

FERRY UPDATE BULLETIN

APRIL 16, 2007

1. **MARCH 14 MEETING AMONG MEMBERS OF THE AMHERST SILAND FERRY COMMITTEE AND OUR MPP LEONA DOMBROWSKY, PROVINCIAL MINISTER OF TRANSPORTATION DONNA CANSFIELD, AND EASTERN REGION DIRECTOR OF MTO CATHY MOORE**
 - This was a very collegial visit, friendly and helpful attitude exhibited by our visitors
 - Various committee members presented facts to the visitors
 - The MPPs were interested to learn some things that they had not as yet heard, and also revealed that they had **never yet been asked** by Loyalist Township whether an "up-load" of the Ferry to the Ministry was possible. They said that they would be **willing to entertain such a request seriously**, if it were made by Council, **or by a sufficient number of Island residents and landowners**
 - MTO has decided to initiate an audit of the Ferry Service accounts, which will be done on an expedited basis
2. **MARCH 26 LOYALIST TOWNSHIP COUNCIL MEETING FOR PUBLIC COMMENT ON THE MISCELLANEOUS FEES BYLAW"**
 - Over 40 Islanders attended, which represents about 10% of the Island's population, out on a weekday night -- **well done, Islanders!**
 - Judith Harrower, Caroline Yull, Eva Little, Lorna Willis, John Schutzbach, Ross Haines and Zander Dunn all spoke
 - Council members asked a few questions for clarification, and argued with some presenters, but did not engage in any kind of mutual discussion
 - In the end, the "Miscellaneous Fees Bylaw" was tabled for a couple of weeks, because of some problem with the facts and figures for the Masters' Swim Program, which was one of the other "miscellaneous fees"
 - It is to be hoped that in future, such an **important issue** as raising the Ferry rates will be dealt with in its **own specifically-named bylaw**, making it easier to track in the agendas of future Council meetings
3. **PROJECTED DEFICIT FOR FERRY SERVICE (2007)**
 - This deficit is one example of the problems with the Ferry Service budgeting process at the Township. The projected deficit was \$118,000
 - Within two weeks of our learning that there was to be an audit of the Ferry Service's books, that projected deficit had been reduced to approximately \$8,000
 - This abrupt reduction of \$110,000 was apparently achieved by re-thinking some of the Administrative Costs allocation. Because the Ferry Service represents approximately 12.5% of the Township budget, the share of the administrative costs allocated to the Ferry is automatically set at 12.5%
 - This might seem fair, until one looks at the fact that the ferry budget is almost all taken up with wages and fuel. These are not paper-based costs -- there are not huge mailing costs, or other costs such as the several thousand dollars' worth of new furnishings and computer equipment and information technology costs that are included
 - According to the most recent Census Canada statistics, Amherst Island represents just under 3% of the whole population of Loyalist Township, just to put this into perspective. Let's remember what the sign at the mainland dock says "**the ferry is a public place as a part of the road system of Ontario**" -- we think it is time the Province of Ontario took over this particular part of its road system, and remove the lion's share of the burden from such a small group of its citizens