

Dear South Channelers,

Although I am writing this in mid-April, the temperature today in Toronto is 4 degrees-- not exactly inviting cottage weather. There have been some choice days this month, but if you were at your beloved cottage this weekend, you would likely be hauling in armloads of wood, and curling up before stove or fireplace.

But the calendar doesn't lie and summer 2012 has to be on its way. In fact, it may be one of the earliest on record. This may be a good place to mark that same calendar for the date of our **Annual General Meeting, August 11 at 10:00 a.m. at the Glenn Burney Lodge** where we met for the first time last year. If you have friends or family for the weekend, bring them along.

One item for discussion at the AGM will be a possible modest fee hike for us members. Forty dollars of our \$63 goes directly to the Georgian Bay Association (GBA) and has for the past 10 years without any increase. The President of the GBA claims that just a \$5 increase would save the day. So, your Executive, which is in favour of it, will put this matter on the agenda for August 11. This would set our annual membership in the SCA at \$68. I don't know about you, but we can't fill our car tank or boat tank once for \$68.

David O'Toole, the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) has just announced this month that we may well be looking less and less to assistance as cottagers from our MNR with offices in Parry Sound. Since 1991, their budget has been reduced from 1.5 per cent of the Provincial budget to 0.5 per cent...and staffing levels have decreased from 5,800 full-time positions to 3,300. Certainly the future will include a decrease in the number of ministry offices. Will this mean Parry Sound's ministry offices? Speaking then, to the diminished role of the MNR, O'Toole acknowledges that "the environmental community has been disappointed in the Ministry's ability to manage Ontario's natural resources; stakeholders are frustrated by the Ministry's limited human and financial resources; and the environmental commissioner continues to criticize the MNR's ability to protect the province's natural resources." In the Fall issue of On The Waterfront, Rick Zanussi, our bear consultant (!) recognised the problem early on when he stated, "MNR has refused to deal with nuisance bears on islands for a very long time. They simply don't have the staff, vessels or provincial funding to perform these duties on islands." Claudette Chabot and Paul Morgan, members of our SCA Executive, are keeping an eye on what this might mean for us cottagers. Stay tuned!! Maybe we can make less government a good thing in the long run. Reminds us of the familiar cynical saying: "We're from the government and we are here to help you." RIGHT !!

I hope you didn't discard your copy of the Winter issue 2012 of On The Waterfront. The last 2 pages are our lifeline. Second to last page ...a splendid setting forth of why you should be a member of the South Channel Association...and last page, the 2012 Membership/Renewal Application Form. John McAllister has done a masterful job. Read it again and better yet, give your cottage neighbours a copy. With government

agencies backing off more and more, We need a stronger voice which can only come by more members. There are about 300 cottagers between Parry Island swing bridge and Amanda Island. And we have been stuck for several years at 100 members. Please read John's page again...and make sure your neighbours do, too, this Spring.

Battles of the War of 1812 will be re-enacted in various places this summer. But the war some of our members will be most engaged in will be the war against marauding bears, particularly on McLaren Island, where cottagers have been fighting nuisance bears for 2 years. Rick Zanussi addressed this nagging problem in the Winter issue. In light of the decline of the MNR, we may not be able to look to that agency for much help. To quote Rick: "Unfortunately, I can almost guarantee bear break-ins will continue in the Spring on McLaren Island, and no doubt others as well. There are clearly more nuisance bears that will be back to cause more damage as they break into cottages. Remember, once a bear finds a food source, that location is etched permanently in its little brain. And nuisance bears often don't differentiate between one cottage and another; they know there's food in that big box in the woods."

The members of your Executive look forward to meeting with and talking to you this spring and summer. Like you, we want to be good stewards of the most favoured cottage country on the continent. Yes, we hear you from Haliburton, Muskoka, the Kawarthas, Bay of Quinte, the Rideau Lakes, etc., but we stand by our conviction.

Remember....**August 11, Glenn Burney Lodge, 10: a.m.**

All good things, Gervis
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