

July 2010

WAWA 2015

“BUILDING OUR FUTURE”

WAWA COMMUNITY ADJUSTMENT REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The foundation for a Strategic Plan for Wawa

Wawa Community Adjustment Committee

3 Maple Street
Wawa, ON P0S 1K0
Phone: 705 856 0901
Fax: 705 856 0443
rmorrison@wawa.cc



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report has been developed by the Wawa Community Adjustment Committee to provide a plan and recommendations to the Wawa Municipal Council regarding the consequences of the closure of the Weyerhaeuser OSB Plant located on the outskirts of the town’s boundaries. The loss of this major forestry industry player, coupled with closures of lumber mills in nearby Dubreuilville and White River, sent the Wawa economy into a nose dive and impacted all sectors that make up the community structure.

The purpose of this Report and Recommendations is found in the agreement between the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the Municipality of Wawa. Community Adjustment Committee’s are supported financially by the Provincial Government and are designed to have the affected community analyze the consequences of losing a major employer and give the community an opportunity to focus on new or different ideas that will sustain the lifestyle of those who call the community home. In this particular case, this report is designed to reflect the community’s collective opinion regarding numerous sectors and what the Town Fathers should consider in both the short and long term planning exercises they go through.

It is the intention of the Committee to encourage Council to consider using this report as one of the building blocks in developing a strategic plan for Wawa. A strategic plan is critical to the long term survival and success of any community. Using the “Wawa 2015” report in addition to Council’s “New Beginnings” document and the Economic Development Corporation’s “2010 Work Plan”, the makings of a solid strategic plan will lie on each and every Councillor’s desk. Council Members will only have to provide direction to municipal staff and a strategic planning document will emerge quickly using the inputs referred to above. Council should also remember that strategic plans require annual updates. Once you have a document to work from, these updates are usually straight forward and consistent with circumstances that prevail at the time of the update.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – cont’d

This report would not have materialized without the cooperation and good will of so many groups and individuals found within the town. In addition, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities has been very helpful, encouraging and always available to provide guidance on the community adjustment process. Looking back at previous adjustment reports, especially the one that was completed after Algoma Ore ceased operation, it is refreshing to see some of the recommendations contained in that report i.e. the establishment of an EDC and blueberry farming materialized into good and productive organizations.

Finally, I want to highlight the importance of technology as it relates to life in Northern Ontario. Wawa must be technologically competent because the opportunities of the future will be tied to some aspect of technological advancement in the many sectors that make up our town’s structure. The world is becoming smaller as it relates to technology and any community who positions themselves with the skills and capacity in the field of advanced technology will prosper and grow.

There is a view that the economic power of Canada is shifting westward. If that is the case then Wawa must ensure it has a capacity to be informed and involved in economic development activities west of our community. This is not to say our Town has ignored what is happening west of us, but rather a new emphasis on western opportunities could be to Wawa’s benefit. We would encourage Council and our EDC to be attentive to the subtle shift of economic power and possible memberships in associations or organizations west of our community would be appropriate.

I want to thank everyone who has contributed to this report. Your input and encouragement has allowed the document to take shape and hopefully be reflective of the town’s desire to move forward in all sectors outlined in the report.



WAWA 2015 “BUILDING OUR FUTURE”

INTRODUCTION

The Municipality of Wawa signed an agreement with the Province’s Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities in early 2008 to establish the Wawa Community Adjustment Committee (WCAC). This Committee then hired a Chair/Coordinator in July 2008 and located this function in the Wawa Action Centre (formerly known as the Old Sault College Building).

The establishment of a Community Adjustment Committee was brought on by the closure of the Weyerhaeuser OSB plant in late 2007. There were also other forestry operation closures close to Wawa that compounded the impact the Community experienced with such an economic storm battering the Town and surrounding area.

The WCAC began a process of information gathering to gauge the impact the Weyerhaeuser closure was having on the various sectors that make up Wawa’s character i.e. health, education, small business, socio-economic, etc. The information gathering was time consuming and often difficult to obtain, but with the co-operation of a lot of good people it was finally completed. In addition, the WCAC reflected an interest and style in wanting to assist and support the various sectors in their pursuit of corrective or constructive action in handling the impact of the Weyerhaeuser closure.

Concurrently, the WCAC developed a philosophy of supporting the many good things that happen in our Community and encouraged co-operation and collaboration among the many groups and agencies that Wawa is blessed to have. When Wawa was doing well economically, we had a good cadre of volunteers and when the economy turned sour, this same group was ready to roll-up their sleeves and help the Town cope. The back-bone of Wawa’s resilience is truly found in the spirit of Wawa’s population and especially in the leadership and dedication of its volunteers.

Working with many sector organizations, but especially the Town Council and Economic Development Corporation, the WCAC has been able to facilitate the writing of a Community Adjustment Report, entitled WAWA 2015 “BUILDING OUR FUTURE”.

This report is presented in a spirit of optimism and belief that the Town will have better tomorrows!

“BUILDING OUR FUTURE”

INTRODUCTION – cont’d

The Town of Wawa is a small yet resilient community of approximately 3,000 residents located 220 kilometres north of Sault Ste. Marie at the junctions of Highways 17 (Trans-Canada) and 101.

Home of the world famous Wawa Goose, the municipality occupies a total land area of 422.09 square kilometres and includes the communities of Wawa, Michipicoten River Village, and Michipicoten Harbour. Due to its central location in the north end of the District of Algoma, the municipality acts as a catchment for the smaller towns of White River, Dubreuilville, Hawk Junction, the Michipicoten First Nations and the surrounding unorganized territory.

The future holds some extraordinary challenges if Wawa is to thrive in the 21st Century. It has been said that the challenges faced by Wawa are not those of a community with a population of 3, 000, but rather the problems of a large town or a small city.

In the past, Wawa has survived based on an economy that thrived on the natural resources of Northern Ontario. Starting with the fur trade and the establishment of a Hudson’s Bay Post, the community prospered through the discovery of gold on the banks of Wawa Lake and the establishment of the Algoma Ore Division due to high concentrations of Iron Ore in the area. Through the establishment of railway and forestry operations in White River and Dubreuilville and the location of the Village of Hawk Junction to the east, Wawa quickly became a catchment centre for the area. The completion of the final rugged 60 miles of the TransCanada Highway between Agawa and Wawa was completed in 1960. The most expensive Ontario section of the Trans-Canada Highway provided easy access to the Wawa area and the vast opportunities that were afforded a well established tourism industry.

Throughout the 1990’s, Wawa’s circumstances began to change. The restructuring of both the Provincial and Federal Governments led to dramatic changes not only across the province and country, but also in Wawa. The restructuring that was undertaken has resulted in job cutbacks or re-allocations within School Boards and Ministry Offices. The Local Services Realignment Project that resulted in an exchange of responsibilities between the Province of Ontario and Municipalities resulted in smaller budgets and service reductions.

The changes that had been experienced as early as 1990/91 when Gold Mines closed did not prepare a natural resource dependant Wawa for the announcement in December 1997 that the Algoma Ore Division would be closing effective June 1998. The closure of this facility combined with the restructuring of both the Provincial and Federal Governments resulted in losses of jobs, disposable income, personal income, municipal assessment, residents and a host of other maladies.

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INTRODUCTION – cont’d

As Wawa moved into the new century, struggles in the forest industry began to emerge. Attempting to compete in an increasing globalized market, Forest Company’s had difficulty adapting to increasing electricity prices, changing world markets, lack of skilled trades, Canadian dollar fluctuations, high transportation cost and the ever changing policies of the Province of Ontario. In fact, the Provincial Government continues to down-size in small and subtle ways; the closure of Wawa Healthy Lifestyles, the removal of the Licensing Office at the Community Centre, job reductions at the MNR and cut-backs or closures at other Government funded agencies results in job losses that impact the local economy. This style of financial management has to stop i.e. a job here, a job there and before you know it Wawa has lost 10 jobs. Government should be looking at how they can locate jobs in the Community rather than the larger centres.

While Wawa adapted to the new realities of an ever changing economy, it also was presented with wholesale changes in its relationship with the Province of Ontario. The continuing process of the Local Services Realignment started by the Provincial Government in the mid-1990’s resulted in an ever-increasing amount of local tax dollars being transferred to the Province through regional agencies such as the Algoma Health Unit, the Algoma District Homes for the Aged, and the Algoma District Services Administration Board. In 2001, the Province of Ontario, as part of the re-regulation of the electrical energy industry and without prior notice, declared that all hydro dam and related infrastructure would be exempt from municipal taxation. The municipal taxation component would be replaced by a system of Gross Receipts Tax payable to the Province rather than the subject municipalities. The Province would then provide an annual grant (equal to the 2000 year taxes paid) to affected municipalities, including Wawa. This created funding issues that would plague Wawa into the future as the announced grant was fixed at year 2000 rates, (other than 2007, 2008 and 2009 that saw a slight adjustment) thus effectively “freezing” the resulting revenue.

It has been observed and stated that Mayor, Council, and the residents of Wawa are confident that by working together and in partnership with both the Provincial and Federal levels of government that Wawa can and will be returned to its former level of affluence.

There are many opportunities that will assist Wawa in redesigning an affluent future. Such opportunities have manifested themselves through activity in the mining sector due to a rise in gold prices and a flurry of exploration activity in not only gold but diamonds. The imminent start up of Superior Aggregates will not only create direct jobs but the project will also re-open the Michipicoten Harbour for a number of purposes, thus presenting a regional focus on the community and create other direct employment. The optimism regarding Michipicoten Harbour and its transportation advantages runs very high in both Wawa and the regional.

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INTRODUCTION – cont’d

The real estate sector and business focus areas have also undergone changes. Wawa did experience a slight increase in demand for some new housing (2007) and revitalized commercial activity; while there has been a loss in activity in the downtown core, the outlying area along Mission Road has experienced some commercial growth. Presently (2010) the picture is dim and will only change as the economy improves.

Lastly, due to the number of smaller communities in the North Eastern Superior Region and the population of the regional unorganized territory, Wawa has established itself as the service hub. The potential enhancement of this concept presents a great opportunity for Wawa.

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WAWA 2015 – THE VISION

Operating as a cohesive, singular entity, the Town of Wawa must be “open for business” providing a full range of various employment activities. The community has a modern telecommunications infrastructure that will be competitive enough to support new industry. Our traditional resource industries will be augmented or enhanced through the provision of value-added initiatives. Sustainable economic development will be practiced by balancing industry with environmental concerns. Wawa will be a leader in providing a wide range of services in the North Algoma and Superior East Regions thereby retaining its position as a hub or cornerstone for the area. Wawa will also be recognized as a major player in policy making in Northern Ontario by participating locally and regionally whenever possible in policy forums sponsored by the Provincial and Federal Governments.

Wawa 2015 includes a community which values and is inclusive of all cultures, particularly those that exist locally. Educational opportunities will be of prime importance and shall include a wide range of opportunities for youth and those seeking life long learning experiences. A full range of health and social services shall be offered to all residents and it shall be recognized that demand for these services will increase as the population of the community ages. Appropriate and affordable housing and accommodations shall include options for all residents. The safety and security of the residents of the Community shall be of prime importance and be the subject of continuous planning. Cultural events and the Arts shall be valued and the community shall support all such endeavors.

The community shall build on the international reputation of its name (Wawa) and its namesake (The Wawa Goose) while reinforcing and continuing to develop the diverse natural beauty of the area through its very successful tourism program and the concept of “Wawa Wow!” The community will offer a wide range of full recreational opportunities for visitors and residents alike. The downtown and commercial sectors should be vibrant and attractive which will anchor a competitive retail sector taking advantage of the Wawa Lake location and improvements along Mission Road.

Finally, Wawa 2015 will point to a “quality of life” that will be the envy of Northern Ontario and to all visitors, both domestic and international. Such a “quality of life” shall be supported and enhanced by the traditional infrastructure (roads, utilities, community facilities, and municipal service buildings) that is expected in a vibrant community.



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WAWA 2015 – RECOMMENDATIONS

The Wawa Community Adjustment Committee puts forward a number of recommendations for consideration by the Community and the Municipal Council. These recommendations are designed to be practical and achievable and not “pie-in-the-sky”. The reality of the Town’s ability to implement a host of recommendations is not in keeping with the financial status of the Municipality. One possibility available to the Town is to prioritize the suggestions and recommendations contained in the report and work with others in either a partnership or directly in searching for resources to implement all or some of the recommendations.

In addition, Municipal Council might wish to consider using this report as one of the building blocks in the construction of their Community Strategic Plan.

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SECTOR: GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS (N.G.O.'S)

Strategy: Partnerships: Develop relationships with other parties that will directly or indirectly benefit the Town of Wawa.

Objective:

- Promote Community, Corporate, and Business involvement.
- Wawa must establish a trust and formalize a working relationship with the Michipicoten First Nations that allows for economic partnerships and general advancement of both parties.
- Recognize, encourage, and celebrate Municipal, Corporate, and Business contributions.
- Use strengths developed through strategic alliances.
- Form public/private partnerships.
- Form Government partnerships that could include non-government agencies and other agencies.
- Utilize the Province’s Northern Growth Plan as a mechanism for Community growth. Identify the unique opportunities that are contained within the growth plan and pursue these opportunities to the fullest.
- Minimize red tape between all levels of government and encourage an attitude of expeditious public service.

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SECTOR: ENVIRONMENT

Strategy: Ensure the stewardship of the environment through the development of policies and practices that will promote sustainable growth and protection of the biosphere. In particular, Wawa’s water supply and abundant fresh air makes for an attractive community.

Objective:

- Encourage commercial and residential zoning on Wawa Lake while ensuring there is a balance between development and preservation of the natural and cultural values of the Wawa Lake shoreline.
- To promote a responsible attitude toward environmental issues.
- To be known as a Town with a philosophy of balance and common sense on environmental matters.
- Use the Northern Growth Plan environmental guidelines as a check-list for new and growing industries and businesses.
- Stay abreast of environmental initiatives and best practices to determine if they can be applied to the Town and area.
- Create infrastructure that permits the enjoyment of the local environment (i.e. Wawa Lake) and educates at the same time.
- Encourage and support programs and policies that promote the philosophy of Reduce – Reuse – Recycle.

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SECTOR: MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Strategy: Develop processes that will be used to pro-actively deal with changes in the Community.

Objective:

- Encourage the formulation of a Community Strategic Plan and a regular process of up-dating and change. This may happen, utilizing the services and skills of the Town’s E.D.C.
- Ensure the Strategic Plan takes into account the Provincial goals and objectives as outlined in the Northern Growth Plan.
- Create a consultation process that is sensible, efficient and easy to implement.
- Reflect an “any idea is a good idea” philosophy to the residents and encourage solutions.
- Ensure a regular dialogue with the residents. This can be done through local media, newsletters, opinion articles and Town Hall meetings.
- On an annual basis assess the public’s perception towards the municipality and its services.
- The Municipality must continue to review the availability of residential lots to ensure the town can accommodate additional housing demands.

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SECTOR: TOURISM AND RECREATION

Strategy: Promotion of the Town as a destination to experience a variety of activities that include sports, entertainment, environmental, cultural and historic attributes.

Objective:

- Recognize the importance of the Baby Boomer Tourism market and adjust our marketing and service delivery approaches accordingly.
- Recognize the importance of the growing Eco- Tourism potential in the Wawa/Superior East region and the increase in European and Asian travellers.
- Work with Provincial and Regional organizations on matters of mutual benefit.
- Maximize any or all opportunities that the Federal or Provincial Governments Tourism Programs may make available to the Community and Region.
- Use the Northern Growth Plan as a reference point to ensure consistency with Provincial goals and objectives in Tourism Marketing.
- Encourage the private sector to participate in local and regional organizations that advance the tourism industry.
- Encourage entrepreneurs both young and old to establish seasonal businesses that may enhance Tourism related activities.
- Encourage the Municipality to form a Tourism and Recreation Board to assist in reviewing the Division’s goals and objectives and contributing to the annual work plan of these functions. The board should include various tourism/ recreational organization members as well as a Council Representative. The Municipality may wish to establish a protocol agreement with this new committee that clearly articulates its responsibilities.

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SECTOR: EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Strategy: To ensure the Town receives high quality education program delivery consistent with Provincial guidelines.

Objective:

- Ensure an education delivery system that includes instruction in both official languages consistent with Provincial Education Policy and guidelines.
- Utilize the latest in technology in the delivery of education and training programs for all age groups.
- Support a sensible deployment of resources that includes staff, buildings, and facilities relative to the demand for education services i.e. student population.
- Establish and support a Training Centre capable of delivering, a) Trades Programs, b) certain College Programs, c) Contact North courses and services and other ancillary training that touches many industries and businesses i.e. First Aid, WHMIS, etc. In addition, effort to create synergies and economies of scale should be researched and implemented Regionally for the benefit of all.
- Ensure small, rural, Northern Communities have a voice in the decision making that takes place regarding Education and Training for Wawa and area.

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SECTOR: MINING

Strategy: To encourage and support the Mining Industry in exploration, development, and production efforts consistent with the various laws and guidelines established by the Federal and Provincial Governments. Wawa and area has a long and successful history of mining and similarly, the Town could and should have a bright future in the Mining and Quarry Industries.

- Objective:**
- Ensure that job opportunities within the Industry are available for the townspeople of Wawa.
 - Support training programs which are required by the industry to hire and establish local work-forces. Regular dialog between the Town and Mining Companies is vital in establishing a healthy working relationship.
 - Ensure that there is maximum economic benefit for the Town and its businesses from the Mining Industry. This must be consistent with competitive prices and high quality goods and services.
 - Promote Wawa as the perfect place to establish work, housing, and accommodation facilities for the Mining Companies and their staff.
 - Develop a philosophy of consultation and possible partnerships with First Nations people.
 - Investigate the potential for a satellite training facility for post-secondary education institutes (U.S. and Canadian Universities/Colleges) to study practical mining, geology and related techniques in the field.
 - Re-establish a Resident Geologist’s District Office in Wawa Area for a Local Geologist through the MNDMF. At the very least, re-establish a local office for seasonal use by local liaison geologist (MNDMF) when visiting the area from their home base.
 - Work towards the creation of a local geoscience initiative (similar to the Atikokan Geoscience Initiative, Lake Nipigon Geoscience Initiative and Discover Abitibi Initiative). Work with NOHFC, FedNor, local universities and provincial/federal governments to acquire funding and to establish working relationships.
 - Work with government ministries to develop shorter timelines regarding the protocols and procedures for new mining operations.
 - Participate in the Ontario Mining Act Modernization process.

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SECTOR: FORESTRY

Strategy: To encourage and support the Forestry Industry in re-establishing former operations and establishing new enterprises that use non-traditional wood and wood waste in new and contemporary products. The Wawa area has had three very successful forestry operations i.e. Weyerhaeuser, Dubreuil Forestry Operations, and Domtar in White River and re-opening possibilities must be supported locally and provincially.

Objective:

- Ensure Wawa/Superior East participates in the new Forest Tenure Policy discussions presently underway with the Province of Ontario. Wood allocation must make sense for our local operations and the Province must establish a policy that supports the economics of these local producers.
- New value-added enterprises must be encouraged and supported by the Province and this must be reflected in the Northern Ontario Growth Plan.
- Support new, contemporary, and efficient power generation that will assist the economics of the Forestry Operations in the Municipality and area.
- Support training programs that are needed by the Industry to hire and establish local work-forces. Regular dialog between the Town and Forestry Companies is vital in establishing a healthy working relationship.
- Develop strong partnerships with First Nations that are interested in new Forestry value-added initiatives.

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SECTOR: AGRICULTURE

Strategy: To encourage and support the Agriculture Industry to establish new enterprises that capitalizes on local strengths.

Objective:

- Encourage the development of value-added products to enhance non-traditional forestry products (ie. Blueberries, mushrooms, birch syrup etc.) A recently announced Blueberry Farm will be established in Wawa and while the concept has been around for sometime, it’s exciting to know that a local entrepreneur/farmer has finally gone beyond the talking stage and commenced land clearing. The value-added possibilities are numerous and it will be transportation costs that dictate what can get done economically.
- Encourage and support the development a year-round greenhouse producing vegetables for local and regional markets. Possibilities for green energy (bio-mass) may make a Greenhouse operation feasible.
- Encourage and support the Community Garden concept. Developing an appreciation for the agricultural Industry often leads to more opportunities within the area. The Town should consider assisting the Community Garden participants with some materials, supplies and services i.e. help clean the site up in the Spring and Fall.

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SECTOR: TRANSPORTATION

Strategy: Wawa 2015 – July 2010 Wawa is a natural hub for the Superior East Region and the transportation advantages of the Community must be exploited and utilized to a much higher level. The connection of Highways 17 and 101 at Wawa suits shipping routes for a variety of natural resource type products i.e. pellets,

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SECTOR: RETAIL AND SERVICES

Strategy: Small Business retention and viability is extremely important to the Town's business community. A business environment of co-operation and pro-activeness is essential to the survival of this sector's members.

- Objective:**
- Ensure that "export jobs", which are jobs that export goods and services outside the Community, are a priority of council. This then allows new money to circulate within Wawa which is critical to the growth of the local economy.
 - The Municipality and their economic arm (EDC) should develop socio-economic agreement templates that could be used to describe the Town's aspirations relative to new industries or businesses establishing within the Town's boundaries.
 - Continue to support organizations like the Business Improvement Area (BIA), in their efforts to stimulate and improve the shopping opportunities available in the Town.
 - Support the re-vitalization of Wawa's Downtown area with an acknowledgement that a good number of old buildings have to come down to make room for new opportunities.
 - The Municipality should work with local businesses and training providers to encourage the development and delivery of hospitality courses on a regular basis.
 - Encourage the coordination of an updated street signage program that is maintained at a high standard of presentation.
 - Encourage and promote greater communication between the Municipal staff and businesses in regards to visitor information, where, when and how it is made available (ie. TIC hours, maps, brochure distribution, website etc.)

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SECTOR: HEALTH

Strategy: The Lady Dunn Health Centre is an integrated health delivery system whose main objectives include access to quality health service and care. The attraction and retention of Health Professionals is a constant work in progress. The Health Centre has an extremely good reputation and this status must never be compromised. Good health service is an important attraction for new residents and essential to retain Wawa’s current citizens.

- Objective:**
- Ensure Health Professionals are recruited with a goal of long-term tenure.
 - Utilize the latest of equipment and telecommunication infrastructure to provide tele-health services where appropriate.
 - To ensure the satellite operations at Dubreuilville and Missanabie are supported in rendering regular “Nursing Station” services.
 - To provide 24-hour emergency services and support the delivery of specialty services like occupational therapy, specialty clinics and rehabilitation services.
 - Investigate the potential to become a “specialty centre” for the Superior East Region. This not only assists with the economics of operating the Health Centre but could also pump money into the local economy.
 - Encourage and support the construction of more long-term care beds to meet the demands of an aging population.
 - Utilize the Province’s Northern Ontario Growth Plan to the fullest relative to health care services.

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SECTOR: SOCIAL SERVICES

Strategy: Since the closure of the Weyerhaeuser Mill, individual and family stress has grown and with items such as mental health related issues becoming more prevalent within the community of Wawa and surrounding area, we must ensure there are sufficient programs, counselors and facilities available within the community to serve those in need. Drug and alcohol addiction services will also need to provide sufficient programs and assistance to those suffering dependency.

- Objective:**
- Ensure a sufficient number of Mental Health Professionals, family counselors and addiction counselors are available and easily accessible.
 - Ensure social agencies and programs are readily available, easily accessible and highly advertised within the region.
 - Ensure students are provided with program information for area services associated with drug and alcohol abuse, along with contact information that includes the ability to contact a professional via email or website.
 - Advertise social service volunteer positions on the Municipal website along with local media and run a news article twice a year dedicated to area volunteers, providing their names and accomplishments if appropriate. Provide volunteer recognition through initiatives such as a Volunteer of the Month program that has a small monthly prize to an area volunteer and a news article about the agency they volunteer with.
 - Run educational articles on local news media about mental health issues, and drug and alcohol abuse, the warning signs and corrective program availability.
 - Marital and family counseling services need to be accessible and confidential with information packages provided to all families within the Town.
 - Police issued information packages should be inserted in mail boxes at least once a year detailing signs of domestic, child and elderly abuse, and the options available to neighbors, family members, friends and victims.
 - The Municipality must insist on appropriate notice of any changes/ downsizing of social services in order to plan accordingly. The Municipality must demand that the health and welfare of the Wawa residents be accommodated and health care solutions are of paramount importance.

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SECTOR: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Strategy: To create a critical mass of expertise in information technology and geographic information systems that will stimulate innovation and support new and existing businesses.

- Objective:
- Establish innovative business partnerships that promote synergy and foster effective and efficient business opportunities in the areas of IT and Innovation.
 - Promote business opportunities where IT or Innovation is required, such as the new Green Energy Act.
 - Create business opportunities that secure knowledge based business presence in the Municipality.
 - Reflect to the outside world that Wawa has the capacity and skills needed to host IT opportunities, and further, our Town and area can accommodate IT and Innovation companies to a reasonable extent.
 - The Provincial Northern Growth Plan will undoubtedly deal with Information Technology and Wawa must capitalize on any and all programs or support the Plan may offer.
 - Investigate with business owners the benefit of establishing public internet access at their location for residents and visitors to Wawa.
 - Municipality should ensure that Wawa’s data processing infrastructure and I.T. capabilities are current and comparable with available services in other areas of the Province.

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CONCLUSION

The Wawa Community Adjustment Committee has received a great deal of information pertaining to the consequences of the Wawa Weyerhaeuser OSB Plant closure. As a result we have been able to produce a document entitled “Wawa 2015 – Building Our Future”. This adjustment report along with the recommendations has been in the making for the last few months. Since the two public meetings that were held in June we have now been able to finalize the report.

This conclusion is being crafted using inputs received throughout the process and there is an element of subjectivity throughout this conclusion. In no particular order, the Committee wishes to express some observations above and beyond those articulated under the various sector headings.

If we were to provide the conclusion with a title, it would probably be “Wawa Wake Up!” There is no doubt our town has received a knock-down punch relative to the economic activity that was lost with the closure of Weyerhaeuser, Dubreuilville Forest Products, and Domtar in White River. The town has and continues to scramble in a variety of directions to ensure its sustainability and future. The Committee has assessed the information that has been gathered. It has also spent some time contemplating what has not been said. The two public meetings that were organized were not well attended yet the comments and questions raised at these meetings indicated an undercurrent of frustration with what is going on in the Town.

Comments regarding our Town Council and the leadership it has shown during this economic crisis were expressed as politically correct as possible. However, it was the words that were not spoken and the body language that was used that indicated attention toward this matter. It is the Committee’s opinion that Town Council and the people of Wawa come to grips with the realities of a Municipal Government in the 21st Century. Here we are in 2010 and we continue to work with outdated policies and procedures that were put in place years ago. With the downloading that has come from the Federal and Provincial Governments, with the shrinkage in our tax base and with the closure of our main employers we are asking our Council to work harder. It is the Committee’s recommendation that Town Council consider the following:

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CONCLUSION – cont’d

1. Municipal Council must establish a regular dialogue with the Provincial M.P.P., the Federal M.P. and Senior Bureaucrats. These meetings should be used to demand accountability from each to ensure that he/she takes the Town’s messages and needs to the appropriate department/official for action. The Town must demand a level of service from the Government representatives that is sensible and timely.
2. Municipal Council has to consider a more aggressive approach in dealing with senior levels of Government. The Town is in the fight of its life and turning the other cheek is just not good enough. We have a right to be demanding and we have a right to insist on accountability on the part of the Provincial Government. The Northern Ontario Growth Plan must be a document that is useful and productive for Wawa. If it is not then the Town must develop a strategy to ensure appropriate changes are made in the plan. We should use all methods possible to ensure our voices are heard. We are fighting the urban agenda.
3. Municipal Council has to have meaningful communication with Wawa residents on a more regular basis. It must also share with the population the challenges that Council faces. People tend to become alienated with a lack of information and the opposite is true that people are more likely to be allies and supporters if they understand what the hell is going on.
4. There has been a lot of concern expressed regarding the attraction and retention of medical staff at the Lady Dunn Health Centre. Wawa must lead some initiative that gets the Government to change the rules of admission at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. Students going in to the program must be aware that after graduation they will serve a two to three year term in the North. This recruitment problem will not go away until something as sensible as “learn in the North, serve in the North” is established as a criteria for these Northern medical schools. The Committee also recommends that Council work with the LDHC and vested community groups to promote an attractive recruitment kit to entice perspective physicians.

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CONCLUSIONS – cont’d

5. Wawa’s Seniors are a very important part of the Town’s make up and economy and we want to encourage these people to continue to live and make Wawa home. The issue of transitional housing was a recurring concern at the public meetings. Transitional housing we will define as housing requirements for those who have difficulty living, or no longer wish to live on their own, but are not yet in need of long term care. An aggressive approach by the Municipality is needed to kick start this initiative into a reality. The Committee believes this is one of the Town’s highest priority items.
6. The annual stipends for Mayor and Council should be reviewed immediately so as to encourage the public to stand for public office, knowing that the work load is very heavy and the expectations of the public are very high. Appropriate remuneration has to be established even though the subject is sensitive. The reality is reasonable pay for reasonable work.

The Municipality of Wawa has many advantages. We have good people, we have a good location, we have a healthy number of amenities and the list goes on. This report is designed to make the Town better and to assist the Town in identifying strategic directions that Town Council may consider using. The Committee believes the adjustment process was a healthy exercise and the report and recommendations that have been made are submitted in the spirit of growing the town and positioning the Town for the challenges that lie ahead. We are confident that the Town’s Administration is strong enough to lead such a renewal.

There are a few Canadian stories about “the little town that could and did” and there is no reason Wawa, Ontario cannot be that Town and bounce back after this severe economic storm and become stronger. Wawa’s future is one of growth and prosperity and while we need the help of others the reality is we are the masters of our own destiny.

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Wawa Community Adjustment Committee Members:

Bill Chapman
Robyn Dewar
Mitch Hatfield
Donna Korytko
Linda Nowicki
Mary Anne Pearson
Ron Rody
Claude Samson
Andy Stevens

Wawa Community Adjustment Committee Staff:

Amber Florczyk
Johanna Rowe

Resource People:

Cathy Cyr
Dan Friyia
Maury O’Neill
Guy Pelletier
Russ Reid
Howard Whent
Eugene Wilson
Chris Wray

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Rod Morrison – W.C.A.C. Chair