

Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Tuesday, November 27, 2007

5:00 pm

Fort Frances Curling Club

M I N U T E S

Christine Denby	P	Cathy Emes	A	Nancy Daley	A	Janet Plumridge	P
Gary Rogozinski	P	Barb Cournoyer	P	John Kantola	P	Stephen Kontzie	A
Bev Kotnik	A	Kevin Nielson	P	Pam Parsons	P	Kelly Spicer	A
Jeff Wright	A	VACANT		TOFF - Mayor Avis	P	RRFDC	A
Patti Anderson	P	Christine Jourdain	P	Jane Gillon	P		
Dawn Booth	P	Cassandra Parise	P	P - PRESENT			A - ABSENT

GUESTS:

- Mike Canfield - BDO Dunwoody
- Jeff Savage - BDO Dunwoody
- Paul Sunstrum - Canadian Tire
- Anne Renaud - Confederation College
- Pam Parsons - Enterprise Rent-a-Car
- Jim Anderson - Enterprise Rent-a-Car
- Cindy Homer - Fort Frances Times
- Pam Hawley - Fort Frances Museum
- Bill Gushulak - Fort Frances General Supply
- Maureen Thomson - Fort Frances Curling Club
- Duane Cridland - Gillons' Insurance Brokers
- John Homer - Gillons' Insurance Brokers
- Wanda Botsford - Ken Boshcoff MP Constituency Office
- Maureen Jackson - KGHS/KSDM Radio
- Jack Mutz - Mid-Town Motel
- Tonia Dolph - Northland Kitchen & Design Consulting
- Connie Cuthbertson - Northwoods Gallery & Gifts
- Doug Cuthbertson - Northwoods Gallery & Gifts
- Jim Jackson - Sight & Sound Audiotronic
- Dan DeGagne - Sunset Lock & Security
- Lillian Gerley - The UPS Store
- Tom Fry - World of Water
- Irene Laing
- Walter Laing

Call to Order

5:30 pm

President's Message

President Christine Denby welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave the following speech:

"I'll try to keep this brief. I would like to thank everyone for taking time out of their busy schedules to be here this evening, showing their commitment not only to the Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce but to the Town of Fort Frances and the Rainy River district as a whole.

I thought long and hard about what I was going to say tonight and as many of you know, it isn't always easy to know what message to give and how to convey that message.

In the spirit of being 'Green' and Environment Friendly, I thought I would practice the 3 R's tonight – reduce, reuse and recycle ~ so that said, I'm going to reuse and recycle the speech that I gave recently at the 12th Annual Business Awards because I feel that my message is still relevant.

We gathered at La Place Rendez Vous on November 3rd to Embrace Excellence in the Rainy River District, saluting those "businesses, organizations, and individuals for outstanding business achievement and the contributions made to the economic growth and prosperity of the Rainy River District".

How did these individuals and businesses get here? By working together, within their businesses and organizations, and with the community as a whole ~ in partnership. Partnership ~ an important concept ~ a concept which is embraced by the Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce, working as the Voice of Business since 1909. As a Chamber, I think one of our biggest achievements is the many partnerships we have created and nurtured.

2007 has been a great year for partnerships. In January, we partnered with the Canadian Mental Health Association to present a well attended workshop for employers and employees, on Mental Health in the workplace.

The Rainy River Future Development Corporation – Geoff Gillon or a representative sits regularly at our board table, working together on various projects and events including the NOACC conference held here in Fort Frances in September, the Business Awards.

The Fort Frances BIA – Patti Anderson, office coordinator for the BIA also sits on our board, working with the Chamber on various events and projects. Russ Ling, president of the BIA and I are currently working on a proposal to present to Town Council.

After much discussion and planning, Service Excellence, a Customer Service Training program was launched, in cooperation with Confederation College,

NCDS Career Works, Skills and Employment, the RRFDC, the Rainy River District Social Services Administration Board and the BIA. We were very pleased to see several businesses take part in that program, and we hope to offer further sessions in the future.

TBayTel has recently come on board as a major supporter of the Chamber, especially with the Home & Leisure Show and NOACC conference. Bell Canada, too has worked closely with the Chamber, sponsoring the Home Show, Quest for the Best, and the Business Awards.

B93 ~ have been a major sponsor at all Chamber events including the Home Show, Quest for the Best, our Spring Business After Hours, the Business Awards and of course, the Chamber Minute, heard on B93!

Shaw Cable – the Chamber has worked closely with Shaw Cable who televises many of our events including Quest for the Best, the recent Provincial All Candidates meeting, and of the Business Awards.

Fort Frances Canadian Bass Championship has partnered with the Chamber to bring Quest for the Best to Fort Frances, and in turn the Chamber has provided many in kind services to the Bass Championship as one of their Tournament sponsors.

And a new partnership to the Chamber came recently when the Chamber worked with the Education Workers of the Rainy River District, both the Elementary and Secondary panels of the Public and Separate boards of Education, to host the Provincial All Candidates Meeting.

2007 has seen the return of the Business Retention and Expansion Project – an economic development strategy that focuses on the retention and expansion of existing businesses in the Rainy River District – partnering with the Chamber on this important project is the Town of Fort Frances, the RRFDC, the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, and the

NOHFC (Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation). Our new Community Development Officer Cassandra Parise, whose main focus will be the Business Retention and Expansion project, is here tonight, having begun her new duties last week.

We have recently been approached by the Emo Chamber of Commerce, as well as the Rainy River Chamber, to work together on a campaign to keep our shoppers home, in the Rainy River District. I am personally hoping that this will lead to more projects together, working with Emo and Rainy River as well, knowing that what's good for the District as a whole will benefit all of our communities.

And, I can not forget the Town of Fort Frances. The Chamber of Commerce works closely with the Town not only on projects like the Business Retention and Expansion, but on Tourism promotion, Town Beautification, the Museum Heritage Tourism Project, sponsorship of the Business Awards, ~ we have a Representative from council sit on our Board of Directors who will be appointed after the election in January.

Of course I would be remiss if I didn't mention the most important partner of all and that is our Chamber members. Through your membership and involvement, and with your input, we can be the VOICE of Business. I'd like to thank those who have served as directors in the past and who tonight have put their names forward to serve in 2008 ~ your time and efforts are indeed appreciated. Thanks also go out to those members who have sponsored events or contributed to our Chamber. Through out the year we have been approached by members on various issues ~ please ~ continue to come to us so we can continue to work together and truly be that Voice.

We've all partnered together in some way or another ~ everyone of us here tonight ~ and we will continue to do so in 2008. Times are changing with many of our industries facing issues never faced before, but I believe that if we work together, Fort Frances will continue be a great community to live, play and work in".

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the April 24, 2007 General Membership Meeting were presented for review.

- **Fort Frances General Supply (Gushulak) - Abitibi-Bowater (Rogozinski) to accept the minutes from the April 24, 2007 General Membership meeting as presented. CARRIED.**

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Janet Plumridge presented the year-to-date balance sheet and income statement ending October 31, 2007. It was pointed out that we are in good shape and project we will end the year with a balanced budget or small surplus. The three main fundraising events we do each year, Home & Leisure Show, Quest for the Best and Business Awards Banquet brought in roughly \$25,000 collectively, which is very important for the Chamber as without these fundraising efforts, we could not afford to operate. It was also noted that unfortunately membership dues are down this year and we will not meet our aggressive \$40,000 budget. As at the end of October, we are at about \$33,000 with another \$2,000 expected yet to come in. We have had 13 members cancel so far this year with 9 of them a result of business closures. It was further noted that the BR+E project has fallen short of its goals this year as our original intern left to pursue full-time employment, leaving the position and project vacant for six months but we are back on track now and any budgeted amounts will be moved to the 2008 budget.

- **Fort Frances General Supply (Gushulak) - Confederation College (Kantola) to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented. CARRIED.**

Early Bird Membership Draw

Chamber Manager Dawn Booth announced that at the beginning of each year, membership renewal invoices are sent out with an incentive to pay within a specific time frame. Those that take advantage of the incentive and pay their dues within that time frame, are entered into a draw for free membership the following year. Dawn made the draw and Confederation College was the lucky winner of the free membership in 2008.

Special Presentations

President Christine Denby acknowledged those Directors who will be leaving the Board at the end of the year or who have left the Board mid-way through the year including:

- **Brian Kahler** - who sat on the Board from 2003 - 2007. Brian and his family relocated to Manitoba earlier this year. Brian was acknowledged for the significant contribution he made to the Chamber, bringing many new ideas and aiding in the formulation of policy.
- **Kelly Spicer** - a long standing Chamber supporter and Board member including time on the Executive and many years as Treasurer. Kelly sat on the Board from 1995 - 2007. Kelly was thanked for her contribution and many years of service to the Chamber. Kelly, along with Robin's Donuts and Curves for Women, have been a tremendous supporter of the Chamber over the years.
- **Jeff Wright** - Board member in 2006 and 2007. Jeff was with us a short time but contributed to the Board in many ways, always ready to volunteer with various projects, including the Home & Leisure Show. Jeff and his wife Heather will certainly have fond memories of the dunk tank. Jeff and Heather are now busy with a new addition to their family but we hope Jeff will return to the Board in the future.
- **Tannis Drysdale** - another long time member of the Chamber and Board of Directors who not only served on the Executive, and was President, but also served with NOACC on our behalf, including time on their Executive and as President. Tannis was a great resource at the Board table and will be greatly missed. Tannis served on the Board from 1994 – 2007.
- **Stephen Kontzie** - was elected to our Board at this time last year. Stephen was new to Fort Frances when he came to the Board and was just starting to warm up and speak up at the table, and now we're losing him to a bigger community. Thankfully he thought highly enough of the Chamber and has recruited another representative from the Royal Bank who is allowing her name to stand for nomination to the 2008 board.
- **Others on the Board for part of 2007 include:**
Chris Shackles who sat as a representative on behalf of Enterprise Rent-a-Car, and was replaced by Pam Parsons when he was transferred. Mike Cameron & John Kantola who sat on behalf of Confederation College while Anne Renaud was on temporary assignment in Thunder Bay and we thank them very much for their ideas, commitment and hard work.

Christine made a special presentation to volunteer Irene Laing:

"I have to make special mention here of a wonderful volunteer in our community, Irene Laing. The Business Retention & Expansion project suffered a slight setback when our first Community Development Officer left for another employment opportunity. Irene had volunteered with our project, and continued with the interviews she was doing so that project wouldn't suffer an even great setback~ we are very grateful for Irene's assistance. Irene has also made many, many phone calls to our membership reminding them of our Business After Hours. So again, I'd like to thank Irene Laing for her time and look forward to her continued involvement in 2008".

Irene was presented with a gift on behalf of the Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce.

2008 Nominating Committee Report

Chamber Manager Dawn Booth presented the Nominating Committee Report.

"Although 2007 is not over yet, we are here today to discuss our 2008 Executive & Board of Directors.

Our Board of Directors graciously volunteer their time and come together as a team to focus on the needs of the business community, to set goals and objectives for the Chamber of Commerce and to work towards making our community the best place to live, work and play.

Our Board of Directors includes five Executive members, nine Directors and five appointed members.

Our Nominating Committee met a month or so ago and put together a slate of officers with distinct characteristics, skills and abilities to ensure the Chamber will continue to grow and prosper in 2008.

This slate of officers include:

Jane Gillon from the Ministry of Northern Development & Mines who will return as an ex-officio member of our Board. Although this is not an appointed seat according to our by-laws, we feel having such a representative at the table is a definite benefit to our Board of Directors.

In addition to our elected members, the Chamber reserves seats on our Board for representatives from the Town of Fort Frances, Economic Development office, Business Improvement Association, Couchiching First Nation and Abitibi-Bowater. The following individuals will sit as our appointed representatives:

- Patti Anderson for the Business Improvement Association
- Geoff Gillon from the Rainy River Future Development Corporation
- Christine Jourdain for Couchiching First Nation
- Gary Rogozinski from Abitibi-Bowater who will also serve as Past President
- and the Town of Fort Frances has yet to name an appointed member but have stated they will do so after the bi-election in January.

There are nine seats available for Directors on our Board. The following individuals have put their name forward for consideration:

Wanda Barker	Super 8 Motel
Barb Cournoyer	TD Canada Trust
Dan DeGagne	Sunset Lock & Security
Tonia Dolph	Northland Kitchen & Design Consulting
Mario Galluzzo	Causeway General Insurance
Lillian Gerley	The UPS Store
Bev Kotnik	Good Impressions Printing
Krista Mauro	RBC Royal Bank
Leo Melanson	B93 fm
Kevin Nielson	Shopper's Drug Mart
Pam Parsons	Enterprise Rent-a-Car
Josh Phillips	Clover Valley Farmer's Market
Paul Pirie	Tamarack Partners
Anne Renaud	Confederation College
and Paul Sunstrum	Canadian Tire

Dawn thanked these 15 individuals for their interest in the Chamber of Commerce. Additional nominations were called for from the floor. As there were none, Dawn closed nominations for the 2008 Directors.

Dawn continued, "As there are 15 individuals vying for the 9 seats, an actual election must take place. Ballots will be distributed to all of our 175 members before the end of the week with a deadline of December 7. Results will be tabulated, all 15 individuals will be notified of these results and will be officially announced at our next Board meeting on Tuesday, December 11.

Again, thank you to everyone who put their name forward. I appreciate your interest in becoming involved and wish you the best!"

It was suggested that in an effort to save money and time, ballots be sent out via e-mail or fax. Dawn stated that as not all members have e-mail or fax, she will use a combination of e-mail, fax and mail to ensure all members receive their ballot.

“Moving on to our Executive Members...Gary Rogozinski representing Abitibi-Bowater will sit as Past President for the 2008 term. As this is not an elected seat, a motion is not necessary. Thank you Gary for your continued support of the Chamber.

The position of Treasurer however is an elected seat and Janet Plumridge of Investors Group has put her name forward to serve as Treasurer for a second term. Thank you Janet!

Additional nominations for the seat of Treasurer were called for from the floor, as there were none, the following motion was made:

- **Gillons’ Insurance Brokers (Cridland) - Fort Frances General Supply (Gushulak) to accept Janet Plumridge for the position of Treasurer to the 2008 Board of Directors. CARRIED.**

Nancy Daley from the Canadian Mental Health Association has put her name forward for the 2nd Vice President seat again this year. Dawn called for any other nominations from the floor and seeing none, asked for a motion to accept Nancy Daley as 2nd Vice President.

- **Fort Frances Curling Club (Thomson) - Northwoods Gallery & Gifts © Cuthbertson) to accept Nancy Daley as 2nd Vice President for the 2008 Board of Directors. CARRIED.**

Cathy Emes of Skills & Employment Source has agreed to run for the 1st Vice President seat again in 2008. Additional nominations from the floor were called for and as there were none, a motion to accept Cathy Emes as 1st Vice President was asked for.

- **Abitibi-Bowater (Rogozinski) - Couchiching First Nation (Jourdain) to accept Cathy Emes as 1st Vice President for the 2008 Board of Directors. CARRIED.**

Christine Denby of Gillons’ Insurance Brokers graciously put her name forward for the role of President again for 2008. Dawn called for additional nominations from the floor and seeing none, a motion to accept Christine Denby as President for 2008 was made.

- **Confederation College (Kantola) - Enterprise Rent-a-Car (Parsons) to accept Christine Denby as President for the 2008 Board of Directors. CARRIED.**

Dawn concluded by congratulating the 2008 Executive & yet to be announced Board of Directors and stated that all nominations will be in effect from January 1, 2008 - December 31, 2008. She again thanked everyone for their interest in getting involved and stated that she is looking forward to working with each and everyone of the new Board members.

Guest Speaker

Christine introduced Mayor Roy Avis from the Town of Fort Frances as our special guest speaker. Mayor Avis had the following to say:

“Good Evening,

Thank you for inviting me to speak this evening. A year has passed since our new Council was sworn in and I must say, it was a busy and rewarding year.

First, we tackled the budget and after much deliberation and cutting the wish list without affecting services, we increased commercial occupied taxes .8531% and occupied industrial 1.123%.

Since we are outside the range of fairness, commercial increase was only 50% of residential. Our tax ratio has come down from a high of 3.1 to 2.0 to 1 residential.

I attended the pre-budget meeting in Kenora and brought forward the disparity in the Education Tax throughout the province for the commercial sector. Our claim to fame was the 8th highest ratio in the province. I am pleased to announce consideration was given in the provincial budget to correct these inequities. Over the next seven years, the ratio will be

equalized throughout the province. If you have built a new building since April 2007, you would be taxed at the new equalized rate that is projected in 2014. This is a very good incentive for new business start-ups.

We also brought forward the issue of a fluctuating Canadian dollar and the hardships it creates for local businesses with the influx of American goods particularly building products. At present, PST is only collected on non-commercial goods imported by Ontario residents returning to Canada. It is not collected from American residents who import goods that will be consumed and left in Canada. This creates an 8% disadvantage to our local businesses.

This year has seen Council put forward an economic incentive plan for the Abitibi Bio-Mass Project. This being Realty Tax Concessions (over three years) building permit fee (estimated at \$70,000) municipal services (up to \$100,000). We pride ourselves on having one of the best incentive plans in Northwestern Ontario. This plan is not only used for industrial class but all commercial class and we are open for business.

This summer saw construction on Central and Scott Street in the downtown core area. This biggest question - What took so long? And I know the Chamber sent a letter on this and should be getting a letter in return. Well, I will explain. There is an effluent line from Abitibi that is three feet in diameter and the contractor had to pass over or under at least eight times. No maps were available for its exact location. The infrastructure that was being replaced was over 100 years old. Needless to say, at the end of the project, we were only over approximately 12 days from the allotted time. Near the end of construction, a week of wet weather delayed paving operations.

Council had worked with the Police Services Board to develop a strategy that will enhance traffic flow next year when Phase II of the Central Avenue project is undertaken. This project will encompass Central Avenue from First to Eighth Street.

Council has worked with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to bring a new Youth Detention Centre to Fort Frances. This will create approximately 20 new full-time jobs and 10 part-time jobs with an estimated payroll over 1 million dollars.

Myself and CAO Mark McCaig have met with Susan Rubenstein, the Director of Ontario Travel Information and Bill Kenny, the Vice President of Industry Relations and Corporate Communications to develop a strategy to enhance our tourist information centre. This would involve private sector participation. An example being the duty free, a coffee shop, and other tourist related businesses in a mini-mall or plaza setting. This has been discussed with the stake holders and interest has been shown. This is an exciting concept and we look forward to working with them. It is important to acknowledge that issues involving the tourist centre have regional impact. All relevant stake holders need to work together on this initiative.

I will close in saying we must work as a team to accomplish our mutual goals and make Fort Frances a better place to work and live. Council will assist when needed and we appreciate your input at budget time and throughout the year and look forward to a prosperous 2008.

Thank You”

Question & Answer Period

Mayor Avis fielded audience questions including one on the tourist centre and one on the affect of the high Canadian dollar on Town operations.

Adjournment

Mix & Mingle

Christine invited everyone to stay for mixing, mingling and great hors d'oeuvres.

She thanked Sight & Sound for the use of the sound system and the Fort Frances Curling Club for hosting us tonight.

She concluded by saying it has been a pleasure to serve as President of the Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce in 2007 and learned that being President is a whole different ball game. She went on to say that although we were unable to complete our strategic planning session as had hoped earlier this year, she has made it a goal to complete in 2008. She was also pleased to announce that 2008 will see the number of meetings decrease and therefore, the required time commitment also decrease, alleviating some of the pressure off our volunteer members.