

LETTER TO OTTY LAKE PROPERTY OWNERS, JANUARY, 1975

I always seem to write our winter letter during the coldest week in January. The week when the Spring seed catalogue arrives. And perhaps this says a lot. For after all Spring is just around the corner and in a few weeks we will be getting ready to make our way back to the lake to begin sprucing things up for the summer. What better time to take a look at where the Committee stands by examining our accomplishments and failures, and to think about where we are going in the future.

It is hard to believe that 1975 will mark the beginning of our 5th summer as a Committee. According to the people who dabble in statistics voluntary committees like ours are only supposed to last about three years. We are still going strong after passing our three score and ten because of the dedication and hard work of our Executive members and the generous support we have received from all of you. And yet there is another reason for this longevity. Our task is far from over. A good deal remains to be done and I don't think that any of us will turn away until the future of our lake has been assured.

From the beginning we have been breaking new ground. Things have not always gone smoothly and in several important areas we are still seeking solutions. However four functions have been remarkably straightforward and carried out quickly and effectively. Water quality monitoring, distribution of pollution control information and advice, the establishment of good working relations with the Lanark Land Division Committee, and the management of the annual regatta.

Four years ago Dr. Fred Green began water monitoring. By the summer of 1973 in co-operation with the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, and with the advice of Dr. Al Hoffman of the National Research Council, he had established a scientifically approved system for assessing the lake's water quality. Last summer the program was taken over by Dr. Laurie Liberty and his wife Carol. I am pleased to tell you that this work has been most effective.

One of our principal responsibilities has been to keep cottagers informed about the things they can do as individuals to keep the lake clean. For the first few years our task was to explain the problems and causes, and this was done through general meetings, news letters, and the distribution of pollution abatement publications. Last year David Code decided that the time had come to present our message in a more direct manner by going to the cottagers themselves. This would give cottagers a chance to discuss their problems on the site with people familiar with pollution abatement procedures. The program has been very successful. David organized teams in each zone under the area councillors, and the work was well received and helpful.

Our work with the Lanark Land Division Committee has been encouraging. This Committee is responsible for land severances in the County of Lanark, and it has taken a strong position with respect to severances for cottage properties on over-populated lakes. In all cases on Otty Lake the Committee has turned down applications for severances which might involve the establishment of new cottages and add to the problem of over-population and pollution. I have attended all hearings involving Otty Lake other than those which simply dealt with requests to add to existing lots and where no additional buildings were involved.

Donald Hill and I also attended a meeting of the Ontario Municipal Board held in Perth to consider a number of appeals against Land Division Committee decisions on other lakes, which if sustained could have established unfavourable precedents for Otty Lake. The results were satisfactory and we expect to represent you at similar appeal hearings in the future.

Once again the regatta was a great success. When Ken Daines returned from Australia he took over the program and it is quite obvious that he learned something from those carefree days on Australian beaches and the great barrier reef.

At the 1974 Annual Meeting we projected the anticipated pollution rates for July, August and September. These projections were alarming and the Executive was instructed to proceed with legal action to obtain an injunction against further building. The proposed court action was unprecedented and our chances of success depended upon our ability to demonstrate in a scientifically unassailable form that the water deterioration was rapid, continuing, and directly related to population growth. Donald Hill who was responsible for the legal arrangements decided that we should not initiate action until we had the water quality levels for the balance

of the summer. When these results were available they contained inconsistencies that could not be readily explained. This made our legal position less attractive and your Executive, on the advice of Mr. Hill, decided that it would be inappropriate to proceed with legal action at that time. This is what has happened.

In July and part of August the pollution levels in the east section of the lake dropped unpredictably, and we were not in a position to adequately explain what had happened. However when the final counts were available in September we found that this had been a temporary phenomenon and though our projections were too high for general coliforms, they had more accurately reflected the growth of faecal coliforms.

The average overall coliform counts for the summer of 1973 had been 32/6. In 1974 the general coliform level remained constant at 32, but the faecal count rose to 13. This was a rise of 116.6%. In other words the amount of excrement from the bowels of animals, mostly human, which entered the water was more than double the 1973 rate.

In the west half of the lake the general coliform counts rose by 92% and the faecal coliforms rose by 150%. In the east half, or the older section of the lake, the general coliforms dropped by about 19.6% but the faecal coliform counts were up by 122.2%. These results suggest that our sewage disposal systems are not adequate, that the soil around the tile fields is becoming increasingly saturated and incapable of handling the discharge from septic tanks, and that we are seriously overpopulated. A complete list of the 1974 counts is printed at the conclusion of this report.

Under these circumstances the proposal to take legal action will be reconsidered and we will let you know when a final decision has been taken.

Of course our real problem has been with the municipalities of North Burgess and North Elmsley. If these people had been more co-operative it would not have been necessary to consider legal action in the first place. We have been unable to get them to appreciate or even understand the conditions on the lake. For several years we explained the problem in every conceivable way from gentle persuasion to the presentation of our case with tough scientific evidence. But we have run into a blank wall of indifference that only the Councillors and Reeves themselves can properly explain.

Several years ago a friend on the lake who is not on our Executive predicted that before the smoke settled we would find it necessary to take over these municipalities through the normal elective process. As you know we have been opposed to this course of action because we felt that the management of local affairs should more properly be in local hands. However the present situation calls for reconsideration. The time may have arrived to carefully examine the question of local political action and here are some of the facts that we uncovered during the last few months.

The municipality of North Burgess illustrates the situation. In 1974, 1,477 persons were eligible to vote in the December municipal election. Of these 651 or 44.1% resided in Ottawa and vicinity; 382 or 25.9% were residents of the municipality; 172 or 11.6% resided in the Town of Perth or vicinity; 132 or 8.9% lived west of the township in towns and villages from Kingston to Toronto; 81 or 5.5% resided in the Smiths Falls area; and 59 or 4% were people who lived in remote locations or outside the province.

In other words 1,095 or 74.1% of the voters were non-residents. Out of this total the vast majority, perhaps as many as 1,000, were cottagers who reside on our lake, the north shore of Big Rideau, Long Lake, Round Lake, and other smaller streams and lakes in the area.

This also means that about 80% of the land taxes are raised from people who are not represented on the municipal council and who do not have a say in the management of their own affairs. We have known that this disparity existed but until recently we hoped that the local politicians would look after cottage interests. This has not happened. The cottagers have been almost completely ignored. In the Tay Valley Area Planning Report which makes proposals for future land use in the area, the cottagers are hardly mentioned except for the odd comment about the financial benefits to be derived from tourists with whom they seem to be classified.

Some consideration was given to taking political action in 1974, but we did not have a mandate from the Committee and when we obtained the necessary political information it was too late to organize and draw up a slate of suitable candidates. The next municipal election will be held in

December 1976, and at the next annual meeting I will propose the establishment of a special committee to examine the problems and to report back to the members in 1977. It may also be appropriate to conduct a similar examination of North Elmsley.

This is where we stand. Much good work has been done to examine and assess the water quality. For several years we have conducted information programs to make people more aware of the problems and help them make improvements, but we have not stopped pollution. This has not been due to any lack of effort. There have been numerous meetings with Provincial and local officials, we have enlisted the help of the foremost experts in the field, but pollution growth moves relentlessly on. We must find a solution.

This year there will be a major change in your Executive and this may be one of my last letters as your Chairman. I would therefore like to thank you for your help and support during the last five years. By all accounts we have been one of the most highly organized lakes in Ontario and have probably done more than any other to publicize the dangers that face our recreational areas. You may all be justifiably proud of that. But I must also close with a warning. Pollution will not go away. Wishful thinking about miracles or simplistic solutions will not work. Be careful not to become complacent or to substitute good sounding but ineffective programs for real action. Some people feel that self-discipline may be the answer. It is important but don't place all of your bets in this area. Last year one of the most successful sections in David Code's program was Area 1. But when the water quality results were complete we found that in the water along the shores of this area the general coliform counts had risen by 71% and the faecal coliforms had doubled.

Judy Burns has prepared a map of the lake which shows the location of cottagers and the water quality testing areas. We are enclosing a copy which you will find interesting and useful.

The Annual fees for 1975 of \$5.00 are now due. You should submit them to the Secretary, Mrs. John Burns, 764 Lonsdale Road, Manor Park, Ottawa, Ontario.

John Kimble Abbott,  
Chairman,  
Otty Lake Pollution Control Committee.

OTTY LAKE POLLUTION CONTROL COMMITTEE

1974 Bacteriological Water Quality Test Program -TOTAL FAECAL COLIFORM COUNTS

Station	May	June		July			August		September	
	20	2	16	1	14	28	11	25	8	22
1	2/2	0/0	55/10	10/0	5/0	24/0	38/0	0/0	70/2	0/0
2	0/0	10/2	0/0	2/2	5/2	8/2	8/6	10/2	1000/130	0/0
3	10/6	10/4	10/0	26/26	0/0	32/0	36/0	60/0	80/12	0/0
4	0/0	0/0	5/2	5/0	2/2	2/0	12/2	55/2	5/2	5/0
5	6/0	4/2	10/4	0/0	2/2	4/4	10/2	25/2	74/2	100/0
6	0/0	6/2	15/4	5/0	0/0	4/0	10/0	5/0	5/0	0/0
7	0/0	0/0	8/8	0/0	4/4	20/12	24/6	25/8	20/4	10/0
8	0/0	2/0	2/2	2/2	2/2	2/0	18/8	2/2	15/2	0/0
9	0/0	6/0	100/100	6/6	2/2	0/0	16/16	15/8	10/2	0/0
10	0/0	30/12	2/2	0/0	2/2	4/0	34/16	5/2	45/4	0/0
11	2/2	10/2	30/4	0/0	0/0	10/0	580/164	10/4	105/2	0/0
12	0/0	2/0	15/4	20/0	12/12	0/0	40/30	0/0	50/6	0/0
13	0/0	10/4	0/0	0/0	0/0	12/0	28/8		50/2	0/0
14	2/2	2/0	5/0	5/2	10/10	2/2	34/14	2/2	10/0	0/0
15	0/0	0/0	2/2	20/0	0/0	14/0	10/10	0/0	100/24	5/0
16	2/2	8/0	18/18	2/2	0/0	6/0	6/6	0/0	40/0	5/0

Station	May	June		July		August		September	
	26	9	23	7	21	5	18	2	22
17	2/2	20/8	2600/2600	12/12	5/0	10/0	30/4	35/4	20/0
18	2/0	2/2	15/4	0/0	0/0	6/6	15/6	85/2	0/0
19	0/0	6/4	10/2	4/4	0/0	25/4	80/16	50/2	75/0
20	0/0	2/0	4/4	6/8	5/4	10/2	45/14	65/6	5/0
21	6/0	100/12	90/22	10/2	5/0	8/8	75/16	40/2	0/0
22	10/0	44/0	15/4	6/6	5/2	80/2	10/2	60/0	10/2
23	2/0	30/6	5/2	0/0	0/0	20/0	25/2	50/0	8/8
24	80/80	5/2	30/4	10/6	0/0	10/2	20/6	185/2	5/0
25	8/2	6/4	10/0	10/10	20/8	10/2	55/14	125/2	
26	2/0	6/0	10/4	0/0	10/4	0/0	25/10	15/0	2/2
27	20/2	4/2	0/0	0/0	10/0	25/4	15/6	40/0	2/2
28	16/0	24/0	20/12	10/6	15/2	35/15	10/2	15/4	5/0
29	2/0	46/10	25/2	5/0	0/0	20/10	15/2	35/2	0/0
30	4/4	304/6	10/6	5/2	30/0	15/0	6/6	10/0	0/0
31	4/2	8/0	0/0	5/2	50/2	30/6	35/2	240/0	0/0
32	6/4	16/2	25/18	0/0	5/4	80/0	55/4	25/2	0/0