

FOCUSING ON THE FUTURE

Inside this Issue

Feature Business 2

Customer Service Challenge 2

District Abattoir 3

Community Improvement Plan 3

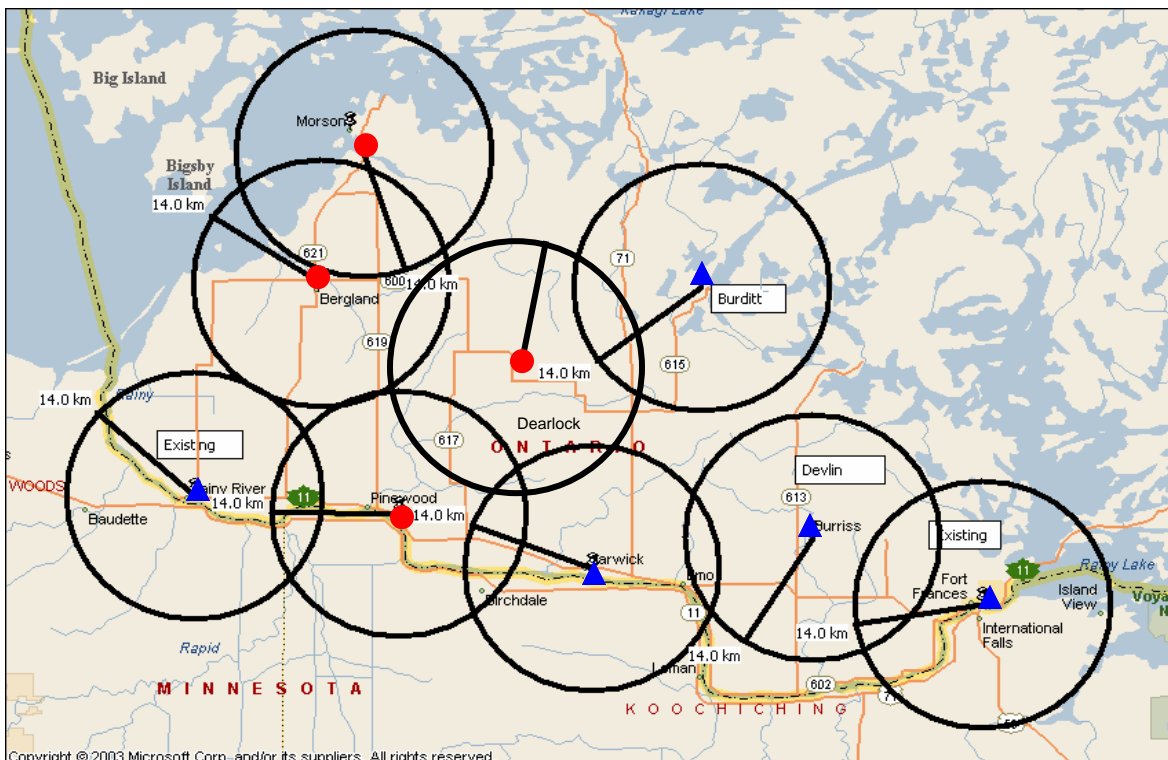
Immigration Study 3

Broadband Coming to the West

RRFDC has made important progress in enhancing the Rainy River District's broadband telecommunications capabilities. Recently, a new broadband contract has been signed. Four new microwave towers will be installed in Morson, Bergland, Dearlock and Pinewood; upgrades to other components of the existing system will also be carried out. The construction will start in 2006 spring, and is expected to be completed in 2007. The new infrastructure will deliver high-speed broadband service to more than a dozen communities in the west Rainy River District. Residents and businesses in the area will have better electronic access to services and business opportunities.

The \$1.2 million project is funded by the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation (\$909,000) and FedNor (\$300,000). Other project partners include the serviced communities, Thunder Bay Telephone and the Pwi-Di-Goo-Zing Ne-Yaa-Zhing Advisory Service, which provides advisory services and training to its seven First Nations members.

This achievement can be attributed to the success of developing partnerships to provide services that would not be possible as individual communities. Again, continuing strategic alliances are key to our District's future!



**Map 1
Proposed
Broadband
Network**

- New towers
- ▲ Existing towers
- Service area

H & R BLOCK

Alan Tibbetts is the owner of H&R Block in Fort Frances. In this issue's Feature Business, Alan will share with us his experience in running a successful business.

What made you decide that you wanted to go into business for yourself?

I had been working for other people for over 25 years and doing financial consulting work on the side. 8 years ago, I purchased the H&R Block franchise in Fort Frances and tried to work full time for myself. The main reason was the freedom I felt would come from being my own boss. I have been very happy with my decision.

What has been the biggest challenge so far?

It is challenging to try to make a living on my own. First, I had to learn a lot about the income tax business, not only how to do other people's taxes, but all the administrative functions to satisfy Canada Revenue and the H&R Block company. This is a continuous learning process which I love. Another continuing challenge is dealing with changes in the tax business and the outside economy.

What is the best part of being in business? Is it any fun yet?

Being my own boss is the best part. My success depends mainly on my own efforts. While outside forces play a part in both success and frustrations, it is still up to me to make it, and I like the challenge. Yes, there is a lot of fun to be in business. Hiring your own staff and helping them to be a successful working team is a big benefit of owning your own place.

"It is much easier to satisfy an existing customer than to go out and find a new one . . . Without happy customers, any business will have trouble flourishing."

Any advice to someone just starting out?

Study your business ahead of buying it and be willing to continuously learn more about your business, including your target market. Knowing your customers, satisfying their needs and ensuring they want to come back year after year will make the business a success.

Any customer service advice you'd like to pass along?

Listen to what your customers are telling you they want, then do your best to meet their expectations. Communication back and forth between you and your customers will prevent a lot of problems from developing. Instill in your front-line staff that good customer service will benefit everyone. It is much easier to satisfy an existing customer than to go out and find a new one.

Any business training ideas that you would like to see offered to local business people?

Customer service training for staff and owners is a key, and it needs to be repeated year after year so we don't get complacent and forget the lessons we need to know. Every type of business needs customer service training, but the service industry needs it most of all. Without happy customers, any business will have trouble flourishing.



2006 Customer Service Challenge

Now in its third year, the Customer Service Challenge has proven to be very successful. We have close to 50 businesses signed up to be 'mystery shopped' over the coming few months. The champions will be announced on May 17 at the Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce's Business after Hours. This is a district wide Challenge, open to any business. We have made some changes to the event this year. The business has to sign themselves up, and the completed surveys will be sent out to the business owners after the awards.

We will award the top 10 businesses with plaques and an additional 10 will gain an Honourable Mention. The businesses will be featured in our next newsletter, the district newspapers and recognized during Small Business Week in October 2006. Good luck to all businesses!



The regional abattoir project is proceeding again with the efforts of various local groups. Spearheaded by the Rainy River Cattlemen's Association, an abattoir steering committee was formed and a new plan was proposed in the public meeting held in Barwick on Feb. 15, 2006. The proposed plant is provincially licensed with an estimated cost of \$1,800,000.

The facility will be constructed by a not-for-profit corporation in order to qualify the project for possible government funding, including \$600,000 from the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund and \$600,000 from FedNor. At least \$600,000 is needed from within District.

Right now, the committee is soliciting the community, especially beef producers and businesses, to join the non-profit corporation as a member to help move forward the project. Each member will contribute a \$500 non-refundable membership fee for project development costs, plus a \$2,000 member loan at 0%

A member meeting is scheduled on April 4 in Chapple's Recreation Centre. The steering committee plans to review the project with all the members, and the corporation's implementation Board of Directors will be elected then. The Board will take responsibility for business plan development, marketing, operation and other issues related to the abattoir.

Further movements rely on the degree of local commitment and support.

Anyone interested in signing up for the membership, please contact Geoff Gillon at the RRFDC or Ken McKinnon, who can be reached at 807-486-3451.

Relaunch District Abattoir

with repayment at an undetermined future date. The public have responded positively to the proposal. By March 10, 75 cattlemen had signed up for the membership, and 4 local businesses had agreed to support the project as lenders. The committee is still looking for more community support to reach the goal of 100 members.



As part of our efforts to support inward investment and local expansion, the RRFDC is working with the municipalities of Chapple, Emo, La Vallee and Rainy River to develop their Community Improvement Plans (CIPs).

Community Improvement Plan

CIP is a planning tool permitted under the Ontario Planning Act, which allows the municipalities to provide incentives (e.g. grants, loans, tax relief) to property owners to encourage developing, redeveloping, or rehabilitating their lands and buildings, thus to promote economic development and community improvement. Related public meetings will be held in the coming few months;

subsequently, the Plans will be submitted to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for approval. Thank you for the support and cooperation from all these municipalities!



RRFDC Immigration Study

The RRFDC has recently launched an immigration project, which investigates the potential to recruit and retain international immigrants to the Rainy River District. The project entails a series of survey, interviews, and research into immigration issues. Our goal is to develop a regional immigration strategy, focusing on addressing the population problem and stimulating economic growth in the District.

The first step of the project, a questionnaire survey with existing District immigrants, has been completed recently. The survey results will help develop a profile of the reasons why international immigrants move into, and stay in the District, identify support and services needed for them, and examine the possibility of attracting new comers. The next step is to conduct face-to-face interviews with officials, professionals and target immigrants to obtain more detailed information. If you would like to share your ideas about the immigration project, please contact Jessie at jessie@rrfdc.on.ca or 807 - 274 - 3276. We would like to hear from you!



Ask us about the

**Self-Employment
Benefits Program**

Phone RRFDC at
807-274-3276

or
check

www.rrfdc.on.ca

RRFDC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Russ Fortier - Chair

Ken McKinnon - Vice-Chair

Dick Trivers- Treasurer

George Emes - Secretary

Martin Dufresne - Director

Eugene McPherson - Director

Brian Kahler - Director

Cathe Hoszowski - Director

Looking for Business Opportunities?

Check our website!

www.rrfdc.on.ca

Rainy River Future Development Corporation

608 Scott Street
Fort Frances, Ontario P9A 1H6

Phone: 807-274-3276
Toll Free: 800-465-8502
Fax: 807-274-6989
Email: info@rrfdc.on.ca

Upcoming Events

- Rainy River District Abattoir Membership Meeting, April 4, 7:30–10 pm, Chapple’s Recreation Centre. Open to the public.
- Self-Employment Benefits Program Information Session, April 13, 2–3 pm, Emo Municipal Office. Free admission.
- How to Start a Small Business Seminar, May 3, 6-9 pm, 608 Scott St., Fort Frances. \$ 20 per person.
- Brown Bag Lunch-N-Learn: 50 Ways to Improve Your Cash Flow, May 9, 12-1pm, 608 Scott St., Fort Frances. Free admission.
- Brown Bag Lunch-N-Learn: Problems in Managing a Family Owned Business, May 23, 12-1pm, 608 Scott St., Fort Frances. Free admission.

Do you know ...

- There are **268** Community Futures Economic Development offices across Canada. **61** of them are in Ontario, **37** of which are in rural Eastern and Southern Ontario, and **24** in Northern Ontario. RRFDC is one of them!
- **October 21st** is Ontario’s *Community Futures Development Corporation Day!*



RAINY RIVER FUTURE
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
A Community Futures Development Corporation



Canada

