

Raven Lake Cottagers Association
Annual General Meeting
Landing Access Update

August 18, 2018

Landing Access Update

Good morning friends and neighbours. On behalf of the Lake Access Committee, I would like to summarize our progress with regard to securing the tenure of Lake Residents access to the Hwy 35 Landing with the Ministry of Natural Resources & Forestry.

First of all, in some ways, I feel like I am having a déjà vu moment. Our progress to date has been slow but steady and, while we realize that although this initiative has been a long journey and it remains ongoing, it is an important one. One that, when completed, will secure our rights to park both our boats and cars at the only point of access of a size, scale and capacity sufficient to meet the needs of the Raven Lake boat access residents.

The reason why we are pursuing this objective is that the MNRF considers the existing docks as being “an unauthorized occupation of Crown land”.

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Accordingly, in 2015 we submitted a proposal to the MNRF based on the following principles:

That the MNRF convey to the residents of Raven Lake:

- A right to park cars overnight at the Hwy 35 Landing;
- A long term, “evergreen” shoreline lease with the right to build boat slips, sufficient for every resident that wishes to have one, subject to RLCA obtaining the appropriate building permits to be issued by the Township of LoB. The maximum number of docks required is currently estimated to be 100.

In exchange, the RLCA will:

- Assume liability for the new docks and indemnify the Ministry from liabilities arising from the use of the new docks.
- Remove the existing stick docks from the shoreline over a 3 – 5 year period as the new slips are built out.

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In April, 2017, we received a response to our 2015 proposal from the MNR. Specifically:

- “The MNRF would not be opposed to issuing tenure for this portion of Crown land, having said this, the review and execution of any tenure document for Crown land is an extensive process and can take over 1 year to complete barring any unforeseen issues. ”

What does this mean?

- That the MNRF has identified a process that it will follow to make a decision as to whether or not they will approve the issuance of tenure to the RLCA.
 - It will be screened for:
 - effects upon the environment
 - Planning and development
 - Comments from the General Public including First Nations

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Over the 2017-18 winter, the MNRF commenced its approval process and we have received official notice that MNRF WILL NOT oppose our proposal and that we have successfully passed through a consultation process with the First Nations.

The next step is to complete Environmental Assessments for both the water and the land is now underway. The Bancroft office is overseeing the EA for the water and the Parry Sound office is doing the land portion.

We have also pursued “unofficial” discussions with LoB Township. Its feedback is that once the license to occupy has been granted they will consult with the MNR & AH and will also require:

- require a “boat study” performed to better understand how the use of the property would evolve
- require a permit for building of the new docks in accordance with the Official Plan and LoB by-laws

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In our discussions with LoB, we are learning where and how we fit in with its Official Plan

We have identified a Planning Consultant familiar with the type of studies/assessments LoB will require of us and will engage her services once approval has been granted. Initial discussions have been illuminating with regard to streamlining the process to be followed, limiting the scope of “boat studies” and interpretation of the by-laws for building out the docks.

We anticipate that the specific design, layout and positioning of the docks will be largely prescribed by LoB based on building by-laws

We expect to learn much more from the MNR (both districts), LoB and AH about the process over the coming months.

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We have not published a budget as promised last year because with the process being as drawn out as it has been, we wanted to have as relevant numbers as possible and therefore want to publish a budget that is as relevant for implementation as possible in real time.

In accordance with many requests, the Landing Access Committee was considering taking voluntary non-refundable deposits from prospective participants to be used to defray planning and legal costs which would then be included in the total cost of the project and shared pro-rata by all dock users. However, the MNRF has asked us not to do so until they are closer to reaching their conclusion regarding their support of our proposal.

We will keep you informed of progress as it happens.

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I will also mention that I have been in contact with both of our local counsellors, for LoB and ALGH and both expressed that we were very smart to be proactive and that there has been a change in the way government in general was looking at things. Just because things have always been a certain way does not mean that they will stay that way.

With an election coming up in both Algonquin Highlands and Lake of Bays on October 22, 2018, please recognize that each everyone who is property owner or renter is allowed to vote. This applies even if you are only a seasonal resident.

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Frequently Asked Questions

What would we gain?

A secure legal right to access our properties while parking our boats and our cars at the Landing.

Guaranteed access to moorage and parking for new owners/residents as needed, up to the 120 slip maximum and the right to overnight parking.

No change to the use at the landing with no increase in traffic.

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Why are we doing this?

This proposal is about fitting into the precedent that has been established elsewhere in Ontario in similar situations by the MNR.

What do we risk if we do nothing?

Everything. With our proposal being made in good faith and firmly being considered, we are mitigating the MNR's ability to make a decision without consulting us. If we hadn't made a proposal, we would be at risk of the MNR making the decisions for us. Including removal of the stick docks without replacement, enforcement of no overnight parking and a general loss of control of our own destiny at the landing.