

# Temagami staying optimistic in 2024

TEMAGAMI – There are many different projects that have been unfolding in Temagami.

One of the first things Mayor Dan O’Mara hopes to get resolved is that of employee recruitment and retention.

“We’ve been having some staffing issues in public works and administration,” he said.

The objective is to attract the right people to the positions, he explained, “so we have asked for a staffing review. We would really like to look at how we staff and try to develop a plan” that meets the municipality’s needs.

He foresees that the municipality is “going to have to get innovative” to get the staffing that is needed for Temagami.

“A lot of small municipalities are starting to have some problems retaining qualified people. Maybe we will have to think outside the box about some things we can do to attract people.”

Service sharing with other municipalities is one possibility.

“We have a consultant who has some northern experience working with us.”

O’Mara anticipates there will be a plan out by the end of the year so the municipality can start working on it.

The other goal is keeping the municipal budget in line, he said.

“That’s always a challenge. We don’t have a lot of industry. We have a lot of seniors.”

The municipality has to keep costs down, but faces a lot of challenges and infrastructure issues, he continued. The goal is “to find a balance, not go into the hole, and keep our reserves up” while at the same time trying to do some projects.

“Most municipalities in Northern Ontario have that” challenge, he said.

## **VACANT LAND**

The municipality would like to see what can be done in terms of housing, he said.

“We have been working over the last few years on an inventory of available property in town,” O’Mara said.

The objective would be to develop some new lots on municipally owned land. There is land available stretching up toward the Temagami Tower and also in Temagami North, he commented. The need for water and sewer connections would be a cost to the municipality, he noted.

“We’re going to put the land (list) out there and see if anybody is interested in working with us.”

Temagami is part of the Nipissing District Services Administration Board which is working on a study looking into the issue of housing. O'Mara hopes there could be something that agency could do to help Temagami with some additional affordable housing.

### **LOOKING FOR NEW BANK**

The municipality is being forced to deal with the closure in July 2024 of the Scotiabank branch, the only bank in town. The municipality has been reaching out to other banking institutions and is getting some interest, according to O'Mara.

The municipality will have to find out who owns the building Scotiabank currently occupies and whether something could be worked out there.

"It's not fair for our community to go without some kind of banking services," he said.

O'Mara said Temagami wants to continue to work with the Temagami First Nation and the Teme-Augama Anishnabai "because we feel there's things we can do cooperatively. That's always been successful."

The municipality is working on a new UV system for the Temagami South sewer plant, and still has some work to do on the water tower, as well as the water system controls. That work has already been approved, he noted.

The municipality is continuing work on the Fox Run Drive upgrades.

The municipality continues efforts to be removed as a funding partner of the Au Chateau retirement home in Sturgeon Falls. Temagami's annual cost as a member is half-a-million dollars, O'Mara explained, but it has been years since a Temagami resident used the home.

"We've been dealing with the government to see if we can find ways and means to deal with that. We don't feel that our dollars going to that home are being used by our community and we've got enough infrastructure problems and issues that half-a-million dollars a year could really help the municipality out, so we're working on that. We're kind of entrenched in legislation that really hurts us. We don't feel it's right."

He said the municipality has been dealing with the issue for the past few years, but is getting closer to a solution.

"Hopefully in the new year we'll have some good news there."

The municipality is also working on its waste issues, and in particular those at the landing, said O'Mara.

"We've got to find a way to better manage our waste."

The municipality would like to get ownership of the former Ministry of Natural Resources property in the downtown Temagami area, O'Mara said.

"We're still trying to get that put to good use."

He anticipates the property will be coming on the market again.

“We’ve always expressed an interest in the MNR property.” However, because it has been identified that there is contamination on the property there are some restrictions on its use, he continued.

“We feel the ministry should work with us and help us fix that site so we can put residential units there. We’re not giving up.”

If the municipality does not get ownership of the property, he expressed hope that the next owner will put the property to good use.

### **TEMAGAMI DRY**

The municipality is working to get its economic development corporation finalized, which should be done soon, he said.

Plans have already started to get the Temagami Dry patent back on the market and under a new company, he said.

“Hopefully in the new year we’ll have some good news on that.”

It is felt that by getting the soft drink back on the market, every can sold will also sell the image of Temagami, creating a good advertising source for the town, O’Mara explained.

The economic development corporation will also have the task of trying to find a new bank, he said.

The municipality is also working on plans to have a Lake Temagami Landing Corporation set up, and a request is being made to the province to have the landing turned over to the corporation, O’Mara continued.

The plan is for the municipality and Temagami First Nation to form a joint corporation “to better manage that area and hopefully to get some revenues and better control, as opposed to everybody just going there and doing what they want.”

His expectation is that “by coming together to form a new group to manage that and get control of that area, that will be a big benefit for both sides.”