

# Echo's of the Oxtongue

Newsletter of the Oxtongue Lake Ratepayers Association

Summer 2006

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## President's Message

Dear neighbours:

It is my pleasure to address the residents and cottagers of Oxtongue Lake in this newsletter. We have seen a beautiful spring and are now starting the summer season. I sincerely wish it to be one of the best ever for you and your families.

We all have our own interests to pursue on the Lake. It may be that the Lake is your permanent home, or that you cottage here for recreation, or that you operate a business venture here. Whatever has brought you to Oxtongue Lake, you are a part of its Community.

One service you have as part of our community is the Oxtongue Lake Ratepayers Association. I've found, in my years at the Lake, that this body has been a great source of information regarding local events and developments. Over the years your Association has been involved in monitoring water levels, debating safety issues on the Lake, voicing concern to Town Council with respect to development near the Lake and also encouraging social events in the Community.

Most recently we have monitored progress of the erecting of the Bell Cellular Tower and lobbying Town Council with regards to the demolishing and clean-up of the old "Howling Wolf" property on Highway 60.

As part of the Community I urge you to keep informed about events on and around Oxtongue lake. Be part of the Ratepayers Association by becoming a subscribed member. We also invite all residents to the

Annual general meeting which will be held on the Monday of the long August weekend – see announcement below. The AGM is the best source of local information on any number of topics as they relate to the Oxtongue lake Community. I again encourage your active involvement.

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

## Notice of AGM

The 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Oxtongue Lake Ratepayers Association will be held Monday, August 7, 2006 at 10:00 am in the Oxtongue Lake Community Centre. Please come out to support your community association.

## Bell Cell Tower Update

The Community Centre had standing room only on Saturday, May 27 for the meeting with Bell Canada representatives to discuss the new proposed site for the cell tower at Oxtongue Lake. While most people present acknowledge that improved cellular coverage and high speed internet service was needed for the area there was still considerable concern expressed about the proposed location which is quite close to several dwellings located along Highway 60. The new site is located on the Phillips property and has direct access to highway 60. It is located 300 metres away from the original site towards the highway. The tower will be less visible from the lake and will be buffered by the ridge on which it was to be originally located. It is also to be at a slightly lower elevation, about 50' less than the original. The tower will be of a

monopole design with the antennae mounted inside the structure similar to the one at the west gate of the Park. It will be unlit and will accommodate both Bell's and Roger's requirements, thus eliminating the need for other cell towers in the area. Several days prior to the meeting Bell had launched two balloons from the site on 150 foot cables and had taken photographs from various locations around the lake to demonstrate the extent to which it would be seen. Discussion mainly centred around location and potential health effects from high frequency electromagnetic radiation. Several questions were asked as to why the tower could not be located in an area further removed from cottages and homes, for example on Crown land west of highway 60. While the response was couched in terms of technical preferences, signal reception, ease of access, etc., the arguments were not convincing. There was heated discussion on the potential health effects that the tower could pose to those living close to it. It was explained that while very high levels of electromagnetic radiation can cause cancer, the effect of continuous, low levels of radiation from structures such as cell towers is not really known. Present instruments can not detect measurable radiation further than about twenty feet away from a tower but that does not mean that it has no human health effect. It was pointed out that radiation standards for cell towers are set by Industry Canada and that the standards are currently under review.

At the conclusion of the meeting Bell indicated that a summary of the points expressed together with written submissions received would be sent to Council for their consideration.

## **Household Hazardous Waste Day**

All households should have received notice from the Township about the Household Hazardous Waste Day scheduled for August 5<sup>th</sup> at the Oxtongue Lake Landfill. This is an

opportunity to dispose of all hazardous material that collects around the home and cottage including, paints, finishing products, used motor oil, batteries, propane tanks, cleaners, aerosol cans, solvents, pesticides and herbicides, pool and photographic chemicals and fluorescent light tubes. The facility will be open from 1 – 5 pm. Be sure to bring your orange Landfill Identification Card with you. Please make use of this event as your local community has lobbied long and hard to have this service brought to Oxtongue Lake and we want to make sure it becomes an annual event.

## **Proliferation of Signs along Highway 60.**

No doubt you have noticed the proliferation of advertising signs along highway 60 between Huntsville and the Park and also along highway 35 towards Dorset. Apparently, with no public consultation, the Ministry of Transport has changed its policy of allowing one sign every 2 kilometres to one sign every 500 metres. As one local resident and business owner commented, it makes the approach to Algonquin Park look like a Florida highway! The issue has been brought to the attention of our councilor, Diane Griffin who has raised it with Algonquin Highlands Council. At the present time we are awaiting notification of their deliberations. The issue has also been raised with the Lake of Bays Council.

## **Protecting our Shoreline**

To a large extent the health of our lake is governed by the health and vitality of its shoreline. The zone where the water meets the land is the richest natural environment most of us will ever experience. This is the habitat of fish and a myriad of other aquatic organisms that make up the aquatic ecosystem. When natural shorelines are altered, often by well-intentioned cottage owners meaning to improve their water front, the vital balance between the

creatures, plants and earth can be irretrievably altered. There is an excellent publication, The Shore Primer, published jointly by Cottage Life in association with Fisheries and Oceans Canada that explains the delicate balance that exists at the shoreline and steps to take, and approvals you must obtain, if you are contemplating any alterations of your waterfront. The publication can be obtained from either organization or downloaded from [www.cottagelife.com](http://www.cottagelife.com). It makes interesting and informative reading even if you are not planning any alterations of your waterfront. The health of our lake is a prime concern to all of us and changes in one part of the lake can impact us all.

## Notes from the Fire Department

The O.L.V.F.D. consists of 15 volunteer fire fighters. Every firefighter provides approximately 100 hours a year to the department. This time consists of training in fire fighting (structural and forest) medical and rescue responses, training as outlined in the Ontario Fire Marshal curriculum and fund raising.

Over the years the firefighters, with your help, have held fundraisers and raised approximately \$100,000.+. These funds have been used to purchase equipment and training. Some of the equipment includes a rescue snowmobile and sled, rescue A.T.V. and trailer, pumper truck, rescue van (cost shared with township), chain saws and portable pumps. We also donated funds raised towards the purchase of the "Fire Safety House" which is a portable training unit in which children and adults can be given hands on fire safety training to better prepare them for fire prevention or a fire. This unit is owned and used by the area fire departments and is *Not* owned by MacDonald's Restaurant chain; as some rate payers think, however MacDonald's was a large contributor to the purchase of this training unit.

Please make our job easier and your summer more enjoyable by following these simple rules:

- Check your smoke detectors and replace the batteries. If you don't have smoke and carbon monoxide detectors install them **Now**. Smoke detectors must be installed outside every sleeping area and on every level of your home. It is the law.
- There is **No** daytime burning from 7:00am to 7:00pm, except for cooking and warmth. A "Fire Ban" means absolutely **No Fires**. Fire Bans will be posted.
- Make sure your 911 number is visible.
- Have your chimney cleaned and inspected by a qualified chimney sweep at least once a season.
- Operate your boat and any motorized vehicle in a safe and courteous manner.
- Do Not drink and drive

Have a safe and happy summer

Ted Keown  
District Fire Chief

## Some History of Ragged

**Falls.** (An account by Fran Gower reprinted from Facts & Fables of Oxtongue Lake edited by Fran Gower and Marnie Brethour, with kind permission of the editors)

Have you ever given thought to having the privilege of visiting Ragged Falls taken away? This almost happened in 1968 when Mr. Frank Knapp appeared at Oxtongue Lake and declared his ownership of the Ragged Falls area and proceeded to prevent anyone from visiting it. The rumour was that he planned to make it into a big commercial enterprise. This was a dreadful situation and it was only through the quick action of the Oxtongue Lake Association and the

Ministry of Natural Resources that it was prevented.

In 1892 David Gilmour of Gilmour & Company Ltd. purchased pine timber rights to almost 87 square miles around Canoe Lake, for the unprecedented sum of \$703,875 to keep his sawmills and factories operating in Trenton, Ontario. He then devised a scheme to transport the logs via the waterways. His plan included constructing a supply road from Dorset, where he had an office, to his depot at Tea Lake. He also planned to establish logging camps on the timber limits and build dams and slides on the Muskoka (Oxtongue) River to transport his logs to Lake of Bays, on their way to Trenton. One of these slides was built at Ragged Falls (as well as one at High falls). It was preferable to build log slides in a straight line, but local physiography forced them to construct a curving trough down the top half then a straight slide for the lower section, down this 82 foot drop. A wooden dam was built at Tea Lake to raise the water level about 6 feet, and it is possible that our dam at the outlet of Oxtongue Lake was built then as well (Jim Asbury's diary mentions going down the river a way to take out logs at the dam in 1902 but no other reference could be found to confirm this).

In January, 1895, two years after the log slide was built, Allan and David Gilmour purchased 1.5 acres at Ragged Falls, part of Lot 10, Con 13 and parts of Lot 10 & 11, con 14, McClintock Township. Ownership of the parcel was transferred to Gilmour & Company Ltd. in July 1901. The rest of Lot 10 (98.5 acres) was purchased by Andrew J. Davis from the Crown in January, 1907. On his death in 1960, this parcel went to Elihu James Davis, Jr. who sold it to The Last House Hunt Camp in August 1965.

In February, 1953, Mae A. Anderson acquired the 1.5 acres previously owned by Gilmour & Company for \$35.52. It is likely that this was a tax sale and that the price was the amount owing in back taxes by the

Company. The property was subsequently sold to Frank T. Knapp in June 1968 for \$3,000. It was rumoured that Mae Anderson was an Aunt of Frank Knapp.

Mr. Knapp, it seems, had plans for a commercial development at the site of Ragged Falls. During the summers of 1968 and 1969 he attempted to curtail any trespassing on his property. This was a terrible state of affairs – many a picnic and love story occurred at the top of the Falls. How could this stranger suddenly appear on the scene and stop everyone from enjoying this beautiful spot?

Fortunately, the Oxtongue Lake Association (now Oxtongue Lake Ratepayers Association) appealed to the Ministry of Natural Resources to rescue our treasure. There was an announcement in the Huntsville Forester in the summer of 1969 that 4.01 acres known as Ragged Falls had been expropriated by the Department of Lands and Forests for use as a “public recreation area”. This is undoubtedly the greatest successful endeavour of the Oxtongue Lake Association since its inception in 1962. We must all be thankful to the executive of the day for their foresight to act on our behalf to maintain Ragged Falls for all to enjoy today and for ever (the area was set aside as Ragged Falls-Oxtongue River Provincial park in 1989)

## Membership

### Oxtongue Lake Ratepayers Association 2006/7

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

Province: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone

Home \_\_\_\_\_

Cottage \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

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