

last 1/2 years than in four years, the , attracted.

Amherst I. ferry's fate coming up for decision

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As the time draws near for the expiration of a transportation agreement between the Ontario government and Amherst Island Township, interest is gradually mounting. Two camps already formed, for and against a proposed provincial take-over of the ferry operating here.

In the thick of the debate on this issue are two members of the island municipal council, Reeve Norman Allison and Councillor Ted Welbanks. The 5-year agreement expires Dec. 31.

Reeve Allison is in favor of maintaining the *status quo*, that is, for the island council to have control over the service and for the provincial government to continue subsidizing it. (The government will this year pay \$660,630 or 91.5 per cent of the total cost).

Councillor Welbanks wants the ministry of transportation and communications to fully assume control. These two councillors presented their platforms to an unusually large group of about 50 islanders who gathered the night of Aug. 7 at Amherst I. public school.

Pair differ

It was a committee meeting of the whole council, called expressly to deal with the issue raised by Welbanks. It was to be held in the council chamber.

But so many turned out it was shifted.

It would be wholly to the benefit of islanders to have the management of the service as is, Allison says. Conversely, it would be to their disadvantage to have it changed or altered.

Taxes will rise dramatically and the island will lose control should the government fully take over the service, said Allison, in an interview last week with *The Beaver*.

The reeve handed this newspaper a copy of his thoughts on this matter. His brief was available to members of the public at the meeting, he says.

The benefits

Allison outlined the benefits of the present arrangement and the drawbacks of having it changed: —it employs about 24 islanders. A free ferry by provincial take-over would cause the job of purser, or treasurer on board, to be eliminated. Four would lose their jobs.

—the municipality earns money by the present arrangement because the government shares the salaries of its staff, the cost of utilities for its office and of insurance for its building;

—in 1983 and '84 the township negotiated two contracts with the union and service remained uninterrupted; it has amiable relationships with the MTC

and union; —if the ferry were taken over and made free, there would be unequal benefit to islanders; —taxes would have to be increased by 106 per cent to \$90,550 to make up for the shortfall in local revenue since the subsidy would be lost when the service is taken over.

Hits seniors

"The burden of increased taxes in the case of a free ferry would fall on those who would reap the least benefit for potential savings in ferry fares," says Allison in the brief. Hardest hit would be seniors who no longer drive but who would find their taxes increased by 106.5 per cent.

On the other hand, residents who don't own property on the island and outsiders would really benefit from the free service. Using the actual assessment figures of councillors including his own, Reeve Allison showed how dramatic would be the increase in taxes for each of them should the service be taken over and made free.

Allison's taxes of \$589.75 would increase by 304.16 to \$893.91; Larry Fleming's \$206.34 by \$106.42 to \$312.76; Ian Murray's present tax of \$349.10 would be increased by \$180.04 to \$529.14; Chester Tugwell's \$223.19 by \$115.11 to \$338.30; and even Welbanks' (which stands at \$345.43) by \$178.15 to \$523.58.