



Presidents Letter

February 2019

Greetings All,

As much as I love the summer, every season on the Big Rideau brings with it a unique beauty. The picture above, taken by Daniel Gosselin, of the west end of the Rocky Narrows as the lake froze over bears testimony to that.

At this time of year, thoughts of cottage life are not likely front of mind but I felt it was a good time to reach out and update you about BRLA goings-on. This letter is part of our updated communications plan designed to keep you better informed on a variety of topics related to the quality of life on the lake. You will be pleased to hear that an updated ***DriftWords*** Newsletter is being brought back this spring.

The President's Letter will be an annual winter publication to give you the highlights of issues and plans, as a precursor to a new season.

I have always enjoyed helping out with neighbours on the lake but was not really that interested in getting involved with the Big Rideau Lake Association. However, the changes on the lake I have noted since we moved here seven years ago compelled me to join BRLA and get very involved. On the environment front alone, I have discovered how complex the issues are and have been surprised at the myriad of government, academic and other organizations that are involved. This has been quite an education for me and I am committed to making BRLA a strong advocate for all those who enjoy our lake, regarding matters that could damage the Big Rideau and it's environment.

For over a year now, the Board has worked to ensure the maintenance of our core programs, strengthen the organizational structure and identify the challenges ahead. A formal planning activity resulted in an ambitious set of BRLA priorities for 2019.

Below is the summary of those priorities.

2019 PRIORITIES

1. Improve communications to the broader community of Big Rideau Lake as to what the Association does for all lake property owners. Use Social Media (particularly Instagram), and the new *DriftWords* platform to inform and update members, elected representatives, and all those who enjoy our lake about key issues related to the lake.
2. Continue to test lake water quality as part of the National Water Rangers program and closely monitor environment trends and on-going studies. (e.g. Impact of Fishing Tournaments on the Bass population as well as lake residents).
3. Maintain the Shoal Marker Program and explore new ways to promote water safety such as a boat handling course, and continue to work with the OPP to control the noise from boats running off muffler.
4. Implement a comprehensive membership recruitment and retention strategy to increase membership with particular focus on the area from Rocky Narrows to Poonamalie, where BRLA membership has traditionally been low.
5. Maintain the success of the BRLA Social and Recreational Programs while exploring ideas for improvements, including expanded Cow Island docking, upgrades to the club building interior and an upgraded washroom facility.
6. Lobby the Townships to:
 - update, improve and make uniform their building and septic system permit application and approvals processes
 - improve the management of storm water runoff from the watershed areas under their jurisdiction

- update their official plan
 - support the BRLA with funding for activities that support the management of the quality of the Big Rideau Lake
 - partner with the Big Rideau Lake Association in the development of a Lake Management Plan
 - increase mandatory septic system inspections on a more strategic basis.
 - consider creating a shore line lighting regulation
 - become more aware and proactive in relation to water quality and environmental issues that may affect property values
 - act on Lake Property Owner issues such as excessive noise
7. Form a stronger relationship and coordinated front through liaison with other Associations and working groups and improve and increase the BRLA interactions with RVCA, Parks Canada, and all three Townships.
 8. Develop a strategic approach for managing the future of the Lake as a precursor to the Development of a Lake Plan.
 9. Activate the Nomination Committee to recruit candidates for upcoming Board vacancies.
 10. Develop and implement a strategy for recruiting more volunteers.
 11. Develop and implement a fundraising strategy, including supporting RLEF fundraising drives.
 12. Fine tune the BRLA's management framework set in place in 2018.

In keeping with BRLA's role as an advocate for its members, here are highlights of topics we have been working on over the past few months. We have made considerable headway in having the BRLA's "voice" heard by local government and with both federal and provincial agencies that have the power to protect and improve life on the Big Rideau.

PROPOSED ONTARIO GOVERNMENT BILLS

There are two current Bills on the table that could impact us:

Bill 205 proposes an open hunt for Double Crested Cormorants that would run from March to December of each year with a daily bag limit of 50 birds and allows hunters to shoot from anchored boats. The issue of Cormorants on the Big Rideau has resulted in much heated debate but apart from the pros and cons of Cormorants, the potential injury to residents, visitors and boaters due to a hunt that runs through the summer cottage season is a significant concern.

BRLA members were invited to submit their opinions to the Government on this Bill and many did.

Bill 66 was legislation developed by the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development that contained positive features but would allow Municipal Governments to pass a bylaw which would exempt specific development projects from nearly all legislation that has been set in place to protect water resources.

BRLA and adjacent Lake Associations submitted a letter to the responsible Minister Todd Smith pointing out that particularly in rural areas municipalities should not be exempted by this Bill from protecting water resources. The Minister responsible for this legislation withdrew section 10 that would allow the creation of bylaws that exempted developments from those Acts that protect water resources

CALL FOR THE REPEAL OF A KEY SECTION OF THE CONSERVATION AUTHORITY ACT

Randy Hillier, an Ontario MPP, wrote to the Minister of the Environment Rod Philips calling for the repeal of the section of the Conservation Authority Act related to the authority of Conservation Authorities to enter into MOU's with municipalities. He believes that they have, in some cases, overstepped their mandates. Conservation Authorities are funded by municipalities and perform a variety of important services for them.

The BRLA wrote to Minister Philips supporting the role of Conservation Authorities and requesting that he disregard Mr. Hillier's request.

THE NEW MAYOR ANNOUNCES LAKE ASSOCIATION GROUP

Arie Hoogaboom, Rideau Lake Township's new Mayor, has indicated his intention to create a forum to meet with Lake Association representatives to hear and discuss the issues of concern to their members.

BRLA will be involved with this new forum.

RIDEAU LAKES TOWNSHIP INVITATION FOR GRANT APPLICATIONS

Individuals and organizations were invited to apply for grants to the Rideau Lakes Township in support of their work.

*BRLA submitted an application, including a presentation to council, asking for \$1500.00 to fund improved water testing for *ecol i*, nitrates, phosphorous and other forms of nutrient that support the increasing presence of various sorts of Algae blooms seen in the lake over the past 2 or 3 summers. The Township rejected this application in favour of a formula based allocation of funds to the BRLA and other Lake Associations.*

MUNICIPAL ELECTION 2018

On October 22nd, Ontario voters elected mayors, councillors, school board trustees and all other elected officials in all of the province's municipalities.

Through membership emails and a dedicated webpage, BRLA provided background information on candidates running for positions in each of the 3 municipalities surrounding Big Rideau Lake.

MEETINGS

BRLA met with or had representatives at meetings and events held by numerous groups

and associations, all with a view to keeping an ear to the ground for policy changes and other issues that could affect the quality of life on the Big Rideau.

NEW MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR

At the last AGM, there was no candidate for the position of Director responsible for membership. Fortunately, Robin Copestake accepted an invitation to fill the role in the Fall and was appointed by the Board; she has already put forward some new and innovative approaches to attracting new members. We welcome her to the team!

BY LAWS BEING UPDATED

BRLA's Bylaws have not been updated since 1968 and in the context of the world of 2019, there are some glaring omissions and shortfalls. A team of BRLA Directors have drafted a revised set of Bylaws that will be submitted to the membership for a vote at the 2019 Annual General Meeting.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

As mentioned, my involvement with the BRLA has been both an educational and a rewarding experience, giving me the opportunity to work closely with Directors and members who are as passionate about the lake as I am, and I am sure as you are.

Our expanding level of activity will only be achieved with support from additional volunteers so please think of how you could participate in a way that rewards you and at the same time supports the maintenance of the unique quality of life on our lake that we all want to see continued into the future.

Cheers!

Grant Leslie

President