

## **Report of the Fire Committee of Blackstone Lake Association**

### **Regarding the proposed engagement of**

### **Seguin Fire Department as fire responders for our lake.**

**December, 2012**

As a result of the serious fire that occurred on our lake in early spring, a number of cottage owners on Blackstone Lake approached our Town Councillor, Ian Mead, to see if he could reawaken a proposal that was initiated some years ago to have Seguin Township Fire Department provide fire response on our lake. Ian took on the challenge, and in response to his leadership, an arrangement has been negotiated between The Township of the Archipelago, and our neighbouring township to the east, Seguin Township, to provide fire response to Blackstone Lake. The boundary between the two townships is located right at the Armstrong-Jacklin Road at the northern end of Blackstone Lake. Seguin's nearest fire station is located at the intersection of highway 69 and Blackstone Crane Lake Road. The basic idea is that Seguin would extend their fire response services to the cottagers on Blackstone Lake at an annual cost to all property owners included in the coverage. A special levy would be added to our individual tax bills annually.

As we all know, there is no fire response coverage provided by our township. As a result, we have developed our own fire response capability through the acquisition of a number of fire pumps, and one fire boat. While this has been somewhat successful in controlling fires in the past, there are serious shortcomings to this approach that I am sure we all must realize. First and foremost is the reality that we rely on individual cottage owners who are not trained or experienced fire fighters. In addition they are not trained or equipped to carry out rescue operations. Secondly, at any given time they may or may not be available to respond. As indicated earlier, this spring we had a very serious fire on our lake that threatened a number of cottages and significant forest coverage when there were very few people on the lake. As a result, we were not able to bring our resources to bear on the situation. Fortunately, the Ministry of Natural

Resources did respond with fire bombers, and an airborne fire crew, extinguishing the forest fire.

One question that immediately comes to mind is whether or not Seguin Fire has the ability to deal effectively with water access. It turns out that they do have numerous areas within Seguin that rely on water access. They assure us that they have the proper resources to handle this kind of response situation.

Another issue is response time. In that we are within 10 km from their nearest station, we should receive the same kind of response times as many of their own rate payers. Even so, it may not be adequate to save a cottage. This is true particularly given the structures we are dealing with. This is also true of our own response system on the lake. This is why we continue to stress the importance of working smoke alarms, fire extinguishers ready at hand, and having a connected water hose available. Obviously, the earlier we get water on the fire the less the damage. That being said, even more important is being able to minimize the damage to our forest and shore line. By adding Seguin Fire to our arsenal of fire fighting capability it is not hard to imagine that we could save neighbouring cottages, reduce damage to the forest cover, perhaps save a life, and even save a cottage or two. We believe personal safety is first and foremost. We come up to this lake to enjoy the beauty and the recreational opportunities available. The last thing we want is to place anyone in danger. Here is a chance to add a significant increment to our collective ability to ensure a safe environment for everyone!

Regarding 911 Fire response, we are assured by Ian that The Township of the Archipelago will arrange through Northern 911 to route our fire calls to Seguin Fire.

Another consideration is the affect this would have on our fire insurance. Quoting Ian, "Currently every address on Blackstone Lake is rated "unprotected" by insurance companies. From what I can determine, if you are on a road and within 13 Kilometers of a Fire Station you will be classified as "semi-protected", and that will save you insurance dollars that far exceed the \$236 per year. So most with

road access will actually save money, however, it is up to the ratepayer to contact their insurance company and find out”.

Okay, what about the cost? As indicated in the preceding, what they have now settled on is a price per ratepayer of \$236/year (payable in 2 instalments/year), which is a locked in price for 5 years. According to Ian, the previous discussions in 2006 talked about a one year price of \$185. The \$236 price will take us to 2017. So the price will have gone from \$185 to \$236 over a span of 12 years-that's 2% per year. If we look at the \$236 as the mid-point average over 5 years you could argue that it the span is more like 9.5 years-giving an average increase of 2.5%. Either way it seems like a great deal to us! Seguin says that the cost is based on what they charge their own ratepayers for the same services. We don't think we can ask for better than that.

The Board of the Blackstone Cottagers Association fully endorses the recommendations of the Fire Committee and strongly recommends that we all accept the increase in our taxes of \$236.00 per year, and engage Seguin Fire to provide fire protection for our lake.

Included in this mailing is a copy of the agreement that will be signed with Seguin, a map of all the civic addresses involved on Blackstone, a mail back ballot and a pre-addressed, postage paid envelope to mail the ballot back with.

**Please make every effort to return the ballot promptly.**

**This will be our last opportunity to have Seguin be our fire department so PLEASE VOTE YES!**

On Behalf of the Blackstone Lake Association Board:

Jessie Metelka - President

