

Echoes of the Oxtongue

Newsletter of the Oxtongue Lake Ratepayers Association

Spring 2007

President's Message

Dear Friends:

Another summer season is approaching us. Spring is a season marked by cleaning up after the winter and preparing for the summer. A lot of effort goes into making things "just right" so that we can take a day or two out of each week to sit back and bask in the warmth of the summer. When those rare days of relaxation come along, oh how we enjoy them. The many days of preparation are rewarded when we can finally relax in the summer sun.

Reflecting on the activities of your Ratepayers Association, I am encouraged by the concern and diligence exhibited by the Executive. I think I can say that the Executive members, in their various roles, have done wonderfully well observing and reporting to the membership the issues affecting the Oxtongue Lake community. You will read about the many of these ongoing and upcoming issues in this newsletter.

In preparing for the upcoming season we not only prepare our properties but must also prepare ourselves to be aware of the current events in our community. This is why I encourage you to become a supporting member of our Association. I emphasize the word supporting. We do need backing by showing that a large majority of the ratepayers support the work of the Association. In this way we gain more political leverage in pressing forward our local issues with the Township. I think I can

say it is obvious that a knock on the door is louder when struck by a larger doorknocker! Let's give that Township Office in far-off Haliburton a loud door knock from Oxtongue Lake.

Our membership is up significantly this year but it is still less than 50% of the population. Why isn't it 100%? If you are a supporting member, approach a neighbour who isn't and ask for their support. Let a neighbour, particularly one who has a complaint, know that they may have support through their Ratepayers Association in raising a voice. For those of you who are members, I would like to ask you a question. What is your goal for joining the Association? Would you take an active role in achieving that goal? Then take an active part. One area the Association Executive always discusses is what social events could be organized to bring together our community. Several new initiatives have been started in recent years: the coffee station, events at the Community Hall, the ongoing success of the Regatta, the many events organized by the Firefighters. We do need more ideas. I recall one catchphrase we had at one school I taught at that was meant to encourage involvement: "COD – Community-Or-Deteriorate". Give it your best!

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

Notice of AGM

The 43rd Annual General Meeting of the Oxtongue Lake Ratepayers Association will

be held Monday, August 6, 2007 at 10:00 am in the Oxtongue Lake Community Centre. This is election year for the Executive so we are looking for new volunteers to serve in this capacity. As we discussed at the AGM last year, we would like to elect 4 board members for a 1 year period and 4 for a two year period so that in future we do not have all the positions changing at the same time. We also plan to discuss timing of future AGMs – is the Monday of the August long weekend the best time to hold it or would members prefer a different time. Please give this some thought and come with your suggestions. Above all, please come out to support your community association and encourage your neighbours to come as well.

Results of the Dam Survey

Eighteen responses were received to the Dam Survey which was distributed with the last Newsletter. A variety of views were expressed, some saying negotiate with the land owner to access the dam, others saying ignore the land owner and go around his property, take legal action or encourage MNR or the Township to take action. Given the disparity of responses received, the Executive is still considering the next steps. A further announcement will be made at the AGM. The real ‘find’ from the survey was a resident who still had the Dam file updated to 2001. The information contained in this file will be invaluable as we move forward on the issue.

Household Hazardous Waste Day

Last year’s Household Hazardous Waste Day at Oxtongue Lake was a great success and the Township has scheduled another one this summer. It is scheduled for August 4th 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 florescent light tubes. The facility will be open from 1 – 5 pm. Be sure to bring your pink 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 remains an annual event.

Bell Cell Tower Update

As many of you are already aware, the new cell tower started operating last November providing much improved cell coverage in the Oxtongue area. That is the good news – the bad news is that high-speed internet service will not be available for the foreseeable future. We will keep you advised if and or when this situation changes.

Property Taxes

In the last Newsletter we reported on some of the activities of WRAFT (Waterfront Ratepayers After Fair Taxation). OLRA is a member of FOCA and FOCA is a member of WRAFT. An informative article can be found on the WRAFT website http://www.wraft.com/news/2007-05-29_report.html .

Severe weather

(From the Fall 2006 meeting of FOCA)

A warning preparedness meteorologist reported on last summer’s major storms, especially those on July 17th and August 2. Severe weather includes:

- grape sized hail (20 occurrences per year in Ontario on average
- 1 inch of rain in an hour (20 times per year)
- winds over 90 km/hr (70 per year)
- Tornadoes (14 per year)

A weather radio station in Algonquin Park broadcasts on 162.4 MHz, 24 hours a day in

English and French. Weather radios are available for \$50-100 at most electronic stores.

General safety guidelines for severe weather:

- get as low as you can, underground if possible
- put as many walls as possible between you and the weather
- seek best shelter such as:
 - a basement of well constructed house
 - a windowless room on the lowest floor
 - in a one room cottage, seek shelter under a sturdy table
 - in a soft sided tent or van/car, low down, below door level in van/car
- outdoors, seek low lying area, if lightning is main threat- crouch down and cover head, if strong winds lie flat and cover head

Visit www.msc.ec.gc.ca for daily weather, fact sheets, weather alerts etc. (If you are connected to the internet as you read this by e-mail, try hitting the “control: button on your computer and “left click” your mouse to go directly to the website of the Meteorological Service of Canada.

Haliburton/Stanhope Airport Expansion Plan

The Executive has learned that Algonquin Highlands Council has received a consultant’s report on the development of Phase 3 of the Haliburton/Stanhope Municipal Airport and is intending to proceed. This expansion will have a significant impact on all parts of the Township and could include an increase in tax levies to cover a large part of the cost. Your Executive is concerned about the lack of public involvement in a decision of this magnitude and has sent the following letter to Council asking for a public information meeting before the plan proceeds any further.

OPEN LETTER TO COUNCIL
24 May 2007

Subject: The Proposed Stanhope Airport
Expansion

Subsequent to the May 7, 2007 presentation under council rules, the Executive of the Oxtongue Lake Ratepayers Association has had an indepth discussion of the proposed Stanhope Airport expansion currently under review by council.

The executive believes strongly that the Oxtongue community requires more information and participation in a venture of this size and scope. We feel that there could be significant implications to our community that warrant a full public meeting in a forum that provides for an open dialogue with the township’s consultants, staff and council members.,

With this letter, the Oxtongue Lake Ratepayers Association is formally requesting council to arrange for an open public meeting to discuss the proposed Airport expansion. We would suggest that the meeting be held in Dorset so that it encourages attendance by interested parties from both northern communities (Oxtongue and Dorset). Furthermore, we would suggest that it be held at a time that would allow for seasonal residents participation and attendance. We respectfully request that this meeting be scheduled as soon as practical so as to allay the fears and concerns of the ratepayers and dispel any misinformation that may be circulating.

We look forward to receiving a favourable response to this request in the near future.

Yours Sincerely,
Gary Schultz
Vice President, OLRA

cc: Lake Associations and Ratepayers
Associations of Algonquin Highlands,
Mr. Barry Devlin – MP
Minden Times

Annual Regatta

(Submitted by Tracie Parrott)

This year's regatta (the 47th) is being organized by the Gower/Parrott families. It will be held Sunday, August 5th at Oxtongue Lake Cottages beach starting at 1:00 pm. In case of inclement weather, the rain date will be Monday August 6th. Please bring your own canoes, paddles and life jackets (mandatory) if you have them. Donations towards raffle prizes would be much appreciated – please contact Korby or Tracie Parrott (635-1549). The Art Andrews trophy is 30 years old this year! The picture below is from 1977 when Rich Swift won the Tom Paris trophy and Tracie Gower Parrott won the Art Andrews trophy.



The 46th Annual Oxtongue Lake Regatta was held on the August 6th, 2006 long weekend and was a great success. Weather cooperated and gave us a sunny day with a lovely (?) breeze. Lots of volunteers were enlisted to help with the day and everyone seemed to be in good spirits. We

had a large, enthusiastic crowd that participated in the wet, water sports and were generous with their money - buying lots of raffle tickets, hamburgers, hotdogs, sausages, pop and water.

It was a successful day in terms of both racing and fund-raising and we send a big thank you to our great Oxtongue Community for helping raise money for our local volunteer Fire Department.

In total, we raised \$ 1,453.50.

Congratulations to our Art Andrews trophy winner, Charisse Parrott for the top female, and our Tom Parris trophy winner, Kevin Thomas for the top male.

Both are repeat winners, so let's get our canoes and paddles ready to bring to this year's regatta and challenge them for the winning prizes - 2 beautiful paddles, donated by Algonquin Outfitters.

A big thank you goes out to all our wonderful volunteers for the day. A special thank you to Scott Hayden, Jim Rowan, Greg Parrott, Harold from Cabin 6, John Catterall and Rich Swift. Finally, we wish to acknowledge all our extremely generous sponsors who are far too numerous to list – a big thank you to you all.

(2006 report submitted by the Lomax, Hollingsworth/Clarridge families, 2006 Regatta organizers)

Notes from the Snowmobile Club.

(Submitted by Marlene Kyle)

The Algonquin Snowmobile Club would like to thank everyone for their participation during this winter season. With many social events the club was able to raise approximately \$1,000. The highlights of the year can be viewed on our new and improved website – www.algonquin-sc.on.ca. The chili cook-off and the fish derby are two of the great events. This year the fish derby was won by Doug Kyle with a winning 8lb lake trout – see picture on next

page. A special thank you to the many local businesses who helped support all the fund raising events with the donations of prizes and their valuable time.



Notes from the Fire Department

Due to the recent very dry weather the Haliburton/Muskoka area has already had to put a 2 week total fire ban in effect. After some rain this ban was removed, however, things are still very dry so please be careful with any fire.

The fire department has erected signs at a number of locations in the area to inform you of the various burning conditions. Please read and heed these signs as you could be liable for any damage your out of control fire causes and for the costs to extinguish it.

Oxtongue Lake has an excellent track record for fire safety. When we compare Oxtongue Lake to the remainder of our municipality our fire loss is very low. Keep up the good work. It is all common sense.

- Change the battery in your smoke detector. Make sure it is working. Smoke detectors Do Save Lives.
- Make sure your 911 number is visible
- Be careful with fire

Have a safe and very happy summer
Ted Keown
District Fire Chief

Canadian Wildlife Federation Backyard Habitat Certification Program

Submitted by Barb & Chris Woodfield

We thought Oxtongue Lake community might be interested to hear about the certification of our property by the Canadian Wildlife Federation as a “Backyard habitat that will benefit wildlife”.

Certification involved providing a detailed sketch of our property together with photos, a listing of the native plants, trees and shrubs that are on the property and a description of what has been done to encourage wildlife, including birds, frogs, insects, salamanders, moths and butterflies. A few examples of what we have done to encourage wildlife are leaving dead trees where that can be done safely, leaving fallen trees where they fall to rot and add to the soil, and leaving piles of rocks, brush and logs for small creatures to use as shelter. We do not use any pesticides or fertilizers and have a composter.

We purchased our property of 2 acres on Oxtongue Lake in 1988 and for ten years used it as a cottage. We developed flower borders as transitions to the natural foliage of the area and developed a small nature trail throughout the wooded area of the property.

We have also anchored a wooden plank offshore for wildlife. Now every summer many ducks make our shore front their resting place. Many an evening a Mallard and her ducklings will settle for the night on the safety of our plank.

Over the years we have encouraged the growth of natural shoreline plants. In one short section, a retaining wall made of railway ties had been constructed to address a subsidence problem. This was never a satisfactory solution, so in 2005 we

undertook some shoreline restoration on this section of the shoreline. We consulted the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and obtained the necessary permits to carry out the work which involved the removal of the railway ties and the use of materials they suggested to restore the waterfront to a more natural state.

We are now benefiting from all the work we have put into the property. We have more birds, frogs and insects than previously and last summer we saw a number of peepers. These we had not had before as they usually only inhabit the crown land at the far end of the lake.

Membership

Congratulations! In 2006 our Association membership climbed to 95, the highest for many years. Hopefully we will see a further increase in 2007. Membership of the OLRA is open to any permanent or seasonal resident of Oxtongue Lake. A vibrant membership will provide a strong and clear voice for sustaining and enhancing the community for present and future generations. Please encourage your neighbours and friends to join as well. The Treasurer will be collecting membership fees at the AGM but if you are not able to join us for the meeting please mail your cheque and updated contact information to OLRA, c/o Jim Elliott, 8 Island View Blvd., Toronto, Ontario M8V 2P4 or drop it off at Helsel's store. E-mail addresses are appreciated where possible as they reduce mailing costs for the newsletters.

Oxtongue Lake Ratepayers Association 2006/7

Name: _____

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Province: _____

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Newsletter edited by Margaret & John Lawrence. If you have comments or ideas for topics in future editions please contact us at lawrencemj@sympatico.ca or by mail at P.O.Box 302, Carlisle, Ontario L0R 1H0.