



NEWSLETTER MAY 2007

Co-chair's Message

By Mary McCulley

Well - welcome spring, although it is most definitely off to a poor start. Imagine, Christmas Day was warmer than Easter Day! However, if all runs along according to form, we will soon be complaining about the heat.

We saw the new Council inaugurated and the setting up of **individual committees of council** to manage Town business in place of the previous Committee of the Whole. As you might be aware, our mayor did not renew the **Environmental Advisory Committee**, stating that the environment would be paramount in the considerations during all committee meetings. In the absence of an EAC, the HLC felt that it should monitor that this was happening. Fortunately, we have been helped in this by members of the **Ad-hoc EAC**. The mandate of this citizen's committee, brought into being in large part due to the efforts of Don Baker, is to be reactive to any omissions in environmental awareness in committee deliberations and to be proactive by tackling specific issues, such as green plans and pesticides. It intended to report to the mayor on its findings and recommendations in August or September as the mayor said he would reconsider the need for a Town EAC after a period of six months. However, at the Council meeting of April 10, 2007, our mayor asked Council to discuss and vote on the formation of an Environment Committee of Council with Mary Jane Fletcher as chair, himself as deputy chair, Fran Coleman as member and with a representative each from the HLC

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HLC Fundraising BBQ

The Huntsville Lakes Council will be hosting a BBQ fundraiser week-end at Robinson's Independent Grocer in Huntsville. (plaza, corner of Highways #60 and #11)

Friday, June 22, 2007 4:00 Pm to 7:00 PM

Saturday, June 23, 2007 11:00 PM to 4:00 PM

Sunday, June 24, 2007 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Please notify your friends and neighbours of this BBQ. Come out and buy a hot dog or a sausage and support HLC's endeavors! Members of the HLC will be on hand to answer any questions you may have concerning activities.

If you can spare a few hours to help out at the BBQ, please contact Bill Somers at (705) 788-2015 or via e-mail at dison@vianet.ca

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and from the new Ad-hoc EAC. We will discuss this issue at our next meeting May 12th.

I expect that you have all heard about the problems Mary Lake, and especially Port Sydney residents, are having dealing with MNR's intention to close the dam across the Muskoka River just south of Mary Lake. This walkway has been used without incident for well over 100 years and the Port Sydney Community Hall could hardly hold the crowds that attended the MNR presentation back in November. Absolutely none of the public wished the walkway closed and many suggestions were provided to MNR at this meeting. MNR maintains that its liability is the concern and is sticking to its policy. However, there is hope that some compromise can be reached. HLC sent a letter supporting the Mary Lake association.

Congratulations to Peninsula Lake on the successful completion of its efforts at the Ontario Municipal Board level opposing an application for development of a quarry which was to have been sited on a hill overlooking the lake and within earshot of nearby residents. A precedent was set for all lakes which will, hopefully, give new quarry developers a signal that the peace, tranquility and natural tree lines are too precious to not preserve.

Congratulations to Lake Waseosa as well on the OMB ruling which denied the severance of one lot into four. Lake Waseosa is over threshold, has a number of larger lots which could apply for the same consideration and as well, has a number of lots on the lake which have not yet been developed. However, these congratulations are muted now by the applicant asking the OMB to reconsider. A hearing is set for June for the OMB to hear arguments as to why the case needs to be looked at again.

Since our last Newsletter, the Muskoka Watershed Council has been its usual very active self. It has summarized the results of the two studies it ran this past summer on storm water runoff in Huntsville (looking at the flow into Fairy Lake from the Huntsville Place Mall, Canadian Tire Store and surrounding roads) and Bracebridge (looking at runoff into the Beaver Creek watershed which flows through Town). A Position Paper has been developed which makes recommendations encouraging planning authorities to develop, implement, monitor and enforce strategies to ensure that storm water carries no pollutants other than what would have been conveyed through direct precipitation and that there is no increase in storm water quantity or rate of flow.

At the February 19th meeting of the MWC, Phung Tran presented on the Muskoka River Watershed Inventory Project on which she is the Project Planner. This project is a collaboration of the MWC, the Muskoka Heritage Foundation, District and MNR. Its purpose is to do a landscape level analysis of the terrestrial ecological systems (ecosystems) within the Muskoka River watershed to help with planning and resource management. The Ontario Trillium Foundation and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans provided the funding. Its goals are to identify unique terrestrial ecosystems, areas of high ecological importance and stresses on ecosystems. In the process, biological data and site inventories were done, sites of unprotected vegetation and communities and landforms were identified and significant degraded sites were noted. A map was made showing the significant natural areas and connecting corridors. This will be of great benefit to, for example, help the MHF identify areas for potential acquisition or remediation; help District,

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for patent land, and MNR, for Crown land, come up with strategies to protect natural heritage areas; help the MWC as it develops the Land Component of its Report Card and to help all of them promote stewardship and education to enhance a logical and continuous natural system.

The MWC has printed a forestry brochure *Caring for your Woodlot* and will soon publish another brochure on storm water.

The Muskoka Heritage Foundation held three visioning workshops in February, looking at possible goals and new directions for its second 20 years. All the workshops applauded the work it is doing and really, apart from some changes in emphasis, only added the suggestions of increased political involvement and increasing membership.

Stewardship

The Muskoka Watershed Council's Report Cards look at the current health of our lakes, forest and air. Indicators of this health are set out in the following areas: swimability, drinkability, fishability, breathe-ability, biologic community integrity and diversity, physical environment integrity and sustainable community values. The last Report Card was published in 2003. The 2007 update is due out July 26, 2007. The ceremony will be in Huntsville at the Algonquin Theatre and the *Forester* will provide more details as we get closer to launch day.

As you might recall, the MWC was founded by the District Municipality of Muskoka and the Muskoka Heritage Foundation in the belief that the most effective way to sustain the watersheds for future generations is through co-operative approaches involving a broad

cross-section of the stakeholders in Muskoka's watersheds. The MWC believes that future development in Muskoka must be sustainable and reflect a balance between social, economic and environmental values. The Report Card is a tool that steers future decisions toward more sustainable ends. The local impacts of climate change will be added to the Report Card this year.

The Muskoka Heritage Foundation is hosting another tree sale on May 5th in Huntsville. Look in the *Forester* and *Weekender* for the selection available and support this. Only indigenous species are used and they're a great buy.

Volunteerism

By Bill Somers

"Volunteer" – to offer to give or do something – one of many definitions available.

To volunteer, a person gives or volunteers to do something, which helps others, without expecting a return. It is believed that one in four Canadians volunteer in one form or another.

Without volunteers, many public facilities, such as hospitals and social clubs like the Lions Club and the Rotary Club, would be hard pressed to survive. Many community organizations are not for profit and operate within a single local community. They are run on a voluntary basis and are self funding, raising monies through donations, fund raising events and grants. They generally have a board of directors and a written constitution and bylaws.

The Huntsville Lakes Council is one such organization. The volunteer board of directors is elected annually. Some directors agree to serve longer but

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eventually the board has to seek out new volunteers to replace those that retire.

A director since 2002, I for one will not be seeking re-election at the 2007 Annual General Meeting and I ask that you step forward and volunteer your services so that this worthy organization can continue to operate on behalf of its membership.

The HLC would also like to recognize and thank the volunteers who have served on our various committees. There is always room for more volunteers. If you would like to become involved, please check out our website at www.huntsvillelakescouncil.org or contact us at hlc@vianet.ca.

Membership

By Bill Somers, Secretary

The membership of the Huntsville Lakes Council presently stands at eighteen member associations. The Directors of the HLC welcome the newest member association – Otter Lake Association. This group of property owners has worked long and hard to form their association and the HLC wish the Otter Lake Association a long and fruitful existence.

The Huntsville Lakes Council is available to assist its membership. If your association has a concern and requires assistance, please contact us at hlc@vianet.ca or visit our website at www.huntsvillelakescouncil.org.

Our meetings are open to all.

HLC Website Offer to our Members

By Dwayne Verhey

If you have visited the Huntsville Lakes Council website lately you will have noticed our new address:

www.huntsvillelakescouncil.org and our new look. It is all part of our new support initiative for our member associations.

A presence on the web can be expensive, depending on the type of services and level of professionalism desired. This can be a heavy drain on a lake association's resources, money that is often needed elsewhere. At the same time, web-based resources can be a powerful and desirable tool in an association's arsenal.

With this in mind, the HLC has secured substantial internet resources for our members. For a modest fee, the HLC will supply any member association with hosting space, e-mail services, top quality open source software and technical assistance establishing a web presence. Each participating association will have its own domain name and control over its own webspace. Each association is free to install its own software choices and can operate completely autonomously if it prefers.

The price for this year has been set at \$25.00. This will be reviewed next April and adjusted down depending on participation levels. In addition, each association will be responsible for its own domain name registration fees (which we can arrange for you if you like - typically approximately \$10.00 US per year for .com, .org, .net or .info addresses).

For more information, see our website: www.huntsvillelakescouncil.org.

Special Projects

By Mary McCulley

At our January meeting, which the mayor and two councillors Fran Coleman and Brian Thompson attended, it was decided to support

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three initiatives. One of these was to canvas our membership to see which lakes needed additional funds to help their progress to a **lake plan**. Last year, Fox Lake had applied to Muskoka Community Futures for grant monies to complete its lake plan. The application was returned with the suggestion that MCF would consider an application that covered all the lakes in our association. Four lakes decided to be involved in this.

The second initiative relates to problems some of our lakes are having with **lake level** fluctuations. Fox and Mary Lakes are particularly hard hit and both had approached MNR as these changes have followed its implementation of the new Muskoka River Water Management Plan. Lake Vernon is having more minor problems. HLC suggested that these lakes band together for a more united front with MNR, hoping that Buck and Fairy Lakes would join in as they are an integral part of the chain. District Councillor, George Young, attended the April meeting and noted that he is concerned about levels of the Muskoka River at his home south of Town.

The third initiative relates to Lake Vernon's request that HLC help it in getting Town's financial support for the **installation of approved navigation buoys**. At the meeting in January, the mayor agreed that tourists to the area especially need to have in place recognizable navigation aids. A survey of HLC member associations showed that six lakes have buoys. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans was consulted about types and costs of approved complete buoy systems. Final costs are hard to determine for the mayor as the DFO will come to each lake and help it to determine the specific buoys needed and to look for other hazard areas. A meeting between the mayor and representatives of the lakes involved will be held shortly. As a side

benefit of these discussions, it was found that FOCA's insurance agent, Atrens-Cousel, will add buoy coverage at only an extra \$50.00 per year.

At our April meeting, we decided to put together an outline of the ways that successful private road management protocols have been developed by various associations. This will be put on our website.

WRAFT Report, April 2007

As summarized by Bill Somers

In the past month, the Ontario PC party has put a 5% cap on property assessment in its election platform. In response, the Liberal government has included a four year assessment cycle and four year phase-in in the recent spring budget. While WRAFT supports the PC plan, WRAFT will continue to push the Liberal government to include capping in its proposal. Without that change the Liberal plan is only a short term fix to a long term inequity.

Ontario Finance Minister Greg Sorbara's plan to spread property assessment hikes over four year cycles is just tinkering. It doesn't fix the unfairness as there is nothing in the budget that will prevent a return, every four years, to dramatic, double-digit increases in property assessments.

The *Coalition After Property Tax Reform* (CAPTR), which represents about a million Ontario property owners, believes assessment hikes must be limited to no more than 5 % annually. Otherwise, the combination of hot real estate markets in some areas and a crude assessment methodology will continue to lead to massive volatility in valuation and hence in property taxes. Five per cent is the average annual increase in residential real estate prices in Ontario over the past 25 years. It is therefore a fair and realistic cap, which

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will allow assessments to rise in line with past trends and not with overheated current market conditions.

In the last assessment in 2005, more than 100,000 properties in Ontario were up between 30% and 150% compared to the average provincial increase of 12%. The Sorbara four-year cycle means the person who gets the 100 per cent assessment increase in 2009 will have four years to deal with the heavy tax impact. Then the next assessment notice will arrive.

The promise to fix the volatile assessment and property tax regime the McGuinty government made in 2004 has been in place across Ontario for nine years and remains unfulfilled. If Mr. Sorbara had combined his new four-year assessment cycle with WRAFT's 5% assessment increase, he would have solved the problem.

For more information, contact WRAFT at www.wraft@sympatico.ca and/or CAPTR at www.captr.org.

- Are you part of a group that is trying to form a new lake association or do you know of another lake group that is trying to do this?
- Is your existing lake association considering incorporating but not sure if it wants to do this or how to start the process?
- Does your lake want to start a lake plan but not know how or where to begin?

Huntsville Lakes Council has developed guideline documents that can help you with the above challenges. Just contact us at hlc@vianet.ca for assistance or check out our website at www.huntsvillelakescouncil.com for more information.

Documents available:

- How to Form a Lake Association
- Flowchart to Incorporate a Not-for-profit Organization
- Lake Plan Template/Manual (LPT/M)

Huntsville Lakes Council has a new website

Take a minute to check it out at www.huntsvillelakescouncil.org

See special offer to associations on Page 4 of this newsletter

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 hlc@vianet.ca.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

The Huntsville Lakes Council is an association of Huntsville & area lakes whose purpose is:

- *to identify & provide a single strong voice to lobby for issues held in common among the lakes*
- *to facilitate lake plan development*
 - *to provide education on issues involving lakes & the watershed*
 - *to promote stewardship*

If you have any questions about the Huntsville Lakes Council, please e-mail them to hlc@vianet.ca