

## Water Levels and Waste

Rick Zanussi, Councillor Ward 4

As many of you have heard, we are facing a water level crisis. I say crisis because we have never experienced these low levels ever....Levels are down five foot three inches from their 1997 levels. Although many of us know Georgian Bay water levels fluctuate annually, we are now faced with an unprecedented problem.

Many of you will be unable to take your traditional routes to your island properties, in the boat(s) you have used for decades. Upon your spring arrival more of you will find your docks will not be in enough water to tie your boat to. Yes, it's that bad.

Let me put it in perspective; if you left on a typical calm August day in 2012 and returned on December 20, 2012 you would find the water level was thirty nine inches lower. Granted there was a good east wind that blows the bay water west towards Lake Huron/Lake Michigan, but nonetheless that's the situation. Although water levels annually recede in the fall and winter months, they have dropped this year in an unparalleled amount.

There are many purported factors, all of which have been studied to death, but we have to deal with the consequences. To that end, the Township began working on a way to facilitate ratepayer's docking and dredging issues, away back in October. The three year program adopted by council last month allows ratepayers to move or increase the length of their docks to enable access to their properties. This may be done without regard to current bylaws. You are now able to do this with a hand drawn site plan, and no inspection fees. Please visit the Township website for full details. A simple form needs to be signed by the property owner promising to remove the extension/changed dock within three years. If water levels continue council will revisit the time frame. Should you need to relocate your dock to any location that infringes on the normal side line setbacks, another form needs to be signed by the affected neighbour. Quick, simple and free.

Dredging of your shoreline or waterways however is an issue that the Township has little control over. It is regulated by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) and Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) Unfortunately there are severe restrictions on dredging and timelines for this work. These restrictions are generally encouraged by all of us, as they protect fish and wildlife. The Township has been in ongoing conversations with both Ministries in an attempt to increase the timelines available to dredge, in these unprecedented low water level times. We are hamstrung however as these provincial regulations are very difficult to change. Again, there is more information on the Township website.

Most of us have seen ongoing changes at the island waste sites. The Township continued to improve waste collection at Devil's Elbow, Sheep Head Bay and again secured agreements with the Town of Parry Sound and Georgian Bay Township so ratepayers can utilize current sites at MacFarlane and on Twelve Mile Bay road.

You now see fully sealed waste containers with compactors at all seven Township transfer sites. The island sites were the last two to be retrofitted with these compactor units. As a result the Township will save \$20K annually in barging fees alone from the island sites (compacting requires fewer barge trips) and \$10K in corresponding land transportation fees. As well, by using the Township owned Holiday Cove Marina we are saving \$18k annually by eliminating the lease rights for the former mainland landing in the Parry Sound harbour.

In 2011 the conversion to a closed site was completed with required fencing. It must be noted that this change was driven by the Ministry of Environment (MOE) Their mandate is to ultimately have all Ontario sites open only when staffed. Although this is a costly and inconvenient change we did see a \$2k savings as the attendant ensured proper disposal of recycling materials, which reduced the "contaminated" containers to zero....prior to this change some 90% of recycling containers that were transported to the approved recycling facility in Bracebridge were rejected, and those containers had to be reloaded and sent to a regular waste site.

I should also note that the island waste sites will be opened much earlier this year than in prior years. As you know we are experiencing much earlier spring boating and the sites attendants will be on hand much earlier in the spring. Again see the Township site for full operational schedules.

I again implore all ratepayers not to leave garbage at any site when it is closed. It is disgusting to note how many people leave garbage on the dock or shoreline. This encourages bears to populate the areas as easy food is available. No doubt most of you have heard of the ongoing bear problems we have on McLaren Island. Be forewarned....there are now cameras at each waste site. The OPP have already charged one group of people who broke into the attendant building in October 2012. The Township will use these cameras to identify people who dump illegally. My thought is to parade the offenders to all the ratepayers on McLaren Island who continually deal with bear break-ins....me thinks I'd rather face a judge than those ratepayers!!

Please continue to support the GBA, GB Forever, The Sierra Club, and the many other groups who are working with all levels of Canadian and US governments in our pursuit of remedies to our water level crisis.