

Mayor's Report

Regional Distribution Centre Meetings – October 26th and 27th, 2016

This meeting was held over one and one half days at the Lac Seul Event Centre. Approximately 100 people attended, including representatives from regional First Nations, private sector, government agencies, social enterprises, education, and others. Topics covered by speakers included: RDC Update, Ontario Social Enterprise Strategy, Local Organic Food Coops Network, Paying for Nutrition – A Report on Food Costing in the North, Ontario Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association, Breakfast Club of Canada, Taking Up the Challenge (Dr. Mike Kirlew). Keynote speeches were given by Nishnawbe Aski Deputy Grand Chief Derek Fox and Ted Nolan (former NHL Coach). Chief Clifford Bull (Lac Seul FN), Chief James Cutfeet (Kitchenuhmaykoosib Ininuwug) acted as hosts and provided background information.

Currently funding has been provided to undertake the Business Case for the RDC to be located in Sioux Lookout. This meeting allowed all present to ask questions and gain a better understanding of the project. It also opened up the possibilities of spin-off projects related to buying groups and other services that could be provided through the RDC.

A preliminary view of how the RDC will function is as follows:

- First Nation businesses, organizations, schools will order their goods from where they want but provide the RDC in Sioux Lookout as the delivery address.
- The RDC will provide appropriate storage and group orders together for air shipment north in a coordinated manner.
- The FN businesses and organizations will be kept informed of status and delivery dates.
- Shipping will be coordinated such that full loads leave the RDC on a route to one or more communities with full load rate for all destinations.
- Government and any other subsidies will be applied to the freighting costs through the RDC.

Current methods and practices include non-tracking of orders, a 'non-caring' intermediate address at the transition between ground freight and air freight, late deliveries, spoiled food, high shipping costs due to full load rate not being applied to all, subsidies going to retailers and not being passed on to consumers.

As well as food, it is possible that the RDC will handle medical supplies and other goods and services. The facility will be located at the Airport and it is estimated will employ between 6 and 10 people to start.

There will now be a push in the next month or two to gain agreement from the key stakeholders, government and agencies to commit to their piece in the overall business plan so that the details can be worked out. A hopeful view would have construction of the facility start in 2017 and operations start some time in 2018.

The importance of this project for Sioux Lookout goes beyond the RDC and those jobs. The bringing together of the various groups to this meeting is part of Sioux Lookout's continuing and growing role as hub of the north. It has been very significant that James Bay communities have become involved. As well, there is an increasing realization in both government and private sectors of Sioux Lookout's growing role and the opportunities that exist here.

Mayors-Chiefs Meeting – October 28, 2016

The RDC Meeting enabled the holding of the Mayors-Chiefs meeting as a 'tag-along' on the final day. Eight of the nine municipalities in the Kenora District Municipal Association (KDMA) were represented (Kenora sent regrets and did not attend). The Mayors and Chiefs (16 Chiefs) all seemed very pleased with the opportunity to meet and grow our relationship a little more. There is definitely a belief that together we could form a strong political lobby group. The job now is to find several issues on which we agree and we also agree to move forward on together.

Former Cat Lake Chief Russell Wesley appealed to the Chiefs to use the Watay Power project and the organization developed through it to spin-off on to other regional First Nation projects such as all-weather roads and housing. Just as the \$1.2 billion Watay project will have positive economic spin-offs for municipalities, so too will the billion dollar projects for road and housing development.

Both Chiefs and especially Mayors were very interested in hearing about our Municipal Truth and Reconciliation Committee. CAO Ann Mitchell and Committee member Darlene Angeconeb provided a Power Point presentation to the group on the national TRC Commission as well as our Municipal Committee.

Red Lake Deputy Mayor Sandy Middleton and Mayor Doug Lawrance discussed KDMA Strategic Directions using a Power Point presentation to frame the discussion. KDMA's four strategic directions were outlined as:

1. Increase KDMA profile and political influence regionally and provincially through an effective communications strategy;
2. Facilitate information sharing among member Municipalities;
3. Strengthen relationships with local MP and MPP; and,
4. Continue to build mutually beneficial relationships with First Nations.

This fostered discussion on finding common challenges and opportunities for District Municipalities and First Nations for joint action.

Doug Lawrance

November 2, 2016