

Echo's of the Oxtongue

Newsletter of the Oxtongue Lake Ratepayers Association

Fall 2005

President's Message

Dear neighbours:

It is with great pleasure that I address you at this time as the newly elected president of the Oxtongue Lake Ratepayers Association.

2005 has seen wonderful cottage weather, particularly in July. The very high temperatures that month, which seem so oppressive when in the city, are seen in an entirely acceptable light when relaxing by the shores of our lake.

Our community is certainly a diverse one. Some come to the lake as cottagers, while others are permanent residents. Some wish to see more business and residential development in our community. Others would like to conserve it as it is.

Whatever your hopes for the future are, they should be informed ones. I urge you to support the Ratepayers Association and become a member if you are not already one. What we do is keep abreast of the status of our community and monitor any developments. We try to gather as much information as we can about activities on the lake, along its shores and along the highway through our community. This so that we can address issues as they arise and inform you and the community.

The RatePayers Association also enthusiastically supports social activities in our community. We urge you to keep informed by reading notices on our bulletin boards at Harris Road and at Helsel's Store.

Richard Wesolowski,
President, O.L.R.A.

OLRA 2005/06 Executive



Back row from left: John Salvagna, Gary Schultz (Vice-President), Jim Elliott (Treasurer), Rick Wesolowski (President). *Front row from left:* John Lawrence, Ann Lista (Secretary), Tracie Parrott. *Missing:* Ted Keown.

Highlights from the AGM

A record crowd packed the Community Centre on the August 1, Civic Holiday for the OLRA Annual General Meeting. Scott Hayden and President Bill Cunnington welcomed everyone to the event and thanked them for their support.

- Treasurer Lynn Logan reported that the net revenue of the Association for 2004/5 was \$1846.
- Ted Keown provided a report from the Fire Department. All blue address boards were now in place and urged everyone to take down the old yellow numbers. A 'new' used rescue unit has been purchased. He cautioned everyone about fire hazards and the need to check smoke detectors. Ted also reported that the Department has raised \$1743.99 which has been donated to a camp for children suffering from burn injuries.

Finally, Ted stressed the need to indicate very clearly where you are when calling 911 from a cell phone.

- Scott Hayden reported on a very successful year for the snowmobile club. Concern was expressed about ATVs using the snowmobile trails and that perhaps dedicated ATV trails were needed.
- Jim Smith reported that there were 32 paid up members of the OLRA and urged more people to become members.
- Election of officers for the Association resulted in the 2005/2006 executive shown in the picture.
- Frank Lista, chair of the OLRA Tower Committee reviewed the proposal by Bell to situate a cellular tower on Oxtongue Lake and described the steps taken to hire a consultant to determine if alternate sites were available in the area that would be less obtrusive. Several alternate sites were identified and these have been forwarded to Bell for consideration. The following motion, proposed by Frank and seconded by Marilyn Farber was passed at the meeting: "The OLRA supports the establishment of wireless cell phone service in the Oxtongue Lake area as soon as possible. However, we are strongly opposed to the current proposed site of the Bell cellular tower off Severn Lane. We urge Bell to locate the tower on a more remote location which is less visible from the lake, unlighted, less intrusive to the local residents and, if possible, camouflaged".
- John Salvagna raised the issue of the boat launch off Keysbury Drive and discussed the possibility of donating the land to the OLRA. As OLRA is not in a position to accept the offer the following motion was proposed and carried: "The OLRA requires continued access by road to the Oxtongue Lake dam".
- Fran Gower asked the membership for heritage artifacts to donate to the Dorset Museum (contact Kerry at 766-2246 or Fran at 635-1229).

Beetle Lake Trail Update

(Submitted by Chris Woodfield)

The Beetle Lake trail is a hiking trail running parallel to the north shoreline of Oxtongue Lake with access points at Blue Spruce and Timber Trail Resorts - a total distance of about six kilometers. It was originally developed by Bob Canning a local resident and municipal councilor in the early 1990s. However, for various reasons the trail was little used and fell into disrepair.

In 2003 the municipality secured the services of Haliburton Trails and Tours to resurrect and improve the Beetle Lake trail. Chris and Barb Woodfield were asked by the OLRA Executive to represent the community on this project.

In 2003 the Beetle Lake trail was reopened as it was originally set up by Bob Canning with a few minor changes, mainly to repair facilities that had deteriorated during the period that it had not been used. However, it had become obvious that more significant changes would be needed to improve the trail and to make it more interesting. As a result most of 2004 was spent reviewing the problems, exploring possible solutions and redesigning the trail.

Work on the new routing was started during the latter part of 2004 and completed this year. The result is that most of the trail has now been rerouted to avoid sections of the original trail that were difficult to maintain and crossed areas that tended to be muddy or subject to washouts. At the same time it was rerouted to visit a series of quite spectacular lookout points overlooking the north end of Oxtongue Lake. The trail has been brush cut and marked with blue diamond trail markers and directional signs at regular intervals.

The new trail still has access points at Timber Trail and via the Blue Spruce Ski Trails which may be accessed immediately north of the Algonquin Outfitters store. Trail Head signs are currently being

constructed and will hopefully be in place later this year. Trail maps are also expected to be available shortly.

During late summer a number of people walked the trail and reported that they have found it a little challenging but rewarding. The full trail takes about 2 hours to complete. However, for shorter walks: the walk to the lookouts from the Timber Trail entrance takes about half an hour each way, as does the walk to the Oxbow Creek Bridge from the Blue Spruce entrance.

Although Algonquin Park has many hiking trails, the Beetle Lake trail provides our community with a great facility that local residents and visitors alike can enjoy without payment of entrance fees or expenditure on gas to get there.

A few people have suggested we organize a community walk of the trail during October. Anyone interested should contact Barb or Chris Woodfield (635 – 2372)



View of Oxtongue Lake from one of the lookouts.

Bell Cell Tower Update

In September, Frank Lista spoke to an executive at Bell who is involved in making the final decision regarding the location of the cell tower. Bell confirmed the following:

- Three other sites are currently being investigated in the Oxtongue Lake area;
- Technical studies are being conducted on each of these sites;

- Bell will attempt to limit the height of the tower and have it unlighted or at the very least, light shrouded;
- The budget to install a cell tower in the Oxtongue Lake area has been approved by Bell for 2006;
- Bell will be contacting the OLRA in the near future for its input regarding the location of the tower.

Your 2005 Tax Assessment

MPAC is sending 2005 assessment notices to property owners from mid-September to mid-November. They reflect the assessed value of your property at January 1, 2005 and will be used to calculate your property taxes for 2006. Assessment notices have already been sent to some parts of the province and confirm that waterfront property assessments are in fact rising at a much faster rate than other residential property. Some waterfront areas are up by as much as 30 to 40% compared to 15% which appears typical for urban areas where numbers are available. Go to <http://www.wraft.com/mission/> for further information.

Winterize Your backyard for Wildlife

(Submitted by Barb Woodfield)

Wildlife can usually fend for itself and, if healthy habitat is available, readily finds its own food and shelter. When the north wind blows, however, many food sources disappear, temperatures plunge and survival becomes a continuous challenge. You can lend a hand by providing high-energy foods and warm accommodations. Here's how to turn your backyard into a wildlife oasis in the bleak of winter.

- Provide food for birds - include in your backyard buffet such goodies as peanuts, millet, cracked corn and sunflower seeds;
- Build brush piles - create winter homes for all kinds of creatures;

- Give toads a winter abode – dig a hole, fill with sand and cover with compost or other insulating material;
- Make space for snakes – build hibernation lairs for these herpetological heroes. Dig a hole, fill with rocks, logs and brush, cover with thick layer of leaves, brush and soil.

Source: *Canadian Wildlife Federation*, 1-800-563-WILD or www.wildaboutgardening.org

Algonquin Review Area Adjacent to Algonquin Park

Many property owners will have received notification from the Ministry of Natural Resources proposing the formation of a new Crown land use designation called “Algonquin Review Area” on Crown lands within approximately 6.5 kilometres of the western boundary of the Park. The intent of the designation is to prevent undesirable access and incompatible uses adjacent to the Park and enabling consideration of new compatible land uses. In conjunction with this land use amendment, MNR also proposes an amendment to the Forest Management Plan for the French-Severn Forest to identify a new Area of Concern near the Park.

For more information or to submit written comments, property owners are encouraged to contact, Michael Bissonette, Resource Planner, MNR, 1350 High Falls Road, RR 2, Bracebridge, P1L 1W9, or call (705) 646-5526.

Other Issues being Investigated by the Executive

See future issues of the newsletter for details.

- Waste Management Master Plan
- Community Centre Use
- Trout lake Zinc Mine
- Highway 60 Bridge Repairs

Membership

The purpose of the OLRA is to unite all property owners on Oxtongue Lake and vicinity, for the enhancement and enjoyment of Oxtongue Lake land, homes and cottages. If you are not already a member of the Association, please consider joining by completing the form below and sending it with a cheque for \$30.00 to Oxtongue Lake Ratepayers Association, RR#1, Dwight, Ontario, P0A 1H0, or dropping it off at Hessel’s General Store.

Oxtongue Lake Ratepayers Association 2005

Name: _____

Mailing address: _____

City: _____

Province: _____

Postal Code: _____

Telephone

Home _____

Cottage _____

E-mail: _____

If you have news items or short articles that you would like included in the newsletter, please contact the editor, John Lawrence at (705) 635-9121 or (905) 659-3491.