



NEWSLETTER SPRING 2008

Message from the Chair

Back in March I downloaded a scenic summer picture of snow capped mountains, a lush forest and colourful shrubbery with a pristine lake in the centre, onto my desktop. Each time I open my computer, I have this beautiful picture to remind me of the coming summer. Well it is almost here but today as I sit at my computer, the weather outside is cold and wet, a far contrast to my picture.

Looking back over the winter, the HLC has kept busy attending Council meetings, Environment meetings, Draft By-law meetings and of course MWC meetings. The HLC was able to secure funds from the 2008 municipal budget to supply four Huntsville lakes with navigational buoys. With all the cuts made to this budget, we thank the Council for their financial support.

Looking ahead, the HLC is monitoring Hydro One's request to use pesticides along their hydro lines and it is investigating the potential taxation for the rural and waterfront property owners for sewer and water.

Read more on these and other topics within this newsletter and have a safe and pleasant summer.

Bill Somers, Chair

Huntsville's Environmental Award Winner...by Bill Somers

In January 2007, Huntsville's Town Council dissolved the Environment Advisory Committee, a committee of Council. In response, several concerned citizens from the Town of Huntsville met and formed an independent citizen's group known as the Ad-Hoc Environmental Advisory Committee. The primary goal at that time was to have the EAC committee re-instated as a committee of Council.

In the spring of 2007, the Town created an Environment Committee (EC) comprised of three members of Council, one member of the Ad-Hoc EAC (plus an alternate) and one member of the

Huntsville Lakes Council (HLC) (plus an alternate). In the fall of 2007, the Ad-Hoc EAC decided to continue on as a permanent citizens group and changed its name to LEAF (Local Environment Advisory Forum).

In 2008, LEAF developed criteria, in conjunction with the Town's EC, for an Environmental Award to be given to two citizens/groups/businesses on Earth Day each year.

The executive of the Huntsville Lakes Council nominated Director Mary McCulley of the Chub Lake Association for this award. As the first recipient of this award, Mary is pictured below, receiving her award from Huntsville's Mayor Claude Doughty during the Town Council meeting of April 21, 2008.

Well done Mary.



Navigation Buoys...by Mary McCulley

With our budget in to Town by the deadline, we waited, with dimming hopes, as it became clearer that drastic cuts had to be made to finalize an "acceptable" figure. Bill Somers and I attended almost all the meetings dealing with the budget, hoping that our mere presence might help councilors skim over our tiny little \$8,000.00 line item, thinking only about the safer boating they would promote.

They did and we now have the cash to purchase and install these lovely Coast Guard approved buoys.

Our order is in and we expect delivery around the first week in June. This is a bit late for the start of the boating season but we had to wait for budget finalization and approval.

Town will own and insure the buoys but the lakes involved - Mary, Fairy, Vernon and Waseosa - will continue to maintain them and put them in and out each year as appropriate to their locations.

Thank you Town.

Zoning By-laws...by Mary McCulley

All our Huntsville member lakes were polled for agreement or changes to be made to a document the HLC Policy Committee had developed regarding the December 13, 2007 draft of the new by-law. These were compiled into a consensus document. The Zoning By-law Review Committee met and incorporated many of the changes suggested into a new draft made public on March 26, 2008.

We were left with only a few issues that we continued to have problems with. These were item 3.1.18.5 dealing with the maximum width of boathouses (set in the draft at 10 metres) and item 3.1.18.6c) dealing with the maximum length of docks (set in the draft at 15 metres but with an exception to allow a maximum length of 30 metres in shallow water areas but shorter if a water depth of .75 metres is reached first).

In response to our comments at the public open house on April 17th, it was suggested that we set figures for what we would like for presentation at the public meeting of the Plan and Design Committee on April 21st. Again the lakes were polled. An 8 metre maximum boathouse width (with possible exceptions for water access properties or properties with extensive frontage)

and maximum dock length of 15 metres even for shallow water areas were decided on. The Plan and Design Committee members seemed to consider favourably our boathouse width but the majority seemed to be of the opinion that many boats require depth for their use and we should not insist that they purchase low-draft craft. No voting took place.

Terry Sararas, Director of Development Services, noted at this meeting that Lake of Bays Township had held off on commenting until the draft was near completion. It had just submitted its comments which the planning staff had not had time to review. Most of these deal with waterfront and rural provisions in which our ZBLs differ from those of Lake of Bays Township. Since both municipalities share jurisdiction of portions of Menominee Lake, Peninsula lake and Lake of Bays, the purpose of its comments is to ensure that any new development and the permitted uses are not dramatically different thus ensuring the same overall character.

Environment Committee...by Mary McCulley

This committee has dealt with a number of initiatives over the winter season. It heard from the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit on an anti-idling promotion done in Gravenhurst. This issue was undertaken by the Health Unit due to the impact that exhaust fuels have on air quality. The results of this, which targeted not only the general public but school children, were to be available and presented to the committee later in the winter so consideration could be given to bringing the program to Huntsville. Apparently, the results have been delayed.

You may have noticed in the Town Hall Announcements section of the *Forester* that a box is devoted to Environmentally Friendly Tips. The idea for this came from the committee and the tips were received from experts in the community.

The committee also developed criteria and guidelines for an annual Environment Award (see the Environmental supplement to the May 28th *Forester* for more on this).

As you will have seen in the *Forester*, much meeting time was devoted to the storm water proposal for the new River Mill Park.

The committee also reviews environmental reports from the Sound-Sorb berm on the gun club property on Madill Church Road as well as from the ongoing monitoring of the KWH Pipe property in Town.

Bore holes were drilled on the firehall property (also formerly used by the tannery) this winter and the committee is reviewing the first test results in from these. Soil and groundwater testing results from Avery Beach, where a Shell Canada bulk plant was situated 25 years ago, will be reviewed when they are in.

The committee also took the Local Environmental Advisory Forum's (LEAF) Green Plan Committee under its wing so that it could be offered greater Town support.

Muskoka Watershed Council...*by Mary McCulley*

This very active organization with members from across Muskoka has been involved in a number of activities this winter. It is supporting a green roof demonstration project at Bracebridge's new rec. centre. Staff is working with real estate agencies to help educate them about shoreline development and best practices.

Phung Tran, who completed a terrestrial inventory of Muskoka, has been funded for two years in order to complete an inventory of the aquatic portion of Muskoka. Among a variety of aspects, the terrestrial portion looked at the whole area identifying large tracts of land that could be considered for development constraints in order to hold on to areas large enough to support wildlife requiring this. It also identified other natural features that require protection.

The MWC has hosted two excellent speakers in its Environmental Lecture series: Gord Miller, Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, on his latest report, and Dr. David Pearson, professor of Earth Sciences at Laurentian University, Science Director at Science North in Sudbury and Co-chair of Ontario's Expert Panel on Climate Change, on climate change and our lakes.

Elaine Jackson and I recently attended a workshop on Community-based Social Marketing for which MWC had received funding. This was an eye-opening experience as many of our notions on how behaviors can be changed did not pass muster. We found out how to devise plans that have a statistically much better chance of actually effecting change.

MWC recently provided the opinion to District Council that Hydro One not be allowed to use any non-essential pesticides (this year Roundup) on District Road right of ways.

It is also sponsoring the Well Aware program in Muskoka which allows private well owners one-on-one help with any well problems.

Comments are received at meetings on a variety of other issues. A position paper was developed on economic development and the MWC responded to the District's Muskoka Stormwater Management Strategy to name just two.

Sewer & Water Downloading...*by Mary McCulley*

The HLC will be providing comment on this issue shortly. We felt that we needed to be aware of the amount of subsidies provided by District tax dollars on behalf of sewage lagoons and whether we directly subsidize any portion of water and sewage treatment for urban dwellers.

Opinion has just been received from an expert who actually knows how to read budgets and a letter will be going out shortly to all our members for comment. Incorporating any responses, we will then send this on the District Council before its June 30th meeting when this issue will be discussed.

Are We Governors of Our Environment?..*by Dr. Burr G. Atkinson*

Hydro One continues their push to apply herbicides to district and municipal road allowances in Muskoka. The Hydro One's program officer, John Bowen, claims "that the inability to use herbicides on municipal road allowances in the district has resulted in an overgrowth of bush around its electrical lines that ultimately affects reliability" and "that the herbicide Roundup is safe to use" (see *The Forester*, February 27, 2008). You might recall that in 2007, the District, on the advice of Muskoka Watershed Council, rejected a request by Hydro One to apply Garlon 4 to road allowances. This year, 2008, Hydro One sought permission from the District to use other herbicides. Namely, (1) a foliar application of 'Roundup WeatherMax' on brush too small to cut, (2) a 'Vantage herbicide' on the stumps of deciduous, cut trees and (3) a EZECTO capsule system on brush located within the no-spray zone (*i.e.* a 3 meter buffer from any water). Interestingly, the commercial formulation of these herbicides generally consists of an aqueous mixture of (1) glyphosate, (2.) a *surfactant* that enhances the spreading of spray droplets on the leaves of plants and (3) various minor components including anti-foaming and color agents, biocides and inorganic ions to adjust the pH. Experimental studies support the idea that the toxicity of the *surfactant* used in these herbicides is greater than

the toxicity of the active ingredient (glyphosate) alone and the commercial formulations alone.

Unfortunately, there appears to be very little or no independent studies reported on the environmental effects of these *particular* herbicides (other than the manufacturer's reports) and no information (easily) available on the relative amount of the surfactant, active ingredient or other components used in the formulations of these particular herbicides. These facts, coupled with (1) Monsanto's (the manufacturer of these herbicides) brochure on 'Roundup WeatherMax', stating that "it is *toxic* to aquatic organisms", and (2) Monsanto's reply to a paper published in 2005 by Relyea (The impact of insecticides and herbicides on the biodiversity and productivity of aquatic communities.) stating that "there are no Roundup brand formulations approved in the US or Canada for application over water and that all current Roundup brand herbicide product labels specifically prohibit application over water", should cause one to pause before using these herbicides near our waterways. Indeed, it should make anyone concerned about the environment surrounding our waterways take a deep breath and reflect on the dangers that indiscriminate and/or poorly supervised use of herbicides, such as these, might cause on our environment. Whatever the case, we are the governors of our environment and, above all, should be well-informed caretakers of it.

Community-Based Social Marketing Workshop – April 23/24, 2008

HLC provided the funds for Mary McCulley and Elaine Jackson to attend this workshop, sponsored by Muskoka Heritage Foundation and Muskoka Watershed Council with funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The workshop leader was Doug McKenzie-Mohr, co-author of the book *Fostering Sustainable Behavior*, which was provided free to workshop participants.

The purpose of the workshop was to help the participants, many of whom were from volunteer groups such as HLC, to learn how to effectively change the behavior of others. We learned that trying to change behavior simply through education has been proven not to work as there is **no correlation** between peoples' attitudes and their behavior. We continue to use methods that are familiar to us: e.g., signs, brochures, seminars, etc. as it makes us feel like we are doing something worthwhile even if it's not effective. We don't focus enough on the **outcomes** of our efforts. We need to develop strategies that create barriers to bad

behavior and encourage good behavior through rewards and benefits. The barriers and benefits are unique to **each** behavior we wish to change. Therefore, we must understand what issues matter most to the individual, remove the barriers to change and motivate them to engage in different behaviors.

Firstly, we must look for barriers and benefits relevant to our project through literature research, unobtrusive observations of our target group's behavior, the use of focus groups and surveys. To apply all of these techniques to a targeted behavioral change could take up to six months.

There are different methods to achieve the desired results. Some work better for one project than another. Methods include: public commitment, social diffusion (role modeling by a respected person in the community), norms (peer pressure and social compliance), direct communication, the use of incentives, and making change convenient and easy. If you decide to hire a consultant to help you, you need to ensure they will use "social marketing" methods if you wish to succeed.

Focus groups are expensive to do using a professional consultant, but MHF may purchase a focus kit for do-it-yourself usage by groups and make it available free. If so, they would like to post results of others' projects to their website as examples of what can be done using social marketing techniques.

Of all the methods we explored in the workshop, probably the most important tool for HLC to consider using is the identification of barriers that get in the way of people changing their behavior and identify the benefits to them if they do change their behavior. We would then need to get their commitment to change their behavior through the various methods described above, for example, to improve the environment on a personal basis or take on and complete voluntary tasks.

Whatever method we decide to use for a project, it's important to pilot test the method before using it on a large scale in case it does not work. For example:

- The Federal Government hired Rick Mercer to promote the one tonne challenge in Canada. The method used (TV advertising) was totally ineffective in changing anyone's behavior. The government did not pilot test it before implementing it.

- Anti-idling signs used in Toronto resulted in almost no change in behavior. Personal contact on a one-to-one basis with drivers who were idling their cars and getting their commitment to change, followed by a sticker on windshield to remind them, worked.
- In Sudbury, asking people to adjust their thermostats in their homes was ineffective. When the town went door-to-door and actually supplied the thermostats, arranged immediate installation for free and showed people how to use them, their behavior changed resulting in a very effective saving in energy in their community.

Lots of detailed information, good handouts and practical exercises in applying the methodology were provided at the workshop. Electronic copies of the workshop handout sheets will be sent to HLC and other workshop participants for our use soon. You can also check out the Community- Based Social Marketing group's website at www.cbsm.com for more information.

HLC hopes to utilize what we learned at this workshop to benefit our organization's efforts in the future. Thanks for sponsoring our attendance.

Directors, Elaine Jackson and Mary McCulley

Stewardship...by Kim Small, courtesy Muskoka Watershed Council

Stewardship involves caring for and responsibly managing something entrusted to us. Landowners are encouraged to protect and enhance the natural diversity that exists on their property by understanding the interrelatedness of the watershed ecosystem. Specifically, on your land you can follow these best practices to ensure watershed health:

- Support and restore native vegetation
- Protect natural wetlands
- Reduce storm water run-off
- Upgrade and increase the setback of old septic systems
- Involve all lake residents, of all ages in the celebration and protection of our precious resource. Promote the stewardship of your lake!

To find out more about how you can make wise and informed decisions go to www.muskokawaterweb.ca for information on:

- Who protects your water

- How to protect your water
- The *Lake System Health Monitoring Program* – find your lake's data for 2007
- The *Lake Partner Program* – how you and your Lake Council can get involved
- Education and public information programs and workshops
- Best Practices

IT'S ASSESSMENT TIME AGAIN

What to expect this fall

Keep an eye on your mailbox this fall. It is sure to include your assessment notice. For many home and cottage owners it's unlikely to be good news. The notice will reflect the assessed value of your property on January 1, 2008 and the increase in value over the past three years. For most properties on waterfront, it's likely that the increase will be higher than average; that is higher than the municipal average, higher than the district average and higher than the provincial average. That means that your taxes in 2009 will be higher due to your assessment. Over and above that, you will be hit with your share of any increase in municipal spending. Your actual tax increase will only be revealed when you receive the second installment of your 2009 tax bill.

The installment plan

In the 2007 provincial budget, the government introduced major changes to the assessment/property tax regime. From now on assessments will be carried out every four years and any increases will be phased in over the subsequent four year period. This will apply to the upcoming assessment as well which means that your 2008 assessment increase will be phased in over the years 2008 to 2011. Assuming you will be faced with an assessment related tax increase, it will be phased in over the four years 2009 to 2012.

Do waterfront and urban property owners benefit from this four year plan?

The Coalition After Property Tax Reform (CAPTR) and Waterfront Ratepayers After Fair Taxation (WRAFT) have been actively campaigning for a number of years for reforms to the property tax system. Basically we believe that the current system is too volatile and has been particularly hard on urban and waterfront home and cottage owners. While we accept the principle that higher value properties pay higher taxes, we have been consistently calling for limitations on annual assessment increases. Both opposition parties

have included such reforms in their party platforms. But the government, which was reelected last fall with another majority, has in our opinion failed to come up with reforms needed to provide stability and predictability for Ontario property owners. It is our view is that the four year phase-in is nothing more than an installment plan for paying higher taxes. By assessing every four years the government is increasing the exposure of property owners to volatile real estate markets and inexact assessment methodology.

Where do we go from here?

CAPTR and WRAFT have set up a petition on their websites www.captr.org and www.wraft.com. We ask you to go one of the websites and sign up. It only takes a minute. Tell your friends and neighbours to do likewise. While you are on the website read the report we recently sent to our membership and learn what we've been doing and what's planned for this summer and fall. A study we commissioned on real estate trends clearly illustrates that most waterfront and inner city properties will be hit again this fall with higher than average assessment increases. When you get your assessments this fall, we'd be interested in hearing from you at wraft@sympatico.ca if you've been particularly hard hit. Let your MPP know as well. If we hope to get the government to think again we need to be ready to once again point out to all concerned the inequities in the present system. Unless we take strong action, there is no question that waterfront property owners as a group will continue to suffer the most from the present property tax regime.

Bob Topp, Executive Director, WRAFT

Privacy Issues and the HLC Website...by

Dwayne Verhey, Website Administer

The HLC website is set up to control access by "permissions". There are various levels of access to documents, depending on the sensitivity of the document and the needs and role of the user. The general public can only view what we have determined to be suitable for public consumption, while a Director of the Association can view all documents on the website – provided they are logged in and have been granted Director's permissions by the administrator. For example, Directors can read the unapproved minutes of meetings because they need the opportunity to check them for accuracy before voting to accept them.

The third main level, falling somewhere in between in terms of access to documents, are representatives of the various member associations. For example, they can view the master Contact List that contains our contact information of all the other representatives of member associations. Obviously we have to respect the privacy of these individuals but at the same time, representatives have a bona fide need to be able to contact each other.

If you have access to these sorts of documents, you need to respect the confidentiality. Do not pass them around indiscriminately. If you are not certain if someone should have access to a document one way to handle it is to send them a link to the document on the website. If they are authorized, it will appear. If not, they will get an error message instead.

I review all new registrations and assign new users to an appropriate group if I recognize them. However, if you register under a pseudonym and/or use a different e-mail address, I have no way of knowing who you really are. In that case, you should contact me at admin@huntsvillelakescouncil.org to make the appropriate arrangements.

Our Annual Meeting is August 9th at Robinson's Independent Grocers Community Room at 9:30 a.m. Please plan to have a representative from your association attend & consider sitting on the Board as a Director for the coming year.

If you are in town the weekend of August 22nd, 23rd or 24th, come hungry & visit Robinson's Community BBQ where HLC members will be cooking up hot dogs & sausages. Look forward to seeing you all there.

This newsletter is prepared by the Huntsville Lakes Council for its' members and supporters. If you would like to comment on this newsletter or contribute an article or post an event in upcoming additions, please contact contact@huntsvillelakescouncil.org.