

DoKURA

DISTRICT OF KENORA
UNINCORPORATED AREAS
RATEPAYERS
ASSOCIATION
A NON-PROFIT ONTARIO CORPORATION

PRESENTATION TO

MINISTRY OF NORTHERN
DEVELOPMENT, MINES AND
FORESTRY

PROPOSED GROWTH PLAN FOR
NORTHERN ONTARIO

JANUARY 2010

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BACKGROUND

WHO ARE WE?

For READERS unfamiliar with DoKURA, we are an incorporated, Non-Profit Corporation under the laws of the Province of Ontario. We were formed over fourteen years ago to represent the interests of the over 35,000 permanent and seasonal residents and ratepayers who reside outside the organized municipalities in the Unincorporated Territories of the Kenora District of N. W. Ontario.

Our organization is operated by a volunteer Board of Directors who are elected annually at public meetings. And, we have four elected representatives who serve on the Kenora District Services Board.

With one quarter of all the provincial Land Tax accounts in Ontario (15,682 out of a total of 60,000) located within the Kenora District, we provide a substantial portion of the local funding that goes towards the operation of the KDSB.

With the reform that took place in 2009 with respect to Provincial Land Tax (PLT), the share paid by the individuals we represent, towards the operation of the Kenora District Services Board, increased substantially. The following is a breakdown of the allocation, showing the changes that resulted from the new assessment figures.

It should be noted that with assessment values for the properties in the Unincorporated Territories of our Kenora District expected to out pace those of most of the Municipalities within the District, we anticipate that our share will continue to rise.

	PRE PLT REFORM	WITH PLT REFORM
Unincorporated (4 TWOMOs)	31.1%	45.2%
Kenora	26.7%	21.3%
Dryden	15.5%	11.7%
Sioux Lookout	9.0%	7.0%
Sioux Narrows/ Nestor Falls	5.9%	4.9%
Red Lake	5.8%	4.9%
Machin	2.7%	2.2%
Ignace	1.6%	1.0%
Ear Falls	1.3%	1.0%
Pickle Lake	0.5%	0.4%

Our Association operated entirely on the backs of those who serve as volunteer Directors. Yes, our Association has a small bank account. We are funded by generous donations from property owners within the District. Unfortunately such revenue provides no where near the funding required to meet the needs of the four elected representatives. They are regularly called upon for help on issues area residents have, not just issues involving the DSSAB.

DoKURA conducted the first vote across the District, in 1996, and elected the first Unincorporated Territory representatives to the then, newly formed, Kenora District Services Board. DoKURA has four representatives on this Board, one from each of the four electoral areas our Association defined. The map on page 6 details the four areas.

Subsequent elections for representatives to the DSSAB have been the responsibility of the KDSB, however they have down loaded such responsibility to our Association, under contract.

Starting in 2001, we obtained funding from your Ministry to conduct meetings within the District to see if there was sufficient interest to form an AREA SERVICES BOARD. Numerous public meetings were held, and in the end, a public vote taken on whether or not to proceed.

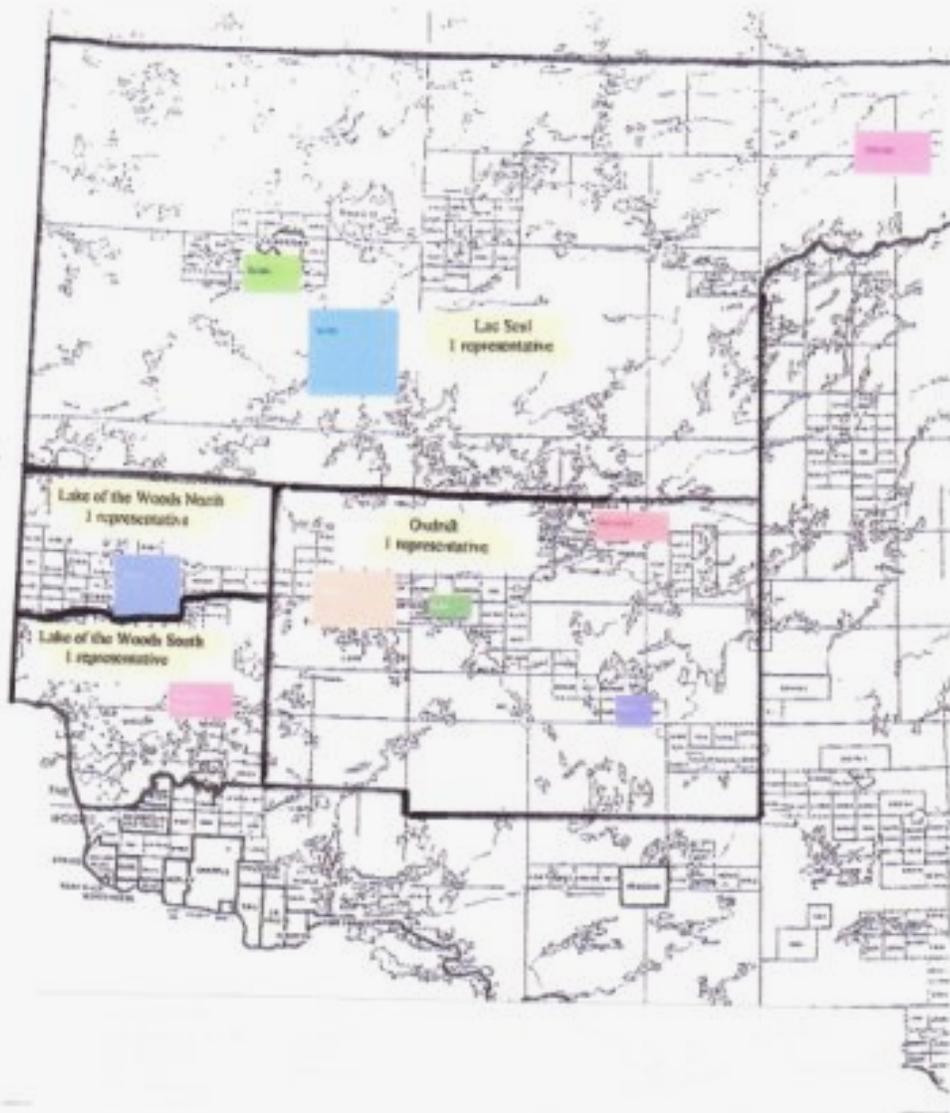
The vote in the Unincorporated Areas was in favor, as was the vote from the majority of the Municipalities.

Unfortunately, the government of the day chose not to proceed with this much needed reform.

Our elected representatives, acting on behalf of DoKURA, have made several presentations to various Provincial Cabinet Ministers, including MNDM Minister Michael Gravelle, on the need for reform allowing for expansion of services by the existing Services Board or replacement of the Board with something closer to an Area Services Board.

Our most recent meetings with a Provincial Minister, Minister Madeline Meilleur, the Minister of Community and Social Services, during the summer of 2009, and subsequently with her senior staff, have led to this presentation today. They understand the need for changes in, or the formation of some type of local government, for our Unincorporated Areas, and suggested we make them known to this body.

On the following pages, we have provided our comment and suggestions, with the various areas under review. Some of the topics are of more concern to us than others.



DISTRICT OF KENORA UNINCORPORATED AREAS

RATEPAYERS ASSOCIATION

ELECTORIAL BOUNDARIES ON THE
KENORA DISTRICT SERVICES BOARD

OUR THOUGHTS AND COMMENTS

1 BUILDING TOWARDS A NEW ECONOMY

MINING – FORESTRY

Two strong resources that are available to aid in the growth and development of Ontario's North.

While the mining industry is experiences areas of prosperity and growth, at present, forestry is suffering from the down turn in the overall global economy.

The economy will re-bounce in the not too distant future, and with it will come new opportunities in both areas.

Government has to be careful, however, in planning for the recovery, and the new jobs, that will follow. Northern Ontario will not be the only area looking for investment and growth, rather those with money to invest will be sought after by all areas.

If government makes it easy to do business in the region, investors will come.

If government does not **go out of it's way** in making the ease of doing business attractive, investors will go elsewhere.

In other words, make sure that “Red Tape”, so often associated with trying to do business, is kept to a minimum.

In addition, if economic development is to prosper, communities, together with the Provincial Government, must find ways to extend the supply of Natural Gas to some of the more remote regions. The dependence on electricity for heating, with it's ever increasing cost (smart meters) in areas such as Red Lake, many times, stands in the way of the economic benefit he expansion of the mining industry will bring with it.

We note your comments regarding the Plan of Action, in the section pertaining to Forestry. Mention is made of the need for a forestry council to support collaboration between labor, communities, industry and Aboriginal peoples.

It is our opinion that if we are to move forward with a strong forest industry, we **MUST** have the support and agreement on how to proceed, between such groups.

It is our suggestion that such a council should be established NOW. Representatives of all the groups mentioned, should participate. But rather than requesting that they work out local area agreements on how and what areas of forest should be harvested, such a council should be given a time frame (ie – one year maximum) to establish a working agreement, or the Provincial Government shall step in and dictate same.

The recovery and growth of the industry can not be accomplished unless all of the groups are willing to work together. They must put the benefit to the entire area, ahead of trying to negotiate agreements that may be considered one sided.

If we have such operating agreements in place BEFORE the economy starts to re-bounce, forestry companies will expand their operations. If the agreements are not in place, expect them to look elsewhere.

GREEN ENERGY

We agree that areas of Northern Ontario hold great potential when it comes to expansion of hydro-electric facilities.

Unfortunately, too many of the sites are located distant from where the energy is most needed (Southern Ontario). The costs of transporting the power so generated, over long distances, many times outweighs the benefits.

We note comments pointing out the fact that some of the best sites for generation of electricity using the wind, are located on the northern shores of Lake Huron and the eastern shores of Lake Superior. With the closer proximity of such sites to Southern Ontario, we would encourage their development first.

TOURISM AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

There is a great tourism industry, particularly across North Western Ontario. This has seen some down turns in recent years, due primarily to the set backs in the global economy.

This industry provides a large number of seasonal jobs for residents of the area, and needs to be supported when ever possible.

Government needs to make sure that the roads tourists use to access the tourist sites (many in remote areas) are well maintained.

They need to see that public facilities used by such tourists – docks, boat launch sites and related marine facilities – are well maintained. Tourists who use the areas and find the facilities well maintained and user friendly, are the first ones to tell their friends. They are some of our best ambassadors.

BUT, when they find such facilities in need of repair, they are the first ones to tell their friends considering a similar trip, that they might want to think about some other location.

There is too much “It’s not my responsibility” attitude by some Ministries, when it comes to maintaining and operating such facilities.

The Ministry of Natural Resources is but a perfect example of a Ministry who, in past years, constructed and maintained, either alone or with others, facilities such as these. They are now looking to get out of such responsibility, stating that it is not within their mandate and/or they don't have the funds to do the job.

A fine example of this is the marine railway transfer system on the Lake of the Woods, known as Turtle Portage. This is in dire need of up grading. Tourists use it on a regular basis.

Something has to be done to make sure that numerous facilities, such as this, are not allowed to be closed down simply because one Ministry does not feel it is something they should have to look after.

Boat ramps and public docking facilities must be properly maintained.

Municipalities and the Ministry, when it comes to the Unincorporated Areas, have to provide adequate parking facilities for tourists. Don't assume they are all headed to private establishments and that such private operators will look after their needs.

When it comes to tourism, all Ministries need to work for the benefit of the entire area.

ATTRACTING INVESTMENT AND BUSINESS GROWTH

We've mentioned this earlier in our presentation, however feel it is important enough that it bears repeating.

From our point of view, the number one thing that the Provincial Government can bring to the table in this area, is an ease of doing business.

Individuals and businesses looking to invest in business opportunities – and creating new jobs for local residents – must find the process of doing so, easy.

Investors are too hard to find and those with money to invest are usually sought after by many areas.

If Northern Ontario is to be the winner in such instances, than it had better have the doors open and make sure that bureaucratic RED TAPE does not stand in the way.

If you want private industry, as opposed to government, to be the investor, then you had better make sure the transportation system (roads) are up to standard; the needed energy to fuel the projects is readily available, and at a reasonable cost. Government both local and provincial, **MUST** be prepared to go that extra step to make sure they can get started with ease.

2 INVESTING IN PEOPLE AND PROGRESS

Attracting skilled people to Northern Ontario has always been, and will continue to be, a problem.

Huge amounts of money have been spent, not only by local communities (Municipalities), but also the Provincial Government, in trying to get skilled professionals to re-locate in the north. From time to time such recruitment activities are successful. More often than not, they succeed in attracting an individual, only to find that after a relatively short time working in the north, that individual moves on.

Yes, investing in people is very important. Spending available funds to invest in the right people is the challenge.

If long term results are to be achieved, more consideration has to be given in investing in the people who grew up in the north. Individuals used to the isolation many of Ontario's northern communities bring with living there, are more likely to remain, than those imported from areas such as Southern Ontario.

A perfect example of this can be found in our Kenora District Ambulance Service. This service, operated by the local Social Services Administration Board, had a terrible time trying to find qualified paramedics to staff a number of their locations. People just did not want to live in some of the more remote communities.

Faced with this on-going problem, the DSSAB got together with Confederation College. They encouraged the college to run a paramedic training course, and even donated a used ambulance, to assist in the training.

The course was a success. As the majority of those attending, came from northern areas, the graduates were more than willing to take jobs in some of the more remote communities.

The staffing problem was solved.

4 CONNECTING AND STRENGTHENING NORTHERN COMMUNITIES

REGIONAL ECONOMIC PLANNING

We note the comment in the October 2009 information brochure – page 42 – that states that the regions of Northern Ontario do not fit a “one-size-fits-all” approach.

We fully support this statement, and point to our Kenora District as a perfect example.

The south western area, the portion in and around the City of Kenora, has an economic base supported by a very large population of seasonal residents. Recent economic impact studies (2002) show that such property owners contribute \$85,000,000.00 or more, annually, to the local economy.

Other areas of the District get input from the tourism industry, but they do not enjoy such a large number of property owners – seasonal residents. Their tourism economic benefit is more from the transient tourists, who stay for a short periods of time.

In planning financial support to handle the anticipated needs of different regions, the different needs of seasonal residents and tourists, must be kept in mind.

The areas in and around the City of Kenora are a fine example of continued changing use, which must be kept in mind. As seasonal resident property owners age, more and more of them are retiring and making their one time “Lake home” their permanent residence. We see more and more of this every year.

While such new full time residents typically reside in rural areas, they provide an increasing revenue stream to the area’s retailers, who, for the most part, are located within Municipal boundaries.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

There is more to planning to meet the needs of the North, than simply economic planning.

There is a GREAT NEED for the establishment of some form of local government to provide for the needs of the vast areas of Unincorporated Territory.

The province took a first step in this direction, with the establishment of the ten District Social Service Administration Boards, across Northern Ontario. They have been in operation for over ten years now, and, while limited in what they can do, are a good starting point for expanded local government.

The initial design of such boards would have seen their services expanded to include many of the services needed by many of the Unincorporated areas. Unfortunately, when they were finally established, the government of the day saw fit to restrict their operations to just the four services they manage today.

It is our opinion that they need to be replaced by AREA SERVICE BOARDS, which would allow them to take on such additional services as LAND USE PLANNING and GARBAGE.

These are the two services that are first on the list, at least for the area of the Kenora District that we represent.

Attempts have been made, on a very local basis, to provide some of the services mentioned. The Ministry of Natural Resources has implemented three “Development Control Areas” west of Kenora. They are relatively small in area, and are a band-aid attempt to try and solve a broader problem (Development control).

That Ministry is the first to admit that they want nothing better than to get out of that business, and turn it over to some form of local government – ie – an Area Services Board.

In addition, the problem of what to do with garbage in the Unincorporated Areas, is continually increasing. Again, MNR is involved, in some areas, but the facilities provided are few and FAR between.

Legislation does not allow for the Local Services Boards to operate a garbage disposal site. Residents are relegated to having to haul their garbage many many miles into local municipalities – if they make their sites available, or disposing of same in some un-approved manner.

The establishment of a local government to serve the needs of the Unincorporated Areas in the form of an Area Services Board, would go a long way to solving these problems.

Existing community volunteer fire departments, local roads boards and local road associations, meet the needs of their respective communities. There is no need to replace them. Rather, an Area Services Board would handle the collection of local funds, via the tax roll, to fund such groups.

Each area of the province has it's own local concerns and with local representation and authority, as would be provided by an ASB, each could deal with their own problems.

The DSSAB Act provides for local representation from the 7 Unincorporated Territories. The number of representatives on each of the North's DSSAB areas varies, with the Kenora District being the largest (4).

Unfortunately, when the DSSAB Act was written, provision for funding the cost incurred by an elected official in adequately representing their local electorate, was missed.

If you will refer back to page 3 of this report, you will see that the Unincorporated Territories of the Kenora District **fund over 45%** of the cost of operating the DSSAB. Such funding is derived from the local tax payers in their Unincorporated Areas.

This vast tax base is more than adequate to fund the increased services needed in the area, as well as supporting the costs incurred by the four elected members.

Changes are needed!

We could go into a number of other changes that are needed to put the Unincorporated Territories on a level playing field with their Municipal cousins, however will leave that for more detailed work the proposed “Review Team” will no doubt, delve into.

TRANSPORTATION

Mention is made in this section with respect to the transportation needs of the North.

We couldn't agree more. Improvements are needed in this area, and the sooner, the better.

We are pleased to note the small start that was announced in the summer of 2009, with respect to twinning the Trans Canada Highway, starting from the Manitoba border.

This is an **IMPORTANT** project that will go a long way to improving transportation in the north. This twinning needs to be placed on a fast track across **ALL** of Northern Ontario.

Canada, and Ontario, needs a four lane highway from the Manitoba border thru to the east.

The fact that a single broken Beaver dam can, and does regularly, wash out the single road crossing the province, effectively cutting the province, and country, in half, is not acceptable in today's economic environment.

How are we to develop a strong economy in the North, with second class, un-reliable highways?

Something needs to be done!

One other item that needs addressing that is tied in with transportation, is the lack of YEAR ROUND rest areas, with heated washroom facilities, on the major routes used by travelers and tourists.

There is no excuse for the lack of such facilities. The province can't turn a blind eye to the problem, suggesting that this is a Municipal problem. Similarly, the Municipalities of Northern Ontario can't place all of the blame on the Province.

Both groups MUST find ways to work together.

The Unincorporated Territories are willing to pay their fair share, but need some form of local government (an Area Services Board) in order to be able to contribute.

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

This presentation has been prepared, reviewed, edited and is fully endorsed by DoKURA and its Directors.

Written questions and comments can be directed to the organization at the following address;

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