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Recession is all relative — Local forum hears

 Posted By **GORD YOUNG, THE NUGGET**

Updated 2 hours ago

A panel as diverse as the economy met in North Bay Tuesday to discuss the recession and its effect on the community.

But it was clear from the remarks of the city's mayor and police chief, along with those of the chamber of commerce president and executive directors of the Community Counselling Centre of Nipissing and Low Income People Involvement of Nipissing that North Bay hasn't been as hard hit by the economic crisis as many other communities.

For some individuals and families, there's no economic crisis at all . . . and for others, there's a huge economic crisis," said Alan McQuarrie, the community counselling centre's executive director.

McQuarrie suggested the recession is being felt by residents who are directly affected, such as those in the mining industry who have lost their jobs. And he said social agencies such as his are dealing with the fallout.

McQuarrie said those with existing issues such as financial debt, marital strife or an addiction are most vulnerable due to the added stress and anxiety during tough economic times.

Lana Mitchell, executive director of Low Income People Involvement of Nipissing, who also deals first-hand with those who have been directly affected, said people are falling through the cracks faster and harder.

By the time they get to an agency like ours, they're desperate," said Mitchell.

She said those affected by the recession have most often lost a high-paying job and have already done everything they can to maintain their lifestyle before reaching a social agency.


Sponsored by the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, the forum at the Best Western attracted about 40 people.

Part of a series of such meetings in various communities throughout the province, the forum is aimed at developing grassroots recommendations to help deal with the recession that will be submitted to the provincial government.

Overall, however, the effects of the recession in North Bay are moderate compared to other communities according to some of the panelists.

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Mayor Vic Fedeli acknowledged job losses within the community, but reiterated that North Bay is well-positioned to weather the economic downturn.

Sean Lawlor, president of the North Bay and District Chamber of Commerce, agreed, suggesting the city's diverse economy is an especially welcome asset at this time.

Although some sectors have seen revenues dip, Lawlor said sales are picking up in many areas.

Meanwhile, police Chief Paul Cook cited sources suggesting recessions typically result in higher crime rates. But he said local statistics show crime has decreased compared to last year.

We're down . . . we're in good shape," he said.

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Yeah well this town sucks for jobs and if you can sit there and say that this recession isn't affecting North Bay that much, then it just goes to show that North Bay has always been behind the eight ball when it comes to employment!

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