

The Chronicle Journal

THE NEWSPAPER OF THE NORTHWEST

Published by Continental Newspapers (Canada) Ltd.
75 South Cumberland Street, Thunder Bay, Ont. P7B 1A3

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No denying damage done by drinking

TORONTO Maple Leafs fans — of which there are many in this country, despite their team's lack of playoff success of late — likely noticed that former Leafs right-winger Rick Vaive has a new book out. It's just in time for the holidays, when many people drink too much.

Like scores of NHL players of his generation in the 1970s and 1980s, Vaive, a sharp-shooter who logged three consecutive seasons with more than 50 goals, also had a drinking problem. It's an issue he broaches in his book unflinchingly.

In 2009, with his hockey career pretty much washed up, Vaive was charged with impaired driving following an event at a golf course in Gravenhurst, north of Toronto. He was ultimately acquitted at trial, but Vaive says in the book he drank heavily while his case wound through the courts and caused him all sorts of unflattering publicity.

It was much worse for Rob Ramage, another NHLer of Vaive's generation who followed him as captain of the Toronto Maple Leafs. Two years before Vaive was charged, Ramage was convicted of impaired driving in the death of Chicago Blackhawks great Keith Magnuson. Magnuson had been a passenger in a sports car that had crashed near Toronto with Ramage at the wheel.

In his book, Vaive says that alcohol was a prevalent factor in both his junior and professional career. Former Philadelphia Flyers forward and fellow sharp-shooter Reggie Leach, who has been sober for decades, has also spoken to youth groups about "the mistakes" of those booze-filled years, when he once scored five goals in one night despite battling a hangover that would have killed a horse.

At 61, Vaive says he has finally come to terms with his alcohol problem, and how the booze did him more harm than good, even when he drank to excess to try to cope with his fear of flying. He's not the first aging male celebrity in sports or the arts to admit how tightly an addiction had a grip on him.

American actor Chevy Chase reportedly said he re-entered rehab in his early 70s to be "the best I can be." Not that the decision to stop drinking is necessarily altruistic: another famous actor, the late Lee Marvin, allowed the main reason he cut out the booze was because he could no longer stand the inevitable mornings after.

While it is understandable that many men and women who turn the corner of age 60 no longer relish the prospect of spending the dwindling years they have left slumped on a bar stool, getting that message out to their adult children and grandchildren remains a huge challenge.

On Saturday night, a 27-year-old Rainy River-area woman was charged with impaired driving after a pickup truck rolled into a ditch. A passenger in the truck, a man in his late 20s, was killed. Nothing has been proven in court, but the incident has undoubtedly changed forever the lives of the accused and the members of the dead man's family.

Alcohol consumption normally spikes during the holiday season, but health officials noted earlier this year that the amount being imbibed has been up for several months, likely due to feelings of anxiety and isolation arising from the ongoing coronavirus crisis. A pandemic needn't be an excuse to reach for a bottle; it can also serve as a time for honest reflection and the re-setting of priorities.

Rick Vaive should be congratulated for his honesty. His book probably won't turn him into a millionaire, but for some its message will really turn a light on.



Free-spending Freeland must draw line somewhere

BY HEATHER SCOFFIELD

PANDEMIC fiscal policy has come to us mainly in the form of words.

"We will always have your backs," Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland tell us repeatedly. "Whatever it takes, for as long as it takes."

Finally, we will get some numbers to go with the words — some badly needed clarity about what the supports amount to and their effects.

Freeland said Monday she will give a detailed update on the fiscal state of affairs on Nov. 30, a document that will account for how much the pandemic has cost so far, how much the government expects it to cost later, and how we will finance the economic rescue operation that will come when we finally get the vaccine.

It's been a long time coming. We've gone 20 months with no budget, only sporadic and partial charts and graphs, and unprecedented spending — to put it mildly. For a government committed to transparency, it's been too long.

The deficit this fiscal year is likely to be about \$425 billion, according to the latest projections from Scotiabank Economics. The provinces have run up a \$100-billion tab in their fight against the pandemic.

And while growth in the economy will resume next year, we are in a bad space right now. The rebound that many sectors of the economy experienced in the summer and early fall has been quashed by a ruthless second wave that has not yet crested.

Closures, restraints and fear of contagion have halted the recovery in its tracks in key parts of the retail and small business sectors. Consumers have once again scaled back their spending and companies are reluctant to invest. Travel, accommodation and tourism are barely hanging on. And the unemployment rate remains high.

So the challenge for Freeland will be to use the fiscal update to plug the holes in the federal government's range of pandemic supports, focusing on the pain of the second wave. But she will also need to set the stage for a bigger,



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There's no guiding principle that suggests government knows when to say 'No'

more future-oriented spending plan in the form of a spring budget.

In a way, the budget will be easier. By spring, recovery should be in plain sight. As vaccines become available and more of the population is able to resume safe interaction in public, the economy should pick up speed in tandem with the vaccination rate.

But for now, there's still an enormous amount of uncertainty. While public health modelling points to a steep increase in the number of COVID-19 cases, the economic effects of those rising numbers are difficult to put a number on. It's partly why the federal Liberals have taken so long to put pen to paper for their fiscal plan.

But a few things are certain. Small businesses are on the brink. The federal government on Monday rolled out new rent subsidies for commercial tenants and included a top-up for anyone caught up in a lockdown. Those companies will be able to have the government cover up to 90 per cent of their rent or property expenses.

But even with the rent subsidies, the extension of the wage subsidies until next summer, and the business loans that have been on standing offer for months, many firms won't make it.

Freeland is looking for ways to offer even more, in time for next week.

At the other end of the spectrum, airlines are hobbled by a lack of customers, and while the federal government has signalled for months now that a bailout is in the works, negotiations have been long and difficult — and almost certainly not wrapped up by next Monday in time for funding in the fiscal update.

At the same time, Freeland also wants to send some solid signals about what kind of recovery is in store, making a down-payment on some of the vision set out in the speech from the throne in September. Childcare, job creation and a green recovery were all big commitments in that speech — commitments that will require huge amounts of funding if they are to be meaningful.

The big money will come in the budget, but the update may contain some teasers meant to give people some hope and direction in their planning.

What won't be there is a fiscal anchor or principle that will guide Freeland's decisions on how much is too much when the "whatever it takes" pandemic policy graduates into a recovery policy.

For sure, the urgency to adopt a new guideline has dissipated now that bond rating agencies have mainly confirmed Canada's triple-A rating. But the need for some guidance for when the government should say "No" to silly or counterproductive spending remains.

It's a relief to know that the government will finally account in detail for all the spending of the past nine months, identify the challenges and give us its best projection for how the pandemic will play out for the economy over the coming months, with its help.

But as the big spending that was hinted at in the throne speech and that will be required for a solid recovery draws closer, some discipline would be welcome as well.

Heather Scoffield is an Ottawa-based economics columnist for the Toronto Star. Email her at hscoffield@thestar.ca or find @hscoffield to follow her on Twitter.

Look back so we can move ahead together

Treaties Recognition Week an opportunity to reflect on history, build for future

BY TANIS THOMPSON

IN 2016, the province of Ontario designated the first week of November as Treaties Recognition Week. This week provides us with the opportunity to honour and recognize the historical significance of treaty signings across the province, and why treaties should matter to all Ontarians.

Nov. 3, 2020 marked an important day as the City of Thunder Bay honoured this year's Treaties Recognition Week by installing a permanent treaty text sign recognizing the Robinson-Superior Treaty of 1850. This sign signifies a step forward in Thunder Bay's healing and reconciliation journey and reflects our commitment in continuing to honour existing treaty relationships and fostering those relationships by continuing to support and work with our Indigenous partners, creating a respectful, inclusive city and a better future for everyone.

The City of Thunder Bay is committed to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's calls to action and the Thunder Bay anti-racism and inclusion accord. In the spirit of reconciliation, Treaties Recogni-



ONE CITY, MANY VOICES

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

tion Week remains a perfect time to express our humility and gratitude to the original peoples, notably the Ojibway of Fort William First Nation and the Metis people, by honouring and acknowledging the sacrifices that were made to facilitate settlement back in 1850.

Reconciliation requires active participation from everyone. Part of that action requires speaking to historical hard truths and Treaties Recognition Week provides the platform for us to respectfully do so. Sometimes those truths may be difficult to hear, but the stories play a crucial part in gathering facts in order to ap-



Thunder Bay Mayor Bill Mauro, left, and Regina Mandamin, manager of Indigenous relations and inclusion for the City, unveil a plaque recognizing the Robinson-Superior Treaty at city hall on Nov. 3 during Treaties Recognition Week.

preciate why things transpired the way they did and are the way they are now, and why treaties should truly matter to all Ontarians.

The City of Thunder Bay continues to make efforts to build public awareness and provide ed-

ucational opportunities to learn more about the history and experiences of Indigenous Peoples, which are important parts of Canada's shared history.

We invited the public and organizations to take time to reflect and learn more about the history

so we can improve our relations by being respectful to First Nations and Metis in the work that they do, and acknowledge that we can all do better in being good neighbours by working towards reconciliation together, one step at a time.

Thank you for supporting Treaties Recognition Week and taking part in honouring history by joining in the week's daily virtual activities which included films, speakers and some amazing online learning opportunities and virtual events. Visit www.thunderbay.ca/TreatiesWeek to access additional resources on treaties.

Tanis Thompson is a member of Norway House Cree First Nation in Manitoba. She was born and raised in Treaty 3 territory in the town of Rainy River and arrived in Thunder Bay in 2013. This past July, she accepted the position of Indigenous liaison for the City of Thunder Bay and has more than 17 years' experience servicing Indigenous populations within various communities across Ontario. The views and opinions expressed in this column are those of the author.

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