

# Ox-Bow Lake Cottagers Association Meeting

Date: Sunday June 30, 1996

Location: Ox-Bow Lodge

## Opening Remarks

Bruce Cameron announced the passing of Gerry Dodds in May.

"Lake Savers" - Tickets were sold for \$2.00 to raffle-off a Lake Savers environmentally friendly kit of cleaning products.

## Annual Meeting Date

The decision to move the annual meeting to the July 1st long weekend was made for a couple of reasons. It is easier for Jamie and Jill at the lodge as this is not a peak guest weekend and secondly, having the meeting early in the summer allows time to get things done.

## 1995 Minutes

Minutes from the 1995 meeting had been mailed out in April. If you did not get a copy there are extras available. Ed McRobbie moved that the 1995 minutes be approved. Motion was seconded by Ruth Scott. Minutes passed.

## Financial Report

Lynn Jackson presented the financial report to the association.

BALANCE FORWARD		82.75
INCOME:		
	Membership Dues	390.00
	Enviro Kit	20.00
	Tasso (Notice Board)	84.50
	Interest	<u>5.32</u>
	TOTAL	\$499.82
NEW BALANCE		\$582.57

EXPENSES: Refreshments '95	45.00
FOCA	107.00
Mail/Canoe Race	29.00
L. Brown (FOCA)	83.63
B. Wylie (FOCA)	72.50
FAX	9.50
Cheque Fee	<u>.60</u>
TOTAL	\$516.28

BALANCE

\$66.29

Anthony Reitmeier moved that the financial report be approved. Motion was seconded by John Rolls. Report approved.

## Security

Wayne McDonald from the Hunstville OPP addressed the meeting regarding the "Cottage Watch Program". Carmen and Sandra from the OPP cottage liaison group discussed the details of the program. Cottage Watch combines Hydro and Bell on the roadways and cottagers in general. This program gets cottagers actively involved in preventing break and enters. There are approximately 480 break-ins to cottages per year in Muskoka making it a serious problem for everyone in the region. It is important to know your neighbours. A "buddy system" works well where you watch each other's properties. Every incident should be reported to police, including evidence of an attempted break-in.

Generally there are two motives for Break & Enter: 1) Theft of boat motors, chainsaws, batteries, and portable appliances, etc. and 2) Theft of alcohol. It is recommended that these items are taken home or at least kept well secured and out of sight.

It is suggested that our association form a small committee to set up lake policing. Cottage Watch Decals are available from the OPP for \$1.00 each to indicate the active program at each participating property. To identify your goods and deter theft, your drivers licence number should be engraved on all valuables which are portable. In the event of a theft, you may find it is increasingly difficult to claim for stolen goods without proper documentation of worth so keep these records for your insurance company.

Winter is the time when the most thefts occur. In accordance with your buddy system, try to arrange staggering neighbour's attendance on the lake particularly over the winter months. Call the police immediately if you see suspicious vehicles or activities. The police want to know about all break ins and suspicious activities. Bell & Hydro crews are also looking out for suspicious persons and vehicles and are reporting them to the police. If you happen to spot a B & E in process, it is important that you do not confront the perpetrators. Instead, record a licence plate number and description of the vehicle. If the crime is in action, call police and absolute top

priority will be assigned. Note that if a B & E has already occurred, it will take longer for the police to respond.

Volunteers to implement lake cottage watch program: Ed McRobbie, Don Fowlke,  
East Arm - Dave Caulder

### **Report: Kelly Surstan- Fire Chief for the Lake of Bays**

There are 66 volunteers in this area responding to 150-200 calls per year. Calls involve: fire control, medical assist, and water or snowmobile rescue.

Fire Permits - The Provincial Govt. has changed the forest fire prevention act. No longer are we restricted between April 31 and October 1 for the burning of leaves or brush. However, fires must be attended until they are dead out. Fire areas or pits must be smaller than 6' by 6' and must be ignited prior to 2 hours before dusk. Winds usually diminish in the evening and dew helps to control spreading. Fire must be contained at least 6' from a building or dock. Adequate fire tools must be on site. A steel rake and a pail of water are excellent for control. If you do have a fire that gets out of hand, do not hesitate to call the fire department. We will bring the blaze under control without reprimand.

Lake of Bays or Muskoka will have a 911 service in 1998. As part of an emergency system, properties will need to be properly numbered. Canvassers are to visit all cottages to gather standard identification information. Please assist in this process. Numbers will be posted in a prominent location at your property entrance. Although it is highly advisable to identify your property with the issued number, it will not be mandatory if you object. Call the Fire Chief or local fire stations to address any concern you have about numbers. The current numbering system is inadequate and must be changed under the 911 initiative. The new numbering system will eventually become your mailing address.

### **Report: Henri Bertrand - Local Councillor**

On January 1, 1996 the District of Muskoka took control of the dumps. The Township of Lake of Bays will initiate a 'user-pay' system. Instead of paying \$1 per bag this year, there will be a charge of \$32.40 for annual dump usage. This applies for one year only. After January 1, 1997 we will employ a user fee.

### **Report: Mayor Tom Pinkard and General Discussion**

This is a transition year regarding the dumps. The switch-over of fee methods has meant a problem until the new program gets organised. We will use a district levy once we go to the user-pay system. A true user-pay system will mean no more boxes on your bill for district waste management. Local Council has passed the resolution to go to user-pay because it will be fair for everyone. Local merchants will sell tags for garbage. This system works elsewhere and so they are not reinventing the wheel. We are not subsidising garbage in Huntsville, Bracebridge, or

Gravenhurst. We have lower costs because we do not have curbside pick-up. Administrative benefits are to be recognised in the district. We can also make money on recycling. Most of our local dumps are in a "no compliance" state. Therefore they will become transfer stations with the waste being shipped where there is proper waste handling facilities.

Interest charges were greater expense because some people did not pay property taxes. The region had to borrow about \$40,000 to compensate for lost tax revenue. Regarding property tax, the battle was fought by organised cottage owners in the Lake of Bays region and won at the first level, however the province appealed. We are waiting to see what the outcome will be. If the appeals process is successful for property owners, estimates of a 15% reduction are being discussed. In this event, the municipality would cut a cheque back to the rate payers.

The town placed money in reserve equalling \$183,000 but will need another \$261,000. Reserve funds are quickly consumed. For instance, a fire truck blew up in Baysville with a replacement cost of \$75,000 amongst other unexpected expenses. A capital equipment renewal program is in place to replace all equipment over the next 20 years.

Bruce Cameron noted that Bill Wylie, despite his keen involvement on the taxation (i.e.: MVA) issue, could not address the topic with us today due to a family wedding. It appears that in a month or two we will be hit with a new type of tax. Messrs. Harris and Eves had Mr. Crombie review Market Value Assessment. Mr. Harris indicated he would not have time to look at MVA for the time being due to government priorities. There appears to be a move to finance more of the cost of education from land taxes. There also appears to be a trend to download many (provincial) responsibilities to municipalities so that the province can deflect education costs from their budgets. However, part of the Crombie group's mandate is to analyse the disparities of MVA and to develop a fairer system. Muskoka is the richest place in the province. It remains to be seen whether this group will have the fortitude to implement change. No former premier wanted to touch this burning issue. New taxation formulas from the Crombie group will be an alternative way to assess. Any recommended change will have to be discussed by provincial politicians.

Bruce Cameron announced that the OxBow association executive held a special taxation meeting on May 24. Something has to be done about unfair MVA and the huge increase in property taxes resulting from it. To make a strong collective statement, the association executive recommends that our OxBow ratepayers continue to pay exactly what we paid last year in property tax and also pay the interest charges on the outstanding balance. It is an individual decision of course but if enough of us do it, a powerful anti-MVA statement will be made.

The Highway 460 issue is not dead. Eventually they know they will have to build a new road. The traffic studies support this of course. However, it is not expected soon.

"The Vision". Many thanks to those citizens who participated. Copies of the report are to be distributed including a Land Use Planning document. This paper is meant to tell the Township what people want to see preserved, maintained, or built in the region for the benefit of future generations. This summary of opinion will help steer how land will be used in the future. In mid

to late July we will call for volunteers to provide input. Last year, the Visioning Program held 50 meetings discussing what they wanted their community to look like in the future. The local newspapers recorded these meetings. Summarised copies are available for \$3.00.

Who decides that there will be two bear hunting seasons? The Provincial Government is making the decisions. There is a huge re-surge of wildlife in the area. We can make representations against hunting and fishing on your behalf if you wish. However, please appreciate that many people in this area are avid hunters and fishers and support these activities. To voice your concerns, Mr. Bill Grimmit should be contacted at the Ministry of Natural Resources.

The OxBow/Tasso Notice Board has been erected at the intersection. Jointly funded by each lake's association, Howard Cambray constructed it at cost price.

### **Report: Bill McNaughton**

In the last election, the question was asked whether you would like to see district downsized and the answer was yes. A provincial committee is continuing to review the issue and there will be further downsizing. Bill chaired a committee locally to implement the initiative. District has dropped 16 full staff in the past year. Since 1992 they have dropped 40 people. We were concerned about reducing bureaucracy to save money. We passed a motion to have the district planning department downsized to eliminate duplication. If you have questions about downsizing or anything else, please drop in and see Bill at his home on Limberlost Road.

On May 24, 1996 the dumping fees for brush increased. We needed to implement a standard rate program. Our dump disposal rate was low compared to other areas. Franklin and Lake of Bays rates have been undercharged for many years. As alternatives, you can burn brush of course and there is a free brush dump in Dorset. On holiday weekends, the dump is closed Sunday if Monday is the holiday. There is a toxic waste site on Magill Church Road for paint cans, solvents, oils, and other toxic materials.

Regarding roads, budgets continue to get tighter and tighter. Since 1974, spending has been reduced from \$700,000 to \$500,000. Inflation factors in to make the cuts far more severe than this. We have 370 km of municipal road of which 182 km is specified as "year-round". If the town were to perform winter maintenance on a given "seasonal" road, it would then be obligated to upgrade the structure of that road to "year-around" specifications. Given the fiscal budget restraints, winter maintenance of seasonal roads is not even open to discussion. Lower road standards have not yet been subject to review making the prospect of less stringent specifications not possible at this time or perhaps not at all.

### **Lake Stewards Report - Ed McRobbie**

Ox-Bow lake is recorded as having zero capacity for future property growth. Existing lots that are empty will be given a permit if desired. Our lake has been chosen as a lake for water quality sampling. Every 2 weeks and the end of the summer we will be given a report on the health of

our lake. The MNR draws from 20 years of records on the lakes in this area. This year, water samples are also being taken in the channel linking Tasso and OxBow.

Will the camp be able to increase their population? The Olympia operation recently finished a major septic system reconstruction. Camp management is complying with all regulations and this should be a comfort to all cottagers on the lake. The system is designed to accommodate their peak population.

Every lake has a different regeneration capacities. For example, Rebecca lake has better quality water than OxBow. Ed McRobbie has been taking readings with the secchi disk this year. We had another algae bloom this spring in the lake.

Executive meeting - Lynn Brown suggested that we become incorporated. If we have a lawyer in the association, we would appreciate their help.

Community Dock - Concern was raised about car parking at the community dock to the point where motorists could have a difficult time manoeuvring a boat trailer. Signs will be posted not to park at the boat launch.

OxBow Narrows - please slow down in the narrows. Swimmers should have boat accompanying them but this is not always the case. Have an eye for swimmers.

## **New Business**

There will be a canoe race on the holiday weekend in August. A Kids Regatta at the camp has been cancelled. It cannot be done because of insurance issues.

Next years' executive:

Bruce Cameron - President

Bill Wylie - Vice President

Lynn Jackson - treasurer

Lynn Brown - will continue to our FOCA rep unless other people want to.

Tom McBride - roads superintendent.

Chris Cambray - Secretary

Meeting adjourned

In light of this and in view of recent announcements from the provincial government, education will not be funded from assessment. Rather, market value or actual value assessment will be used province wide. It seems we have done all we can to bring about changes to property taxation. Bill Wylie and I recommend that any member who is still withholding taxes owed to the Township in protest, should pay them now.

10. Bill Wylie has let me know how strongly he feels that we maintain our membership in the FOCA (Federation of Ontario Cottagers Associations). FOCA had a major role in eliminating education funding based on assessment. They successfully negotiated a lower Hydro cost for most Cottagers. They continue to be involved in Native land claims, one of which involves Ox-Bow Lake. They offer many services and much information, particularly through their lake stewardship program. A small fee increase has been proposed by FOCA which Bill hopes will not adversely affect our future involvement. We will have more discussion at the annual meeting.
11. ANNUAL MEETING - This year's annual meeting will be held on Sunday, June 29, 1997 at 1:00 p.m. at Ox-Bow Lodge.

*Look forward to seeing you there!*

Bruce