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Invitation to Tender

Northern Sunrise County Regional Water Supply System Improvements Proposed Flushing Points

SEALED TENDERS, marked "Northern Sunrise County; Regional Water Supply System Improvements; Proposed Flushing Points", will be received until 3:00 p.m., local time, 19th day of September, 2008 at the offices of Focus Corporation, 8909 -96 Street, Peace River, Alberta.

The work includes the following approximate quantities:

- Flushing Point Assemblies 12 units

Plans and Specifications may be obtained from the office of the Engineer upon deposit of \$100.00 in CASH or CERTIFIED CHEQUE made payable to the Engineer. The \$100.00 deposit will be refunded only if Contractors not tendering the Project return the documents in good condition, to the office of the Engineer prior to the date of tender closing. Bonafide Tenderers tendering the Project will have fourteen (14) days to return the documents in good condition following the date of tender closing.

Tenders must be accompanied by a Certified Cheque or Bid Bond in the amount of Ten Percent (10%) of the Tender Price, made payable to the Owner.

A Performance Guarantee & Maintenance Bond in an amount equal to Fifty Percent (50%) of the Contract Sum and a Labour & Materials Payment Bid in an amount equal to Fifty Percent (50%) of the Contract Sum will be required from the successful bidder.

The lowest or any Tender will not necessarily be accepted.

FOCUS CORPORATION #3. 8909-96 Street Peace River, AB T8S 1G8 Attn: Jason Schuler Ph: (780) 624-5631 Fax: (780) 624-3732	NORTHERN SUNRISE COUNTY Bag 1300 Peace River, AB T8S 1Y9 Attn: Brent Schapansky, Utilities Operations Ph: (780) 624-0013 Fax: (780) 624-0023
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The road block

What exactly is preventing better living conditions in Little Buffalo?

By Curtis Haugan

Little Buffalo resembles very little of what Canadians would classify a modern community.

There is no running water and no sewer system for the roughly 500 people who call it their home.

There are no small businesses. No gas stations. The centre of the community – if it could be called that – is the singular and juxtaposing structure of a Kindergarten to Grade 12 school surrounded by small lots of trailers and little homes.

But the struggle for Little Buffalo's standard of living is not a new issue.

For years the Federal government has been trying to strike a land deal with the Lubicon Lake First Nation in an attempt to make the aboriginal hamlet in Northern Sunrise County self-sustaining.

To date there has been no headway since serious talks began in the late '80s.

So the question – the big question – remains; who is going to take care of the hamlet?

Alberta Municipal Affairs communications officer Jerry Ward said infrastructure such as water and sewer is the responsibility of Northern Sunrise County, but by no means are they obligated to do so.

"The way it was described to me is that if the community wants a water pipeline, they would have to pay for that," said Ward.

"Other taxpayers in the area are under no obligation to pay (extra taxes) for the county to do that."

However, there is an obligation, Ward said, if there is existing pipe already running up to the area.

That means NSC would divide the cost of that venture by the number of people the infrastructure would serve and make a payment plan for the community over a number of years, usually a decade.

Unfortunately, if history is an indication, it's much easier said than done.

Chief Bernard Ominayak, who would not return interview requests from the Record-Gazette, is the leader for the group of First Nations people living in Little Buffalo.

According to Northern Sunrise County Reeve Agnes Knudsen in an Aug. 24 interview, Ominayak has made it clear he wants no help from the municipality.

"It's gotten to the point where we've run into further resistance from (Ominayak)," she said.

The issue will likely come to a boil again, she said, when the county's new \$40 million water treatment plant is built in the upcoming year.

The plant, which is compiled from \$32 million in government grants, \$4 million from INAC, and the rest from the county's own pockets, will have the capability of servicing Little Buffalo.

Capability is one thing. Permission from Chief Ominayak is another.

"We're beating our heads against the wall," said Knudsen. "They want your help, but they don't want your help."

The 'they's' she refers to are the people in Little Buffalo and the leadership of the community.

Those who want the municipality's help are people like Robert Ominayak.

He is a member of the Little Buffalo community, featured in the first installment of this series, who, if he had one thing to say to the Northern Sunrise County, would be "get us water."

It seems to be a contentious issue.

The contention stems from 1899 when Treaty 8, which recognized many First Nations groups in the country and the land they lived on as their own, left out the Lubicon.

Even more contentious is that in 1988 the provincial government and the band went to Ottawa to ratify a proposed \$45 million settlement, which in the end Chief Ominayak deemed unacceptable.

Five years later, in a Nov. 2, 1993, CBC radio interview, Chief Ominayak said, "What is happening right now is everyone else is benefiting from the natural resources taken from our traditional area, while we're subject to welfare."

"I think it would only make sense to start looking at, and considering, how best to deal with the resources that other people are stealing ... There's been billions of dollars in resources taken out of our area."

Ten years later a deal seemed imminent. Headlines ran in this paper that year included, "Real chance

could end century of Lubicon, federal negotiations" and "Treaty will bring 'big' impacts to Peace River."

But again, like in '88, the two sides could not come to a decision.

To this date there is no settlement and the federal government has seemingly cooled on the issue.

On Sept. 5, Peace River MP, Chris Warkentin empathized with the situation and quite accurately summarized it.

"The one thing we've learned over the years is that you can't force anything on a community," he said.

"I know it seems bizarre when you have people living without water, but if you can't work in partnership there may be a short term gain, but a long term problem."

The short-term gain would be force-feeding the community a utilities line. It's a lose-lose situation it seems. There are those who need running water, but those in leadership who don't want it from the government.

"There should be a distinction I'm sure," said Warkentin. "But again I think the community has to consider the leadership and ensure that their leadership is in fact fighting for the same things they want."

"I have no doubt that everybody in the community has a desire to see water."

Pearl Calahasen is the regional MLA for the residents of Little Buffalo and she will be meeting with NSC councillor Darlene Cardinal in October to see the conditions of the hamlet for herself.

"It is a quality of life issue," she said.

"How do we make sure that people who live in a hamlet can also have the same quality of life that they have in towns?"

The meeting with the county, she thinks, will be beneficial touching on the important issues of how to improve conditions for the people there.

"I grew up in a situation like that, where we had to walk through three feet of snow to go to the outhouse, and I know that happens in some communities and it shouldn't."

"It's a huge issue," she added. "That's why we're going to sit down and talk about what we can do, how it can be done and how best we can do it."

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