

DoKURA NEWS

Fall 2018

Welcome to the Fall 2018 newsletter of DoKURA (The District of Kenora Unincorporated Areas Ratepayers Association).

Over the past year the association has continued to work towards its key objectives of improving communications between unincorporated communities in the District and promoting a better understanding of the unique problems each area faces.

ANNUAL MEETING

The association's Annual General Meeting was held Sept. 25 at the Oxdrift Community Hall. In his President's remarks Jack McKenzie thanked Oxdrift director Ray LeRay for his many of years of involvement with the association. A director and KDSB representative since 2006, Ray is stepping back from his active involvement with the association.

Several reports were presented on the association's activities over the year including attendance at the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association conference and participation in Common Voice Northwest and All Nations Health Partners.

At present, Common Voice Northwest is expected to take a hiatus from its activities of promoting common interests for the region. Past efforts have included in-depth Energy and Transportation reports. Thunder Bay city councillor Iain Angus, a driving force behind Common Voice, cited a lack of funding and other time commitments as factors in the group's uncertain future. Direct Mark Sobchuk will continue his connections with group.

The All Nations Health Partners with representatives from the 10 First Nations in the Kenora area, the city of Kenora, Sioux Narrows Nestor Falls, DoKURA, and various health delivery agencies is now very active in pursuing improvements to health services in the Kenora area including physician recruit, addressing inter-provincial barriers to accessing health services in Manitoba, a new hospital for Kenora and expansion of health services at the community level including new ambulance bases and establishing community level physician/health clinic offices.

Bob Stewart is the DoKURA representative with the Health Partners.

Following the presentation of reports, elections were held for the board of directors with most positions being re-affirmed by acclamation.

The DoKURA Board of Directors for 2019 is:

Officers

Jack McKenzie – President

Vice-President – Gord Dingman

Treasurer – Irene Kember

Secretary – Bob Stewart

Directors

Ed Murray (Oxdrift)

Laurie Huffman (Oxdrift)

Barry Baltessen (Lake of the Woods North)

Jack McKenzie (Lake of the Woods North)

Bob Stewart (Lake of the Woods South)

Irene Kember (Lake of the Woods South)

Mark Sobchuk (Lac Seul)

Gord Dingman (Lac Seul)

Bill Deschamps (Lac Seul)

LOCAL ELECTIONS

Local elections for councils and boards across Ontario were held Oct. 22. DoKURA was the election agent for the Kenora District Service Board with Jack McKenzie serving as chief returning officer. The unincorporated areas elect four members of the 13-member Service Board board of directors, with the district's nine municipalities appointing one member each from among their elected members.

The board's key mandates include managing or co-ordinating and funding the regional land ambulance service, social housing, income support and child care programs.

Barry Baltessen (Lake of the Woods North), Bob Stewart (Lake of the Woods South) and Mark Sobchuk (Lac Seul) were acclaimed to their positions for the 2019-2022 term, with Ed Murray the successful candidate of four people seeking the Oxdrift seat.

In an effort to give the residents of the Greater Oxdrift Ward the opportunity to vote, arrangements were made with five community halls to serve as voting sites. A special Thank You to the individuals who served as Deputy Returning Officers and Poll Clerks at each site, as well as the volunteers associated with each of the halls (Eton–Rugby; Oxdrift; Waldhof; Wabigoon; Dyment) who arranged to have the buildings open and tables set up. Their help was greatly appreciated. And last but not least, thanks to those associated with Local Roads Boards, Road Associations, Local Service Boards, volunteer fire teams and other community groups who assisted in getting the word of the election out by posting notices in their areas.

In his election report Jack McKenzie noted a low voter turnout was again an issue mainly due to a lack of public awareness about the District Service Board and the fact elections were even being held.

He noted efforts to hold a vote–by–mail, or use Internet voting as the school board and municipalities do were not successful due to the high cost and time lead – at least a year or two in advance – needed to organize a voter contact list and the fact the Ministry of Community and Social Services, which reimburses district social services boards for election costs only provides in–year funding for the election.

TURTLE PORTAGE

Current issues which the association is monitoring include the possible closure and dismantling of the Turtle Portage boat transfer system and the twinning of Highway 17 from the Manitoba border to Kenora. Earlier this year the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry announced its intention to close and dismantle the Turtle Portage boat transfer facility this winter. The facility allows for the movement of boats across a narrow land/water bridge connecting the Aulneau Peninsula to the mainland on the east side of Lake of the Woods near Nestor Falls. The marine railway system allows for the movement of small and medium–sized boats between Whitefish Bay and Sabaskong Bay, saving boaters from a lengthy 60 km trip around the peninsula. DoKURA was among several associations, camp owners and individuals to protest the government was not allowing sufficient time for options, including private operation, to be proposed and considered. The government has now extended its review/consultation process to the spring of 2019.

HIGHWAY TWINNING

After a decade of delay, there is positive news on a start to the twinning Highway 17 from the Manitoba border east to Kenora.

First announced in 2009, the project stalled after initial route plans were opposed by First Nations communities. Those issues have now been resolved and planning, including public consultation sessions and environmental review, have resumed, with an aim to begin actual route clearing and construction in the fall of 2019 of the first 6.7 km of the 45 km route.

FIRE TRAINING UPDATE

Rural volunteer fire departments have been given a reprieve on mandatory training and certification requirements that had been scheduled to take effect 2019. The certification would have required all firefighters, whether municipal or in unorganized areas and whether full time, part time or volunteer – both paid and unpaid – to pass a standardized set of courses before they could go on fire calls or use certain types of equipment. Rural fire chiefs had expressed concern about the cost and time commitment required by volunteers to take the approximately 300 hours of additional training within a two–year period.

In October the government backed away from the mandatory requirement for the training.

“Over the past few months, I have heard substantial concerns about the mandatory certification regulation, which would come into force July 1, 2019. After hearing those concerns, our government has decided to repeal the firefighter certification regulation effective October 5, 2018. The community risk assessment and public reports regulations will come into force as scheduled,” wrote Community Safety and Correctional Services Minister Michael Tibollo in a notice to the fire chiefs.

DoKURA

**LOOKING OUT FOR THE INTERESTS OF THE RESIDENTS
FROM THE UNINCORPORATED AREAS IN THE DISTRICT
OF KENORA**

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