

CONCESSION 17 PIGEON LAKE COTTAGERS ASSOCIATION INC.

Submission to the Panel on the Future of the Trent-Severn Waterway September 2007

The Concession 17 Pigeon Lake Cottagers Association Inc. represents the owners of 41 cottages on Sandy Point Road on the east side of Pigeon Lake in the Township of Galway-Cavendish and Harvey in Peterborough County. We appreciate this opportunity to make a submission to the Panel on the Future of the Trent-Severn Waterway.

Preservation of Boyd Island

Our Association is putting forward a proposal that would make a significant difference to the protection of water quality in Pigeon Lake. We propose that the Trent-Severn Waterway (TSW) purchase Boyd Island from Grand Island Estates and Mattamy Homes and keep it in its beautiful, natural state.

The discussion papers published by the Panel identified a number of issues of concern to people in the Kawartha Lakes. Many of these are significant concerns to our members and other residents on Pigeon Lake. These include:

- An increase in waterfront development and shoreline hardening including more year-round houses;
- Wetland and habitat loss and fragmentation;
- Eutrophication – in mid-summer, phosphorus levels in Pigeon Lake consistently approach or exceed the 20 ppb level at which algae and weed growth accelerate;
- An increase in invasive species such as zebra mussels;
- Rampant aquatic plant growth, particularly Eurasian milfoil (an invasive species) and tapegrass.

The proposed 95 house strip development on Boyd Island, approved by the Township of Galway-Cavendish and Harvey and the County of Peterborough in 2003, will exacerbate all of these problems. Keeping Boyd Island natural could achieve many of the Panel's goals and reduce the impact of the concerns noted above.

From 2001-2003, our Association submitted several briefs to municipal and provincial governments identifying numerous problems and impracticalities with the development proposal including:

- Strip development around the perimeter of the Island (with the exception of one wetland area deeded to the TSW) is contrary to Township and County Official Plan policies which encourage cluster development;
- Access to many parts of the Island is difficult due to rocky cliffs, shoals, weed beds and submerged logs, yet the only access to each lot will be by boat to individual docks;
- Boathouses are not permitted. Pigeon Lake is shallow and is subject to severe storms and high waves. Boats left tied up at docks during storms will be damaged or destroyed;

- Requirements for a 20 metre natural buffer zone, allowing only an undefined “narrow viewing corridor” for each house are completely unrealistic and unenforceable. The plan proposes that residents, possibly through an association, will enforce rules against the cutting of trees in the buffer zone. Residents purchasing an expensive lot and house will want to see the lake and will not stop each other from cutting down trees to facilitate a view of the water;
- Although the development is designated as seasonal, the houses are described as being built to year-round standards, encouraging permanent residency. This will inevitably result in pressure on the TSW to permit construction of a causeway;
- Lot owners will be required to drill their own wells even in areas where the hydro-geological survey showed that the water is not potable due to high mineral content. If the water is certified as undrinkable, they must incur the cost of a lake water treatment system;
- An enormous amount of fill must be brought by barge to the Island for the septic systems;
- No clear provisions have been made for mainland car parking and boat storage, garbage disposal, recycling and pumpout of septic systems;
- Provision of emergency services and utility services such as hydro, telephone, etc., will be difficult and costly;
- Habitat of wildlife and fisheries will be disrupted or destroyed;
- Archaeological resources are inadequately protected.

These concerns were never adequately addressed by the proponent or by the various government agencies that approved the development in 2003. The fact that construction has not begun likely proves that the proposal is not feasible and should be withdrawn. The proponent, Grand Island Estates/Mattamy Homes, may be open to an offer to purchase the Island.

The purchase of Boyd Island would create tremendous opportunities to achieve objectives identified in the Panel’s discussion papers. These include:

1) Securing of natural environment lands

As the discussion papers point out, the shorelines of the Kawartha Lakes, including Pigeon Lake, are heavily developed, with very limited public land. Boyd Island is an 1119 acre Island, at present completely undeveloped. It is a beautiful area and a valuable natural resource that should be preserved for public uses.

2) Opportunities for nature interpretation and education

The discussion papers identified a lack of opportunities for on-site interpretation and outreach programs for schools and the public. Programs such as these could be facilitated by partnerships with Sir Sandford Fleming College and Trent University, which already has the Oliver Ecological Centre on Pigeon Lake, an ideal location for boat access to the Island. Boyd Island would provide an excellent location for ecological and archaeological field work for university and college students. The TSW could consider providing public access and education programs for elementary and high school students and the general public during the spring and summer months as well.

3) Protection of valuable fisheries, wildlife habitat, trees and plants

Pigeon Lake is known as a good lake for fishing of bass, pickerel and muskellunge and important fisheries and spawning grounds are located around the shoreline of Boyd Island. There are also many species of birds and animals on the Island, including osprey, loons, herons, songbirds, beaver, mink, muskrat and red fox. Valuable forests and plants have also been identified. Public ownership and preservation of Boyd Island in its natural state would protect these irreplaceable resources.

4) Provision of recreational opportunities on publicly accessible shorelines

The discussion papers identified the lack of publicly accessible shoreline in the Kawartha Lakes for water-based recreation activities such as boating, swimming and fishing.

Houseboats now tie up at the Island overnight. The development proposal did not suggest any alternative locations for this. The preservation of Boyd Island would protect this activity and additional recreational opportunities such as picnic sites and swimming areas could be created in a limited number of locations along the shoreline.

There are organizations that might be willing to partner with the TSW to secure Boyd Island. These include the Nature Conservancy of Canada, Conservation Authorities, the Province of Ontario and the Kawartha Heritage Land Trust. Mattamy Homes promotes itself as a leader in sustainable development and may be willing to participate in an initiative to protect Boyd Island, for example, through the Ecological Gifts Program.

In summary, the development approved for Boyd Island is not needed and will be extremely detrimental to the ecology of Pigeon Lake. The purchase and protection of the Island by the Trent-Severn Waterway would be a major contribution towards the achievement of many of the objectives identified in the Panel's discussion papers.

Other Issues

Our Association participates in the water testing programs and environmental stewardship work of the Kawartha Lake Stewards Association. We share their concerns and support the recommendations they submitted to the Panel on September 13, 2007 including:

- Maintain existing water levels to ensure adequate flows from the north part of the watershed into the southern lakes to reduce their phosphorus levels;
- Discourage lawns in shoreline areas to reduce nutrient runoff and make shoreline properties less inviting to Canada Geese, which raise *E. coli* levels in the lakes;
- Provide current information and educate people on how to control aquatic plants and take any measures possible to reduce aquatic plant growth;
- Be more active in prevention of invasive species and public education on actions that can be taken to reduce their impact;
- Monitor discharges of sewage treatment plants and require municipalities to take measures to reduce discharges.

Our Association supports an expanded role for the Trent-Severn Waterway in ecological protection, coordination of regulation and enforcement of waterfront and in-water works and public education.

For further information about this submission or the Concession 17 Pigeon Lake Cottagers Association, please contact me.

Respectfully submitted,

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