

Acton Island Association

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Report to Members Spring, 2006

As I sit at my desk writing this newsletter, I am looking out at the lake. The sun is shining, the water is shimmering and I have decided that its time to get the boats in the water and thereby officially start the summer season. I am sure that you are thinking about doing the same. Another summer at the lake is about to begin.

This spring newsletter outlines various things that have happened since my last newsletter or are soon to happen and that your board thinks would be of interest to you.

Annual General Meeting

This year's AGM will be held on **Sunday, June 25 at 1pm at the Bala Community Centre**. Please plan to attend. Highlights of the meeting will include:

Mayor Susan Pryke

The mayor of the Township of Muskoka Lakes has graciously accepted the board's offer to be this year's AGM speaker. She will be speaking on various matters including what issues are currently facing the township and where she believes the township will be in 5 to 10 years.

High Speed Internet Providers

Various providers of wireless and satellite internet services will have tables at the AGM. They will be available at the coffee break or after the meeting to provide you with information on their services and answer your questions. More information on your high speed internet options is provided later in this newsletter.

Acton Island Map

As mentioned in my last newsletter, your board has through the hard work of Jim Claydon, produced a map of Acton Island and the surrounding area. Copies will be given to members at the AGM.

2006 Membership Roster

The second edition of our membership roster will be available at the AGM. Many thanks again to Leslie McCann for all of her work on this.

Taxes

Your association financially supports WRAFT (waterfront residents after fair taxation). Its hard work is producing results.

In October the Ontario Ombudsman, responding to complaints from thousands of property owners, announced an investigation of MPAC, the company that determines assessment values. WRAFT provided evidence to this investigation and in March the Ombudsman issued a scathing report. While the report didn't deal with the underlying inequities of the assessment system, it seriously discredited the whole assessment methodology.

Wraft has also been meeting with politicians and their actions plus your complaints and those of thousands of other taxpayers to their MPP's seems to have hit home. The Premier recently stated that he would conduct "a careful, thorough, thoughtful review" of the property tax assessment system. With an election scheduled for October 2007, hopefully we will finally see some kind of solution to skyrocketing tax assessments.

Innisfree Road Landing

Your board responded to the request of cottagers on Innisfree road who were getting more and more tired of the Innisfree boat landing being used as a commercial loading and unloading site. In all seasons, barges were using the site to ship materials to locations on other parts of the lake and to bring back that equipment and their refuse. Cottagers especially objected to the odors produced by the unloading of tanks containing septic sewer waste. Numerous letters were sent by cottagers to the Township.

Initially, the township tried to block the use of the landing by placing boulders in the water but these were moved by the commercial users. Then, after a meeting in early May between your board member, John McMechan and the Mayor and Len Troupe, a barricade was installed. However, now this has also been removed by commercial users.

John and the nearby cottagers will continue to work with the Mayor and Len Troupe to ensure that a permanent solution is found. Thanks John for all of your work on the issue and thank you Mayor Pryke and Len Troupe for your ongoing attention to this issue.

Advertising Signs on Acton Island

As mentioned in my last newsletter, a number of members who attended last year's AGM expressed concern about the proliferation of advertising signs on Acton Island Road especially near highway 169. I am pleased to announce that my letters and calls to Len Troup, the Superintendent of Public works have borne fruit. The signs were removed a week or so ago.

High Speed Internet in Muskoka

Bill Tannahill, on behalf of your board, reviewed the options available to members who want a higher speed internet service than is currently available using the telephone lines.

The first thing that must be understood is that none of the providers can, at this time, provide a service equal to that provided by a cable operator or a high speed operator that uses fibre optic cable. While it is our understanding that fibre optic cables have been strung down highway 169 there is no fibre optic capability currently on the island nor planned in the foreseeable future. Therefore, at this time, you can not get the

same internet speed as you might be able to get in say, Toronto. However, you can get a much faster service than provided via the telephone lines.

There are currently about 5 options available, all are wireless options and all are much more expensive than dial up.

Of the five options available, 3 (**Indiginet**, 762-3535; **Muskoka.com**, 645-6097, www.muskoka.com and **Candlelight**, 866-629-6616, www.candlelight.com - what I call antenna tower service providers) require you to be able to receive a strong, reliable signal from their land based antenna towers. The other 2 are satellite based providers (**Anikast**, part of Telesat Canada – 877-264-5278, - www.anikast.ca and **Xplornet**, 866-841-6001, www.xplornet.com). The advantage of the antenna tower service provider is that the up loading and downloading speed is much faster than dial up. The disadvantage is that you may not be able to receive a strong reliable signal from where you are located. The advantages of a satellite provider are: a) the service is available anywhere so you don't have the same potential problem as with an antenna tower service provider and b) the download speed is very very fast. However, the upload speed is slower than that of the antenna tower service providers.

Of course, costs vary all over the place but in general equipment will cost you between \$400 and \$1000 (which may be paid over time) and there is a monthly fee for basic service of \$40 to \$60.

If this hasn't confused you enough, there may be another alternative available in a year or so. Muskoka.com recently won a contract through Blue Sky Net to build high speed wireless infrastructure that will provide service to over 90% of residents in Parry Sound Township and the western part of the Muskoka Lakes Township. They are also bidding on a contract for the eastern part of Muskoka which includes Huntsville, Gravenhurst and Bracebridge. If they win this area, they have stated that the cost for a residential user will be \$150 for installation and \$49.95 per month. They hope to have the service ready by June 2007. This will also lay the foundation for services like VoIP which allows things like phone signals to be transmitted over the internet.

Other Matters

Safe Boating

The Muskoka Lakes Association offers many safe boating courses for both youth and adults. Please visit their web site at www.mla.on.ca

Federal Age/Horsepower Boating Restrictions

Age	Power Restriction
1) Under 12 and <u>directly supervised</u> *	Boat with motor less than 10HP
2) Between 12 and 16 and not supervised	Boat with motor less than 40HP
3) Under 16	Not allowed to operate a PWC**

* Directly supervised means accompanied and directly supervised in the boat by a person 16 years of age or older
** Personal Watercraft

Pleasure Craft Competency Requirements

Who it applies to

When it applies

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) If born after April 1, 1983 | Must Now Have Your Pleasure Craft Card |
| 2) All operators of boats under 4m of length, including PWC's | Must Now Have Your Pleasure Craft Card |
| 3) All those born before Apr 1/83 | September 15, 2009 |
- For more information, visit www.safeboater.com or call 877-737-2223

Other Association Annual General Meetings

Your association is focused on issues directly relating to properties and roads on or leading to Acton Island. The Muskoka Lakes Association (www.mla.on.ca) and the Muskoka Lakes Ratepayers Association (www.tmlra.on.ca) have broader mandates and would appreciate your membership and support. I encourage you to attend their annual general meetings so that you can gain a better understanding of the issues affecting the wider community. Their meetings are as follows:

The Muskoka Lakes Association – Saturday, July 15 at 9:30 am in the Port Carling Community Centre.

The Muskoka Lakes Ratepayer's Association – Saturday, July 29 at 9:00am in the Port Carling Community Centre.

Your Township Mayor and Ward C Councillors

Mayor – Susan Pryke, spryke@township.muskokalakes.on.ca or 705-765-3156
Dist/Township Councillor - Stewart Martin, smartin@muskoka.com or 705-765-3370.
Township Councillors - Karen Ellis (705-765-6337), Brian Hare, brabbit@muskoka.com. (705-765-5527)

Your Acton Island Association Board of Directors

President: Gord Richards, 1153 Acton Island Rd., 705-762-5394 or 416-486-0507, grichards@sympatico.ca
Past President: Jim Lewis, 1043 Innisfree Rd, 705-762-1799, eleanor.lewis@sympatico.ca
Secretary: Brian Atkinson, 1153 Acton Island Rd, 705-762-5394 or 416-486-7404, brianratkinson@sympatico.ca
Director at Large: Malcolm Foulkes, 1054 Kemp Rd., 762-3664, r.d@bellnet.ca
Director at Large: Sally Hastings, 1029-2 Ham Rd., 705-762-5171
Director of Membership: Leslie McCann, 1133 Innisfree Rd., 705-762-5784, leslie@summitmortgage.ca
Director at Large: John McMechan, 1314 Innisfree Rd., 705-762-3748, kmcmechan@hotmail.com
Treasurer: Bruce Patterson, 1250 Acton Island Rd., 705-762-5270, oldpeakroad@yahoo.com
Director at Large: Bill Tannahill, 1022 Guys Rd., 705-762-0938, tannahill@encode.com

Your Board is here to serve the needs of its members. If you have ideas or would like to become involved please contact me or one of the other board members.

Gordon Richards, President