BLUE SKY ECONOMIC GROWTH CORPORATION

Blue Sky News

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Summertime in Blue Sky

Summer is on its home stretch, gardens around the Region are in full bloom, beaches are alive with activity as is the office of Blue Sky Economic Growth Corporation.

Some of the many festivals in the Blue Sky Region have wrapped up and attendance figures at this point look good despite some less than ideal weather conditions at Mattawa Voyager Days and the North Bay Heritage Festival. Organizers of both events reported satisfaction with the festivals' outcomes. In both cases the concerts drew some of the largest crowds; names like David Wilcox, Sam Roberts, Alanna Myles, The Village People and Deanna Carter definitely helped draw these crowds. As with every year, the economic spin-offs generated through these festivals give a huge boost to area economies. Both Sturgeon Falls' and South River's festivals concluded last week and echoed the success of Voyager Days and Heritage Festival. Visit www.blueskyfestivals.com for more.

In this issue of Blue Sky News we hope to keep the stories full of the fun of summer throughout the Region. For example, check out the back panel for information on the 3rd annual Blue Sky Municipal Cup Golf Challenge hosted by the Municipality of Callander. Also you can have fun trying to solve our Blue Sky Summer Trivia.

All of us at BSEGC hope that your summer continues to be a safe and enjoyable one.

Blue Sky EGC hosts mayors of the Region

On June 11 the Board of Directors of BSEGC hosted the Mayors, Reeves and Chiefs of the Blue Sky Region at the "Mayors of Blue Sky Luncheon."

"The purpose of the Luncheon was to gather elected officials who represent the communities, districts or areas in the Region and let them know how we can all benefit from cooperation," says Susan Church, General Manager of BSEGC.

Church also believes that a lack of communication in the past between BSEGC and the communities in the Region kept a lot of people in the dark about some of the positive things the Corporation was doing.

Please see New/P2

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BLUE SKY REGION SUMMER TRIVIA:

1. *Who is accredited as being the first white man to visit what is now known as the Blue Sky Region?*
2. *One of the Region's most notorious inhabitant (especially in North Bay) is an insect known as the Shadfly. Name their "claim to fame?"*
3. *How many lakes, streams and rivers are in the Blue Sky Region?*

   A)130
   B) 330
   C) 530

4. *Name the only township in Blue Sky Named after a provincial Premier. (Hint, it is in the Almaguin Highlands)*

New Mayors attend luncheon

"I think we were very successful" says Church. "We really are a new corporation, so the onus is on us to prove that we are a worth while venture. Recent results definitely prove that we are."

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The Luncheon featured an overview by researchers from the University of Montreal on peripheral regions in the knowledge economy. The talk outlined the basic issues that face municipalities who are geographically isolated from major centres. A more detailed presentation was given to delegates in the afternoon at Nipissing University.

Two of three new mayors in the Region attended the Luncheon. The Townships of Bonfield, East Ferris and the Municipality of Callander all took advantage of legislation that allows heads of council title be changed from reeve to mayor. The new mayors in the Region are: Narry McCarthy (Bonfield), Bill Vrebocsh (East Ferris), Hector Lavigne (Callander) and on June 24, Robert Crriveau of Papineau-Cameron.

The decision to change titles is based on a perception that reeves carry less power and status. An update to a 100 year old piece of legislation allowed councils to pass the resolution.

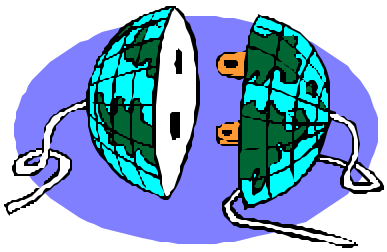
Please see related story/ P4

Online portal boasts database of over 8,000 businesses

www.blueskyregion.ca

The Blue Sky Region Portal is best described as an online phone book, with some obvious distinctions. First, the Portal is ad free. This means that listing an organization or business on the Portal is free and equal "space" is allotted regardless of size or financial ability of the organization. Second, the Portal covers the entire Blue Sky Region. And third, the Portal maintains several public access internet sites. These sites are: Best Western Hotel, Cassellholme Home for the Aged, North Bay and District Association for Community Living, North Bay and District Chamber of Commerce, YMCA, Yes! Employment Services, and 12 terminals at the North Bay Public Library plus a pay-per-use kiosk at Jack Garland Airport.

The Blue Sky Region Portal was created as an Urban Community Access Program (CAP) demonstration project with funding coming from the Federal Government, Provincial Government and from many organizations in the Region. The goal of the project was to create a community portal that provides a virtual 'common counter' and one-window access to all clubs, programs, government services and businesses in the Blue Sky Region, and to provide free public internet access sites, to ensure everyone can access the information available through the Portal.



Blue Sky Region; plugged in

The Blue Sky Region Portal allows access to information regarding more than 8,000 community businesses, organizations, and events. It is by far the largest online database of its kind in the Blue Sky Region. The objective is to allow individuals access to what they are looking for in less than two mouse clicks!

The Blue Sky Region Portal makes a great homepage for both business and personal use! Visit: www.blueskyregion.ca.

Trivia Answers

1. It is generally acknowledged that 18 year-old Etienne Brulé was the first white man to set up camp in the Region. Brulé was said to have been dispatched by Samuel de Champlain to explore a new passage for the burgeoning fur trade. He set up camp near the present town of Mattawa.
2. The shadfly is actually the most ancient flying insect known to science. The adult insect lives approximately 24 hrs (its Latin name means "that which live one day") and its only purpose is to mate. The shadfly has remained relatively un-evolved over the last several million years and actually possesses a non-functioning mouth.
3. There are 530 lakes, rivers and streams in the Region!
4. Joly Township (1878) was named after the Hon. Gustave Joly de Botbiniere, MPP, speaker of the Quebec Assembly and premier of Quebec in 1878-79.

TORC forum update

In the June issue of Blue Sky News we brought you information about an upcoming forum hosted by the Ontario Rural Council.

The forum was held on June 24 at Pinewood Park/ Clairion Resorts and covered a wide variety of topics pertaining to resource sectors in the new economy. Many people evolved with Blue Sky EGC attended the afternoon session.

The format was a panel discussion by three gentlemen involved in the resource sectors. John Symington brought a unique perspective from Waubeteck Business Development Corporation. Wabeteck is a partnership between 27 First Nation Communities in the northeast that promotes enterprise and provides entrepreneurial training to First Nations People.

Paul Krabbe, Alternate Chair to the Blue Sky Forestry Cluster and Business Development Manager for the forest management arm of Tembec Inc. Mr. Krabbe addressed the group with information about use of technologies and innovations in the forestry.

Dr. Greg Baiden of Laurentian University in Sudbury also referenced the importance of technology in the mining sector. Dr. Baiden said that technology in mining is not only important in producing optimal yields, but it is also very important for keeping workers safe. It is now possible for miners to operate excavators and trams very precisely from a long distance using remote control.

The session was moderated by Jeff Celentano from the office of the CAO, City of North Bay. Jeff is also a representative on the Quality of Life Sector Committee

Sector chairs Phil Richardson, Marrianne Berube, and Mark King and John Candie of Economic Partners Sudbury East/West Nipissing graciously donated speaker gifts for the forum.

AHSPIC working to unify Highlands

Last week while driving to Tobermory on the Bruce Peninsula I decided to take a route that hugged the shoreline of Georgian Bay for most of the trip. My course took me through Parry Sound, the southwestern tip of the Muskokas, over the Trent-Severn waterway, through the Blue Mountains, and above the massive cliffs of the Bruce.

As you might imagine I saw a great deal of the scenery that Ontario has to offer, but one small segment sticks out in my mind quite prominently. The comfort and beauty of the landscape along highway 124 between Sundridge and Parry Sound did not overwhelm me with a sense of awe, but rather subtly suggested peace and tranquility. Upon my return home, I told Ed Hughes, Deputy Reeve of McMurrich/ Monteith and Chair of the Almaguin Highlands Strategic Plan Implementation Committee (AHSPIC) about my trip and jokingly asked if he really wanted to promote the Highlands as much as he does instead of keeping it a secret.

"It's inevitable" Hughes said about the 'growing northward' trend that has already been felt in some parts of the Almaguin Highlands. As evidence, Hughes points out that many property values have increased 20 percent since last assessed in 2000. "Our (AHSPIC's) expectation for the Highlands over the next ten years is to give Muskoka and Halliburton some serious competition in terms of tourism and economic growth."

Hughes and the Board of AHSPIC feel confident that this will happen given some recent positive changes. "I have seen a great improvement over the last two years in the way our member municipalities communicate with one another. There is much more contact between the partners now and we are all talking 'Region' now where not so long ago it was every community for itself."

AHSPIC seems to have a number of tools that will help the Highlands develop over the short term as well as in the years to come. During the next few months AHSPIC will be promoting the Almaguin Highlands Logo that will assist in a "better brand recognition for local businesses and tourist operators," Hughes reports.

Two more projects are a "bring and brag event" and the creation of a regional radio station. The bring and brag is essentially an opportunity for area organizations to meet and discuss successes over the year and help plot the course for years to come.

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As far as long-term ammunition, AHSPIC has their doctrine; the Almaguin Highlands Strategic Plan. The Plan is a concise document produced in May of 2002 that lays out strategic directions for the communities in the Highlands to take. Of course, the suggestions in the document are voted on by AHSPIC as to what directions would be most prudent. Also, a major acquisition for the group is the almguinhighlands.com Website. The site will be used as resource for the communities and people interested in visiting the Highlands. "It will become one of our main tools in bringing the Highlands municipalities closer together," said Hughes of the site.

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Mobilizing the region with a shared economic vision

Visit us on the web!
www.blueskyegc.ca

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JEFF BUELL, EDITOR

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Callander hosting golf tournament

Once again the Municipality of Callander will be hosting the Annual Blue Sky Municipal Cup Golf Challenge on September 14, 2003 at Osprey Links Golf Course In Callander.

Last year, 144 golfers took part contributing to $1,500 raised for charities. As will be done this year, the money raised went to the winning municipalities charity of choice. The Northern Children's Treatment Centre on behalf of the City of North Bay was last year's beneficiary.

We encourage each municipality to put together a team and compete for a worthy cause. Contact Leslie at the Municipal Office in Callander at: 705.752.1410 for more information. We hope to see you on the links!

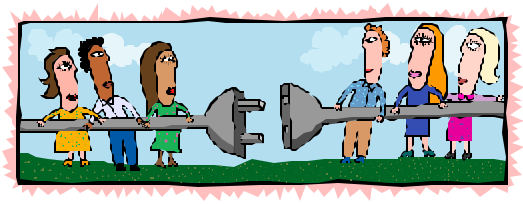
A new sector?

As it stands now, the Retail, Building and Retirement Development, Agriculture, Mining, Technology, Forestry, Tourism, Transportation, Education and Training and Quality of Life Sectors encompass the vast majority of employment in the Blue Sky Region. However, there may be a new sector added to the fold.

The mission of Blue Sky Economic Growth Corporation (BSEGC) is to mobilize key elements in the private and public sectors within the Region to implement economic strategies with a shared vision. To achieve this "shared vision" there is a need for coordination, cooperation and constant communication.

Through the success of the Mayor's Luncheon held June 11 it became evident that involving more municipal leaders in the Blue Sky Initiative would greatly increase communication. Broadening BSEGC's communication through municipalities would mutually benefit both the communities' and Corporations' interest.

Many municipalities in the Region are concerned with creating and sustaining employment in their respective communities. Many communities within the Blue Sky Region rely heavily on employment from only one or two sectors in the economy which can cause problems if that sector experiences difficulties. The municipalities concerns and the mission of Blue Sky EGC seemingly make a natural partnership; a fringe benefit of the "clusters approach" to economic development that Blue Sky EGC uses is economic diversification.



Although a municipal sector would not juxtapose to either vertical or horizontal sector definitions, its position in the Initiative is not a complex one. Just as the Quality of Life and Education and Training Sectors overarch the eight vertical sectors, the Municipal Sector would envelop all ten sectors.