

**Ministry of Natural Resources
MERC Report**

There were a number of firsts during this term on the management side. Rob Kennedy, the management co-chair left the table after 18 years as co-chair and was replaced by Steven Boyd, who was the acting director of HR. Steven Boyd will be replaced as the management co-chair at the next meeting by Pat Friestatter, as Steve has moved on to SIRD.

We were successful at getting the Minister to attend one of the MERC meetings for a couple of hours. Unfortunately, the short time that she gave us did not lead to any in-depth conversation. She left with an open ended invitation to attend again in the future.

There was a grievance pilot project, MEIP (Ministry Early Intervention Program) that was launched and over the last year. The project is being viewed as being successful in resolving outstanding grievances waiting to go to arbitration.

We were able to finally sign off on the Terms of Reference for our committee, and a joint communication went out to the membership.

The team was successful in creating a business case to get the bush meals increased.

An agreement was reached that benefited all parties for the aviation internship program. It was agreed that 4 individuals would begin the 2 year program. It is estimated that in 5-10 years there will be 50% retirement in aviation. By offering this program, the Ministry should have a pool of well trained individuals to choose from.

Through the efforts of the membership through the "Save the MNR" and "Save our Parks" campaign; we saw increases in both the Parks budget and enforcement.

The Fish and Wildlife Review and the Communication Review seem to have ground to a stand still. The Communication group has a new director, John Whytock, who seems to have a different view on where communications should be located. Dale Scott, has moved on to other projects, so there was another transfer of duties. There is no longer staff dedicated to this project alone.

The Defibrillator program is moving along. There is a 2 year plan for the rollout. Last year Corporate Management Division purchased 100 units and they are being shipped out once the site assessments have been completed for the year 1 locations.

We had the opportunity to have one of the local presidents join in by tele-conference on an issue that was raised by the local.

The lateral transfer policy for the MNR will be cancelled as of December 31, 2008. We will then be covered under the language in the Collective Agreement. As HR is now being done by MGS, they will have control of the process.

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Parks continues to be a challenge. There have been several parks where bullying and harassment seems to be taking root. A number of health and safety concerns are still being raised over the lack of radio coverage area within the parks. Contract length continues to be a concern.

We continue to review and provide input into health and safety policies that are being developed or under review.

There have been a number of tragedies this term; the loss of Kent Cousineau during a prescribed burn. The Ugli Too sank in Lake Nipigon and we had another boat incident on Lake Ontario. We are still waiting for the final reports on these issues. The team voiced concerns over the 16 passenger vans and the safety hazards that they possess. There was an incident that occurred with a van transferring fire personnel this summer. The report has not been received yet.

This report is a short review of what we have dealt with at the table in the past two years and is by no means all inclusive.

It has been a busy and challenging two years and as you've heard there were a number of wins. On behalf of the team, I would like to thank you for your input and assistance throughout this last term.

Elaine Bagnall
MNR MERC Chair