

News

Volume 47 No. 1
Monday, December 28, 1992

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Now then, just a little bit to the left



Students at Schreiber Public School perform their Christmas Concert Dec. 17. More on page 2.

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Township remains opposed to Section 63

by Darren MacDonald
Staff

Reeve Jim Ziegler says that Terrace Bay Council has no interest in implementing a tax reform plan that would see local residential and industrial taxes take a big hike.

"As far as we're concerned, it's finished," says Ziegler.

According to a study by the Ministry of Revenue, the proposed Section 63 tax reform would increase total residential taxes in Terrace Bay by \$75,288, and industrial taxes by \$92,917. Commercial taxes would decrease by \$13,180, and taxes for apartment buildings larger than six units would

decrease by \$21,095.

The big winner if the tax reform is implemented would be James River Marathon. The pulp and paper company would see its total tax burden decrease by \$589,372.

However, total residential and commercial taxes in Marathon would increase by more than \$440,000.

The study was conducted after businesses in unorganized localities complained that they paid an unfair share of school board taxes.

The municipalities of Manitouwadge, Marathon, Terrace Bay and Schreiber agreed to the study on the condition that

it wouldn't go past the initial stage unless all four townships agreed.

When the study was released last spring, the three townships and Marathon met again to discuss it.

"When we looked at it, we saw there would be a tax increase for just about everyone," says Ziegler.

Ziegler says he asked for a recess, and consulted other members of Council, who all agreed that it would be a "mistake" to pursue the matter any further.

So he and Clerk-Treasurer Dave Fulton returned to the meeting and presented their

position. The Mayor of Marathon and the Reeve of Manitouwadge were so upset, Ziegler says they stormed out of the meeting.

The matter ended there until this past October, when James River President Bob Gregor sent MPP Gilles Pouliot a letter, complaining about the tax situation.

In the letter, Gregor says that James River is being forced to pay "an inordinate and unfair amount of school taxes" because the four municipalities cannot agree to call for a Section 63.

"This situation is unjust," Gregor continues, "and abso-

lutely cannot continue from our point of view, especially given the precarious economic position we find ourselves in.

"We cannot afford to continue to pay more than our fair share."

"I don't think (James River) pays more than their fair share of taxes," says Ziegler. "No matter what tax structure you have, people don't like paying taxes. So somebody's going to be complaining."

Ziegler says James River didn't stick up for Terrace Bay when it paid too much for the Thunder Bay Homes for the Aged.

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DIANNE O'NEILL



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