

New Credit Council to hold bi-election

Council votes to fill vacant seat "as soon as possible."

by Paul Baswick

NEW CREDIT - A bi-election to name a successor to late band councillor Gordon LaForme will be held before Nov. 20, band council decided Monday night.

Council voted unanimously to seek out a replacement for LaForme, who suffered a fatal heart attack on June 12, rather than serve the remaining 18 months of their term with one less councillor.

"We should have the bi-election as soon as possible," said councillor Marvin LaForme, in dismissing the option to proceed with six councillors instead of the usual seven.

"I think maybe at one time they were able to get by with only one less councillor, but now everything is getting quite busy, and we don't have enough reps to sit on the different committees that we already have," he said.

Chief Councillor Dan Laforme noted that holding a bi-election sooner rather than later would not only help council stay on top of its workload, but that it would also make the bi-election process much less expensive to implement.

"If we have it now it shouldn't cost any more than \$3,000, but if we hold off it will cost us a lot more because of the Corbiere decision," said the chief.

The Corbiere decision, a 1999 Supreme Court of Canada ruling which has extended voting rights to non-resident band members across the country, goes into effect November 20, 2000. While the details of how precisely the decision will be put into practice have not been finalized, it is expected that First Nations will be required to provide advanced notice of elections and alternative voting methods to their off-reserve members, resulting in a greater cost to band governments.

"I'm not sure of the time schedule, so I couldn't tell you right now when (the bi-election) will be," added the chief, "but it will be as soon as possible."

Council also voted to solicit applications for the position of electoral officer for the upcoming bi-election.

Committee responsibilities of the late councillor LaForme, who most recently served on New Credit's Policing Committee, Tom Howe Landfill Site Community Liaison Committee and Woodland Cultural Centre Committee, will be delegated among councillors during a planning session to take place in Niagara Falls at the end of this week.