

OPINION

OUR VIEW

Handle surplus with care

The state’s projected \$1.1 billion budget surplus is clearly good news for Minnesota.

Following years of budget deficits, a surplus has allowed the state to payback \$246 million it borrowed from public schools during the recession. And, another \$15 million will go to the state airports fund to repay money borrowed in 2008.

Those successive state deficits could have cut deep into pockets of local taxpayers had local governments not been fiscally responsible in their spending.

But before we start writing out checks with that extra money, we ought to wait until February when another economic forecast is due. Should the surplus hold true then, and only then, should state officials consider its uses.

Gov. Mark Dayton has already said he would consider tax cuts should the surplus remain in February. Among the cuts Dayton is eying is the three business-to-business sales taxes approved in the last session.

He said he would consider a tax cut for middle-income Minnesotans by eliminating the marriage penalty, which would reduce state taxes for 640,000 Minnesota taxpayers and increasing the working family credit, which would lower state taxes for 53,000 taxpayers. Dayton said those

two tax cuts combined would total \$436.4 million, still leaving \$388.6 million for other purposes.

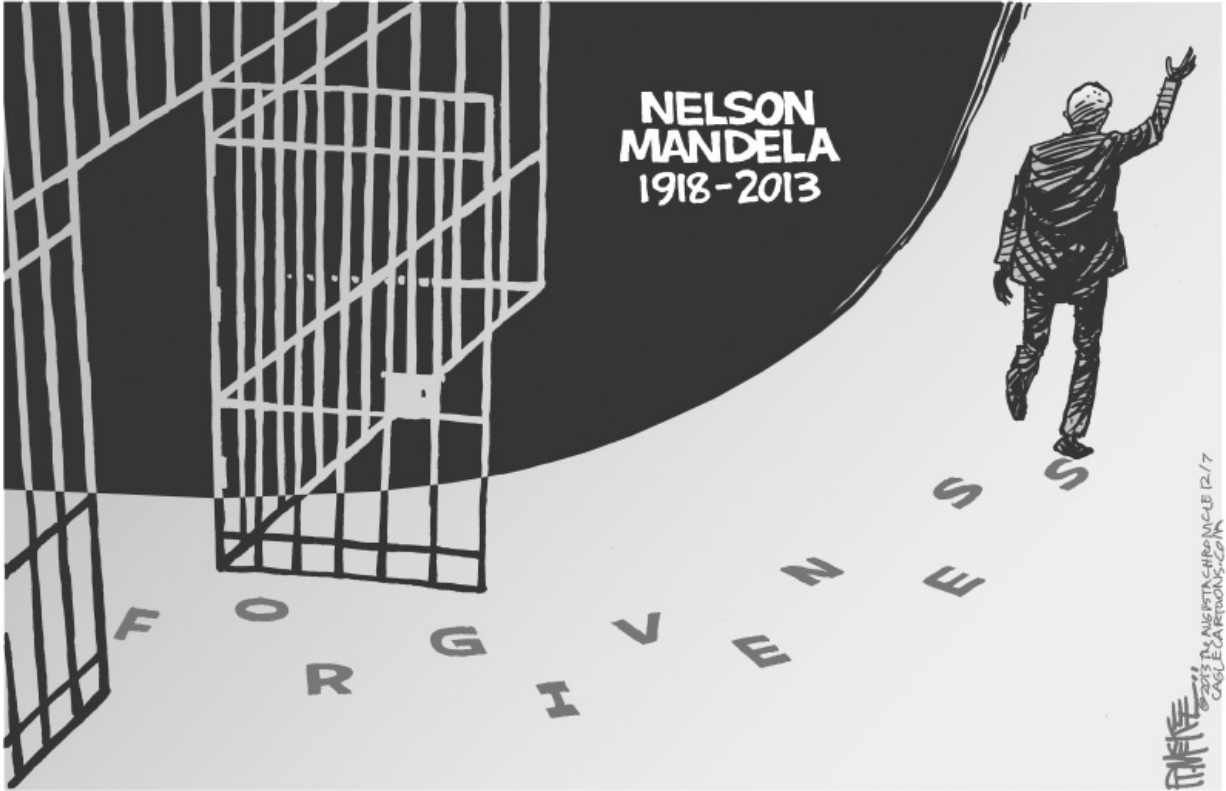
We agree with Dayton’s ideas for tax cuts and it appears the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce does, too. “The governor and Legislature clearly overcorrected on revenues with the huge increase in taxes. This needs to be fixed immediately,” Chamber President David Olson said.

All proposals for the surplus deserve discussion, but we need to take care what the governor and Legislature do this February doesn’t come back to bite us in future deficits. Perhaps some of that \$388 million ought to be placed in what was once called a rainy day fund to help absorb the roller coaster of state revenue as the U.S. economy slowly recovers.

It wasn’t that long ago — July 2011 — when a budget impasse shut down Minnesota’s government for 20 days.

Certainly, taxpayers are right to expect a return on investment, but lawmakers and the governor ought to take a cue from local governments which have taken a fiscally conservative approach.

Excessive spending or cutting isn’t a good idea during this delicate state economic recovery. We urge lawmakers and the government to handle this surplus carefully.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RECAP has great potential

To the editor,

In 1999, someone asked me if Koochiching County would be interested in eliminating waste by “changing it” using lightning, or, in essence, by using a Plasma torch. Thank goodness Mike Hanson and Paul Nevanen took it seriously, because this venture, now called RECAP, is a great project. Its positive ramifications cannot be measured or imagined. The potential for success is excellent unless “we” stand in the way.

I have read that the council of Ranier is against RECAP (Renewable Energy Clean Air Project) being near their city; I have read that the mayor of International Falls is weighing his opinion based on Ranier’s concerns, and he should, but he also needs to play an important advocacy role in the process. Apparently, the Second Creek residents who live in Ranier want the project; however, they, like their council, want it somewhere else.

I believe the buffer areas that

the Koochiching County Board and the project neighbors requested in the last year have been agreed upon, and/or met and exceeded, and any and all other aesthetic concerns will be addressed in this project. All parties involved support improvement of Second Creek and future restoration, and this project does not negatively affect this small estuary any more than residents mowing and feeding their lawns.

The selected RECAP site is as perfect as it can be; it has rail, road, power, infrastructure like water and sewer. It’s not my intention to downplay concerns by local residents, but considering the area already has a busy bypass, highway, and railway; one of the largest superfund sites in northern Minnesota; and a 200-foot microwave cell tower in the immediate area, in addition to a proposed rock quarry nearby, I don’t see the perceived negative effect.

The science works. This process is functional and community friendly; emissions,

if any, are minimal. RECAP would keep close to \$1 million in tax money from leaving Koochiching County to bury our trash, and this would halt the leaching of chemicals and toxins going into northern Minnesota’s water table. The project can create marketable by-products ranging from aggregate to energy, could employ in excess of 20 people in high wage positions, and would provide a destination for interested scientists and investors.

This will be successful if locals are willing to support RECAP, consider possibilities, and help our representatives make decisions based on the community good. You can use your voice to help bring this project to fruition. Attend Thursday’s meeting at 5:30 p.m. at the AmericInn with an open mind and an open heart for your community.

Yes, I would put it in my back yard; sometimes what we see is not the big picture.

Tim “Chopper” McBride
International Falls, MN

How to contact your lawmakers

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U.S. Rep. Rick Nolan 2447 Rayburn House Office Building Washington DC 20515 202-225-6211 Website: www.nolan.house.gov Facebook: US Rep Rick Nolan Twitter: @USRepRickNolan	U.S. Sen. Al Franken Democrat Senate Hart Building 320 Washington DC 20510 202-224-5641 Website: www.alfranken.com E-Mail: info@franken.senate.gov
STATE OFFICES	
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Brainerd Office of Congressman Rick Nolan Brainerd City Hall 501 Laurel Street Brainerd, MN 56401 218-454-4078	Rep. David Dill 571 State Office Building St. Paul, MN 55155 651-296-2190 800-339-0466 rep.david.dill@house.mn Assistant: Joan Harrison
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Salt, sand on the streets, roads

To the editor,

It has been just wonderful the last five days — just like in the 50s and 60s: no sand or salt, very seldom people were in the ditch, everyone knew how to drive on the ice and snow-covered roads.

(In those days) The only place I saw sand was on the International Falls downtown street intersections. That was shoveled on out of a city pickup with one driver and two helpers in the cab — and Richard Prozinski doing the shoveling — remember?

The salt tracks home on your car, drops off in your garage, raises cane with the cement floor, eats up your car, also your footwear. Have you ever tried walking in the slop it creates on the roads?

It would be interesting to find out how much it costs the taxpayers each year for damage to you and your

property, let alone what it does to the lakes and rivers. Give me the old snow-packed and ice roads any day. I for one am against salt.

By the way, there was an article in the Falls paper a few months ago on not to use salt on your sidewalks because of the damage it does. I guess the state, county and city government didn’t read it.

Norman Boyum
International Falls, MN

The Journal welcomes letters from readers

Letters should be limited to 500 words or less. Longer letters may be edited. Letters must be signed and include the telephone number and address of the letter writer. Only the author’s city address will be published.

Mail letters to The Journal, 1602 Highway 71, International Falls 56649. Letters can also be sent by e-mail to laurel@ifallsjournal.com.

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