

Acton Island Association

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Report to Members Spring, 2007

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Realty Taxes and the November Provincial Election

In the last property value reassessment 61% of ALL Ontario properties increased by more than 6.5% and over 400,000 by more than 13%. Acton Island reassessments were very much in this latter group. Your Acton Island Association for the last several years has been supporting WRAFT (Waterfront Residents After Fair Taxation) and the more recent CAPTR (Coalition After Property Tax Reform) which represents all property owners in the province. Their efforts have made the reassessment process a front burner item for all three provincial parties. The governing Liberals have suggested a four year phase in approach, the NDP a freeze position until a property is sold and the Conservatives, who brought us the Fair Market Value Assessment process in the first place have promised a 5% cap on reassessment increases.

Wraft and CAPTR strongly support a cap of 5% as a smoothing mechanism rather than a phase in approach. 5% approximates the long term average increase in residential property values in Ontario. A phase in approach doesn't stop the large increases. Nova Scotia has capped increases starting in 2008 and 15 US states have also capped assessments. Only Maryland has a phase in system. A cap is revenue neutral to both the municipalities and the province. It does not cap taxes – only the volatility of their distribution amongst property owners.

With an election in November, this is the time to write or email your MPP about this issue and we strongly urge you to do so. Briefly tell your MPP what your situation has been and that you support a cap on reassessment increases, not a phase in approach. You can get your MPP's name and email or mailing address by visiting www.wraft.com. If you don't have a computer, give me a call and I can get the information for you.

Report on the Mayor's Task Force on Commercial Barging Docks

The Mayor's task force was formed as a result of Council's decision last fall to rehabilitate the natural areas of the public access at Innisfree Road which had been damaged by commercial barging activities. The two main reasons for forming the task force were to find alternative sites for commercial barging, particularly on the west side of Lake Muskoka and to improve the public's awareness of the importance of maintaining access for commercial barging.

In January the Mayor received their report. Although the task force did not discover any new sites suitable for commercial docking they did provide a range of recommendations for improving existing sites. One of the task force's 17 recommendations was that the Innisfree Dock be opened for commercial docking.

After reviewing the reasoning behind the recommendations the Mayor forwarded all but one of the recommendations to Council. I am pleased to report to you that the recommendation not forwarded to Council was the one suggesting that the Innisfree dock be opened to commercial barging. While Council has not yet adopted these recommendations I have been told that the Mayor's non inclusion of the task forces recommendation re Innisfree will not be revisited.

Many thanks to John McMechan and John Hurlburt for all of their work last summer on this matter and many thanks again to the Mayor and our Councillors for supporting our point of view on this issue.

High Speed Internet Access

In my Spring 2006 Newsletter (available at www.actonisland.com) I reported on your alternatives for high speed internet service. All of the alternatives required an up front cost of \$600-\$1000 for equipment. This cost may soon be decreasing as a result of the Blue Sky Net project undertaken by all levels of government.

Their undertaking has been to install and improve tower access points and then permit all service providers to use these to provide high speed access to their customers. Since the government is paying for much of the infrastructure equipment the installation cost to you should drop to the \$150-\$200 range and competition should result in monthly costs of \$40-\$50 (maybe half of that for seasonal customers).

I have been told that the system should be ready in our area some time this summer or fall. If you don't have high speed now, you may want to wait until this process has been completed.

Safe Boating Banner

Your Board of Directors, in an effort to educate boaters, will be hanging a safe boating banner from the railings of the Acton Island Bridge at various times during the summer. Children often learn and emulate what their parents do so it is hoped that the sign will encourage parents to keep to the 9KM speed limit when going under the bridge.

Boat Exhaust Noise

Have you ever experienced one of those times when you were sitting on your dock sipping a drink and talking to friends or just reading a book and relaxing when all of a sudden a really noisy boat went by, one that was so noisy that you had to stop talking or that broke the peace and quiet that you were so enjoying? Many have and it seems to be happening more and more. The problem seems to be the proliferation of high performance vessels since the late 1980's and the ability of the operators, at a flip of a switch, to direct the boats exhaust through above water exhaust pipes rather than through the below water exhaust pipes that help muffle the engine noise. To some boat operators the noise has a sweet sound to it. To others its just noise pollution.

Section 37(1) of the Small Vessel Regulations requires all vessels to have a muffler with the following exemptions: a) vessels manufactured prior to 1960 b) vessels with no muffler as long as the exhaust is directed under the water or c) vessels operating more than 5 nautical miles off shore. So the use of what is called the "Silent Choice" or "Captains Choice" switch to change the exhaust from below the water to above the water is illegal at any time on our lakes.

The OPP officers who are performing marine patrol duties this summer have now been trained on what types of systems are being installed in boats and how the systems look and what they sound like when working. This should help them to educate those problem boat owners who may not realize that what they are doing is not permitted.

If you see violators you can report the incidents by calling 1-888-310-1122. Gather as much information as possible: time, date, location, description of the boat and license number if you can get it. All reporting will be logged and the OPP will follow up directly or be on the lookout for those boats the next time one of their 114 boats are on marine patrol in our area.

2007 Annual General Meeting

This year's AGM will be held on **Sunday July 15, 2007 at 1PM at the Bala Community Centre.** We have arranged for a representative of the Planning Department of the Township to be our speaker and to comment on the new building codes, the successes and challenges. Questions of a general nature will be entertained following the speech.

Also available at the meeting will be copies of the 2007 Roster of Association Members as well as other information that may be of interest. Please mark down this date and come and meet your neighbours and hear about what is happening.

2007 Annual Meet and Greet

The annual Meet and Greet get together provides you with an opportunity to meet other members of the association and to reconnect with your neighbours or those living close to you. This year it will be held Sunday afternoon July 1, 2007 at a location yet to be determined. A notice of location and time will be set up near the bridge closer to July 1.

Mosquitoes, Innovative Ways to Cope

Jack Sinclair forwarded an article listing the following ways to try to keep mosquitoes at bay:

A) Use Bounce Fabric Softener Sheets. Just wipe on & go. Great for babies. B) Take one vitamin B-1(Thiamine Hydrochloride 100 mg.) tablet a day, C) Mosquitoes like something about banana oil so stop eating bananas for the summer, D) This is going to floor you, but one of the best insect repellents is Vick's Vaporub, E) Plant marigolds around the yard. The flowers give off a smell that bugs do not like, F) "Tough guy" Marines say that the very best mosquito repellent you can use is Avon Skin-So-Soft bath oil mixed about half and half with alcohol. Use at your own risk – no guarantees.

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@township.muskokalakes.on.ca or 705-765-3370. Township Councillors: **Karen Ellis**, kellis@township.muskokalakes.on.ca (705-765-6337), **Brian Hare**, bhare@township.muskokalakes.on.ca or (705-765-5527)

Your Acton Island Association Board of Directors

President: **Gord Richards**, 1153 Acton Island Rd., 705-762-5394 or 416-486-0507, g-richards@sympatico.ca
Past President: **Jim Lewis**, 1043 Innisfree Rd, 705-762-1799, eleonor.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 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: **Larry Scott**, 1173 Innisfree Rd., 705-762-2548, easyzzfriend@gmail.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 your other board members.

Gordon Richards,
President

