine.

3) Tourism

From July 18-19th, 2014, the Fort Frances waterfront hosted the first **Harmony of Nations Music Festival**, uniting artists and audience members from First Nations, Métis, Canadian and American communities, in a creative, musical environment. The Festival featured two evenings of highly regarded musical entertainment from award-winning singer-songwriters and up-and-coming local stars, ranging from folk to country, soul and rock. The days were filled with vendor displays, community performances, and interactive artist workshops. These workshops included music for youth, music business, music technology, song writing, guitar, drumming, fiddling, Q&A with headlining artists, and much more.

Given that last year's event was successful with over 500 tickets sold, about half of which was from visitors to Fort Frances, RRFDC has started planning for a second Harmony of Nations Music Festival for July 17-18th, 2015 and is currently in process of writing grant applications to various Provincial organizations. We have applied to Celebrate Ontario, our biggest grant source, and are working on grants for Tourism Event Marketing Program as well as the Ontario Arts Council Northern Arts Grant, both due in the coming weeks. We expect this year to bring in more day visitors to Fort Frances, but also more overnight visitors now that we have established this Festival. The Harmony of Nations committee has met recently to brainstorm and discuss success

strategies for 2015. The artist selection committee will be meeting in November and hopes to have artists selected and signed by January 1, 2015.

Events

The RRFDC and the FFEDO intern assisted the Town with this summer's Canada Day parade.

Fort Frances Tourist Information Center (FFTIC)

The RRFDC finally received occupancy terms and conditions from the Province on the OTIC and approval of Council move in. The RRFDC has been operating the Tourist Information Center on Fort Frances' behalf since mid June. We have been able to have new signs installed, cleaned and decorated the facility. In addition the students went to Kenora for a tourism orientation session organized with Sunset County.

Sunset Country, our partners in the facility has provided much needed area information and imaging with the centre.

The students were stationed at the border 50 or more hours each week all summer long to greet tourists and provide information. We also kept the Sorting Gap and Museum brochures stocked.

Other Tourism Projects

We have applied on behalf of the museum to create a walking tour. This tour will link the downtown and the waterfront area and create a new tourism product.

We continued to support the Heart of the Continent and are also exploring possibilities with charter services for summer tours.

We continue to remain active on all the Town's social media platforms.

Branding

The RRFDC is moving forward with the new Brand, and it is being implemented in all of our Fort Frances economic development marketing. We have introduced it at the Fort Frances Tourist Information Center and at Huffman Court

The Brand is also presented to various organizations within the community.

The RRFDC has applied to FedNor for two projects in support of the recent re-branding of Fort Frances once approved the funds will be used to update the Town's marketing through digital media and tourism signage.

Rainy Lake Market Square

The Rainy Lake Market Square will occupy the former site of the Rainy Lake Hotel which has been vacant for many years. The Market Square will house a market building that will be open most of the year with interior and exterior spaces for vendors. The site will offer a community space that could be used for concerts, events and downtown celebrations. The market square will offer additional access to the downtown that will include pull-through parking stalls and will dramatically increase the access to Scott Street for the 400,000 US visitors who cross at the Fort Frances border each year. The RRFDC/FFEDO completed the concept plan and NOHFC applications for the \$1.9 million project. The NOHFC portion of the project, \$1 million, has been approved and we are awaiting approval of the \$655K requested from FedNor.

4) Value Added Products

The RRFDC's second NCIR study is an evaluation of the ancillary healthcare and personal services sector in Fort Frances and area. The study is assisting the RRFDC and the Fort Frances Clinic in determining new private sector opportunities within the sector. The document led us investigate such opportunities as using the Fort Frances as a location to base mobile medical equipment such as an MRI.

5) Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Support

The RRFDC has held business start up sessions and social media presentations.

6) Regional Strategic Planning

The RRFDC has been working with the Rainy River District Municipal Association and the Fort Frances Chief's Secretariat in holding meetings between the community leaders. A Local Governance Networking Group (LGNG) has been structured which held meeting in July and September. This group's intent is to strengthen the relationships between area leaders in a more formal fashion. The RRFDC hopes that the Group will set the stage for discussions on a regional plan.

7) Telecommunications

In the spring the RRFDC completed a Northern Community Investment Readiness (NCIR) telecommunications baseline study to determine what service is available today in Fort Frances and the District. Subsequent to this study, we developed an Expression of Interest which was sent to telecommunications companies to gauge the appetite for upgrading the region's services. We have received two proposals and are evaluating them at present. We hope to choose a partner within days and move forward with a project to upgrade telecommunications services across the District.

8) Go Local

Go Local is now in our 2nd year. As of September 30th, we had 3931 cardholders and 2659 registered. In order to get more registered going forward, the RRFDC intern brought sign-up sheets to merchant members and reinforced the fact that cardholders could register via paper if they are not comfortable with internet signup. 787,364 points have been issued and \$35,845 in gift cards has been given out to loyalty members that have ultimately returned to the pockets of our local businesses. A third party review told us that card usage exceeds AirMiles advertised usage and that program awareness in Fort Frances was at 82%. This review also determined that there was a 20% increase in local spending by rewards card members.

Go Local looks for ways to stay fresh and fun for consumers so that they continue to feel pride in local spending. For example, in September, Go Local ran a “Stick Local” campaign, in which RRFDC and a few volunteers, hand-delivered sticky-note coupons for 5 bonus points redeemable at any merchant member to each individual home in Fort Frances over the course of a weekend. The week prior to the campaign, 5,359 points were issued, while the week following the campaign, the numbers nearly tripled at 13,832. This translates to roughly 200 more people compelled to walk into local businesses to redeem their points. Go Local is currently in the midst of our second annual “Go Local Month” in which we organize a larger-scale promotion among merchant members. This year, 24 of our members participated and chose their own promotion. Social media quizzes are being done daily and draws weekly to create some excitement around the program. Ballots and a draw box were also placed at each business and when a clerk asks a customer for their Go Local card, both can be entered into a draw to win a \$50 gift card each at the end of November. This encourages consumers to present their card more often and clerks to ask for cards. Go Local continues to issue gift cards monthly once a loyalty member has reached 300 points and keep a strong presence in the community through our use of mystery shoppers, social media and radio ads.

9) Community Foundation

The RRFDC had its first meeting of the Community Foundation Steering Committee in September. It was well attended and Cathy Emes has agreed to Chair the process. We are arranging a teleconference with the Kenora Foundation for later in the fall.

Short Overview of RRFDC Activities to September 30, 2014

1. Three (3) proposals to FedNor, both Phase I and Phase II have been submitted.
 - a. Marketing – \$50K
 - b. Signage - \$50K
 - c. Harvesters - \$50K (APPROVED)
2. NOHFC/FedNor (approximately \$1.9M) \$1M NOHFC (APPROVED)
 - a. Rainy Lake Market Square
3. Communities in Transition – Marketing (\$85,000) (APPROVED)
4. NCIR (Northern Community Investment Readiness)
 - a. Ancillary Health Care and Personal Services Study - completed – Fort Frances Clinic (APPROVED)
5. NCIR #2
 - a. Baseline Telecommunications Study - (completed) (APPROVED)
 - b. Telecommunication Upgrade Expression of Interest developed
6. New Gold Mining Opportunity
 - Continue to liaise with New Gold
 - Mining 101 on September
7. Condominium Land Sale – Offer at Council
8. The “Harmony of Nations Music Festival” (\$73,000) – on July 18 & 19th, prior to the Fort Frances Canadian Bass Championship, working on artists. (Fort Frances, First Nations, Métis, USA & others).
 - a. Celebrate Ontario - \$73,000 (APPROVED)
 - b. Aboriginal Arts Council - \$3,000 (APPROVED))
9. Tile Drainage/Land Clearing for Agriculture
 - a. Five (5) Phase I consortium projects submitted for \$10M in projects
 - b. Two Phase II Heritage proposals submitted last week.
 - i. Tile Drainage \$1.9 M NOHFC \$1Million (APPROVED)
 - ii. Land Clearing \$1.7 M (APPROVED)

10. Heart of the Continent – Fort Frances has joined; the RRFDC will be the lead for the Town of Fort Frances.
11. Walking Tour Trillium Foundation – in the works
12. Border – RRFDC will welcome US visitors again this year via students. Ontario Tourism Information Center (OTIC) is now the Fort Frances Tourism Information Center (FFTIC) – lease has been secured with Ontario and support from Sunset Country has been received.
13. A new Brand has been developed and launched for the Town of Fort Frances - Boundless
14. We have been successful for a second NOHFC intern and are in the hiring process. Will work on regional economic development projects.