

Draft minutes of the Onaping Falls Community Action Network Meeting January 24, 2008

The Onaping Falls Community Action Network annual meeting was held January 24, 2008 at the Dowling Leisure Center. Over 30 people attended. The City of Sudbury had agreed to print a newsletter for the Community Action Network, 16 pages was produced and ready to be printed by early January before the meeting to inform people of CANs activities, but the city staff decided they did not like the content. It was too adversarial. The meeting therefore started with an explanation of the history of CANs.

Long time CANs chairman Martha Cunningham Closs explained that after the amalgamation into the city of Greater Sudbury the action network came up as a way to find solutions and then start projects in the Onaping Falls area. There were further threats to the community. Shortly after we formed the network the city budget deliberations put the arena, the community center, a pool, and the library in Levack on the cutting block. At that point we develop committees to look at our options and do some advocacy. Ultimately we did not have those cuts. We were lucky.

I see the CANs is having two purposes, to allow neighborhood projects to happen, to act as an umbrella for different ideas, projects, and concepts to be fulfilled by different people in the Levack, Onaping, Dowling area. The second part is the representation element. Councillor Claude Berthiaume who represents this huge area needs a community action network to bounce ideas off before taking them Council. As well he needs to be able to pick the brains of people in the area to find out what they want. We have such a huge city, the second largest geographical city in Canada, next to Greater Vancouver. Prince Edward Island with a total population of 138,075 has more than 440 representatives at the local level. The City of Toronto with 2.7 million people and over 647 km², is less than 20% of Greater Sudbury in size and has 44 full-time councillors plus the mayor. We have a full-time mayor and 12 part-time councillors. The community action network was to fill some of that gap in representation when we became Greater Sudbury.

Lorne Taylor explained that an association of Community Action Network started last year. Community Action Networks were created in a number of former outlying areas and in the city center. But although the Constellation City Report said they should operate with terms of reference nothing was decided. How should the city deal with each community? The co-chairs of each Community Action Network worked diligently of terms of reference. Basically what we are and how the city would respond to concerns. Councillor Claude Berthiaume was supportive of it as well as other councillors at the December 7 priorities meeting but one of the councillors was not. He had some valid reasons. CANs was originally for the rural areas now there are many starting in the central core of the city. He did not think the terms of reference worked. At a retreat city Council decided to look at it again later with just councillors and staff. We do not know what can happen. Everyone is very discouraged. We planned this meaning ahead of time. We plan to have a newsletter explaining what we were. Now we are here in limbo in many ways. I don't think we should stop the idea. We should continue with it. But we don't know what the city is going to do. There was discussion of the \$6,000 budget per CANs for doing newsletter and postage. They would have community development people assigned to work with the areas. What we should do now that there's people here is elect a new executive we need new blood.

But with nobody throwing up their hands to take a position, Councillor Claude Berthiaume suggested they discuss the issues first.

Chantel Gorham gave a presentation on a projects she provides for the community. "In February she sets up a cardboard toboggan race on the Levack ski hill. A soap box Derby on Fraser Hill should be a good event again, it draws people from Sault Ste. Marie. Her final event is the Halloween ghost town in downtown Levack with participation of all the businesses. Chantel's work is one of the things that makes the community different and so special.

One of the economic development issues that the local CANs group started with was to try to get

a grocery store going again in Levack. Martha Cunningham Closs explained that they tried a number of different phases including a cooperative. The city paid for a business plan to be given to any would-be entrepreneur interested in opening a grocery store but the plan did not have a positive result. With someone working constantly to keep the grocery store going and with 80% of the people shopping there would be an approximately \$25,000 return. It's not enough to draw someone to open a grocery store especially considering the amount of work needed to reclaim the lost patronage. The group has gone back to looking at a cooperative but even that is on the back burner. Claude Berthiaume said people have to be behind the co-op and want to organize it. We've not found anyone that wanted to fight for it and organize committees. But the Councillor did have good news. The mayor met with some mining executives in Levack recently. The mines will be hiring a lot of people, and the executives told the mayor that they want to help out anyone that wants to start a grocery store.

The question from the floor was whether or not Vale Inco and Falconbridge would get back into the practice of subsidizing local buildings and programs like they used to when they owned the two mining towns. There's not a lot of things for youth and a lot of young people have been moving into the area. Have they been approached?

They agreed to help on the Hydro for the tobogganing hill explained Martha Cunningham Closs. What we need is a communications person to talk to them. Lorne Taylor said that at the last FNX mining company meeting the executives said they are willing to contribute to the local area. There is hope to get the new mining companies interested in helping the area. It's a question of what projects? At the meeting Sharon LeBlanc reminded everyone of the benefits of the original Inco club in Levack, a meeting room, weight room, pool table sponsored by the company.

Next on the agenda was the High Falls Zip Line proposal. Taylor suggested they look at the picture in the handouts. A young schoolteacher from Azilda wants to put in a zip line. Picture two poles and a wire between them. You hook yourself on it and zip between the two. He is planning to charge something like \$35 for the ride. Generally you put them on trees. Costa Rica has them and other places, but then he found is no trees big enough in the Sudbury region. So he's lined up some poles and he thought that if he use the falls on the Onaping River he would have the scariest adventurous spot around. So he went to the city and they said okay but the local community should have some input into it. Would the people think it will mark the landscape or whatever.

He brought the idea to a meeting and we said we would put it in the CANs newsletter and let everybody have an idea of what it is and get a response on it. Since the newsletter was not produced by the city a handout was photocopied and given to the people at the meeting. The e-mail address was on the handout.

If it doesn't spoil the view of a Falls too much I think it's a great idea said one of the participants at the meeting. Others did not agree. "I come from Niagara Falls and they've destroyed the area. High Falls is pretty the way it is. Put anything more and you're taking away from it. He could use the ski hill in Levack and be just as effective. People go to see the falls not to see people coming down on wires."

Mrs. Fraser said she lives downtown in Levack and makes a point of minding her own business. She would definitely not support it. Get a few people drinking or on drugs and it will be vandalized. Don't spoil the beauty of the falls. People from Timmins stop at the falls and walk the trails which go back a number of kilometers into the bush. Why spoil what we have because somebody wants to make some money. Let them go somewhere else.

For the money that it will bring to the area I don't think three or four poles will be a problem, said one of the other residents. The view will not be obstructed by the cable. It will generate money.

Others said that even one cable in the photograph would ruin the picture. People paint it, it's famous for A Y Jackson's painting.

With digital cameras you just take out the wires said one of the participants. The zip line would create a lot of traffic and I would resent that, said another. It would be more garbage in the area. It should be a quiet spot for reflection.

Has anyone ever seen a zip line? Taylor said he did in Costa Rica. In the trees you never even notice it. You just go from one platform to another. A person at the meeting said they're going to go Owen Sound to see the closest zip line.

I think it would offer a different perspective at the Falls, said a lady at the back. No one knows as of yet how successful it would be or how much new business that it would draw into the area.

We have mentioned in the newsletter you'll never get that there was once a proposal to have Tom Morley's mine on the other side of the road to become a tourist attraction. Again it didn't happen. I think we are missing things, said Taylor, there are two sides to the issue if we had a show of hands and Councillor Claude Berthiaume would have an idea of what people are thinking. A suggestion was to put it at the old Levack ski hill since it will draw people into Levack and Onaping. Others said no one would use it. It is the risk of going over the falls that makes High Falls attractive. If we let one activity like this happen it will all be eventually build up like Niagara Falls. That was a concern. Others thought a snack bar or souvenir store would be great. We've gone from being a lively community 20 years ago to being a dead end. I can see worrying about it being too busy. Taylor noted the city in a the population of 160,000 there can't be that many interested in going on a zip line. The straw vote count was 15 people for the zip line proposal and 10 people against with some undecided.

Councillor Claude Berthiaume said that when he was approached he wanted to know what the community feelings were about the issue. The positive thing is it could attract people, a lot of youth like extreme sports. The negative side is it's a very picturesque area and people use the trail. It is private enterprise using city property that's why we wanted to know what people thought. When we succeed in getting the newsletter printed there will be an article in it which will get more input from other people in the area, said the Councillor.

The Councillors report.

The water project in Levack and Onaping will see wells in Onaping supplying both communities. The city has put out tenders for the first phase of building a new water tower in Onaping and bringing the pipes to the bridge in Levack. They will start this spring. The pipes will be on the right-hand side of the road not the left-hand side going into Levack. We thought that at the same time they put in the pipeline the area would benefit by raising the present sidewalk/trail to a height where gravel wouldn't flow onto it from the road. But the city decided to go on the other side of the road. The engineers made that decision because it would cost less money. Once they cross the bridge they will bring it back on the left-hand side.

Welcome to the city of Sudbury said Taylor. They originally said they would put two pipelines on both sides of the road for redundancy to ensure there would always be a safe supply.

There will be new wells as well, said Councillor Claude Berthiaume. Falconbridge Xtrata will be buying water from the city.

So we should give up on the trail? The person to contact is Nick Benkavich. Craig Clausson is the person in charge of public works. It is a \$13 million project said Claude Berthiaume but that's just an estimate.

The work will be an inconvenience, but has to be done. Inco decided not to supply water to Levack anymore due to the increased regulations since Walkerton. Making sure the water is safe is nice, but that's more costs said Councillor Claude Berthiaume.

Taylor explained that when the city water department was replacing lines under 3rd Ave North they should not have just removed parts of the sidewalk but all the whole sidewalk and do a complete job. When Nick Benkavich said they were also going to do the water line underneath the sidewalk between Onaping and Levack he suggested they build a higher sidewalk and put some lights along it since it's a major artery between the two communities. Nick Benkavich said they would talk to the Parks Department about lights. Now they decided to go the other side of the road. Much laughter, lost that one.

Cops program- citizens on patrol.

The citizens on patrol program is going on in Garson Falconbridge and has been very successful. The citizens are the eyes and ears of the police. They are volunteers. It takes about 10 or 15 people. A dealer provided them with a vehicle, the city provided training, the volunteers provide 3 hours per month. If they see anything they radio the police. They don't get out of the car they just radio the police dispatch. Two people go together in the vehicles. The police want the cops program to work so they definitely respond. It is very successful in Capreol. Volunteers are screened to make sure they are qualified.

Question, do the citizens ever have any backlash. To the young people that are being snatched on get even? Claude said there has not been a problem. One approach is to a volunteers in one community to the patrolling in another community.

Could some web cams do the same job?

Councillor explained there is an eye in the sky program in downtown Sudbury and people monitor it all the time. It can be difficult to have them all over. But we still need volunteers to watch monitors.

What is the cops program to prevent?

Martha Cunningham Closs said the crime rate in Levack Onaping is low compared to other areas of the city. Because of the way calls to police are prioritized we don't see the police as often as we want. They are answering more dangerous calls. But there is enough nuisance stuff going on in the Levack Onaping area that something should be done. For instance if you see a gathering of people at three clock in the morning outside a closed business it should be called in, or if you see an underage person where they should not be, or someone that's intoxicated. Fires in Dowling were mentioned as a problem. Martha Cunningham Closs said the solution she was told was to call the fire department not the police. You get immediate response. The bush parties are an ongoing problem.

Someone asked why it takes the police so long to get there. Officer Darren Carbonneau explained that it depends on what time of night. If there is a car in Levack there may not be a police car in Azilda. The Cops Program will help get rid of petty vandalism and will move the kids drinking and doing drugs to areas where they cannot go with a car. They don't want to be recognized. They don't want any police presence. If they're doing something they shouldn't be and see the COPS are driving around and the police show up afterwards they will move their activities.

The officer said he is part of a new unit dealing with the rural areas and they are in the Onaping and Levack area on a regular basis especially on plainclothes patrol. They are dealing with kids drinking, snowmobiles running around, ATVs. The police presence has improved. We're getting complaints about too much police activity.

One of the parents at the meeting said they be lived in Levack for many years and this year have seen police more often than in the past.

I work with youth every day, and yesterday I had 45 kids in the youth center. Why? Because it was cold and they have nothing to do. They have nowhere to go. The Youth center is a very small room.

Every parent should ask their kid why they're carrying a packsack when and not going to school. If every parent asked their child what was in their packsack it would probably solve our problems.

Busing.

At the previous CANs/Councillor budget meeting in October, citizens asked for regular busing to Levack Onaping and Dowling instead of the transit bus. At the annual meeting meeting there was great praise for the transit bus service.

"If we get a big bus like they have in Lively, the number of runs will come down. We have much greater convenience with the smaller runs. Lively has one run in the morning and one in the afternoon. Levack gets eight. Big buses are okay. Anyone that uses the transit service, a 15 passenger bus, feels it is very convenient and a good service. If we have a big bus instead, the seniors will have to walk down to the center of Levack or the mall in Onaping to catch the bus. The ability to call and be picked up where ever will be lost. Another resident suggested a full-size big bus is not needed but a para-bus able to pick up people in wheelchairs as well as other users would be nice.

Marilyn said she is on the bus every day even when they started to charge extra fares and she was the only one left using it. She did not want to see the service end. For six months she was the only user. She does not want to see the service lost. The problem with the big buses is that once they connect up to them in Chelmsford they are so cold you can see your breath. I dress up in ski pants because of it. The big buses are phenomenally bad for being cold. It's guaranteed that the big buses will not go off the road to pick up people as the transit bus now does. A big bus service from the North end of Levack to the city would be such a scheduling problem that the run would be hours long. Instead of three to five pickups they would need to do a circular route it would take forever. Deciding which street to run on would be a battle. Would it run through Onaping? How far into Dowling would it go?

Leaving Levack at 6:15 I get in to Sudbury at 7:30. A big bus going even further would make it even longer. I choose not to drive, I own a car but for the sake of the environment don't use it. The environmental impact of a big bus compared to small van is huge.

One of the problems of the present services is young people don't have the option of just getting on a bus they have to plan ahead of time.

The transit bus driver who was at the meeting said she's flexible even 15 minute notice is enough and she's thinking of upgrading from a 15 to a 25 passenger minibus.

Marilyn explained that the transit service reach the point where a larger bus was needed four years ago. There were 14 people on the bus every morning but as soon as the city started to charge the extra two dollars the daily usage dropped to one passenger. All the seniors that used to use it could no longer afford the bus. They used to call out Hi Honey see you tomorrow, to their former husbands when they past the graveyard.

It was agreed that the service we now have have is wonderful. For a minor inconvenience of calling ahead of time we have the best possible.

A teacher that worked in Lively said the students lives are based around the bus. They will drop their pencils in the middle of an exam to make sure they get on the bus at 9: 45 to go in to Sudbury. They know if they miss the buses stuck for the rest of the day. You really have to plan when there's only three runs.

Mrs. Fraser, a 78-year-old senior said at a regular bus service would mean seniors having to walk half a mile to it. Many seniors can't walk that far. Grocery shopping works well with the transit cab stopping at the Value Mart in Dowling on the way down and returning 35 minutes later to

bring them and their groceries to their door. A lot of the seniors can't carry anything. This works. A regular bus would not work well for people living off the highway. With the transit cab you can stay in your house and watch for it coming to your door. 40% of Levack is seniors and many cannot drive. The kids enjoy coming too, getting on with their skateboards. This was great news for Councillor Claude Berthiaume who is on the transportation committee.

It was suggested that if a new buses being purchased a para-bus could be combined to provide both services.

Councillor Claude Berthiaume said it would be difficult to combine both because handy transit para-bus is more time-consuming due to having to load wheelchairs. There is more bus service now in Valley East it's an experiment. The city is getting more money for transportation through the federal gas tax. An express bus to this area is possible.

Problems with the towering snowbanks and the streams of cars coming from the mines was mentioned. Suggestions included providing buses for workers traveling from Chelmsford to the mines.

Skateboard parks

The skateboard park in Onaping is in the skating rink. It is a disgrace said a local resident, it is covered with broken glass, the asphalt is bumpy and cracked. The skateboards don't run on the old asphalt from piece of equipment to another. Skateboarders try to use the tennis court but are kept off of it.

Teens are looking for something to do. They look at the good things that Azilda and Sudbury have and realize there's nothing for them in Onaping, Levack, and Dowling said one of the residents who works with teens.

The vandalism of the skateboard equipment was discussed. 100 kids might use it respectfully, 10 kids might trash it and everybody loses. But that happens everywhere. Kids are kids there are good and bad.

Should that be one of the major issues of the CANs group. Having asphalt replaced with pavement. Some thought a better spot is needed. The wood skateboard equipment and Dowling is now rarely used because the kids use their quads to drag the equipment to the sand pit behind the rec center to use for their motocross bikes. Any equipment in Dowling has to be bolted down said a resident. A permanent skateboard park is needed.

Mrs. Fraser suggested there is space beside the arena in Levack for a permanent skateboard park. Others said the kids are now using the old Mini putt cement behind the Dowling Mall as a skateboard park. That land is now for sale. It has to be in an area that's watchable and close to a telephone for emergencies.

The concern is there is nothing in Levack. Mrs. Fraser noted that the kids from Onaping come up to Levack to play around. It's one way up in the morning and back to Onaping at night.

Claude Berthiaume said that Azilda skateboard park was fundraised under a program called "let them be kids". The community was involved. If the community action network was strong with a lot of volunteers you should form a committee to do some fundraising. You have the major mining companies here; Inco Falconbridge, FNX, Day.

The city spent \$10,000 on skateboard equipment. We put one in Chelmsford and one in Onaping and we're going to put one later on in Dowling. The inground skateboard park in Meadow Lake in Sudbury cost approximately \$150,000.

Someone suggested putting the skateboard equipment inside the Levack skating arena in the summer. The issue is staffing and liability. If the skateboard park is inside the city is liable, if it's outside like at Meadow Lake people use it at their own risk. If the city is willing to spend a gazillion dollars on an art center they can send out one staff member to supervise the teens, said one of the residents.

Councillor Claude Berthiaume suggested setting up a subcommittee to study whether an inground skating park should be built or continue to use the outdoor skating rinks as a base.

Greenspace report

Lorne Taylor said the city of Sudbury set up a Greenspace Advisory Board and he joined it. He thought it was to build parks and establish Greenspace areas but it seems to be a double-edged sword because they also want to sell greenspace. There are 1600 pieces of property in the amalgamated city to either sell or keep. A list is to be created of properties to be preserved as greenspace.

The lack of playground equipment in Onaping and Levack was mentioned. There is little play value in the present equipment. There is nothing for middle-aged kids. A resident suggested a splash pad for Dowling would be fun for the kids. Councillor Claude Berthiaume said there was an option in the budget for a splash pad in Chelmsford and Onaping Falls but it was shot down by other councillors. The proposal was a special quality of life tax levy. Taxes will go up three quarters of a percent to pay for things like this but it was voted down. It may come up again.

Our staff in the Onaping swimming pool was asked to paint the inside of the building themselves. They were given the material by the city. Are other lifeguards in other areas asked to do that. Councillor Claude Berthiaume said it's the first time he's heard about it. The curling rink in Onaping has to be painted and were told that if the club want to paint it they could do it themselves. Claude Berthiaume said the city does not pay for everything volunteers are used.

Elections.

Lorne Taylor was nominated as chair. He agreed to cochair. Martha Cunningham Closs agreed to cochair. Chantel Gorham is the communication coordinator and activity coordinator.

Economic development and doctor recruitment were suggested as special projects. The next meeting will be held March 28 7 p.m. at Onaping Community Center.