

## Captain Otty's Log

The newsletter of the Otty Lake Association

October 2013

# President's Message

he talk around the lake this summer ■ has been algae and weeds. While some areas of the lake were clogged for several days, others remained weed-free all summer. The problem is both widespread and sporadic among lakes in our region, and the Otty Lake Association (OLA) continues to collaborate with the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA) in an effort to better understand and control excessive aquatic vegetation. We all want a clean healthy lake, fun for swimming, boating, tubing and water skiing. Capt'n Otty reminds us to not drink untreated lake water, and to have our well water tested regularly. Mrs. Otty thinks it would be nice to have lots of shrubs along the shoreline to help soak up the phosphorus and keep the geese away. Try cutting an angled path to the water so that the geese cannot see their way up to your lawn. The OLA **Environment Committee is conducting** more water testing, and evaluating ideas for improving lake quality. Got some thoughts? Let us know!

It has been a great summer for activities. Those attending the Annual General Meeting enjoyed a wide selection of interesting and relevant presentations and displays. Friends and neighbours from all around the lake converged on the Maple Glen recreation area again this summer for the annual Otty Lake picnic, with attendance double that of last year. Congratulations to the



dynamic group of Otty Lakers who organized a Paddle Power flotilla on the same day, making it a fun day for all. On another occasion a small but determined group of five kayakers paddled all the way to Perth, and plan to repeat the adventure next summer with a larger group.

We have lots planned for 2013/14, including attending the Lake Links program in October, and a fish habitat enhancement project in partnership with MNR. Watch this newsletter and future notices for more on the ongoing Shoreline Planting Program, shoreline survey and other activities. Visit our web site often for news and topics of current interest.

We welcome Barb Hicks as the new editor of *Capt'n Otty's Log*, bringing a wealth of experience to the job. If you have an interesting topic for an article in the Newsletter but need help writing it up, send your notes to Barb, who will happily ghost write it for you.

If you have suggestions or comments on OLA plans, activities or priorities, or wish to get involved with OLA activities, visit us at:

http://www.ottylakeassociation.ca/
- click on "contact us", and email us your thoughts. You can direct your email to a particular Board member or to the Board in general.

Have a great autumn on the lake, enjoying the fall colours and watching the flocks of geese, ducks and seasonal cottagers returning to their winter homes.

Robert Cosh

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### 2013 Annual General Meeting

A bout 50 Otty Lake residents and cottagers attended the Otty Lake Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Saturday, July 13 at the Perth Lion's Hall. Attendance was down from recent years, although it is suspected the beautiful summer weather was partly to blame. An interesting range of information displays were available during the social and refreshment time held before the meeting, which began with a number of guest presentations. Those attending heard an overview of the year's activities, and elected a new Board, which included the addition of four new board members. (See story on Page 4). The meeting concluded with draws for some nice door prizes provided by Tay Valley and Drummond/ North Elmsley townships, and the Otty Lake Association (OLA). Thanks to the refreshment crew of Carol Cosh and Mayme Mahoney for keeping us energized that morning.

The AGM is a chance to find out what your association has accomplished in the past year and visit with your Otty Lake neighbours. Here is just a sampling of some of the news meeting attendees came away with.

#### Some township news...

- 1. Drummond North Elmsley has a major \$300,000 project underway to build public docks at Rideau Ferry, which includes \$90,000 in federal funding. Building should begin in September.
- 2. Tay Valley Township is doing a five year update of their Official Plan and is looking for public input. On their website you will find 19 issue papers, several of which have relevance to lake residents, including mandatory shoreline buffers, significant woodlands, wetlands, and dark skies policies. (Several board

- members attended the open house held at the Township office on August 13th. Watch for more sessions to follow.)
- 3. After much discussion, the speed limit on the Elmgrove Road will remain at 60 kilometres per hour, and it will be enforced! Remember, speed limits are there for a good reason.

#### From Drummond/North Elmsley Tay Valley Fire Rescue ...

- 1. Campfires less than 2' x 2' x 2' feet are acceptable without a permit, although no fires are permitted during burn bans.
- 2. If a fire gets out of control, and you have been burning during prohibited times or without a permit, you will pay the \$410 cost per truck sent out. And usually three trucks are sent out!
- 3. Property owners should ensure that the laneway to their property is cleared to 16 feet wide and 16-20 feet high to allow emergency vehicle access.

#### **Protecting Otty Lake...**

- 1. Camping on Ontario crownowned islands on Otty Lake must be done "in an ecologically sound and responsible manner" says the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR). There was some discussion about how to encourage the positive and respectful use of crown-owned islands, for example, Cloverleaf Island. A committee will get together to discuss options. Contact Karen Hunt at 264-9273 or kmhunt@ripnet.com if you are interested in participating.
- 2. Wood ash is surprisingly high in phosphorus: as much as 0.24 to 2.1 pounds of phosphate per cord of hard wood. Please remember

to "Starve the Lake of Phosphorus" by disposing of any wood ash far away from the lake. That way it is less likely to make its way back into the lake and promote algae growth.

#### Fish and Wildlife...

- Wally Robins, our resident fish expert, reported an overabundance of pan fish in Otty Lake, that the pike population is doing poorly, and large and small mouth bass populations are stable. Poaching is not a big problem on the lake but it is out there, and with a relatively small lake, populations are fragile. He also outline the fish spawning enhancement program, the possibility of submerging dead wood to provide shelter to fish populations, and affixing dead trees on the shore angled into the water to benefit other wildlife. Watch for more next issue.
- 2. Bill McLeish, an OLA Board member, keeps a close watch on the lake's loon populations, and has concluded about 12 loons make Otty Lake their home. But only two chicks have been observed this year. Please remember to be respectful of loons and their nesting sites.

For a full account of the AGM, see the minutes on the <u>OLA website</u>. Please put next year's Annual General Meeting on your calendar for Saturday, July 12, 2014. The chance to hear from and ask questions of so many knowledgeable people is a great opportunity. You'll come away with a greater appreciation for Otty Lake, and lots of interesting factoids to impress your friends and family with!

**Barb Hicks** 

### **Enthusiastic Response for PaddlePower and Community Picnic**

Saturday 27 July marked a first for the Otty Lake community: an Otty Lake PaddlePower gathering. This was followed by our annual community picnic with many exciting and unusual activities.

At 10 a.m., 66 boats crewed by 70 people and three dogs gathered in the open water near Maple Glen on the Otty Lake north shore. The motley fleet rafted and formed a heart formation, photographed from the air by Norm Hull and pilot Brian Davies. After the record-breaking assembly was recorded, the intrepid paddlers came ashore for the community picnic at Maple Glen, who kindly allowed the picnickers to use their waterfront.

The picnic included another first: Darren Boyd of The Reptile Rainforest fascinated both kids and adults with his collection of reptiles. He showed a couple of ratsnakes, which are listed as "threatened" in this area, the last classification before "endangered". He warned against picking up snapping turtles because they can't retreat into their shells, so they bite if provoked.





Paddlepower. Photo: Rick Stojak

Their necks are so long they can reach back far enough to bite their own rear legs, so they can certainly bite **you!** Finally Darren brought out a boa constrictor, and allowed the braver spectators to touch it and experience the feeling of its skin.

Dave Bell ran the barbecue and picnickers feasted on burgers, hot dogs, veggies and home-baked muffins and cookies. After the meal, Chris Harrison announced "Let the games begin". The big hits were the tug-of-war and the competitive doughnut-eating contest, made more challenging by having the doughnuts hanging from tree branches – and no hands allowed! Roger Nuttall rounded out the afternoon by showing kids how they could eat some types of Otty Lake plants, and also what to avoid.

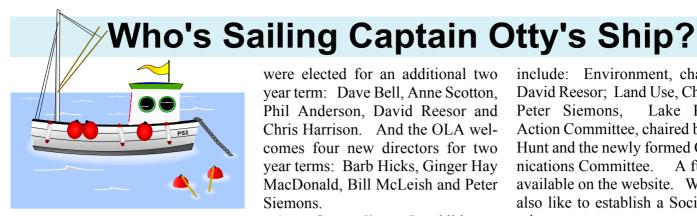
The enthusiastic response to PaddlePower was thanks to organizers Gail Read, Ian McDonald, Evelyn Dore, and Derek Smith. The creative team of Chris Harrison, Daphne Reesor, Gail Read, and Dave Bell put together the picnic and its activities. See y'all next year!

Don Beattie

### MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS ADVANTAGES!

A few people still have not paid their 2013 membership fees. If you are one of them, please mail it soon to the Otty Lake Association, Box 20122, Perth Mews Mall, Perth, ON K7H 3M6. Your \$20 is needed to further the great work of the OLA. Members who pay their dues before April 1 are entitled to a \$5 discount. (Here's an idea: If you haven't paid for 2013, make that cheque out for \$35 so you won't have to send another payment next year!) Please be sure to provide any necessary updates to your contact information while you're at it, so we can keep in touch. If you are not an OLA member, we would truly appreciate your support in future. See the website for details.

This year, the 54 people who paid their dues early were eligible for a draw made at the AGM. Fay Farmer won \$300 to be put toward anything related to Otty Lake protection, such as a septic pump out, a well test, or shoreline planting.



#### The Board of Directors

major function of the July Annual General Meeting is to establish a new board of Directors to manage the Otty Lake Association. We now have a full slate of 15 members which will meet several times over the coming year. Directors are asked to serve for a two year term, which ensures there is not a complete changeover in any given year.

Our thanks to Don Beattie, Wally Robins, Darlene Bishop and Murray Hunt who have completed their two year terms and are now retiring from the board. Taking on another two year term are President, Robert Cosh and Past President, Karen Hunt. Rick Stojak, Roger Nuttall, Cathy Kari and Gail Read are now halfway through their two year terms. Five people were elected for an additional two vear term: Dave Bell. Anne Scotton. Phil Anderson, David Reesor and Chris Harrison. And the OLA welcomes four new directors for two year terms: Barb Hicks, Ginger Hay MacDonald, Bill McLeish and Peter Siemons.

Area Counsellors. In addition to the Board of Directors. Otty Lake has 18 counsellors who represent the 25 area of the lake. It is their job to make contact with other residents in their area and deliver the summer information packages. They also make sure their neighbours' contact information is correct, and relay concerns of their area to OLA for consideration. If you haven't received vour package, or haven't connected with vour area counsellor over the summer, please contact Phil Anderson, the Counsellor Coordinator, who can provide the contact information for your representative.

Committees. The OLA has a number of committees that would welcome your participation. Generally these are headed up by one of the Current committees directors.

include: Environment, chaired by David Reesor: Land Use, Chaired by Lake Planning Peter Siemons. Action Committee, chaired by Karen Hunt and the newly formed Communications Committee A full list is available on the website. We would also like to establish a Social Committee

**Social Committee.** What would you think of a corn roast, a garden tour, a "Welcome Back to the Lake" dance, or a sailing race? Would you consider organizing something? We know there is interest within the Otty Lake community to have a few more special events or social functions that would give Otty Lake people a chance to interact. This year's Paddle Power and the Annual Picnic were great fun. Do you have other ideas? We would also welcome a "volunteer pool" of people willing to help out with specific events. Working together is all part of the fun! If you have some ideas, energy or time to devote to this group, or would like to be involved in one particular event, please get in touch with Chris Harrison, (613) 258-4598.

### **Lake Water Quality Testing Continues**

It has been another busy summer Lwith the water quality testing program at Otty. Again we have placed an emphasis on sampling for E.coli as an indicator of bacterial levels in the lake. E.coli levels at Otty have generally been very good over the past decade. This year we did have one value that exceeded the provincial standard for swimming, the first exceedence since 2003. At this time we are conducting additional sampling at, and near, the site of the elevated value to better understand the situation.



We are measuring nutrient levels at Otty by our continued participation in the MOE Lake Partners Program and also by some additional OLA sampling. This sampling for phosphorus at the mid-point of the lake and certain shoreline sites gives us an

indication of the conditions that support the growth of algae and aquatic vegetation. We are also directly supporting the Rideau Conservation Authority in their sampling program at Otty and McLaren lakes under their Watershed Watch program.

As of late August, we are still carrying out water quality sampling and measurements. Look for the results of the 2013 water quality testing program in the next issue of this newsletter

Murray Hunt

### **Native Shoreline Species Planted by Residents**

Members of the Otty Lake community arrived by truck, car, bicycle and boat to pick up their shoreline plants July 6.

Through this year's shoreline planting program, 125 shrubs (Red Osier Dogwood, Sweet Gale, Highbush Cranberry, Pussy Willow) and 75 pots of wildflowers (Blue Flag Iris, Canada Anemone, Cardinal Flower, Great Blue Lobelia and Joe Pyeweed) found new homes along the Otty Lake shoreline.

The shrubs were free to Otty Lake property owners through a special 2013 stewardship project of the RVCA's Shoreline Naturalization Program. The wetter spring really supported robust growth in the shrubs which were both beautiful and huge. Special thanks to Chris Harrison and Rick Stojak for picking up the plants at the Ferguson Forestry Station and delivering them to Murray and Karen Hunt's home for distribution.

The wildflowers came from Philip Fry at his Old Field Garden and Wildflower Nursery in Oxford Sta-



Cardinal flowers, a native species. Photo: Christine Kempster

tion, and were equally impressive. The OLA covered part of the cost of the first 50 wildflowers. An additional quantity was available at the full cost of \$8 each. Thanks to Evelyn Dore and Karen Hunt for making the pickup, and to Murray

Hunt and Gail Read for helping Karen on distribution day.

Christine Kempster and her husband Reid Kilborn were enthusiastic participants in this year's program. They received some shrubs through the 2012 program, and those plants had taken so nicely they thought they'd plant some more. They picked up eight red osier dogwood and seven high bush cranberry shrubs this year, and purchased a selection of five perennial wildflowers for just 4\$ each. Most of these they planted right in the water along the 240 foot shoreline of their 10 acre Little Otty Lake property. The dogwood was blooming just a couple of weeks later.

This is the fourth year native plants have been made available through the Association through the RVCA Shoreline Naturalization Program. Twenty-six Otty Lake residents took part in this year's program. The OLA supports shoreline planting because a well-vegetated shoreline is one of the best defences of water quality.

### **Summer Hike**



n July 14th, Roger Nuttall led a group of Otty Lake fans on a nature hike along the Gray Trail at Camp Whispering Pines, off of Long Lake Road.

This was part of the area covered

during the BioBlitz in July 2012. One year later, the abundant rainfall of May and June 2013 had created a very different environment. The vegetation was very lush, and there were many very interesting mushrooms and fungi. Sampling the bubble gum tree was a special experience.

Roger has led several nature hikes in the past, providing a great opportunity better appreciate the biodiversity of the Otty Lake watershed.



#### Protecting the Grey Ratsnake at Otty Lake

n 16 June 2012, the provincial Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) published a regulation to protect the habitat of the grey ratsnake. Previously known as the black ratsnake, the grey ratsnake is Ontario's largest snake, commonly about 1.2m (4 feet) long, and is non-venomous and non-aggressive. Ratsnakes eat rodents, keeping the rodent population in check. They can occasionally be seen sunning themselves on roads around Otty Lake, and some residents stop their cars to shoo the snakes out of danger. In 2009 the grey ratsnake was listed as "threatened" in the Frontenac Axis area which includes the Otty Lake area. "Threatened" is the last classification before "endangered", which means being on the verge of extinction.

Grey ratsnakes hibernate for six months of the year below the frost line in fissures in rock called "hibernacula". A particular ratsnake will use the same hibernaculum for its lifetime of 25-30 years. Hibernacula are not common, and if one is destroyed the snakes that use it are in trouble. When a ratsnake emerges from its hibernaculum, it is vulnerable for up to two weeks, and needs a safe place to gradually warm up. Logs, trees or rocks within 50 metres are the safest places.

Other shorter-term locations used by the ratsnakes are compost piles, fallen logs, or rotted stumps. The ratsnakes have common areas where the females lay eggs, where groups bask in the sun and where they shed their skins, typically three times per year. The uninhabited skin is remarkable, having no holes; even the eye covering is shed intact.

Ratsnakes are great travelers. On average, the female travels 1 km between her hibernaculum and the place where she lays her eggs!

Because the grey ratsnake is now threatened, the new regulation protects its habitat. The top priority is to protect hibernacula, so there is low tolerance for alteration within 150 m of a hiber-



Photo by Simon Lunn

naculum. The second priority is protection within 30 m of communal basking, egg-laying, and shedding sites, with more tolerance for alteration. The third priority is to allow travelling over the 1-km range.

At Otty Lake, the north shore and southwest shore are defined as grev ratsnake habitat because of verified observations of ratsnakes and hibernacula. What does this mean to Otty Lake residents?

The key is that activities in the habitat can continue as long as the function of these areas for the species is maintained and individuals of the species are not killed, harmed, or harassed. Removing or altering hibernacula is not permitted because this poses the greatest threat,

but generally yard work, gardening, and renovating or building a shed or a dock are not a problem.

However, if you encounter a rotting log or a compost pile being used as an egg-laving site, you should not disturb it until the end of the season in October. The eggs are soft, oval, and roughly 5 cm long. A female lays eggs only every 2-3 years in July. The attractiveness of an egg-laying site depends on the microclimate there.

If you cut down a tree, providing it is not used for egg-laying, communal shedding, or basking, the ratsnakes will not miss it, but if you plan significant clearing or landscaping, you should call MNR. MNR's intent is to allow landowners to carry on their activities while protecting the gray ratsnake, which means that MNR will work with landowners to find options that accomplish both ends. If you have questions or would like to discuss planned changes to your property, please contact Shaun Thompson at the MNR Kemptville District Office:

shaun.thompson@ontario.ca (613) 258-8235.

#### Otty Lake Watershed Calendar, 2014: Flora and Fauna

his 16 month calendar of the Otty Lake watershed flora and fauna offers a different theme for each month with multiple pictures for each. A truly beautiful and informative edition!Thank you to all of the Otty Lake photographers who have taken



time with their cameras to capture the beautiful flora and fauna of the watershed in which we live. The calibre of photographs submitted is truly overwhelming so multiple pictures have been incorporated for each of the sixteen (16) months.

Calendars are now on sale for rock bottom prices:

Cost: 1 for \$10

2 for \$15 3 for \$20

Please call

Robert Cosh (robertcosh@hotmail.com, 267-5723) or

Karen Hunt (kmhunt@ripnet.com, 264-9273) or Gail Read (read2read@outlook.com) to arrange a pick-up for your order. We hope that you will enjoy these seasonal reminders of our spectacular lake!

#### **New Lanark County Signs Being Rolled Out**

You have likely noticed some of the new signs being placed by Lanark County's Public Works department. New advance road name tabs have been added to the yellow diamond intersection warning signs to increase public safety, and reduce visual sign clutter. For example, cottage roads off of the Elmgrove Road, such as Millers Bay Road and Baxter Lane, have now been labeled more clearly. The older green and white signs on wooden poles used on former provincial highways are costly, easily damaged and at the end of their life span. It is cheaper to use these smaller yellow tabs on pre-existing poles. As an added benefit, the signage on former provincial highways and county roads will now be consistent. About 400 intersections across the County will need to be marked in this way, and the Perth area was just the first phase.



### Survey Coming for OLMP Five Year Review

An upcoming survey will provide an opportunity for Otty Lake residents to guide the work of the Otty Lake Association in the future. The Lake Management Plan was a reflection of what property owners told us they wanted for Otty Lake in 2008. The input lake residents provide for the upcoming survey will become part of the Five Year Review of the Otty Lake Management Plan.

The survey will be distributed to all cottagers and year round residents during the month of October 2013. You will be able to reply anonymously. Survey results will be shared with Otty Lake residents on the OLA website:

(<u>www.ottylakeassociation.ca</u>) and in the winter issue of Captain Otty's Log.

We want to know what you feel are the most important issues we are currently facing at Otty Lake today – and what actions you feel should be taken to address them. Your survey participation is important! The future of Otty Lake depends on all of us - we all have a shared responsibility to look after it.

#### **200th Anniversary Celebrations**





In 2016, this area of eastern Ontario will mark its 200th anniversary — and preparations are already underway. From all indications this will be a major celebration. Perth, Tay Valley Township, Drummond/North Elmsley Township and Beckwith Townships are all planning special anniversary activities. In all the local municipalities, the upcoming 200th anniversary celebrations will recognize and honour the early settlers — their hardships, dedication, accomplishments and their memory.

Otty Lake residents from both Tay Valley Township and Drummond/ North Elmsley Township are invited to become involved in their local township anniversary planning committees. Many of you will remember that Tay Valley township is an amalgamation of the former Bathurst, North Burgess and South Sherbrooke townships.

Meetings of the Tay Valley Township 200th Anniversary Working Group are held monthly, at the Township Municipal Offices, on Harper Road, Tay Valley Township. The public is welcome. For details on meeting location and this Working Group, please call (613) 267-5353.

Meetings of the Drummond/North Elmsley 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee are held on the fourth Thursday of each month, usually at 7:00pm, alternating between the Drummond Centre Hall and the Township Municipal Offices in Port Elmsley. The public is welcome. For information on each meeting location, call (613) 267-6500.

Karen Hunt

#### Wanted: Captain Otty's Log Contributions

Your new Log coordinator, Barb Hicks, would be delighted to consider any and all newsletter contributions: ideas for future stories, interesting experiences from around the lake, photos of nature or people having fun at the lake, newsworthy items from other sources, and the like. Does anyone have some interesting winter photos of Otty Lake for our winter issue, tentatively planned for February 2014? Contact Barb at <a href="mailto:dhicks11@cogeco.ca">dhicks11@cogeco.ca</a> or (613) 283-9966.

### **Wetlands Evaluation Workshop**



Shannon Ritchie from the Toronto Zoo's Adopt-a-Pond program identifying a wetland fern

About 20 people from the Otty Lake Community attended a free workshop to learn about Evaluating Wetlands on June 1. The event was hosted on the property of Evelyn Dore and Derek Smith on Baxter Lane on the North Shore of the lake on Saturday, June 1. The three and a half hour session included a "classroom" component in Evelyn and Derek's spacious garage, and examinations at several pre-selected sites on the property. Workshop leaders were Shannon Ritchie and Crystal Robertson from the Toronto Zoo's Adopt-a-Pond program.

Wetlands are a valuable but perhaps not well-understood resource in the Otty Lake watershed. Wetlands act like giant sponges, soaking up water during heavy rains and releasing it in drier times, thus moderating flooding and drought conditions. They contribute to water quality through removal of nutrients, pathogens and sediments, assist in ground water recharge, provide habitat for a wide variety of plants, birds and animals.

The basics of wetlands were covered quickly so the group could get to look more closely at how

scientists and consultants rate wetlands using the Ecological Land Classification and Ontario Wetland Evaluation System. These evaluation systems allow us to determine what a particular wetland is worth environmentally and how it is used by humans. They provide insight into what areas should be protected for rare species and plants and animals, and what areas show warning signs of environmental degradation.

The group went for a walk to see several examples of wetlands. One very basic classification is whether you have a marsh (often populated with cattails), swamp (more tree cover), or and older wetland, a fen or bog (also known as peatlands). Participants were shown how to identify some wetland plants, examine the soils found there, look for special features, and make other determinations such as where the wetland ends and the forest begins, or if the plants are submerged, emergent or floating.

The Ontario Ministry of Resources is responsible for the Ontario Wetland Evaluation System. Once a wetland is recognized as provincially significant, the landowner may be

eligible for a 100% tax exemption on the eligible portion of their property for protecting the natural heritage of that wetland. Much of southern Ontario's wetlands have already been lost, and much of what remains is privately owned.

If you have a wetland on your property, Shannon Ritchie is willing to make a site visit to evaluate it. Three Otty Lakers took advantage of this offer and arranged site visits. One couple who wanted to understand their property better was Bob and Christine Melville of Mud Lake, situated between Little Otty and McLaren Lake. These full-time lake residents generously invited any interested lakers to participate on the day of the site visit, August 12th. The group spent about an hour learning about wetlands hands-on, and then Shannon and Crystal spent several more hours examining the Melville's property on foot and by canoe. The results of the survey will be discussed more in a future issue. In the meantime, many residents have an increased understanding and appreciation of the role wetlands play in the Otty Lake watershed.

CAPTAIN OTTY'S LOG is produced by the Otty Lake Association (OLA) three times a year.

Coordinator: Barb Hicks
Distribution: Robert Cosh, Rick
Stojak, Shari Beattie

The Log is distributed by e-mail or Canada post to all Otty lake cottagers and residents. Contributions to the log are welcome. To find out more about the OLA, or to see past issues, please see:

www.ottylakeassociation.ca

Or write to the OLA, Box 20122, Perth Mews Mall, Perth, ON K7H 3M6.