

DoKURA NEWS

August 2017

GOING DIGITAL

Most of you will be receiving this News Letter via email, the District of Kenora Unincorporated Areas Ratepayers Association voted at its 2015 annual meeting to switch to digital distribution for the bulk of its notices – including newsletters and meeting notices.

The move was made to reduce costs and make it easier to remain in touch with the those on our mailing list. If you had this newsletter forwarded to you by someone else and wish to receive future copies directly, please contact us with a current email address to ensure you continue to receive information from the association

dokuraorg@hotmail.com

AGM

DoKURA will hold its Annual General Meeting for 2017 on Saturday, September 9 at the Oxdrift Community Hall, Highway 17, beginning at 2 p.m.

HYDRO SAVINGS

Unincorporated area residents opening their July Hydro One bills received a pleasant surprise – a significantly smaller bill total. Measures enacted in the Fair Hydro Act passed this spring took effect July 1, and for average users bill totals are down about \$100 from last summer.

While all electrical users in the province are receiving the benefit of lower per kwh charges, year-round rural residents served by Hydro One are also receiving the benefit of much lower distribution charges. The Fair Hydro Act included a cap of \$36.43 on Hydro One's local distribution charges which often ran over \$100 a month on an average bill and upwards of \$300 on a winter heating bill. The new cap replaces a \$60.50 monthly credit on Hydro One R2 customer class local distribution charges in place since Jan. 1, 2017 and previously set at \$31.50.

Local distribution charges were the largest part of total distribution on bills, which also include provincial grid transmission charges, Smart Meter levies and

allowances for line losses, which for Hydro One amount to a 10 per cent surcharge on power consumed.

Going forward, the new, lower per kwh charges and the distribution rate cap will be held to rate of inflation increases until 2020.

Costs for the Fair Hydro Act customer savings are being funded through general tax revenues and what will happen after 2020 isn't known. The government of the day may continue the subsidies in whole or in part, or may revert to Ontario Energy Board approved rates in place at the time.

With Hydro One shifting to a fixed monthly distribution charge from one using a combination of volume based charges and a monthly service charge, and taking in to account increases being sought in Hydro One's current long-term rate application (2018–2022) now before the OEB, rural Hydro One year-round customers will be paying about \$65 a month in local distribution charges by 2022, without the inflation cap. Still a significant reduction from charges levied prior to July 1, 2017.

For more details, The Ontario Energy Board has a good explanation about how the Fair Hydro Acts impacts bills – <https://www.oeb.ca/newsroom/2017/fair-hydro-act-2017>; as does Hydro One, www.hydroone.com

VOTE BY MAIL INITIATIVE

DoKURA is continuing to work towards having a vote-by-mail option available for the 2018 Kenora District Services Board elections.

Discussions with the services board to have our association act as the election agent for the vote, as has been the case since the board was formed in 1998, is continuing. The Kenora District Services Board is the only remaining social services administration board out of 10 in Northern Ontario still using polling station voting to elect its unincorporated area members.

Municipal members are selected by individual councils from their elected council members

Using vote-by-mail offers the opportunity for greater voter participation, especially important in this region where over half of the eligible unincorporated area voters are seasonal residents and not in the area on voting day.

NEW ELECTION BOUNDARIES

Election boundary changes, expected to be in place for the next provincial election, will have a major impact on voters in the region, including DoKURA's members.

In addition to the expansion of the Ontario Legislature to 122 seats from the current 107 as part of a regular representation review that occurs every 10 years, the province empowered a special commission this year to review representation in Northwestern and Northeastern Ontario, specifically the Kenora-Rainy River and Timmins-James Bay districts, to address First Nations representation concerns and the challenges posed by the large geographic areas the districts cover.

As result of the review, two additional northern electoral districts are being recommended.

Kenora-Rainy River would be divided into two districts roughly along the CNR mainline. The municipalities of Red Lake, Ear Falls, Sioux Lookout, Pickle Lake and their surrounding unincorporated areas would become part of the new Kiiwetinong District along with many of the isolated First Nation communities in the Far North.

Wabaseemoong and Grassy Narrows First Nations would be part of the new riding, however Minaki and Redditt would remain with the balance of the Kenora-River River riding.

The city of Timmins would become an electoral district on its own with its own MPP, with the balance of the Timmins-James Bay district renamed Mushkegowuk. The Ontario Legislation is expected to vote on the recommended changes when it resumes sitting in September.

The changes only apply to the provincial electoral districts, federal election boundaries remain unchanged for Northwestern Ontario.

More information on the proposed changes can be found at <http://fnebc-cdcegn.ca/en/home/>

REGIONAL BUS SERVICE

DoKURA director Mark Sobchuk has been representing our organization on Common Voice Northwest. One of that groups key initiatives this past year has been involvement in the development of the Northern Ontario Multimodal Transportation Strategy - which has recommended improvements to transportation infrastructure and services over the next 25 years. One item of interest to members is the recommendation for development of a regional bus service to improve access between communities in the region.

For further information on the proposals and other work Common Voice is doing visit:

<http://commonvoicenorthwest.com>

MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

DoKURA continues to look for people - year-round or seasonal residents - from the unincorporated areas interested in serving on, or working with the board.

A representative is still needed for the eastern area of the district (Ignace/Pickle Lake). As well, DoKURA has been asked if it would like to become involved with several groups from the region dealing with a variety of issues including health care and economic development, but have had to turn down the requests due to limited time available for current board volunteers.

The DoKURA board makeup allows for two directors from each of its four wards or areas, Directors serve two-year terms and four Director at Large positions are up for election at this year's AGM - Oxdrift (1), Lake of the Woods North (1) and Lake of the Woods South (2 positions).

If you are interested in serving on the DoKURA board please contact nominating committee chairman Irene Kember - ireneak@shaw.ca, 807-543-2128.

DoKURA

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

MEMBERSHIP

DoKURA has no membership fee, membership is open to all in the Unincorporated Areas of the Kenora District. It receives no regular government funding and its directors serve as volunteers, efforts are made to keep general operating costs under \$1,000 a year.

But there is a need to cover costs for sending representatives to meetings with various levels of government to promote and/or defend issues of local concern. That's where you can help, as an individual or community group, through a voluntary donation to the association. Donations can be sent to: DoKURA, Box 1245, Keewatin Post Office, Kenora, Ontario P0X 1C0

<http://www.dokura.com> / dokuraorg@hotmail.com