



Parliament? Nope

Christin Kristoffersen unlikely to be Svalbard's first member after vote Saturday; she's OK with it

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

After a sex scandal caused the process to go haywire during the past couple of months, there's no certainties about what happens when the Labor Party picks its top candidates for the Troms region this weekend. But Longyearbyen's top politician doesn't expect a late effort to rank her high enough for Parliament will succeed.

Christin Kristoffersen said a close vote among two other candidates for the top spot is likely. Yet another candidate appears to be the favorite for the second-place spot. The regional party expects the top two finishers to be allocated seats in Parliament after this year's election.

Kristoffersen said that's fine with her, since
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MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE



AUF

Christin Kristoffersen, left, addresses an audience this week in Longyearbyen shortly before departing for Tromsø to participate in the Labor Party's regional nominating meeting this weekend. Martin Henriksen, right, is narrowly favored as the top-ranked candidate after a sex scandal derailed a rival.

On the bumpy road to recovery

Svalbard regains half of a 15 percent drop in employment, but 'steady' five-year outlook shaky

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

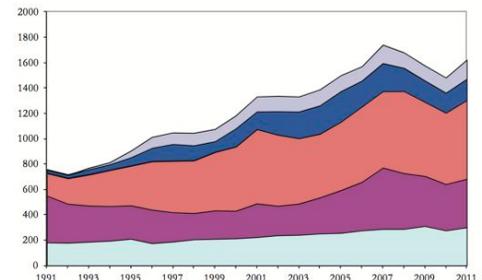
Nearly 20 good years, then a few bad ones and one with a bit of a rebound. And the next five? A somewhat unstable stability.

Total employment in Svalbard, which dropped 15 percent between 2007 and 2010, recovered slightly more than half of that in 2011, according to a newly published report by Statistics Norway. The agency predicts a far more modest increase of three percent during the next

five years, but variables for individual industries and the area as a whole are considerable.

"Svalbard society seems to be moving into a new period of restructuring with reduced activity in the mining and the negative influences it provides for the development of Longyearbyen in general," a summary of the report notes. "Although the industrial base is now considerably more modern than the 1990s, and the community seems more robust, the next development could provide a number of new challenges for local players as well as local planning board and the central government control."

The analysis also relies on statements that
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STATISTICS NORWAY

A chart depicting occupations in Svalbard includes education (grey), construction (blue), industry (orange), mining (purple) and government (light blue).

Burning appetite for a raw deal



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Taiichi Fox serves customers during the opening day at his new Japanese restaurant Kita, which means "north" in that country's language.

Northernmost sushi restaurant opens after long delay – then runs out of food on first day

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

It took Taiichi Fox a year to fulfill his dream of opening a sushi restaurant in Longyearbyen. Actually working that first day seemed far longer than that.

"I feel like I've been here three years already," he said, noting they ran out of food by

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Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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Corrections policy

When we screw up you'll know about it – on the front page. One of the big complaints about newspapers is they tend to bury corrections and clarifications deep inside where few people who read the original article see them. If we need to fix something, an alert box on the front page will state what story is in error and where the full correction is printed.

Submitting material

Letters, columns, photos and other material are welcome, but we can't offer pay for published items since nobody here is getting paid at the moment. Submissions in electronic form (text, Word documents, JPEGs, etc.) are highly preferred, although typing and/or scanning of items will be considered on a per-case basis. We reserve the right to edit submissions for length, clarity, accuracy, libel and other reasons, but we will also make every reasonable effort to contact the author about any changes prior to publication.

Ladies' long love of lutefisk



A diner in proper attire (a.k.a. a hat), left, awaits the dish of honor during the World International Female Arctic Lutefisklag meeting at Spitsbergen Hotel last year. Above, two men are allowed in to announce raffle winners during the meeting. The 10th annual gathering is scheduled at 7 p.m. Saturday at the Radisson Blu Polar Hotel, with the grand raffle prize being a blind date. Current and former female residents of Svalbard are eligible to attend. Photos courtesy of WIFAL.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Ouch. Our snafus are tragically epic, but we've yet to receive a top-of-the-page headline scolding at the governor's Web site. But **our fitter foes at The Local Paper of Relevance are in a bit of a storm as an article this week about the possible closure of some areas to snowmobiles was hastily denounced as a "fail" by the governor.** In an announcement titled "*Svalbardposten* misrepresents" the governor's site declares "*Svalbardposten* has an article on page 13, which states that the governor will close Helvetiadalen and De Geerdalen to snowmobile traffic. It is not right. The governor has not proposed to close Helvetiadalen and De Geerdalen and *Svalbardposten* provides no data to support that the governor has such a view." There's more, basically about what was said and wrote by whom in meetings and memos from last December and in 2009. *Svalbardposten* isn't exactly doing a full mea culpa, with a follow-up article by Editor Birger Amundsen saying a report from the governor shows the issue was indeed discussed at the December meeting – even if the governor's office didn't initiate it – and there's nothing about this being an issue at a 2009 gathering. So, basically, lots of words to say nothing's changing, meaning any time spent reading about this are minutes lost from your life that you won't get back (no, we don't feel sorry for you since it took us ever longer to write about it) ... The jury's still out on whether Longyearbyen residents will flock to a festival featuring movies about Cuban zombie-killer squads and "a man in an iron lung who wishes to lose his virginity (who) contacts a professional sex surrogate with the help of his therapist and priest." But one Svalbard film fest this month is a smash success. **The inaugural Bjørnøya Film Festival (BOFF) took**



BJØRN VIGELAND

It's not about size, it's about filling the vacancy: A crowd like this is a smashing success at the Bjørnøya Film Festival. But if it's what shows up for TIFF in Svalbard this week...

place at the meteorological station last Tuesday through Saturday, opening with a locally-shot movie and continuing with several more screenings each day. "The response has been beyond all expectations," organizers wrote at the station's Web site. "We are incredibly impressed with the audiences who lined up on all the performances. We are already looking forward to next year's festival." ... We've written at length about the marvels of the Mars Rover thanks entirely to the brainiacs using Svalbard as a testing ground (OK, maybe that's stretching the local credit a wee bit). But the only red from another flightcraft with local ties is the faces of the engineers – and gauges going haywire with malfunctions – as **Boeing's new 787 Dreamliner is being grounded all over the world. That might be a relief for officials at Svalbard Airport, which was tested and envisioned as an emergency landing site.** The plane's much-hyped "efficient" design includes those now-infamous lithium-ion batteries that have caused everything from cockpit smoke to fuel leaks to a brake malfunction.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Researchers and tourists, who both arrived in large numbers to observe the Transit of Venus in June of 2012, are seen as the two biggest growth industries for Svalbard during the next several years.

Science, tourism where jobs are

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may no longer be accurate.

Store Norske, for instance, states they "expect only minor changes in the years to come." But circumstances after the report's data-collection period resulted in a "terrible" year with record losses, prompting company officials to declare significant layoffs are likely.

On the other hand, similar comments were made by Store Norske after other troubled years recently, yet the company hired more workers, due in part to development of a new coal mine scheduled to open this year.

Similar reports have been compiled regularly, but not annually, by various entities for decades. Statistics Norway's 2012 analysis, which is actually based on data from 2011, notes employment and population grew steady between 1991 and 2007.

"Between 2008 and 2010 employment fell substantially, to a large part because of decreased growth in the mining sector, but also because of international economic trends," the report notes.

About 260 fewer man-years of labor resulted, but a gain of 141 man-years occurred in 2011. Strong growth in tourism and research accounted for much of the increase.

The result was "on average, each adult per-

son (above 19 years of age) in the population register works one man-year per year" – although that's not the same as saying every adult had a job.

"In 2011, the population increased at a slightly higher rate than employment," the report states. "This has to do with increased inflow of foreign citizens. The share of the population with origins from elsewhere than Norway has increased from 13 per cent in 2002 to 21 per cent in 2011."

As in the past, residents come for jobs offering higher pay and lower taxes than the mainland, but they don't stay long.

"The population turnover rate is between 20 and 25 percent, which means that one out of every four to five people living in Longyearbyen is replaced by new inhabitants each year," the report states. "This implies that the labor market is a (the) main factor influencing demographic development."

There were 100 more children in Longyearbyen in 2011 than in 2006 despite the adult population remaining the same, suggesting "the settlement is strengthened as a family community, in accordance with national objectives," the report states.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Filmmakers 'reprehensible' in polar bear areas, expert says

Filmmakers are engaged in "reprehensible" practices by disturbing polar bear dens with snowmobiles and helicopters, according to an expert, but interest isn't slowing as applications have been submitted for multiple projects this spring. A BBC documentary showing a narrator inside a cage getting shaken by a bear has gone viral to an awed global audience, but the images are disturbing to Thor S. Larsen, a former research director for the Norwegian Polar Institute. "The condition of the bears is bad after months in hibernation without a supply of food," he said of the spring season, when the film was shot. "Intense engine noise from snowmobiles and helicopters carry a huge stress. It often triggers panic, and could at worst have disastrous consequences for the she-bear and the kids." The machines visited a protected area in East Svalbard, under permit from the governor. A multitude of applications for similar projects are being sought this year, including four from Jason Roberts Productions, the same company providing support for the BBC's project.

Four years and 1.1M kroner ago, book OK'd; where is it?

A book about the history of Longyearbyen School is still nonexistent four years after the municipal council approved hiring a writer for it and officials have scheduled a meeting next week for an update. A total of 1.1 million kroner was raised for the book, including donations and the contribution of office space from Store Norske, which was supposed to be completed in 2010. But the money is gone and there's been no work on the book, apparently far from completion, during the past 18 months. Backers say the intent is to resume work this year, but more funds are needed.

Ambulance calls set record

Longyearbyen's fire department responded to a record 137 ambulance calls in 2012, along with 131 fire alerts, eight of which were actual fires. Fire Chief Jan Olav Sæter said the ambulance total reflects a general increase in everything from cruise tourism to snowmobiling. All the fires were minor incidents except for one in December at the power plant.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Snow. SW winds to 25 km/h. High -2C (-7C wind chill), low -12C (-16C wind chill).	Cloudy. Variable winds to 18 km/h. High -9C (-13C wind chill), low -12C (-18C wind chill).	Cloudy. N winds to 42 km/h. High 6C (-13C wind chill), low -11C (-16C wind chill).	Cloudy. Variable winds to 45 km/h. High -6C (-13C wind chill), low -13C (-19C wind chill).
24-hour darkness	24-hour darkness	24-hour darkness	24-hour darkness
Extended forecast: Sunday, snow, -11C (-17C), -13C (-19C), light 0:00h; Monday, cloudy, -8C (-17C), -12C (-21C), light 0:00h; Tuesday, p. cloudy, -12C (-20C), -14C (-21C), light 0:00h; Wednesday, p. cloudy, -10C (-17C), -13C (-22C), light 0:00h			
Data provided by storm.no			



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Shizu Watanabe prepares sushi rolls during the opening day at Kita. She is one of two chefs brought from Japan by restaurant owner Taichi Fox, who said lunch will feature a cafeteria-style approach and more expensive dinner options will be in a sit-down atmosphere.

Serious sushi and ... penguins?

JAPANESE, from page 1

dinnertime and kept working until 11 p.m. doing enough preparation work to hopefully get through the next day. "I totally underestimated what we would have."

But Fox exudes elation rather than exhaustion about the interest in Kita (Japanese for "north"), which opened Tuesday at one end of Lompensenteret. Other restaurants have struggled in that part of the shopping center, including the neighboring A Taste of Thai which has shortened its operating hours, but he doesn't even entertain the idea of failure.

"It's already a success," he said. "If I think it's a success, it is."

His playful attitude is reflected in the restaurant's intended decorative theme of penguins, knowing full well they don't inhabit the Arctic even if many tourists think different. He's far more serious when it comes to preparing sushi, however, bringing over two chefs from a

restaurant he owns in Japan and scouring that country, plus several others, for supplies.

"The tuna I got today is fresh," he said, noting it's vacuum-packed from Sri Lanka. Sushi rice is imported for now from Spain and half-roll noodles he uses for ramen come from Japan.

The menu is currently aimed at Western pallets – including, yes, California rolls – but Fox said the future may see more exotic offerings. He's also considered some Svalbard-themed creations such as whale.

"The interesting thing is Japan gets a lot of fish from the Norwegian mainland," he said.

Fox, who is half Japanese and half American, owns a second restaurant in Niue, a Southern Pacific island nation that shares some of Svalbard's free association with other countries. He said Svalbard's unique aspects, such as the polar seasons, are what lured him here.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

Kristoffersen: Vote still helps Svalbard

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she's happy with her current position as head of Longyearbyen's Municipal Council. The party's turmoil also resulted in her rising from 10th on a list of 12th candidates to a unanimous recommendation she be ranked fourth, which she said will be an asset for the community.

"For Svalbard I think it's good I'm nominated so high on the list because it means I can speak with a louder voice on the northern area of politics," she said.

Wouldn't being in being in Parliament make that voice even stronger?

"To that extent I agree and I would use it in that capacity," she said. But by remaining in Longyearbyen, she gets to work directly with people on local issues.

The nominating process was thrown into chaos when the designated top candidate, Roger

Ingebrigtsen, 46, admitted having an "inappropriate sexual relationship" with a then 17-year-old girl and withdrew his candidacy. His main rival, Martin Henriksen, is now narrowly favored to prevail this weekend, but there have been accusations he prompted the girl to go public – especially after she posted a picture on Facebook of her and Henriksen, and urged party members to vote for him.

The other potential top candidate is former Tromsø mayor Herman Kristoffersen (no relationship to Christin), who was favored in a survey of the city's residents. But party officials stated they don't believe that will significantly influence the vote.

Tove Karoline Knutsen appears to be clear choice for the region's parties number two slot.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

What's up

Jan. 16

6 p.m.: Movie: "The Good Teacher," French drama, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

Jan. 17-20

Tromsø International Film Festival in Svalbard, featuring selected movies from the mainland festival. Kulturhuset. Tickets and other information at cinemarctic.no.

Jan. 17

8 p.m.: Svalbard Seminar. UNIS.

Jan. 19

7 p.m.: World International Female Arctic Lutfisklag meeting. Hats are mandatory. Raffle grand prize is a blind date). Radisson. Tickets and additional details at <http://wifal.blogspot.no>.

Jan. 20

11 a.m.: Mass. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Les Miserables," U.S. drama, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

Jan. 21

7 p.m.: Trivia quiz. Kulturhuset cafe.

Jan. 22

7 p.m.: Fireplace gathering. Svalbard church.

8 p.m.: Svalbard Seminar. UNIS.

Jan. 24

8 p.m.: Svalbard Seminar. UNIS.

Jan. 26

2 p.m.: Presentation about Hanna Resvoll-Holmsen, Svalbard's first female scientist, by author Sigri Sandberg. Longyearbyen Library.

5 p.m.: Spitsbergen Up And Down race from Nybyen to top of Trollsteinen and back via any unmotorized means. Details at www.spitsbergenupanddown.no.

Jan. 27

10 a.m.: Family Mass w/ concert by Polargospel. Svalbard Church.

4 p.m.: UKM local youth talent competition. Kulturhuset.

What's online

Icepeople.net provides daily updates of news about Svalbard and the world's polar regions, plus extras for articles from the print edition. Among the latest news:

- *Norway to vote on Jan Mayen drilling*
- *Russia leads Arctic shipping route race*
- *Town full of polar bears says 'let us hunt'*
- *'Unicorns' of the Arctic a hunters' favorite*