



C R MALLORY
<crmally@msn.com>
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To Lisa Slomke <lslomke@fort-frances.com>, Kathryn Lawson
<klawson@fort-frances.com>

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Subject Request in the Fort Frances Times, May 27, 2015, for
suggestions for Strategic Plan

Dear Ms. Slomke and Ms. Lawson,

I have put together a few ideas that I believe are worth consideration.

I feel that in order to create community, our town needs to create an atmosphere where local people are proud of our town and want to "staycation" and invite others to share what we have. To accomplish this we must entice and welcome the people of the district to make Fort Frances their "go to" place for Arts, entertainment and shopping. By encouraging district people to view Fort Frances as a welcoming community we will also be offering the tourists who travel through our town reasons to stop, look and stay!

I would like to see Fort Frances redefined and redeveloped into the premier tourist destination it was when I was young. We are located at the heart of the continent, on the dividing line between the Canadian Shield and the Prairies, on the international border and we need to use this to our best advantage. Rainy Lake has long been the playground of Minneapolis/St. Paul, Milwaukee and Chicago as well as other cities in the upper mid-west.

As a community we need to remember that what we do in Fort Frances extends past the boundaries of our town. Our economic situation, good or bad, is felt through not only our town, but also the Rainy River District as well as all of Northwestern Ontario and Northern Minnesota.

Historically, Fort Frances was the meeting place for trade between east and west. Our country is vast and it was here, midway between Montreal and the Rocky Mountains that the Europeans, Metis and First Nations came together in friendship and co-operation. It CAN become that again, it CAN be a place that fosters the historic co-operation between the diverse people in the region. Pithers Point has become a bone of contention between the First Nations people and the town. We can turn that around by developing an atmosphere of co-operation between First Nations, Metis and town's people to provide a new meeting place. Funding for this could come from 3 levels of government. An interpretative centre, housed in a reconstruction of the original fort, would provide a place to teach about our rich and varied history from the ancient First Nations, the Fur Trade, pulp and paper industry, farming, tourism, burling(log rolling); we have world class log rollers who live here. We have so much to be proud of and to share!

It is time to accept the fact, WE ARE NO LONGER A "MILL TOWN"! Our mill can be retrofitted for the production of other products. With the cheapest electricity in the province, an unlimited supply of water, and a location central to the continent, the mill can be a prime location to produce and distribute medical marihuana. Hemp is a crop that grows well in our area and produces a variety of products such as fabric, rope, paper and food products.

If the mill can not be repurposed, the beauty of the location at the waterfall/dam is prime real estate that can be developed a hotel/conference centre, casino, condominiums, or graduated housing for seniors.

Some thought should be given to developing the property across Mowat Avenue from the Canada Customs. That would be an excellent small mall that could include outlets for both the Beer Store and the LCBO. Perhaps a coffee shop for visitors to sit down and look over what is available here. Our tourist information centre has suffered because of the relocation of the customs office, as well as the cuts in government funding moving that to the new mall would make it so much more accessible for visitors. A short term fix is better signage to capture the attention of tourists and to direct them to the centre. Utilizing the space in the present building for mini displays from the museum and art gallery will interest visitors and give them a reason to see these attractions. We need to give the tourists a reason to stop. But in the long term I believe we need to look at moving the Tourist Information across Mowat Avenue to that presently vacant lot.

The old mill parking lot, north of and adjoined to the Tourist Information Centre should be opened up for tourist parking. This gets them onto our main street and within walking distance of many of our merchants. Also, we need to offer free bottles of water with our town logo on them to those waiting in line to cross back to the USA. This would have them leaving Canada with a good last impression of Fort Frances and may encourage them to return and visit with us.

Signage along the highway from the east that will promote and inform travelers about our historic waterways: the Noden Causeway, Rainy Lake, historic Boundary Waters, the fur trade route, and Pithers Point. Rock cairns located on the route, in strategic places would create interesting stops for people to learn about our area. We are located where the Canadian Shield meets the Prairies. To the west, there are also points of interest, such as the experimental agriculture farm and the Manitou Mounds. With the co-operation of the Metis and First Nations, Provincial and Federal funding may be available to erect. Remember what benefits the district will benefit Fort Frances and visa versa.

Health Care is key to any development that will bring new residents and keep our seniors here long into retirement. The baby-boomers are quickly moving into retirement and will soon be the largest demographic in our society. With dollars to spend, they continue to be consumers. We need to be ready to meet their needs.

Hospitality must become a focus for all of our citizens. We need to make the people of our district welcome. They are an important part of the customer base for our merchants and facilities such as the sportsplex, library and museum.

Thank you for this opportunity to express some of my ideas.

Sincerely,

Charleen Mallory