

OPINION

OUR VIEW

Less isn't always more

We encourage the International Falls City Council to discuss how to fund a planned airport terminal improvement project as well as ongoing operations and maintenance at the Falls International Airport. The council plans such a discussion when it next meets April 21. The discussion will surround a report and resolution drafted by city Administrator Ken Anderson. The material provides a wide overview of potential sources of money for the project and other funding needs. Anderson's report stems from a discussion at a city Budget and Finance Committee meeting in March, when it was reported the local airport commission, made up of two city and two Koochiching County representatives, along with an at-large representative, had recommended the city and county each commit to providing the local share of money for the terminal project, estimated at \$500,000 each. We applaud Anderson's report and believe it is a good basis from which the city council continue discussion. The report shows there are a number of ways to fund the improvement project and meet the regular funding needs of the airport. But following the city council discussion, we urge

a broader discussion with the county board in an effort to keep all members of the commission and community abreast of the views and ideas members of each group may have on the subject. In addition, certain staff of the city and county should be included in the discussion, as they have insight and knowledge that could help guide movement forward. Clearly, the option of closing the airport can easily be crossed off the list, as all involved appear to agree the airport provides great value to the community, as well as the larger region. But other options, including expanding the airport agreement that created the commission, deserves further exploration and closer consideration. Including members from Canada and the city of Ranier may better represent those who benefit from the airport and may offset some of the local expenses involved in the airport. As Anderson noted in the report, legal input and clarification of financial options, as well as project costs and state and federal contributions, are needed to clearly discuss options, but this is a good start. The more understanding of the options and views of all members of government involved in the airport the better.



GUEST COLUMN

A pipeline to jobs, economic, energy security

BY HARRY MELANDER AND WILLIAM BLAZAR

Beginning in 1973, headlines announcing the results of a meeting of OPEC ministers often sent shockwaves through the American economy. From the founding of the nation until that time, the United States had never been beholden to other nations in determining our economic well-being. It took almost 40 years, but we are finally on the verge of reclaiming control of our energy future and, consequently, protecting American energy security. In 2017, the United States will be the largest oil and natural gas producing nation in the world. By 2023, we can be 100-percent independent in North America with our trading partner and neighbor Canada. Achieving this independence has not been easy, and more remains to be done. Minnesota, for example, has been at the end of every petroleum supply pipeline since the early 20th century as crude oil arrived here from southern

sources in Texas, Oklahoma, the Gulf of Mexico and abroad. As a result, pipelines were constructed to move oil from south to north. Today the vast sources of oil and natural gas produced in North Dakota and Canada promise to put us near the front of the pipeline, if the infrastructure is retooled to allow it. Enbridge has proposed expansions of its pipeline system that extends from both Alberta and the Bakken Field in North Dakota to refineries that produce motor fuel and other products that are sold in Minnesota. These expansions will dramatically increase capacity and take us one more step toward North American energy independence. Enbridge's effort is not without controversy and has detractors across Minnesota. Opponents of expansions fall into two categories. The first group is comprised of local groups supported with slanted information and financial support from international organizations like Greenpeace and the

Natural Resources Defense Council. These local groups, in turn, attempt to create unsupported fears about pipeline expansions to incite opposition to the delivery of North American crude oil. The second group is comprised of landowners and our communities along the pipeline route. We believe these folks deserve the truth. The questions raised by community leaders and citizens about pipeline safety are reasonable; and, the answers are straightforward and clear. 20Pipelines are the safest means of transporting crude oil with a 99.999-percent success rate, according to industry statistics. Thousands of miles of pipeline in Minnesota deliver crude oil 24/7/365. And, new pipeline proposals like the Sandpiper project that will cross northern Minnesota will include the most modern safety technologies available. As you weigh the costs and benefits of pipeline development, please review the facts. As representatives

of the skilled craft workers and businesses located in every corner of Minnesota, we have reviewed the facts and the science because our members build these projects or provide services as vendors of equipment, food, lodging, etc. Our members hear what landowners are saying, and we are confident their concerns can be addressed. However, we are also hearing from Minnesotans everywhere that having access to North Dakota and Canadian energy resources safely delivered will increase employment and improve the economy. The ultimate choice is whether we follow the advice of groups like Greenpeace and "turn back the clock" to the days when OPEC ministers determined our energy security. Melander is president of the Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Council. Blazar is senior vice president of public affairs and business development at the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Wolves are essential, even for moose

To the editor
Minnesota's wolves are an essential part of our northern Minnesota landscape. They help maintain a balance of animal populations and their feeding behavior, which is vital for healthy vegetation, improved waterways and the overall habitat for many birds and animals in the region. Minnesota's gray wolf population is the last original population remaining in the lower 48 states. There are many mistaken beliefs about the wolf hunt in Minnesota, and how the hunt affects livestock predation as well as whether wolves are causing problems for the moose population. These beliefs have a negative influence on the public's perception of the wolf. Let's set the record straight. Some supporters of the wolf hunt believe the decline in Minnesota's moose population is directly related to the wolf population. The

fact is that no one has pinpointed the actual cause of the steep drop in the moose population in Minnesota. But for thousands, if not millions of years, Minnesota's moose and wolf populations have co-existed. On Isle Royale, where there are no deer and thus no deer ticks, the moose are doing well. But without more wolves the moose may eat their way to no food from balsam fir. In Minnesota, when we had a stable number of wolves for over 10 years, from 1998 thru 2008, we had healthy moose. The moose situation is tragic and still a mystery. But blaming wolves can be detrimental to wolves and detrimental to moose since the wolf is vital to our overall ecosystem including the vegetation for moose. Another misconception is that all farmers and livestock producers dislike the wolf, and that a wolf hunt decreases wolf- livestock conflicts. There is no scientific evidence that a wolf hunt

helps to reduce wolf- livestock conflicts. In fact, a hunt randomly kills non-problem wolves and can make problems worse for farmers by making wolf packs less stable and less able to hunt wild animals. Since the development of the DNR's 2001 "Minnesota Wolf Management Plan," Best Management Practices to reduce and prevent livestock depredation by wolves have been recognized as crucial to the long-term reduction of wolf-livestock conflicts. However, wolf depredation management methods in Minnesota have not kept pace with available non-lethal control methods. Related research that was recommended in the Wolf Management Plan has not been conducted and existing information hasn't been disseminated to farmers. Non-lethal methods include a combination of the following: awareness of local wolf activity, the elimination of attractants

like carcasses that lure in predators, deployment of guard animals, frequent monitoring for sick and diseased animals, flagging and non-lethal fencing barriers. There are a number of cost-effective options available for farmers that will help prevent and minimize future conflicts with wolves and livestock. Howling for Wolves believes we need to take a step back, slow down, and properly and scientifically assess what's going on with Minnesota's gray wolf. This means implementing the original Wolf Management Plan and suspending the recreational wolf hunt in Minnesota. This also means providing the best management practices that can assist farmers in wolf territory for the long-term. Maureen Hackett president, founder of Howling For Wolves Hopkins, MN