

# Fire claims Solsgirth resident

*Heater believed to be the cause of morning fire*

The community of Solsgirth and district was saddened with the news of the tragic death of one of its residents in a house fire on Thursday, Dec. 14.

John Francis Workman, 77, was pronounced dead on arrival at the Shoal Lake-Strathclair Health Centre after being removed from his burning residence by air-pack equipped firefighters.

Shoal Lake RCMP said that the fire was reported to the Shoal Lake Emergency Response Team by a resident of Solsgirth at approximately 11:20 a.m. The Shoal Lake fire department responded, and immediately called the Birtle Fire Department for assistance.

Firefighters battled the dense smoke and flames in the frigid -30°C temperature to find Mr. Workman. He was rushed to hospital by the Shoal Lake Ambulance Service.

RCMP Sgt. Alex Graham said that the bachelor lived alone in the home. He said initial investigation by the Fire Commissioner's Office has revealed that an electric heater and/or a faulty extension cord probably started the fire. He also said there was evidence of clothes or bedding near the heater. Sgt. Graham speculated that Mr. Workman attempted to telephone for help prior to being overcome by smoke. The telephone was found off the hook in the home, and a neighbor reportedly could not call out after noticing the fire.

An autopsy will be carried out.

The home was totally destroyed with damages being pegged at approximately \$50,000.

Firefighters from both departments stayed at the scene until nearly 6:00 p.m. attempting to fully extinguish the stubborn fire.

The funeral for Mr. Workman will be held at St. Stephen's Anglican Church in Solsgirth on Tuesday, Dec. 19 beginning at



**Birtle and Shoal Lake firefighters battled the stubborn fire for nearly seven hours**

