

Seeley's Bay and Area Residents' Association
P.O. Box 206
Seeley's Bay, ON
K0H 2N0



November 29, 2012

Council
Township of Leeds and Thousand Islands
1233 Prince St., PO Box 280
Lansdowne, Ontario K0E 1L0

Dear Members of Council:

The Seeley's Bay and Area Residents' Association would like Council to take an active role in communicating our **concerns regarding the Rideau Canal waterway**, and in particular, potential **Parks Canada cutbacks** that could undermine the protection and promotion of the Canal. As you know, Seeley's Bay is on this World Heritage route, and depends very much on this asset for our economic viability. Our revitalization plan, Seeley's Bay Steps Up, relies heavily on the advantages of being on the Rideau, and we know that many of our local businesses count on the seasonal visitor traffic associated with the Canal, and not just the cottage rental business – it is equally important to our grocery store, LCBO, hardware store, etc.

We were pleased to see the recent announcement that the duration of the season will remain the same for 2013, but at the same time, we were very concerned to hear that the daily operating hours would be reduced. We are also upset about the decision to close the blacksmith program and the interpretive centre at Jones Falls. The whole route from Jones Falls to Washburn Mill is a 'destination' for visitors, and deterioration in programming will definitely hurt Seeley's Bay and our neighbouring communities.

At our recent Annual General Meeting in October, the issue of threats to the Rideau system was the most-discussed issue by residents in attendance. In addition to concerns about the economic impact, residents also noted that maintenance of **canal signage has deteriorated** - presumably due to staffing cuts, and that **more boaters are speeding as they rush to get from one lock station to another**, with the result of **further shoreline erosion**. The **UNESCO designation is felt to be threatened** by the less robust efforts at preservation, and the **notion that heritage assets must 'make money' is offensive** to a number of people who spoke at our meeting.

As our local government voice, we hope that you will accord time and commitment to this issue and be an active player in the local network of affected municipalities in

representing our concerns to the federal government. We are concerned that the recent announcement of the 'same length of season' will be seen as a solution, when in fact it only provides temporary redress to one of the many critical issues of concern.

We would also like Council to know that we would like to be helpful in representing the concerns of Township residents who live along and/or depend on the Rideau waterway for economic activities. If Council and/or the administration see opportunities where we can help to convey our concerns and communicate the real impacts at the community level, we would be happy to discuss opportunities for an effective strategy. We would very much like to see an active partnership between SBARA and TLTI in protecting the economic benefits to Seeley's Bay and other area communities along the Rideau Corridor.

Sincerely,

Peggy Sweet McCumber
Chairperson

cc:

Peter Kent, Minister of the Environment, Ottawa
Thomas Mulcair, Leader of the Opposition
Bob Rae, Interim Liberal Leader
Gord Brown, Member of Parliament, Leeds & Grenville
Steve Clark, Member of Provincial Parliament, Leeds and Grenville
Doug Struthers, Mayor, Merrickville
Ron Holman, Mayor, Rideau Lakes
Ann Weir, Director of Economic Development, UCLG
Anne Marie Forcier, Executive Director, Rideau Heritage Route
Darlene Upton, Executive Director, Waterways/Parks Canada
Ken Watson, Rideau Canal expert
Franklin Folts, Owner, Hotel Kenney