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The OPP recently sponsored a poster contest for Grade 3 students across Ontario and St. James' Catholic School's Britney O'Malley of Eganville was the first-place winner in all 2,400 entries. Britney's award included a reception at OPP headquarters in Orillia, a tour of the facilities, and will culminate with a ride in either the OPP helicopter or plane. Here, she receives the original and copy of her prize-winning poster from Constable Liz Van Massenhoven of the Killaloe detachment.



Recipient of Governor General's medal

Andrea Maille, daughter of Andy and Laila Maille of Eganville, is presented with the Governor General's Academic Medal for highest academic standing by local school board trustee David Kaiser during the graduation ceremonies at Opeongo High School last Thursday. Andrea, who will be attending York University in the fall, was the recipient of several awards. Photos and stories on pages 18 and 19.

SS budget set at \$55 million

Pembroke -- The Renfrew County Catholic District School Board has transferred more than \$700,000 from its reserves into operating funds in order to balance the 2009-2010 budget. "This is being done out of necessity, and is not an action of choice," board chair Andy Bray said Tuesday. "Our reserves were put in place to enable us to meet unexpected one-time expenses. We cannot continue to pull from them to meet our ongoing operating expenses."

Despite digging into the reserves, Mr. Bray said he could confidently say his schools will be positioned to

continue to offer quality education. "As trustees, our responsibility is to ensure that the resources and planning are in place to provide the best possible programs for our students, and we have met that challenge," he said.

Mr. Bray added, however, the task of preparing a balanced budget is especially difficult for a small, rural school board.

"The provincial funding we receive is limited, and costs continue to rise," he noted. "We have a lot of hard-working people who make significant contributions to our system, and finding new efficiencies is becoming

increasingly difficult."

The \$55 million budget includes \$52 million in base funding, which covers ongoing programs such as the Student Success initiative and Safe Schools funding.

Mr. Bray highlighted a number of provincial funding announcements that will also contribute to the \$55-million budget for 2009-2010. They reflect the mandate of the government to increase student achievement, close gaps in student achievement, and increase public confidence:

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Funding for Pembroke-based torch celebration stirs debate

By Neil Etienne
Staff Writer

Pembroke -- If purpose of debate is to convince and compromise, county council put on a good showing of political discussion during its final summer meeting until late August.

While in the end a recorded vote on whether or not the Renfrew County should chip in \$2,000 to the City of Pembroke's December 13 Olympic Torch celebrations in advance of the Winter games this year in B.C. was too one-sided for anyone to have held a swing vote, it was an interesting debate leading to at least one mayor thanking her peers for changing her mind.

During the June 24 county meeting in Pembroke, Admaston-Bromley Mayor Raye-Anne Briscoe, also the county's chair of the finance and administration committee, presented a resolution for a \$2,000 funding request from Pembroke toward an Olympic Torch Committee currently working away on plans to host the famed icon and a celebration for two hours as it passes through the region on its way to British Columbia. Even though she herself was opposed to the funding injection she was presenting on behalf of the committee, it was Killaloe, Hagarty and Richards Mayor Janice Visneskie who first voiced opposition, saying she feared the county may set precedent by giving a "grant" to help fund the celebrations.

She pointed out county council policy is to not give grants or donations and feared supporting the event may fall

into that grant category. McNab-Braeside Reeve Mary Campbell also added her distaste for giving the funding, although for slightly different reasons.

"It's a City of Pembroke event," she said. "I don't think there's too many people in McNab-Braeside who will be going up to take part."

She said of that \$2,000, technically, about \$150 of that is McNab-Braeside taxpayers' money and she felt giving money to the city would only be of benefit to Pembroke. She referred to an earlier decision by council to not purchase name tags at a cost of just over \$600 due to the fact the county was trying to eliminate any unneeded and low-priority expenses in light of the economic times.

"You didn't buy name tags because we're so frugal, but now we'll give \$2,000 for Pembroke?" she posed. "I don't see the difference."

She vented frustration, saying she was tired of Pembroke seemingly being the focal point of the county and county tax dollars being spent there, while McNab-Braeside and outlying areas seem to be forgotten.

Mayor Briscoe added her agreement, saying she too would be dismayed Admaston-Bromley tax dollars were helping fund a Pembroke event -- a municipality that shares services with the county but is not one of the 17 municipal partners on county council.

CAO Norm Lemke and several councillors came to the defence of the funding, saying while Pembroke

is in fact the major host community for the torch as it passes through, it is on behalf of Renfrew County and the entire region, and possibly the only location it will spend any length of time in although places like Douglas and Petawawa are planning events around its presence.

"It's the only official stop for the torch (in Renfrew County) and although it's going to be held in Pembroke, it is a county event," said Deep River Mayor Anne Aikens. "That is our celebration community in Renfrew County."

CAO Lemke added that the funding does not fall into the grant or donation category, but rather simple council support for a county event. He said while the county had no obligation to give the \$2,000, it is an example of the types of partnerships and neighbourly relations the city and county try to foster. As an example, he made note of the city's injection of some \$125,000 to help fund an auditorium for the Bonnechere Manor in Renfrew.

"They have no obligation to do that, but they did because they see the value, the benefit for the region...it's good neighbourly relations," he said. "And this is a county event, the torch may not be stopping anywhere else for any length of time, so this is our opportunity to showcase the region; it is not solely a City of Pembroke event, they are simply the host because they are the largest centre."

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The barn dance and appreciation night at Preston and Terry Cull's Douglas-area farm on Saturday night was a huge success attracting more than 1,000 people who enjoyed the wonderful old-time country music. Donations at the event were designated for the CT Scan unit at Renfrew Victoria Hospital and as such three Renfrew celebrities were the special guest performers. Dubbed the Closet Step-Dancers, from left, Randy Penney, CEO of RVH, Renfrew Mayor Sandi Heins and Renfrew businessman, Barry Breen, stand in front of their celebrity dressing rooms. More photos on page 4.

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