

The Chronicle Journal

THE NEWSPAPER OF THE NORTHWEST

The Thunder Bay Chronicle-Journal
Columns Comment., Wednesday, July 13, 2005

[Reinstate the memorandum ONE OF the nice things about elections is that you can hold the winners to their promises.]

Reinstate

the memorandum

ONE OF the nice things about elections is that you can hold the winners to their promises. In his Choose Change campaign, Dalton McGuinty went all out to let Ontarians know things would be different under a Liberal government. He produced a nifty boxed set of promises called the Ontario Liberal Plan, including a booklet titled True North outlining ways of "improving quality of life in the North."

It includes declarations like: "Decisions affecting the North should be made by someone who lives there. We will ensure that the voice of the North is heard in Cabinet and we will respect that voice."

McGuinty has named two cabinets, neither of which gives Thunder Bay's veteran Grit Michael Gravelle a seat. Both local ridings are held by Liberals, provincially and federally.

"We will help the North achieve its economic potential," the blueprint continues. "We will stop . . . work with the private sector to create jobs and stimulate the Northern economy."

There have been isolated examples of private sector stimulus but not where it counts most. The forestry sector is in turmoil over crowded provincial cutting rights and federal trade restrictions and the Liberals have cast off Thunder Bay's most specialized manufacturing plant.

Bombardier has an impressive history. In its various incarnations it has manufactured ships and aircraft, skidders and transport truck trailers before settling into making some of the world's finest passenger rail cars.

The growth of this marvellous business has been built around standing orders via the Ontario government for cars for the **Toronto** Transit Commission and GO Transit. The reputation established there led other jurisdictions, in North America and overseas, to consider and buy **light rail** cars from Thunder Bay.

But the rail car industry has seen more players causing Bombardier to count on its core business more than ever to maintain jobs and expertise at the big Montreal Street plant. Rather than assisting that process, however, the McGuinty Liberals have allowed to expire a memorandum of understanding that ensured Ontario would use the plant as its sole supplier of **light rail** cars providing they continued to meet Bombardier's proven record of price, quality and delivery.

McGuinty and his northern MPPs must not fail their promise and this community in this way.

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The Chronicle Journal

THE NEWSPAPER OF THE NORTHWEST

The Thunder Bay Chronicle-Journal
City News, Tuesday, May 17, 2005

Future in spotlight Ministers hear concerns about Bombardier

Jonathan Wilson

BY JONATHAN WILSON

THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

A meeting aimed at securing the future of Thunder Bay's Bombardier plant went very well, reports MPP Bill Mauro (L-Thunder Bay-Atikokan).

"It was positive, it was good," said Mauro. "It was all about getting the message forward to people on our concerns around Bombardier."

The rail-car plant is in jeopardy of closing later this year because of a lack of contracts. Just 400 workers out of the normal roster of 1,000 are currently working, and the plant was dealt a serious blow earlier this month when it was learned Bombardier will not have exclusive rights to the Ottawa **light rail** expansion project, valued at \$100 million.

Transportation Minister Harinder Takhar has said a 1992 agreement which gave the Thunder Bay plant first rights to all Ontario mass transit contracts is no longer in effect.

Mauro organized the meeting Monday with Takhar, Northern Development Minister Rick Bartolucci and a Thunder Bay contingent including Mayor Lynn Peterson and Jim Johnson of the Thunder Bay Ambassadors.

Peterson said there was a lot of interest in the local presentation. "We raised some awareness about the issues in Thunder Bay," she said in an interview from **Toronto** on Tuesday.

Mauro said the validity of the 1992 agreement remains up in the air, but added he thinks Bombardier is still in a position to bid successfully for the Ottawa contract.

Mauro has suggested that the province look at signing a new agreement with Bombardier to ensure all future contracts go to the Thunder Bay plant.

But Monday's meeting focused more on the big picture of Bombardier's future.

"What we were talking about was the long-term viability and sustainability of the plant," said Mauro.

Peterson and Mauro said there was a lot of talk about creating a Centre of Excellence in Thunder Bay, which could provide companies like Bombardier with support for competing in the global market.

"Certainly this government is talking about strategic investment in industry," said Peterson. "That whole vision of what we'd like to see long term in Northern Ontario, particularly in Thunder Bay, was something that we talked to them about."

Mauro said he thinks the province and Thunder Bay can look at the example of the auto manufacturing sector, which has received government support in creating a successful cluster of companies in southern Ontario.

"This is very much in its infant stages," he said.

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The Chronicle Journal

THE NEWSPAPER OF THE NORTHWEST

The Thunder Bay Chronicle-Journal
City News, Monday, May 9, 2005

Ottawa mayor gets the message Bombardier plant reps make bid to keep rail car deal intact

Jonathan Wilson

BY JONATHAN WILSON

THE CHRONICLE JOURNAL

CAW Local 1075 got its message across Monday to the mayor of Ottawa that up to 1,000 jobs at the Thunder Bay Bombardier plant are hanging in the balance.

Union reps Paul Pugh, Tom Murphy and seven others travelled to the capital Monday to lobby on behalf of the local workers.

They greeted Mayor Bob Chiarelli, waving CAW flags, as he arrived for a signing ceremony with federal and provincial ministers to launch the North/South Ottawa **light rail** transit project.

"It went very well," said Murphy. "We handed out leaflets about what our concerns were and asking that Bombardier build the extension on the cars, and that it be done in Thunder Bay."

The signing ceremony included Chiarelli, Federal Minister of State for Infrastructure and Communities John Godfrey, and Ontario Culture Minister Madeleine Meilleur. The federal and provincial governments are contributing \$200 million each to the project.

Murphy said nearly all the politicians agreed to meet with them, and were receptive to their message about keeping jobs in Ontario.

The \$700-million project includes new infrastructure and rail lines, along with \$100 million worth of state-of-the-art **light rail** cars.

The City of Ottawa plans to tender the project worldwide, despite a 1992 agreement between the province and Bombardier which appears to give the Thunder Bay plant first rights to all mass transit contracts in Ontario.

The CAW has garnered the support of Thunder Bay's two Liberal MPPs, Bill Mauro and Michael Gravelle.

But Transportation Minister Harinder Takhar said the 1992 agreement is not binding on the Ottawa project.

Chiarelli said he, too, believes the agreement is no longer in effect, but has agreed to a followup meeting with the CAW to discuss it.

Meanwhile, Mauro has organized a meeting involving the CAW and Takhar for next week in **Toronto**, and Murphy hopes Premier Dalton McGuinty will be there.

Murphy added that even if the rail car portion of the project is tendered out and Bombardier wins it, there's no guarantee the work won't be done at Bombardier plants outside Ontario.

"What we're saying is even without this agreement, that it should be built in Ontario (to) keep Ontario tax dollars here," he said.

Ottawa and District Labour Council president Sean McKenny made sure the Thunder Bay contingent was interviewed by the Ottawa media about their concerns.

Murphy said the mission was not to disrupt the signing ceremony, but to get the Thunder Bay message across.

He said the lobbying effort is still in the early stages.

Construction on the North/South corridor is to start in mid-2006, with rail service beginning in late 2009.

"As a community, I think all residents here will be concerned if we simply go to a lowest bidder," McKenny said. "I'm hoping this is simply an oversight. . . . The intent today is to remind those governments of the 1992 agreement."

Approximately \$100 million of the project's \$675-million cost is to go toward purchasing rail cars.

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The Chronicle-Journal

THE NEWSPAPER OF THE NORTHWEST

The Thunder Bay Chronicle-Journal
City News, Thursday, May 5, 2005

Plant contracts threatened

Jonathan Wilson

BY JONATHAN WILSON

THE CHRONICLE JOURNAL

Baffled, exasperated and perplexed.

Those are the words CAW Local 1075 president Paul Pugh is using to describe his reaction to news that the Thunder Bay Bombardier plant is in danger of losing its exclusive rights to new passenger rail contracts in Ontario.

Pugh said he and the rest of the Bombardier workers learned the news late Thursday from plant manager Ron Dysievick.

The McGuinty government is planning to sign a memorandum in Ottawa on Monday which will allow that city to seek tenders from around the world for its \$725-million North/South **light-rail** transit project.

That move would go against the province's urban transportation development agreement which has been in place for more than two decades.

Pugh said the agreement brought in by the Bill Davis Conservative government "gave Bombardier first crack at the job," so long as the price was fair and the cars built were of equal quality to other worldwide competitors' products.

It appears the McGuinty government is facing pressure from Ottawa city council to open up the market to cut costs.

The Ottawa Business Journal is touting The Washington Group from Idaho as front-runners for the big contract, along with Bombardier and the German company Siemens.

Pugh said the local plant has proven it can do the job at low cost, citing the **Toronto GO** trains which Bombardier is now producing for less money per car than it did eight years ago.

The plant is already facing hundreds of layoffs later this year. Pugh said if the province signs the memorandum with Ottawa, the local plant is in danger of losing other contracts in London and **Toronto**.

More details and a CAW lobbying campaign will be announced at a press conference this morning.

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