

# Editorial Page

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## Studies & more studies

Ever get the feeling of being poked and prodded? Or maybe like a rat in a maze? Or just like some laboratory experiment?

I'm sure that's what local residents and our towns must feel like with all the studies that have taken place or are currently underway. It seems like we're being put under a microscope.

The Waterfront Development Study, Recreation Master Plan, Airport Master Plan, Housing Study, Training Needs Survey and the Tourism Development Study are just a few of the examinations taking place.

It was not so long ago that if somebody had what they thought was a good idea for a business, they talked about it a bit, got some financial support, and went ahead with the plan.

Now, you hire a consultant, pay around \$20,000 for a study to be completed, analyze the information presented to you, get public input, talk with various government departments about financial incentives, then, and only then, you might proceed with your original idea.

Not that it stands much chance of being anything close to what it originally was. More likely than not it's been modified, updated, altered and revamped so many times that if you originally thought of building a chip stand, you'll end up owning a four star restaurant complete with souvenir shop and an 18-hole golf course to go with it.

In fact, in order to receive government funding, towns must have these studies performed.

Studies can be beneficial though. They can prevent someone from starting a business that has no chance of success. Or it can provide options for changing the original plan into something that will be successful, or at least stand a chance of success.

They can also bring to light possibilities that may have never been considered or may lead to government grants that are buried beneath mounds of red tape.

Some town councillors will be attending the annual



Northwestern Ontario Planning Conference this fall. The last item on the agenda is "Hiring a Consultant".

At the last council meeting, Terrace Bay councillor Chris Joubert joked, "They should have us give a presentation. After all, we should be experts on the subject by now."

All joking aside, this is probably true. No doubt there will be more studies in the future. Hopefully, a more diversified, healthy and strong economy will be the result of all the money being spent on these studies. Hopefully, these studies won't gather dust sitting on the shelf waiting for entrepreneurs to take advantage of the many ideas presented in them.

The News welcomes your letters to the editor. Feel free to express comments, opinions, appreciation, or debate anything of public interest. Write to:

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So we may verify authorship, please sign your letters and include your phone number.

## Modern Technology: Why go to the office?

A small news item in the entertainment pages of the newspaper the other day, says that Peter Livingston, who normally splits his working year between offices in Toronto and New York, is moving to...Chester, Nova Scotia?

Peter Livingston? Just about the hottest young literary agent in the North American book business?

Moving to Chester, N.S., population 990 and falling?

Is he retiring?

Burnt out?

Crazy?

No. No. Like a fox.

Peter Livingston is merely one of the more conspicuous lemmings in a growing mass migration that bids fair to revolutionize the way we all think and live.

Peter Livingston has grasped a Modern Truth that hasn't quite registered in the consciousness of most of us:

There's no reason to go to the big Apple anymore.

As Livingston explained "I can live anywhere there's a phone, a fax and a courier."

Precisely.

Philosopher Buckminster Fuller told us we were living on a spaceship called Earth.

Marshall McLuhan said it wasn't so much a spaceship as a global village.

Peter Livingston knows it's more like an electrified cottage.

Ron Baker knows that too.

Mister Baker is chief executive officer of the Ontario Library Consortium. He's responsible for a program that controls some three million books in about 400 libraries in 21 different library systems throughout the province.

Mister Baker's consortium has no downtown office building, no company parking lot, no reception area, warehouse or cafeteria.

The Ontario Library Consortium exists on four computer discs that take up less volume than a copy of Reader's Digest.

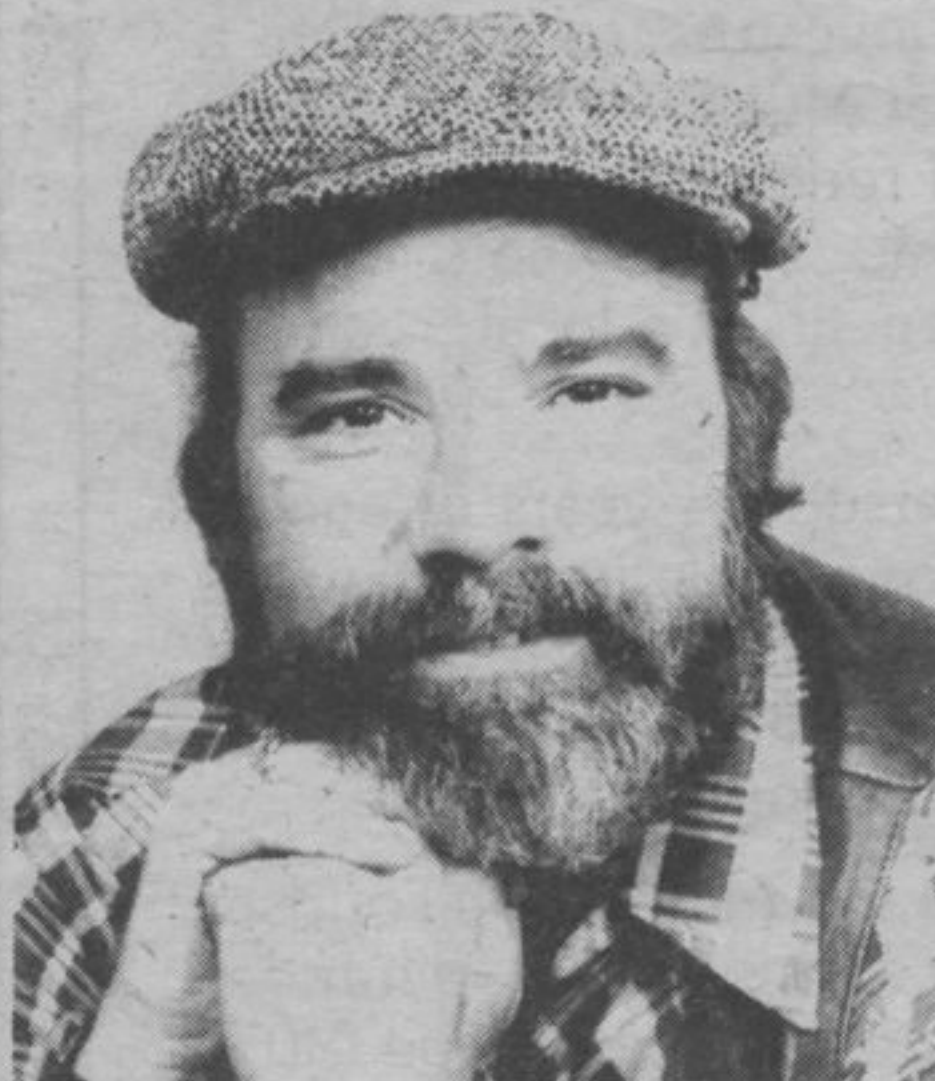
The headquarters are located in a desktop computer on a table in the livingroom of what used to be Mister Baker's summer cottage on Georgian Bay.

Baker's other "plant facilities" include a small

printer and a modem that hooks his computer into his telephone.

Ron Baker used to sweat in the city for 11 months of the year so that he could take a month off at the cottage and recuperate.

Now he lives in the cottage.



### Arthur Black

He only goes to the city for shopping and ball games.

Baker and Livingston have been liberated by an electronic communication revolution that is making new converts every day.

I see them sitting car-bound

in traffic jams threading their way in and out of the city during rush hour.

Instead of fuming and revving and honking as they did only a couple of years ago, these folks are talking earnestly into their cellular car phones.

They're turing the wasted time of traffic tie-ups into productive "office" time by making business calls from their cars.

One day the penny will drop and they'll ask themselves "Why the hell am I in a car at all?"

Good question.

The vast majority of working North Americans are not truck drivers or lumberjacks or chefs. Most of us move information.

The advent of fax machines, cellular phones, modems and satellite communications mean that more and more of that information can be sent electronically.

For an increasing number of us, there really is no reason to go to the office.

We've got a full scale revolution on our hands -- and a return to a more ancient way of

life.

Two centuries ago, humans lived where they worked and visa versa. It was a rhythm that had been largely undisturbed since we knocked around in caves.

The Industrial Revolution changed all that.

Factories sprouted and cities mushroomed.

Small towns and rural life became the backwater butts of sophisticated urban humour.

Today those same big cities are choking on pollution and strangling on congestion.

They're full of crime, grime and slime and they don't work worth a damn. But the countryside is still there. We may have ignored it for 200 years but at least we didn't wreck it.

The Bakers and the Livingstons prove there's no reason why we can't live and work in peaceful and healthful surroundings.

Good-bye New York; hello Chester.

So long Toronto; Aloha, Georgian Bay.

No bad thing, I think.