

RRFDC ACTIVITY REPORT

July to September 2016

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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

Mining – Industrial and Residential Preparedness:

The RRFDC’s pre-employment training program for First Nations and District residents to work at the New Gold mine has been completed (report attached).

The RRFDC continued to work with New Gold on another pre-employment training program for processing facility workers.

We continued to promote the District as a mining supply and services location. Activities included:

- Meetings with New Gold procurement to discuss vendors
- Value proposition package development for key vendors and meeting solicitation

The RRFDC worked with a local entrepreneur in discussion of a possible upgrade to the CN rail spur in Fort Frances as a result of mining supply and service needs.

Advertising has been placed at the Thunder Bay airport that promotes Fort Frances to the mining community.

The RRFDC continued to promote Fort Frances and amenities as a place of choice for the workforce of New Gold. As a result of discussions with the company, new pages will be added to the website that will consolidate information to new residents/potential new residents.

Forestry and Wood Products:

The RRFDC met with FP Innovations to discuss the development of a wood products cluster in the region. A meeting of business leaders is being planned for fall.

Report to Town of Fort Frances
July to September 2016

Tourism:

Fort Frances Tourist Information Center (FFTIC)

The Center was operated over the summer with the 2 summer students, who provided information on local events and attractions, and maintained racking displays for tourism businesses. Free Wi-Fi and washrooms are offered to travelers.

The Center was slightly more active this summer, seeing an increase of 20% in visitation. Students repainted the washrooms and pillars. Window screening was added to the sunroof that protects the moose from sun damage.

The RRFDC applied for permission to hold local fish species in an aquarium at the Center during the summer of 2017. This will allow for the opportunity to build an aquarium that will house a bass fish as an attraction to the Center.

The RRFDC pursued further partnership opportunities with the Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce, with the hope that the Chamber would occupy the Center and provide tourism information. After several meetings and an examination by the Chamber of their own financial situation, the Chamber declined the Town's offer.

Sports Tourism

The RRFDC and TOFF hosted two Sports Tourism Training Sessions during the quarter. The planning and then training sessions were attended by over 45 representatives on local groups.

The second session was led by John Graham a former director with Sobeys/Safeway whose responsibilities included major event marketing and community partnership programs. John will continue to work with three groups interested in developing their sports tourism events in the district.

The RRFDC has offered support to the Early Iron Car Club to assist them with their Canada 150 effort hosting the antique car rally crossing Canada in July 2017.

Canada Day

The RRFDC organized and ran the Canada Day parade as in previous years.

Fort Frances Canadian Bass Championship

The RRFDC provided the events tent for the FFCBC and assisted with site set up and fish care. We would like to take this time to thank Fort Frances Council, administration and employees for all the support they have shown the event.

Branding/Digital Marketing

The RRFDC continued its social media work to ramp up the Town of Fort Frances' presence on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. We continue to train in social media management and the utilization of those tools to market the District. These tools are proving to be useful in providing information to potential residents moving here as a result of New Gold.

We expanded the Brand with new signage and worked with Council to add "Welcome" to the new entrance signs.

Rainy Lake Market Square

The RRFDC applied to Ontario 150 on behalf of Fort Frances in order to support activities at the Market Square in the summer of 2017.

The final design is nearing completion but there are a few more details to work out. Construction has been delayed until the spring of 2017.

Current plan:



The RRFDC is developing a strategy to encourage activity on Scott Street that will increase visitation to the downtown region by residents and tourists. This strategy includes the encouragement of sidewalk cafes. Preliminary meetings with restaurants and cafes have occurred and a report will go to Council for direction in the Fall of 2016.

Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Support

The RRFDC has applied to the MNDC Community Investment Readiness program to seek assistance in doing an Accommodations Facilities Market Analysis.

A one minute business survey was developed to test and analyze information coming anecdotally from employers that the District was experiencing a labour shortage. Employers across all sectors reported that:

1. They were optimistic about sales opportunities;
2. Sales had increased over the last 6 months; and,
3. They were experiencing increased difficulty finding qualified staff.

The RRFDC proceeded to meet with area employment support providers like NCDS to discuss and propose opportunities to assist local businesses. This will include assistance with training to support the local business community's understanding of how to market to the workforce and a job fair planned for the Spring of 2017.

Age Friendly

The RRFDC and Age Friendly Fort Frances continued the process of developing an Age Friendly survey for the community. A consultant has been hired by the group and they will be proceeding with the survey very soon.

Telecommunications

TBay Tel is continuing to roll out this project which is expected to be completed by spring 2017.

The RRFDC is in the process of developing an Expression of Interest for the development of a Fiber Optic Transmission System (FOTS) line up Highway 621 with Big Grassy First Nation, Big Island First Nation and Morson (Lake of the Woods Township) with a possible expansion up Highway 613 to Naicatchewenin First Nation.



Go Local

Throughout the summer, Go Local has continued to maintain its strong membership within the community. Since the program's inception, Go Local businesses have issued over 1.8 million loyalty rewards points to cardholders. Around 5,000 Go Local cards are activated, with 3,600 registered.

As of September 2016, Go Local has reinvested \$101,000 worth of gift cards back into the community.

Go Local is continuing to focus on expanding outside of Fort Frances. We are currently looking for potential businesses in both Fort Frances and Emo to join the program. Go Local once again set up a booth at this year's Emo Agricultural Fair, and had a presence at "Market Thursdays" in downtown Fort Frances throughout the summer.

Project Petunia 2016

Earlier this year, Rainy River Future Development Corporation took over Project Petunia from the Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce. RRFDC's first year at the helm of Project Petunia was a success. With a goal of selling 45 baskets, RRFDC sold 47 petunia baskets that lined King's Highway from Tim Horton's all the way to the Tourist Information Center.

The petunias were grown by Lowey's Greenhouses, and RRFDC partnered with the Town to hang and maintain the baskets.

The project was well-received by the community, as sponsors were able to "dedicate" flower baskets to family members, friends, loved ones, and important causes. Upon completion, Project Petunia placed an advertisement in the Fort Frances Times thanking its donors and recognizing those who had a basket in their honour. These

Report to Town of Fort Frances

July to September 2016

graphics were also shared on social media, through The Town of Fort Frances' Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Those who donated to the project had the option of a one or two year commitment. Project Petunia already has 14 commitments for next year.

Agriculture

Land Clearing and Tile Drainage

The Tile Drainage #2 project was completed during the last week of September. The Tile Drainage #3 project has been sent to the NOHFC for review.

The NOHFC has requested that the members of Land Clearing #2 project whom have not yet received assistance be included in Land Clearing #1, and the combined project be sent to them for approval. This is due to numerous participants in Land Clearing #1 withdrawing leaving a sizable amount of approved funding unutilized.

Abattoir

RRFDC staff met with Board members to discuss possible options for increasing revenue.