

Hospital needs to put resources into maintenance

I HAD an unexpected situation that had me being admitted to the Thunder Bay Regional Hospital for 10 days. I must say that the doctors were excellent, and the nursing staff was exceptional. They took much care, compassion, and pride helping me during my stay.

The TBRHS is now 20 years young but looks three times that age when looked at from a maintenance point of view.

The issue I am bringing up is that the hospital would rate an F for cleanliness. I spent ten years in the restaurant business, and I can assure you that had a health inspector come into my restaurant and saw the filth that I saw in the hospital they would have shut me down. The elevator for guests and patients closest to the front lobby was beyond filthy. From the first day I went in it until the day I left, no one cleaned it. The carpet in the elevator should be thrown out for how dirty it is.

Additionally, the patient rooms, although cleaned ev-

ery day, lacked any deep cleaning. There is a ring of dirt around each room along the floor. The walls have been badly beaten up with the paint and drywall paper being stripped off the drywall exposing the patients to drywall dust.

To maintain proper cleanliness in the hospital every part of a room must be repaired and cleaned. That was not the case that I saw here.

The second issue I have is that there is a lack of maintenance of the facilities. In my washroom, the toilet seat was installed incorrectly and did not allow the seat to stay up without holding it. This is a simple adjustment with a screwdriver. Likewise, in the shower, the part that held the shower head at different levels was broken. I had to place tape on that unit so that the shower head would not fall on me.

As someone who has worked to raise funds for the hospital for over 25 years, I must say that I am very

disappointed in the lack of leadership that allows this situation to occur.

The fix is very simple. In less than a day a crew of two people could go into a room give it a deep clean, repair the walls, and give it a fresh coat of paint. A qualified person can make the repairs and perform the maintenance that need to happen at the same time. It may require closing a room for a day.

I do know that we don't have any extra rooms or beds, but these repairs and maintenance must be done. There is no excuse.

From a cost point of view, to complete every patient room in one year should cost no more than \$400,000. That is about one quarter of what the 50/50 draw makes each month.

David Munro
THUNDER BAY



THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL/JODI LUNDMARK

Last year's International Day of Mourning for Workers Killed or Injured on the Job was marked with a flag-raising at Thunder Bay City Hall on Friday, April 28. Thunder Bay and District Injured Workers Support Group members, from left, Jules Tupker, Eugene Lefrancois, Steve Mantis and Teddy Bobrowski were on hand for the event. This year's event will take place at 5 p.m. Sunday at the First Wesley United Church on Brodie Street.

Worker safety must be priority

AS WE approach April 28, the International Day of Mourning for Workers Killed or Injured on the Job, I want to invite everyone to join us on Sunday at 5 p.m. at the First Wesley United Church, 130 N. Brodie Street, Thunder Bay. We seek your help to protect the health and safety of all workers and for our communities at large.

There have been lots of changes in our workplaces and the hazards we must deal with to protect the health and safety of all workers, their families, and our communities. The two fastest growing issues are stress/mental health and illness and disease.

The majority of fatalities that are accepted by the WSIB are from exposures to toxins at work. And recent research commissioned by the Ontario government suggests that the actual number of deaths may be 10 times higher.

In terms of mental distress, we had to take the WSIB to court because they were discriminating against workers with mental health disabilities. The government changed the law to include mental disabilities, but the WSIB still denies 95 per cent of these cases.

The messages from the Ford government are they are focused on reducing costs to corpora-

tions by lowering WSIB premiums to an all-time low, saving big businesses billions of dollars. And fines for Occupational Health and Safety violations have dropped by 90 per cent.

Real occupational health and safety is not achieved by allowing corporations to escape the costs of injury, illness, and death. Corporations have the legal responsibility to protect their workers. Let's hold them accountable.

Join us on Sunday to be part of the solution. Thank you.

Steve Mantis
KAMINISTIQUIA
Thunder Bay and District Injured
Workers Support Group

Let the arts inspire action in your life

WE NEED the arts — all of them, whether we know it or not. This is the personal story of my coming, again, into this awareness.

So, Dear Reader,

I have needed less job-related stress for a while now, but have done nothing about that situation. What if I did do something and it all turned out badly?

Separately from that (or so I thought), I went to Magnus Theatre to see/hear the Tell Me On A Sunday show for a second time. (Thanks, Magnus, for 'pay what you want' performances.) This time, I sat up close to the stage.

In front of me materialized a petite person possessing powerful presence, singing me a story that I resonated with at each turn of its events. (Magnus does

human connection stories so well.)

Shortly thereafter (seemingly apart from attending live theatre), I put my needs on paper and submitted them at work to address my stress situation.

When I took the time to pause and reflect on what brought about on this very evident change of attitude in me, the realization arrived that Gabi Epstein had sung courage directly into my heart.

I had grown stronger. Much energy had been transmitted — gifted (what word would you use?) — from the outside, in. I'm sorry, folks, for what here might be considered schmaltzy, mushy or cutesy but for all our hearts, we need the arts.

Trudi J. Jones
THUNDER BAY

Build overpasses for rail crossings on busy streets

I'D LIKE to challenge the Thunder Bay mayor and council to release the citizens of Thunder Bay from the continual hostage taking by the railroad line traversing the main roads of this city.

They have us sit in vehicles while a train shunts backwards, then stops, goes forward, then stops — and this continues for a period of time that keeps everyone in their vehicles.

I propose solving this problem with two overpasses — one on Fort William Road and one on Memorial Avenue. This is not a new suggestion but obviously one that is never acted upon by

those who we elect.

I also realize this might take away from appeasing certain individual groups, such as soccer players and art enthusiasts, but I am sure those groups as well as the rest of the citizens would benefit.

There are a number of things council could do by using common sense instead of commissioning groups and businesses to "look into the matter" and report back. Council could also save the taxpayers money.

You voted yourselves a raise, now earn it.

Austin Cawlishaw
THUNDER BAY

Enforcement efforts are appreciated

I AM writing to voice my approval for the Thunder Bay Police Service.

It is a very sad situation when a few people can call on the provincial government to dissolve the Thunder Bay Police and the police board. It is surely a sign that political correctness has gone way to far in our country.

Policing is a very difficult job and there are people at every turn with their own agendas who will exaggerate or see an interaction with police from

their own perspective. They do not stop to think what it is like to help or restrain a person on drugs who does not care how they endanger others.

I want to thank the Thunder Bay Police members for continuing to do their jobs in the face of unrelenting criticism. If only the people they have to arrest were given sentences that kept them off the streets for a much longer period of time.

Garry Hughes
THUNDER BAY

Diversity of views

We believe strongly that our community is best served when all opinions are exposed, considered and discussed.

Letters kept to 300 words have priority and may be edited for space, style, accuracy and clarity. Letters must be the original work of the author and be exclusive to The Chronicle-Journal. Please cite page and date for articles mentioned.

E-mail (no attachments): letters@chroniclejournal.com

Please include your full name, address and day telephone number. Only names and hometowns will be published.

Mercer set new standard for police leadership

BY KAREN MACHADO

ON APRIL 30, the Thunder Bay Police Service Board will say "goodbye" to Malcolm Mercer upon completion of his appointment as the board's administrator by the Ontario Civilian Police Commission (OCP).

Mr. Mercer was appointed two years ago on April 19, 2022, when OCP determined an emergency existed with respect to police governance in Thunder Bay that required intervention. Mercer was appointed as the administrator and the board's voting powers were transferred to him.

In his first year, Mercer was the board, and the key decision-maker. He demonstrated his belief in the importance of civilian governance and made his decisions in consultation with board members. Mercer also played a critical role in advising and supporting the police service through its transition in leadership from a chief to an acting chief and finally to the new Chief of Police, Darcy Fleury.

Leading up to OCP's decision, there was strong public dissatisfaction with the police service and the board. Several First Nations leaders had called on the government for a new beginning. There were serious internal issues related to relations



GUEST COLUMN

between the leadership of the police service and the board, the management of labour relations, governance, and internal strife. The board itself and its chair had also taken their concerns to OCP.

A lawyer from Toronto with expertise in governance, Mercer readily acknowledged that he was an outsider with limited knowledge of Thunder Bay as well as the issues facing the city's policing. What he brought with him were an open mind, a strong sense of fairness, and a commitment to learning from the local community, particularly, First Nations leaders. Mercer often said he was guided by two principles: "Do no harm," and "Do your best to leave things a little better."

Leading up to Mercer's arrival, the board had appointed an independent expert panel to give it advice and guidance on issues of concern to both the community and the members of the police service.

If policing in Thunder Bay and its governance by the board are in a better place today and there is reason to be hopeful — and I believe both are true — considerable credit goes to the role played by Mercer, including his approach to his task.

Mercer made it his top priority to reach out and establish a respectful relationship with First Nations leaders and to learn from them. At the same time, he got to know the people inside the organization and seek their views as professionals. He respected the work of the independent expert panel, developed a collaborative relationship, and took the panel's concerns as well as their advice seriously. Generally, Mercer consulted widely and strengthened the board's culture of consultation.

He steered us through a period of uncertainty and upheaval. I believe the results of his efforts will have a lasting benefit of the board, the police service and, ultimately, the community.

Mercer deftly handled the change-over in the leadership of the police service. Early on, with the departure of the chief of police and the deputy chief under suspension, he not only had to put in place a functioning leadership team, but also set in motion the process for the selection of a new chief. For the first time,

under his guidance, an extensive consultative selection process was established that included the direct involvement of community members. It was a historic departure from the usual practice of selecting police chiefs.

The selection committee used a set of rigorous criteria to cast a wide net. The result of this selection process is that Thunder Bay has a police chief who has come from outside and is Metis, bringing with him a new perspective and approach.

Mercer moved quickly to address the lack of meaningful progress on important recommendations made to the board and the police service over the years by various investigations, inquests and inquiries. He made it his business to ensure that this failure was dealt with systematically and methodically.

To this end, he developed two board committees, namely, the Governance Committee and the Labour Relations Committee. He used a public recruitment process to attract expertise from the community for these committees. The board now works collaboratively with members of the community in these committees to develop policies and training, support the members of the service, monitor progress in implementing the recommendations, and measure success.

Perhaps as importantly as the selection of a new chief, Mercer took a hands-on role in the renewal of the board's membership, working closely with the appointing authorities, the municipality, and the province. Because of his efforts, we have a brand-new board comprised of highly qualified and motivated members. Mercer made sure that they received the training and the support they needed to provide effective governance on behalf of the community.

He recognized the importance of sufficient resources if the board and the police service were to be able to meet the community's safety needs. Mercer took up as his last important business the task of supporting and advising the board in its work of convincing the municipality to provide the necessary finances when approving the 2024 budgets.

Malcolm Mercer has set the standard for what makes a good and effective administrator of police boards. He not only did "no harm," but is leaving us more than "a little better" than he found us.

Goodbye, Malcolm Mercer.

Karen Machado is the chair of the Thunder Bay Police Service Board.