

# City should fund grassroots groups to combat racism

I WAS privileged to be part of a delegation that met with city councillors recently to discuss racism in Thunder Bay.

The Regional Multicultural Youth Council (RMYC) sits on the city's Anti-racism and Respect Advisory Committee to provide an inclusive voice and youth perspective on diversity.

Being a Middle Eastern Muslim young woman in high school, I am familiar with being stereotyped, teased and harassed because of who I am.

I wear a hijab which represents my faith, gives me identity, comfort and security.

Unfortunately, I have endured negative encounters for wearing my head-scarf.

Ignorance and assumptions have led to hurtful comments such as: my parents force me put on the hijab, I hate non-Muslims, and so forth.

Fortunately, through the RMYC I have met other young people with similar experiences and we happily share positive stories about our backgrounds and growing up in our multicultural society.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

**Bingos and other fundraising events "dried up after the casino opened," writes multicultural youth council co-president Yamaan Alsumadi. "This has destroyed a once-thriving inclusive youth program that taught kids to get along."**

We talk about common Canadian values, our hopes and dreams for a brighter and better future for

everyone. We respect human rights and treat each other as equal human beings.

At the meeting, councillors heard from past RMYC members who started a reception and orientation program to welcome First Nations students to the city, help them to meet new friends, stay in school and graduate. They trained peer leaders and created role models to use positive influence and make a difference.

The youth council hosted forums to discuss social issues, and workshops to develop strategies to tackle problems together. There were activities to engage youths in city neighbourhoods, schools and First Nations reserves to make them part of the solution to the challenges we face. And, camping trips were organized with police officers to establish trust and improve relations.

The RMYC did this with money from fundraising bingo and roving Monte Carlos which dried up after the casino opened downtown in 2000. Funding criteria put in place by the city has prevented small groups such as the youth council from accessing the limited grants available. This has destroyed a once-thriving inclusive youth pro-

gram that taught kids to get along. We blame the casino for taking away a primary source of revenue for our youth-led initiatives that broke down racial barriers.

We gave councillors an insightful letter by former police chief Bob Herman who has worked with both the Thunder Bay Police and Nishnawbe Aski Police services (Finger Pointing Futile in Solving FN Problems — Chronicle-Journal, Aug. 28, 2017). He argues that more resources should be invested to address deteriorating race relations.

A new approach is needed to change the status-quo that has put Thunder Bay on the map. The city should purchase the services of action-oriented grassroots groups with a proven track record on anti-racism work, as well as target children and youth to break the generational cycle of racial hatred, intolerance, prejudice and discrimination. The RMYC wants to be involved, but as a dependent population we need funding to restore our capacity to help.

**Yamaan Alsumadi**  
RMYC co-president  
THUNDER BAY

## Mauro takes issue with Horwath on health

EARLIER this week, NDP Leader Andrea Horwath was in Thunder Bay to talk about health care (CJ, Dec. 5). It was an interesting visit given her party's record of cuts while in government.

Under her party's reign, approximately 9,000 acute care hospital beds were closed, 13 per cent of mental health beds were shuttered, 3,000 registered nursing positions were lost, and medical school positions were decreased leading to physician shortages.

Her party also voted against our OHIP+ plan that would see nearly 175,000 children and youth in the Northern Ontario communities have free access to over 4,400 eligible prescription medications and said "no" to the \$10-million expansion of the Northern Health Travel Grant.

These numbers and actions paint a damaging picture.

In contrast, since our government came to office we have increased funding for hospitals and health care services year over year.

Just this week the Fraser Institute noted that wait times for surgeries in Ontario are the shortest in the country. In fact, between 2016-17, we've actually improved on our record with even shorter wait times from GP to specialist, and from specialist to treatment. We have the shortest wait times for CT scans and MRIs. We have the shortest wait times in the country for ultrasounds, radiation oncology, general surgery, gynaecological procedures, ears, nose and throat, colonoscopy, breast cancer, and cancers or the lung, cervix, larynx and prostate.

We invested over \$1 billion over the last two years in our hospitals

for their operating budgets. We've hired 28,000 more nurses, including 11,000 RNs and we have 6,500 more doctors.

More specific to Thunder Bay, this past summer, I joined my colleague Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-term Care, as we announced our government was investing in a comprehensive cardiovascular surgery facility at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre. Since 2009 thousands of Northwestern Ontario residents have received angioplasty without having to travel to southern Ontario.

We also announced an increase to Northern Health Travel Grant and invested to increase capacity of the Lakehead Nurse Practitioner-led Clinic. We are invested \$100 million at St. Joseph's Care Group for the new Leila Greco/Hogarth Riverview Manor, increasing long-term beds capacity, and \$50 million for a brand new mental health wing, and the list goes on.

Our hospitals are facing increasing demands as a result of our growing and aging population, and we need to continue to work closely with our health care partners in the Northwest and across Ontario to determine how we can continue to support them in the future and ensure people have access to care in the right place at the right time.

If Andrea Horwath really wants to make health care a priority again, she could start by supporting the significant initiatives our government has brought forward with respect to increased support in Northwestern Ontario.

**Bill Mauro**  
MPP Thunder Bay-Atikokan

## City taxi fares already too high

I AM hopeful that city council will reject any idea of raising the rates for Thunder Bay taxis. The people of Thunder Bay — especially the lower income folks with few options — have been overcharged for cab fare for far too long.

I took a cab from the Victoria Inn to County Fair mall recently. After a long wait for the cab, nine minutes and less than 10 kilometres later the bill was over \$33.

The drivers are not making much, but the cab oligarchy is doing way too well.

The rates for cabs in Toronto and Ottawa (where living and business costs are much higher and where most drivers own their cars) are far, far lower than here. In addition, cabs there are cleaner and more punctual.

Thunder Bay does *not* need higher rates. What we need is *lower* rates, and some real competition.

**Bruce Hyer**  
THUNDER BAY

## Why remove references to barbaric practices?

FORMER prime minister Stephen Harper said that in the Canadian Immigration Guide, barbaric acts like honour killings would not be tolerated in Canada.

Now the Liberals have removed the reference to barbaric cultural practices from the draft version of the new immigration guide.

Does this mean these barbaric acts are now acceptable in Canada?

Muslim women coming to Canada should enjoy all the rights, freedoms and protections afforded other Canadian women. Canadian laws and values are not to be broken just to appease Islam.

**Karl Friesen**  
SIOUX LOOKOUT

## Some comic relief from political rhetoric

THIS excerpt from The Nurse's Song taken from Roald Dahl's Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator might serve to give us some comic relief from the political rhetoric that torments us daily.

*This mighty man of whom I sing,  
The greatest of them all,  
Was once a teeny little thing,  
Just eighteen inches tall.*

*...It soon began to dawn on me  
He wasn't very bright,  
Because when he was twenty-three  
He couldn't read or write.*

*... "Ah-ha," I said, "this little clot  
Could be a politician."  
"Nanny," he cried, "Oh Nanny,  
what  
A super proposition!"*

*... "Okay" I said, "let's learn  
and note  
The art of politics.  
Let's teach you how to miss the boat  
And how to drop some bricks,  
And how to win the people's vote  
and lots of other tricks.*

*"Let's learn to make a speech a day  
upon the TV screen.  
In which you never never say  
Exactly what you mean.  
And most important, by the way,  
Is not to let your teeth decay,  
And keep your fingers clean."*

*And now that I am eighty-nine,  
It's too late to repent,  
The fault was mine the little swine  
Became the President.*

**Karin Mackenzie**  
NIPIGON

## Third-party management necessary on some reserves

Re NAN's Co-management Concerns Echoed Within Government Itself — CJ, Nov. 29:

IF third-party management is objectionable, perhaps native leaders should ensure public funds spent on reserves are respected. Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler's "disgust" at a First Nation consultant's conviction of fraud is the height of hypocrisy. If I have the following information, so does he. Only one person has defended the taxpayer — Sen. Lynn Beyak.

The reason the First Nations Financial Transparency Act was legislated by the Harper government is that they recognized, as did the Pierre Trudeau Liberals, that billions of dollars were being spent with little or no improvement in living conditions on many reserves. Chiefs and councillors benefit, however, the ordinary native resident often continues to live in squalid Third World conditions. Legislating accountability was imperative, as it became clear many in reserve leadership positions had neither budgeting, financial management skills, nor in some cases integrity, thus, in those cases, the reckless misappropriation of funds.

In January, 2013, it was widely reported that Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence pocketed \$250,000 in the fiscal year March 2011.

National Post, April 8, 2014: Clay-

ton Kennedy, former Attawapiskat co-manager and partner of Chief Theresa Spence, was charged with fraud. A Deloitte and Touche audit found millions in missing financial records between 2005 and 2011 from the \$104 million in federal government funding.

There are other examples.

CBC News, April 11, 2017: Alexander First Nation finance clerk Loretta Burstick urges Ottawa to improve spending rules on reserves. Burstick stated, "Many people from my community are struggling and its heart-wrenching to see. It's impossible for band members to get full disclosure on our finances." Burstick disclosed a forensic audit conducted on her reserve northwest of Edmonton identified \$2.1 million in "unexplained payments" made to a former chief and some administrators.

CBC News, June 16, 2017: Saskatchewan Court of Queen's Bench orders Onion Lake Cree Nation to disclose finances. Onion Lake resident Charmaine Stick brought the action against her reserve with support from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. Reserve leaders have appealed.

CBC News, July 13 2017: Millions unaccounted for as Liard First Nation's new council looks to sort out finances. Financial records are in disarray and millions unaccounted for as the new chief and council take office.

CBC News, June 16, 2017: Six reserves, besides the aforementioned, that are not following the FNFTA, are Algonquin of Barriere Lake, Dakota Tipi, Thunderchild First Nation, Ochaopwacw, Sawridge First Nation, Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation.

The Liberal government refuses to enforce the act.

**Colyne E. Gibbons,**  
THUNDER BAY

## Forest industry answers caribou policies critics

ON BEHALF of Canada's forestry sector and its workers, I wanted to take the opportunity to respond to the op-ed in The Chronicle-Journal Nov. 27 — *Boreal Caribou: Scientists refute forestry claims.*

Forest Products Association of Canada (FPAC) and our members have been involved in caribou research, adaptive management practices for caribou, as well as working collaboratively with First Nations, local communities and partners for many years, and for some companies, multiple decades.

Canada's forests are changing. This year alone, residents of the interior of British Columbia lost over 1.1 million hectares of forest due to wildfires — representing more than the entire landscape of trees harvested across all of Canada in one year. We have seen the mountain pine beetle in the West, and the spruce budworm in the east, ravage our forest landscape.

Actively managing our forests is complex work that includes fire suppression and pest management. This work also supports many values, including, watershed protection, wetland stewardship, and species at risk. In the boreal forest alone, our workers manage not just for caribou, but for hundreds of mammals, birds, and fish that call the forest home.

Whether related to caribou, or any other species in Canada's forests, we must ensure that local land management decisions are informed with the best available local knowledge and science. For our part, forest companies consult broadly on proposed forest management plans with local interest groups in addition to meeting all of the necessary regulatory requirements for a sustainable forest management plan.

Building sustainable forest management plans includes modeling for a sustainable supply of timber on the landscape for up to a 150-year planning horizon. In doing this, companies maintain biodiversity, provide habitat for multiple species (including caribou), emulate natural disturbance patterns and regenerate and renew forests to meet provincial requirements, incorporate local knowledge, values and interests, and

contribute to the economies of the over 600 Canadian communities that depend on the forest sector.

The misrepresentation of the purpose and content of our informational website at www.cariboufacts.ca is unfortunate. To be clear, on behalf of Canada's forest sector and our 230,000 direct employees, we are asking for three simple things:

1. Any land use decision must be based on the most recent and comprehensive science that looks at all factors, including incorporating unique local forest realities and the impacts of action on other species in the forest.

2. All impacted groups should be meaningfully engaged in the discussion, including governments, Indigenous communities, scientists, industry, tourism and recreation groups, and labour organizations.

3. Socio-economic analysis should be conducted to understand what, if any, impacts might be felt by local communities.

To achieve positive outcomes for at-risk species and communities we need to look at integrating the needs for multiple species and community values. This important work is already underway in many jurisdictions, and includes exploring the various possible scenarios (including the habitat needs of multiple species, costs of implementation, effectiveness, feasibility etc.) and looking at which scenario can achieve the best results. Continued monitoring, further research, and an adaptive management approach will be included in future forest management plans. That's something we're committed to.

FPAC, Canada's forest sector and our workers look forward to working collaboratively with partners in Indigenous communities, the scientific community and local governments and other groups to support and implement caribou plans that will work for the long term and will support all species and values in Canada's forests.

**Kate Lindsay**  
Vice-president, Sustainability and Environmental Partnerships  
Forest Products Association of Canada  
OTTAWA



ENVIRONMENT CANADA PHOTO

Forest Products Association of Canada says it has been involved in caribou research for years.

Letters to the editor, exclusive to The Chronicle-Journal, are most welcome.

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