

# The Chronicle Journal

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## Trudeau, Ford can do more for Cat Lake

**M**ANY people who visit a remote fly-in First Nation for the first time come away feeling a bit shocked. Whether they are police officers, doctors, tradespeople or teachers, the scale of the poverty and lack of resources can take one's breath away.

Can it really be that such deplorable living conditions exist in otherwise wealthy Ontario? Indeed they do, because seeing is believing.

Earlier this month, NDP MPP Sol Mamakwa implored Premier Doug Ford to visit Cat Lake First Nation, which is facing a severe housing crisis. Following an inspection, about 90 homes — the lion's share of the housing units on the remote reserve of 500 — were found to be infested with mould and plagued by electrical deficiencies.

Mamakwa, who is from the remote north, toured some of the Cat Lake homes first-hand. He called the conditions "appalling."

Sometime this week, federal officials are to travel to Cat Lake to get a handle on the situation and decide "the next steps." They should not be surprised by what they see, given that Indigenous leaders have been flagging the housing "crisis" for decades.

As has been duly noted elsewhere, the crisis impacting remote fly-ins like Cat Lake, Attawapiskat and Kashechewan "didn't happen overnight."

Children, the elderly and those susceptible to respiratory infection in Cat Lake may have to be evacuated while an action-plan is put forward. Perhaps that will involve a massive cleanup of the homes that can still be salvaged, although Mamakwa said it is likely that most of the them are so badly contaminated they will have to be demolished.

When news of the Cat Lake crisis broke, the federal government pointed out it gives the community about \$250,000 annually for housing requirements. That's peanuts: it would cost that much just to build one house in the remote north.

What are the long-term solutions? For many years, there has been discussion about alternative types of construction — used in Scandinavia, for instance — that are better suited to withstand long, harsh winters.

And, more recently, Mamakwa and others have raised the prospect of establishing sawmills on remote reserves so they can process their own lumber; they are, after all, surrounded by forests.

In the shorter term, there is a dire need to train First Nation personnel to properly operate and maintain air-exchanger equipment. Every community should have at least one staffer who can do that job, ensuring that homes are inspected at regular intervals.

None of these things will happen unless there is political will, which can only be generated by constant public awareness. Sometimes that entails simple acknowledgment that Indigenous reserves still exist. To his credit, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau visited Pikangikum First Nation, another remote Ontario reserve facing similar problems. But that was over a year ago; Trudeau hasn't been back to Ontario's remote north since.

Many non-aboriginal leaders are reluctant to venture to the north simply because it is not a good news story; inevitably they will be asked, possibly with cameras rolling, what they are doing to help solve its many problems.

Traditionally, the responsibility for Indigenous housing has fallen to the federal government. Indeed, former federal cabinet minister and now Ontario Indigenous Affairs Minister Greg Rickford was sure to underline that point when the Cat Lake situation made headlines.

Mamakwa is right, though: the province must get more involved, given the huge scale of the housing problem. Rickford, who has worked in the remote north as a nurse, has seen the crisis first-hand.

But Rickford is not the premier. Doug Ford, who is from Etobicoke, needs to go to Cat Lake, too. He needs to see for himself.

### Write to us

Letters to the editor, exclusive to The Chronicle-Journal, are most welcome. Those kept to 300 words or less have priority. Address them to:

**Chronicle-Journal Letters**  
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We reserve the right to edit, condense or reject submissions. Writers must provide their full name, address and telephone number. Please cite page and date for articles mentioned. Letters may appear on our website.

### NEW NATIONAL ANTHEM?



## Odd move to back Venezuela coup

BY THOMAS WALKOM

**L**AST Wednesday's events had the look of a well-rehearsed plan. First, Venezuela's opposition parties organized massive street demonstrations against President Nicolas Maduro's socialist government.

Then Juan Guaido, a little-known politician recently chosen to head up the country's National Assembly, declared himself the real president of Venezuela.

Finally, in an effort to persuade the country's armed forces to overthrow Maduro, the United States and eight other nations — including Canada — immediately announced that they recognized Guaido's non-existent regime as Venezuela's only legitimate government.

It read like the beginning of a classic American coup plot. The only odd part was that Canada was involved.

The U.S. has a long history of intervening in Latin America to depose governments it doesn't like. Canada usually stands apart.

Canada didn't support Dwight Eisenhower in 1954 when he had his Central Intelligence Agency overthrow the government of Guatemala. Nor did it support John F. Kennedy when he launched the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961.

Ottawa didn't join Washington when it helped organize a military coup in Brazil in 1964. It didn't back Lyndon Johnson's 1965 invasion of the Dominican Republic, nor did it support Ronald Reagan's contra war in Nicaragua during the 1980s.

It steered clear of Chile when Richard Nixon's administration organized a military coup against that country's leftist government in 1973. It even declined to get involved in America's two comic-opera invasions — of Grenada in 1983 and



NATIONAL AFFAIRS

Panama in 1989.

But in Donald Trump's Venezuelan coup plot, Canada has been front and centre. Almost immediately after Guaido anointed himself president, Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland announced that he was Canada's guy and that Maduro should cede power to him. Maduro won't do that without a fight. So what Freeland was really saying was that Canada would support anything, including an armed coup, to remove Maduro.

The U.S. was a little blunter. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo issued a statement calling on "the Venezuelan military and security forces to support democracy."

Would-be president Guaido is best known for being unknown. He's a 35-year-old engineer who was elected to the National Assembly in 2015 as a member of the Popular Will party.

Popular Will describes itself as a centrist party that adheres to what former British Prime Minister Tony Blair called the third way. But in Venezuela it is best known for the street protests it organizes against the Maduro regime. It is the third-biggest party in the opposition-dominated — and largely powerless — National Assembly.

Guaido was chosen assembly president this month by fellow legislators. That's a position roughly equivalent to Nancy Pelosi's job as speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Does Guaido have more political

legitimacy than Maduro? That depends on who you talk to. Guaido was elected four years ago, but only as a legislator. Maduro was re-elected president last May, but in a contest his detractors say was rigged. Certainly, Maduro has played games — particularly by creating a new socialist-dominated Constituent Assembly to bypass the National Assembly. But his supporters argue that this was the only way to break a political deadlock and pass laws benefiting the country's numerous poor.

Still, two things are clear.

First, Venezuela is an economic mess. The oil price collapse hit this petroleum-producing country hard. American economic sanctions made the situation considerably worse. The Maduro government's policies, by encouraging runaway inflation, have been catastrophic.

Second, something will have to give. There are now two competing presidents, one of which has full U.S. support. Coup attempts against Maduro have already been made. It is only a matter of time until one succeeds.

Coups in Latin America can be bloody. There are scores to be settled and class interests to play out. Wise countries, such as Mexico (which still recognizes Maduro as Venezuela's president) avoid taking sides. Instead, they adopt the common-sense approach of dealing with whoever is in power.

That used to be Canada's position, too. Now we are, in effect, promoting a coup on behalf of Donald Trump. Is that what Prime Minister Justin Trudeau means when he says Canada abides by the rule of law?

Thomas Walkom writes for the Toronto Star. Email him at [twalkom@thestar.ca](mailto:twalkom@thestar.ca) or find @tomwalkom to follow him on Twitter.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Aviation Heritage Centre visit a great experience

**I** RECENTLY visited the Northwestern Ontario Aviation Heritage Centre at 905 Victoria Avenue and I just had to pass on my positive experience. If one wants to learn in a casual way some of the very interesting historical people and events in Thunder Bay, visit this place.

The aviation history of Thunder Bay is simply amazing and something which we all can be proud of. Rich in history, Orville Wieben and John N. Paterson are only two individuals who have given so much to the aviation history of Thunder Bay and Canada. Another incredible individual is Elsie MacGill, who was the chief aeronautical engineer at Can Car in the 1940s. She was the first woman in the world to hold

such a position. Many more have also contributed to Thunder Bay's rich aviation history.

There are numerous pictures and documents at this site easily accessible in several rooms. Any information and questions can be attained from the very knowledgeable and helpful attendants.

Do yourself a favour and drop in to this centre, which is a real gem.

**Tom Connor**  
THUNDER BAY

#### A budget wish list for City Hall

**T**O CITY council and administration, the following are my wishes as a taxpayer.

Fix the roads (taxpayers and city vehicles are taking a costly beating). Eliminate bike lanes on busy

roads (such as Victoria Avenue and on other roads where they cause traffic congestion). Support opening Dease Pool. Support the needs of the Conservatory. Fix drainage at Chapples golf course, which is long overdue.

Use our own paid city staff to do "consulting" work.

Our police are doing a good job. If they need help or expertise, work with Ontario Provincial Police.

Trash the proposed roundabout at Victoria Avenue and Ford Street and return Victoria Avenue to its former four lanes.

Do away with city council ward system and reduce council size. Buy back Municipal golf course for \$600,000 and re-open it.

**George Seagriss**  
THUNDER BAY

## Roundtable feedback helps federal anti-racism strategy

BY PATTY HAJDU

**O**FTEN when people talk about racism and discrimination, the focus is on negative personal interactions. But people that experience racism and discrimination in their daily lives often live with consequences beyond the pain of exclusion or negative interpersonal experiences.

For example, did you know that people born in other countries who are also visible minorities earn, on average, 78 cents for every dollar earned by foreign-born non-racialized people? Or that Indigenous people represent 4.9 per cent of the Canadian population but account for 23.1 per cent of the 2016-17 total federal offender population? Or that there has been an increase in



ONE CITY, MANY VOICES

**Thunder Bay's Anti-Racism and Respect Committee produces this monthly column to promote greater understanding of race relations in Northwestern Ontario.**

police-reported hate crimes against south Asians, west Asians, Jewish people, and crimes targeting people for their sexual orienta-

tion? Or that Jewish or Muslim people in Canada face some of the highest rates of hate crimes in Canada?

Canada is strongest when everyone has a fair and equal chance to thrive and succeed. And people cannot succeed if the deck is stacked against them. That is why our government is engaging with Canadians everywhere to build a national approach to eliminating racism.

The standing committee on Canadian Heritage's report on systemic racism and religious discrimination listed steps to reduce systemic racism and religious discrimination in Canada through our communities and evidence-based policy. And building on that, the minister of heritage asked me to

hold a roundtable here in Thunder Bay to hear from people who have either experienced racism and discrimination, or work on this issue, or both.

I want to thank everyone in Thunder Bay who joined our recent roundtable and shared their experiences and perspectives. These discussions are difficult and often painful. But they are incredibly important as we ensure that we hear from the wide range of people with experience and expertise across the country.

I am confident the participants in Thunder Bay offered a unique northern perspective necessary to inform a national strategy that will truly reflect the realities in Northern Ontario.

If you are interested in offering

feedback that informs the anti-racism strategy, you can do so online at [www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/anti-racism-engagement.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/anti-racism-engagement.html). Click on the links that refer to the online poll and survey to submit your feedback.

Eliminating systemic racism and discrimination will not happen overnight and cannot be solved through government action alone, but I know that doing so is critical for the future stability and prosperity of Canada.

Patty Hajdu is the Member of Parliament for Thunder Bay-Superior North. The views and opinions expressed in this column are those of the author.