

Northerners have their say on TVO

Cochrane voice loud and clear on province-wide live broadcast

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TVO presented "The Agenda with Steve Paikin" on Monday night, with a live taping from Timmins. The subject of the show was 'bridging the North-South divide'. The tour including Mr. Paikin visiting three northern communities, with Timmins being the final stop.



Steve Paikin
Ben Lefebvre, CAW Local 599; Jamie Lim, President and CEO Ontario Forest Industries Association; Tom Loughren, Mayor of Timmins; and Peter Politis of For Evergreen Innovative Strategies Inc. in Cochrane.

Mr. Paikin introduced the panel, starting with showing a map of Northern Ontario and how much land it encompasses and asking the panel about the division of the north and south.

Throughout the program, Mr. Politis was very vocal in stating that we need to collaborate and work for own future.

"We have to stop complaining after the fact and learn how to stop the things from happening in the first place," said Mr. Politis. "We need to learn how to play the game and be influential. It is not a north and south divide, most of the problems revolve around the policies made at Queen's Park, so we need to make sure we are heard and understood at Queen's Park."

MPP Ramsay stated that being



David Ramsay, MPP Timiskaming-Cochrane

a northerner, he understands having the sense of feeling like we are losing our resources.

"But the answer is not to shut down the borders," Mr. Ramsay told the panel. "Subsidizing power prices is a key issue to some but it is not a simple matter. What we need is to give more control back to the north and need entities based in the north where royalties will stay in the north."

Mr. Politis said one of the first things that needs to be done is to figure out who we are, what we have to sell and come up with a strategy to sell it.

When host Steve Paikin asked the panel how they expected to be understood when the north actually makes up only 10 per cent of the population, there was immediate reaction.

"We need to take charge of our destiny and sell our message," said Mr. Politis. "We know the north deserves a voice in their own destiny instead of having people who know nothing about us make those decisions. We need to go to the constituency with a plan, influence the decision makers, which will influence the policy at the end of the day."

As for the overall experience, Mr. Politis said it was a great experience and is already hoping the Paikin will return for a 'rematch' where the issues can take top spot and more people can get involved.

"The Agenda Camp workshop was excellent," said Mr. Politis. "It was a debate style discussion and all the issues were well discussed



Peter Politis, senior consultant with For Evergreen Innovative Strategies Inc. in Cochrane, took part in the Agenda Camp and was a member of the panel for the live taping of "The Agenda with Steve Paikin", Monday night in Timmins.

with the 50 people that were in attendance."

Mr. Politis said when they invited him to be on the panel he was surprised and honoured.

"I was looking forward to participating on the panel but was nervous when I found out who would be there with me," said Mr. Politis. "As a concerned citizen and professional who lives in Northern Ontario, I know the boom or bust economy, we have been through it many times. Now we need to be more proactive and the leaders need to get behind us."

Smooth Rock Falls Mayor Kevin Somers was part of the live audience and had the opportunity

to speak as well. His first request was to ask for a motion to make the show longer, since one hour was not enough time...which caused everyone to laugh.

"We have lost our mill in SRF and are trying to move forward regarding fibre," explained Mayor Somers. "Right now the province is actually importing more wood than what we produce and consume."

MPP Bisson ended the discussion stating..."It is not that we need more seats in the house, what we need is for the government to realize the importance of our resources and continue to support them for the future."

Ms Lim, president and CEO

of OFIA, at the close of the broadcast referred to the stuffed caribou toys politicians had received from environmentalists, with cards attached saying, "please save me." Ms Lim said she's considering creating hundreds of stuffed people dolls, with cards attached to them saying, "please save my job, so I can pay the mortgage and feed my family."

While in Timmins the TVO program Your Voice also taped two programs examining urban aboriginal education in Northern Ontario and the economy and Northern Ontario education. Those shows will air on TVO Sunday at 6 p.m.