



Highway #17 Twinning Update – Manitoba Border to Kenora Boundary

Good work has been achieved on Phase 1 of highway twinning from the Manitoba border to Gundy Lake – Section 1. Drivers now can experience the safety and comfort of four lanes over 6.5 kilometres.

Twinning of the highway has been an unresolved issue for more than 20 years. It took the Hon. Greg Rickford, Kenora M.P.P. and Caroline Mulroney, then Minister of Transportation in 2020, to get the project moving ahead. Minister Rickford (Northern Development and Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation) immediately engaged Niisaachewan Anishinaabe, Shoal Lake #40, Washagamis Bay and Wauzhushk Onigum First Nations in consultations about highway twinning on their Traditional Land Use Area. This led to a

further partnership with Moncrief Construction, the successful construction project bidder. A joint venture was formed to enable First Nation participation in construction. Ontario provided \$1.9 million for training, particularly youth, through the Four Winds Corporation. More on this can be found here:

<https://niwinwendaanimok.com/>

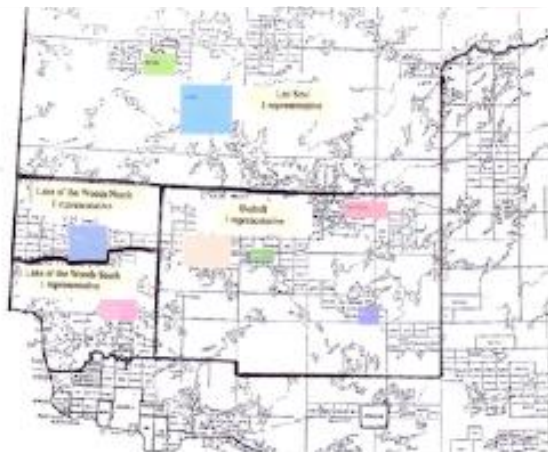
Next will be Section 2 of the project which will extend to Rush Bay Road, a distance of 8.5 kilometres. A preferred route has been selected and talks are now underway with the four First Nations communities. The hope is to begin work as early as 2025. Planning and public consultation for Section 3 from Rush Bay to the Kenora By-Pass, a distance of 24 kilometres is anticipated to commence in 2025 or 2026. Routes previously proposed will have to be revisited.

For more and updates, visit:
<https://4lanehighway17kenora.ca/>.

Fiscal Challenges Face Kenora District

Budget season is upon us and municipalities in the District of Kenora are facing fiscal challenges on several fronts. Inflation has contributed significantly to the cost of infrastructure, equipment and general operating expenses. Upgrades to aging infrastructure at or near the end of its lifecycle can no longer be deferred. Policing costs, driven by calls for service, is rapidly surpassing what municipalities can afford to pass on to ratepayers. The cost of fire trucks, snow graders and plows has risen exponentially, as has the cost of consumable items such as salt, sand and pool chemicals.

Multiple and complex social issues are also significantly contributing to the pressures on communities. These should be investigated further, and all three levels of government should be collaborating on solutions aimed at alleviating these pressures. DoKURA supports the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) proposed resolution that the Province of Ontario commit to undertaking a comprehensive social and economic prosperity review to promote the stability and sustainability of municipal finances across Ontario.



In the Fall 2024 Economic Impact Statement, the Ford Government announced increases to the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund (OMPF) – the province’s main general assistance grant to municipalities – by \$100 million over the next two years. This brings the total funding provided through this program to \$600 million by 2026. In 2025, municipalities will benefit from an immediate \$50 million increase to the OMPF. This should provide some relief to beleaguered municipalities.

What does all this mean to residents who live in the unincorporated territory? The City of Red Lake has already announced significant

increases to a variety of user fees (www.redlake.ca/our-government/fees) starting in January 2025 for non-residents. We’re anticipating that other municipalities could follow this same strategy.

In August, at the AMO conference, the Northern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) presented a paper entitled: *Taxation Reform – Unincorporated Areas*. From our standpoint, it is quite concerning. The premise of the briefing suggested that residents living in unincorporated areas benefit from municipal services, infrastructure and initiatives without contributing proportionally

Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) Gets the Go-Ahead

On November 28, the NWMO announced that it has selected the Township of Ignace and the Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation (WLO) as the host communities for the future site of Canada's deep geological repository for used nuclear fuel.

The consent-based site selection process was launched in 2010. It included clear commitments that Canada's plan for used nuclear fuel could only move forward in an area with a site that meets rigorous safety standards and that has informed and willing hosts. The project also needs to be implemented in a way that advances community well-being as defined by the host communities.

The people of both host communities demonstrated their willingness to move forward in this process. Earlier this month, WLO confirmed its willingness, following a decision-making process that was open to all its members. The Township of Ignace completed a decision-making process with its residents in July, which also confirmed willingness. The project will now move into a ten-year regulatory decision-making process, before the ten-year construction of the deep geological repository can begin. Basically, if it goes through all the way, it'll be 20 years before

waste will actually be stored at the site.

Founded in 2002, the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) is a not-for-profit organization tasked with the safe, long-term management of Canada's intermediate and high-level radioactive waste, in a manner that protects people and the environment for generations to come. According to the NWMO, there is an international consensus that deep geological repositories are the best method for the safe long-term isolation and storage of used nuclear fuel, and it is pursuing this option, along with every other country with a nuclear power program. Finland is

furthest along, with their deep geological repository already constructed and it should be operational within the next few months. Access the detailed press release by following this link <https://www.nwmo.ca/News/The-Nuclear-Waste-Management-Organization-selects-site-for-Canadas-deep-geological-repository>.

If you have any questions about this project, please reach out to NWMO at: contactus@nwmo.ca.

DoKURA will continue to follow developments to ensure that residents who live in the unincorporated area, especially those closer to the proposed Revell Lake site, can have their voices heard as part of the process



Powering the province

Bill 214 Affordable Energy Act

Electricity is a mainstay of home energy and Ontario is moving to push it even more. Promoting and planning for the use of electricity-based home heating and electric vehicles are among the more visible impacts of this move for residential users of electricity.

Recent studies have suggested the demand for Ontario electricity will increase by as much as 75 per cent by 2050, rising from the current 140-150 TWh (terawatt hour) annual range to the 260-270 TWh range. Meeting that demand will require more electrical generation and improvements to the provincial and local electrical distribution system.

Current electrical generating capacity is nearly 40,000 MW (megawatts) from close to 300 generating stations of all sizes. The capacity is required to meet a daily demand that can approach 25,000 MWh during peak periods. Capacity needs to exceed demand. No generating facility operates at continuous full capacity due to maintenance down times or other reasons like water flow, wind or solar availability.

As part of the move to a greater reliance on electricity, the province recently brought forward Bill 214, the Affordable Energy Act. Its aim is to promote electrification and facilitate energy efficiency. To accomplish this, the bill shifts some of the decision-



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making authority for energy planning and supply from energy regulatory agencies to the provincial cabinet. The bill passed its Second Reading in November and is now at the committee study stage.

One of the key policy shifts is to continue to include nuclear energy as part of the province's future. Nuclear energy has been part of Ontario's electrical supply for close to 50 years with the province's three nuclear stations providing 50 per cent of the current electrical supply.

The language in Bill 214 makes it clear nuclear power will be at the top of the list of future supply sources. The bill also makes it clear that while supply options will continue to focus on carbon-free emissions, cost of supply and consumer affordability will carry equal weight. This is important for

consumers because as the province shifted away from carbon-fueled electrical generation such as coal and heavy oil between 2005 and 2014, replacement sources proved much more costly. Recent electrical supply announcements, while they included generation from higher cost non-carbon-emitting sources such as

battery storage, wind and bioenergy, also included upgrades to the province's nuclear and hydro stations along with new natural gas stations as lower cost sources to balance out overall prices.

Electricity supply cost	
cents/kwh (2024/2025)	
Hydro	6.5¢
Gas	8.5¢
Nuclear	10.7¢
Wind	14.9¢
Bioenergy	25.4¢
Solar	46.1¢

Source - Power Advisory

All Nations Health Partners (ANHP) Update

DoKURA continues to be involved in Kenora area health planning through its membership in the All Nations Health Partners Ontario Health Team. One of ANHP's recent initiatives has been to submit a formal request to be included in the province's new Homelessness and Addiction Recovery Treatment (HART) Hub program.

The province announced earlier this year it would be ordering the closure of 10 of the province's safe drug supply, or supervised consumption

sites as they were deemed too close to schools or childcare centres. To replace the closed facilities, the government committed \$378 million over the next three years to opening 19 HART Hubs, as they are being called. Ten of the new facilities will serve communities where safe-consumption sites are being closed.

The approved HART Hubs will receive \$6.3 million each in annual funding for 10 years, including additional startup funding. The Hubs

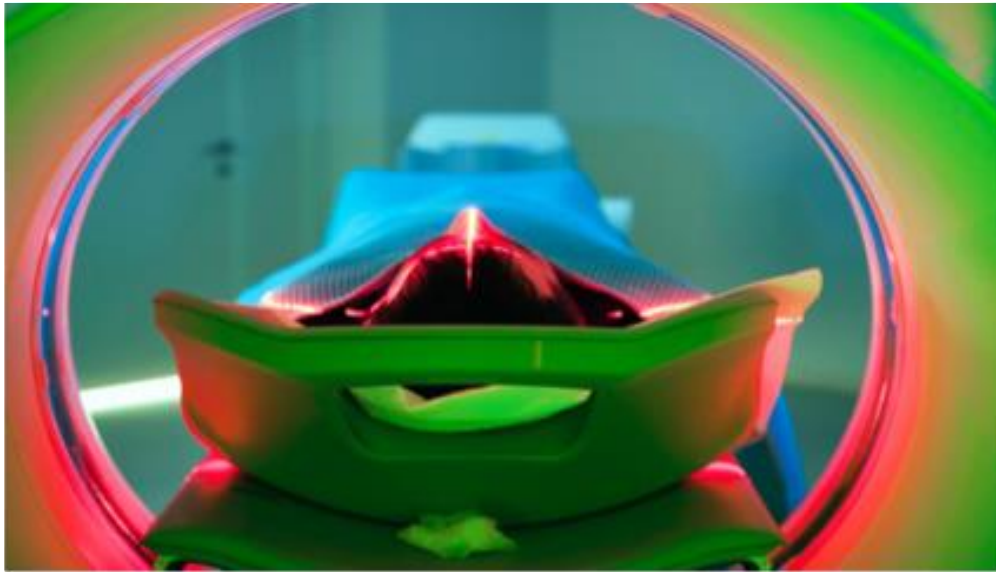
are to be up and running by the winter of 2025.

The ANHP partner agencies involved in the proposal already offer most of the services identified in planning documents for the new support and treatment-focused centres. Whether the Kenora proposal will be successful is uncertain. Thunder Bay, where one of the closed safe consumption sites is located, has made a similar proposal to replace it. Province-wide, there are dozens of proposals for

the limited number of additional Hubs being funded. Meanwhile, the future of a new All Nations Hospital to replace the Lake of the Woods District

Hospital remains unclear. A proposal for approval and funding for the next stage of planning for the new facility was made early in 2024 and the hospital planning committee, of which DoKURA is a member, is still awaiting a government decision on moving ahead with the billion-dollar project. Phase III would lead to detailed design and construction drawings along with detailed costs for the 81-bed health care facility.





MRI Machine Coming to Lake of the Woods District Hospital (LWDH) in Kenora

A November announcement of provincial funding for an MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) machine for the Lake of the Woods District Hospital is welcome news for the District of Kenora.

The diagnostic unit, which is expected to be operational by the summer of 2025, will improve timely access to high-quality care thus reducing wait times and ending the need to transport patients to Winnipeg or Thunder Bay for the service. Throughout the District of Kenora, travel to LWDH for the service will be quicker and more convenient. Patients can expect faster diagnosis and treatment.

The \$7.6 million in provincial funding for the Kenora MRI includes funding for the cost of operations and renovations needed to house the MRI.

Local fundraising will provide some of the funds for the MRI machine.

The announcement was one of several and is part of the government's pledge to fund 49 new and additional MRIs province-wide this year, bringing the total number of MRIs operating in the province to nearly 200 compared to 124 units in 2020. In 2022, 27 MRIs were added to the provincial total.

The new MRI will enhance the hospital's diagnostic imaging capabilities which include x-ray, ultrasound, mammography, and bone density machines, along with a CT (computed topography) unit installed in 2005.

Electricity Savings Elusive

According to government and media news releases this fall, a reduction in the provincially set price for electric power is going to make smaller bills for homeowners in November, December and into 2025. Unfortunately, as we see it, this won't be the case. Depending on the amount of electricity you use and when you use it, total bills will increase if similar amounts of power are used compared to 2024.

While the annual setting of Regulated Price Plan rates on Nov. 1 provides for lower rates per kWh for the coming year averaging just over a penny a kilowatt hour compared to 2023-2024 prices; a corresponding reduction in provincial electricity support and other rate changes coming in 2025 will cancel out any promised savings.

The rate reduction by itself would have saved an average 700 kwh a month user \$8.33 according to a comparison of the Ontario Energy



Board's bill calculator in October versus November. However, the reduction in the Ontario Electricity Rebate from 19.3% of the pre-tax bill to 13.1% negates this small saving. In fact, for Hydro One customers the bill increases by one cent to \$134.50 under time-of-use billing and by \$4.91 to \$136.93 for a tiered rate customer.

The same calculation applied to Synergy North customers shows a 46-cent monthly saving for a time-of-use customer and a \$4.90 saving for a tiered rate customer.

Adding to higher bills in 2025 will be increases in local distribution charges. Hydro One, Synergy

North and Sioux Lookout Hydro – the Kenora District's three local distribution companies – have made application for inflation related changes to their fixed monthly charges. The increases, if approved, will add \$1 to \$5 to a monthly bill.

Meanwhile, Hydro One's phasing out of its separate seasonal class, will mean an increase of approximately \$8 monthly for those customers.

Pump up the Savings

Heat pumps have been around since the 1950s as a lower cost option for home heating and cooling. In recent years various government programs have promoted their use through rebates or co-funding, either through installation in new home construction or retrofitting to replace existing home heating systems.

Heat pump makers and government programs highlight potential savings of \$1,500 a year and more in home heating and cooling costs.

According to Natural Resources Canada, since 2020, nearly 200,000 heat pumps have been installed nation-wide under various programs to assist homeowners in reducing heating costs. And as of 2023 close to 1.2 million households (7 per cent of 16 million in total) now use heat pumps for primary or seasonal heating and cooling. In Ontario the number of heat pump users is growing. As of 2023 over 400,000 households had heat pumps installed, including 80,000 since 2020 under various financial assistance programs.

In Ontario, a third such funding program was added in October 2024. Called the **Home Energy Saver Program**, it offers rebates of up to \$5,000 for air source heat pumps and up to \$10,000 for ground source systems. This latest program is targeted at homes currently using electrical resistance devices as a primary heating source – primarily baseboard and forced air furnace heat, along with hot water heat. Areas targeted are those where the electricity supply faces limitation, either through distribution infrastructure or local generation.



In Northwestern Ontario, both the P9N and P0X postal code areas are included. This is because the Kenora Transformer Station, which reduces grid supplied power from 230 kV to 115 kV for use by local Distribution Stations serving Kenora and the surrounding area is nearing capacity for winter demand when the electrical need is the greatest in this region. Reducing the electricity load on the station will provide more time for owner Synergy North to plan for a station expansion.

This new heat pump program is in addition to the federal government's **Oil to Heat Pump Affordability Program** announced in the fall of 2023 and an existing Ontario program for natural gas to heat pump conversions. As well there are several home energy efficiency and upgrade programs that can assist in upgrades including home insulation, windows and doors and even replacing appliance and lighting fixtures with more energy efficient devices.

Every home is different in its energy need and use; those interested in energy efficiency programs should contact their local utility – Hydro One, Synergy North or Sioux Lookout Hydro for electricity users or Enbridge Gas for natural

Want to Apply?

Contacts for Programs & More Information

Home Energy Saver Program

- [Website](#) (all info)
- Contact info for various programs: saveonenergy.ca/contact

Oil to Heat Pump Affordability Program

- [Website](#)
- Phone: 1-833-674-8282
- TTY: 1-800-465-7735
- Email: OHPA-CAMT@nrcan-rncan.gc.ca
- [Hydro One Website](#)
- [Synergy North Website](#)
- [Sioux Lookout Hydro Website](#)
- [Enbridge Gas](#)

Policing costs raise concerns

Kenora district municipalities, along with many others in small and mid-sized communities, are raising concerns over significant increases to their 2025 OPP policing bill. However, the province has agreed to help cover costs.

Fort Frances was the first northwestern Ontario town to raise the issue back in October. The municipality is facing a 25% increase, going up from \$2.7 million in 2023 to \$3.45 million in 2025.

In Kenora, city council recently reported its 2025 OPP bill is \$8.78 million compared to \$6.77 million last year – a nearly 30 per cent increase. Last year's bill was reduced with special funding after appeals to the government and the eventual cost to the city was \$5.96 million.

Across other parts of Ontario increases ranging from 10 to 30% are being reported. The Ontario Provincial Police provide policing services to 330 of Ontario's 444 municipalities on a cost recovery basis. In unincorporated areas like those represented by DoKURA, OPP costs are billed to the Ministry of Finance and paid for in part through the Provincial Land Tax.

Police officials say the 2025 increase is due to several factors. The biggest is a new contract signed in mid-2024 which included retroactive pay for 2023 and 2024, those amounts along with 2025 pay increases are all included in the 2025 billings. A return to pre-COVID level calls for service is a second factor, along with new regulations that have increased the amount of time officers spend on each call.

Overall, the new costs have raised the average cost-per-property used in billing calculations from \$350 to \$400 according to OPP billing statement summaries. Calls-for-service costs form a major part of individual municipal billings and can vary widely. In the case of the city of Kenora the total cost-per-

property, the fixed cost per property for basic service (\$168 in 2025) plus the charge for calls-for-service which is based on officer time spent answering and dealing with such calls, will be over \$1,000, while in Dryden it will be over \$1,700. The impact on municipal budgets will be severe. Many mayors have said publicly

that increased OPP costs alone will result in property tax increases of seven or eight per cent; and other parts of local budgets, services and infrastructure projects may have to be reduced.

As a result of lobbying by individual municipalities and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the Ontario government has proposed \$77 million in provincial relief to help offset the sharp increase for municipalities served by the OPP.

Specifically, this funding would offset the 2025 impacts of OPP negotiated salary increases, which would include:

- A 3.75% bill reduction on 2023 total reconciled costs,
- A 44% bill reduction on 2023 reconciled overtime costs, and
- A 10% reduction on amounts invoiced for 2025 policing cost.

In addition to these changes, the Government of Ontario is continuing its annual \$125 million Court Security & Prisoner Transportation Transfer Payment Program. The province has also agreed to examine options for reviewing the OPP billing model to ensure that it meets the needs of all communities across Ontario.

The specific reduction for each community is yet to be determined. However, a 10% reduction on the 2025 invoiced costs would translate into a significant reduction for all communities in our region.



Turtle Portage Marine Railway



The Ministry of Natural Resources has closed the site for the season. Notification will be provided when the site reopens in the spring of 2025.

Since 2024 was the first full operating season, the Ministry

would like your feedback on the new system. How often did you use it? Did you encounter any issues? Did you hear any or have any comments about the system (positive or negative)?

The Ministry contact is:

Michelle Riley
Resource Management Coordinator
Ministry of Natural Resources | Regional Operations Division
Northwest Region | Kenora District
808 Robertson Street | Kenora ON | P9N 1X9
c. 807-747-0341 | michelle.riley@ontario.ca

Ontario and Starlink to Bring High-Speed Internet to Remote Communities

On November 14, the Ontario Government announced that it is partnering with Starlink to launch the new Ontario Satellite Internet (ONSAT) program, offering high-speed satellite internet access to 15,000 eligible unserved homes and businesses in rural, remote and northern communities, beginning in June 2025.



Program details and a registration process is expected to be available in Spring 2025. DoKURA will continue to follow progress on this initiative and will be looking for a program to assist low-income families with affordability for the monthly cost to access satellite service.

KDSB Working to Provide Reliable Child Care Services

The Kenora District Services Board (KDSB) provides help and support when you need it. KDSB delivers essential social services. These services assist in helping everyone reach their full potential. KDSB's services support individuals, families and communities in the Kenora District. The KDSB is dedicated to improving everyday lives through early learning and care, housing, paramedic and social services.

Integrated Social Services (ISS) - Early Years Services

Integrated Social Services (ISS) creates a seamless and responsive continuum of services. This means involving multiple areas of expertise with you every step of the way. Receiving unique supports and services tailored to your needs is a priority when working with our ISS team.

The Kenora District Services Board (KDSB) is the Service System Manager for all Early Learning and Care Programs throughout



the Kenora District. The KDSB is also a direct service provider of Early Learning and Child Care in the communities of Kenora, Dryden, Machin, Sioux Lookout, Ignace, Ear Falls and Red Lake. Services include: Licensed Child Care Programs and EarlyON Child and Family Centres. The KDSB believes that a supportive foundation for children and youth encourages an increase in well-being for the District. All Early Learning and Care Programs (ELC) provides play-based learning environments that are: Safe, High-quality, Inclusive, Affordable, and Supportive of children and their families need.