

IS THE MARINA GAMBLE GOOD FOR COBOURG?

Build it and they will come! This premise certainly worked for Kevin Costner in the movie *Field of Dreams*. Is this the very same premise that the marina is betting on by building 120 slips in the west harbour? The marina expansion gamble has high stakes which will forever change the very heart of our “feel good” town.

Let's look on the positive side and presume that the marina is correct and the “list” of potential boaters across Ontario who want to dock their boat in Cobourg all come running and gobble up these 120 new slips next year. What has the Town gained? Revenue to pay down the \$2,500,000 harbour expansion. Fantastic! But wait, how many of these boat owners pay taxes in Cobourg? How many will shop locally? How many will simply bring their supplies with them from Toronto or Belleville for the two or three weekends they visit their boat. Are they really contributing to the health of the Downtown businesses?

On the other hand, what if the marina is wrong? Those on the waiting list don't all jump to Cobourg as soon as the docks are ready. Some don't come for several years and we have many empty docks? What if some of the present boat owners who have slips retire from sailing and no longer need the slips they occupy? The waiting list may already be depleted and no one is left to take their spot. How is the marina going to pay back the \$2,500,000 loan? If there isn't money in the reserve fund now to maintain the present infrastructure budget, what will happen after the expansion and the infrastructure budget balloons? Isn't the marina a self-funding operation?

What are the drawbacks of the Marina Expansion Plan to the tax-paying residents of Cobourg? The birds will go away so that would mean that bird watchers would have to go elsewhere to enjoy their passion. Residents who enjoy watching the serenity of the water during the lunch hour will have to look through the sea of masts to get a glimpse of the picturesque harbour and lighthouses. However, not in the winter as the parking lot will be turned into winter storage and full of boats from October through April. Programs such as dragon boating and canoe kayak paddling will cease to exist in Cobourg.

I have only heard support from Town Councillors and the Mayor to maintain the present user groups and programs in the harbour. I have yet to see anything that indicates the present Town Council is in favour of adding any slips in the west harbour and jeopardizing the recreation programs that call the Town's Harbour home. Is the almighty dollar worth more than the health and enjoyment that so many Cobourg Citizens enjoy from using and visiting the west harbour? Who is

spearheading the destroying of so many recreational programs for youth and adults? Do they even live in the Town of Cobourg?

Dragon boaters have been allocated a small strip of water for practices which is not adequate or safe to train properly for competitions. In the past 15 years thousands of residents have enjoyed dragon boating and being on the water. Now they will have to leave Cobourg to dragon boat.

The canoe kayak program has flourished over the past four years, putting Cobourg on the map throughout Ontario and Canada with its successes. Over 30 athletes train daily from April through September for Provincial and Canadian Championships. The marina expansion plan has given them a small section to train in and it must be shared with anchored sailboats, the sailing school, and motor boats.

What does the expansion plan say to these young athletes? Many of them have dreams of representing Canada in the near future. To realize their dreams to compete at the Olympics or National Championships these young athletes will have to leave Cobourg and paddle for other teams. I'm sure they will remember that they started their career in Cobourg, the "feel good" town.

What a shame that Cobourg's home grown talent will represent other clubs on the National stage. A Paddle All program for physical and intellectual youth and adults will disappear. This program allowed these individuals to enjoy the waterfront in a safe and supportive environment. The over 100 summer campers and 50 recreational canoe and kayakers that participate each year in paddling programs will no longer have a space to practise and the program will have to fold.

One hundred twenty boaters may come, but at what cost. How many people will no longer be visiting the Downtown and waterfront if the expansion plan is approved? "Build it" and they will definitely go! Birds, dozens of naturalists, over a hundred dragon boaters. Hundreds of youth and adults canoe and kayakers will lose the opportunity they have to enjoy paddle sports and the Cobourg Harbour. Many more Cobourg tax payers will lose their quality of life and enjoyment than will benefit from expanding the harbour for Toronto and area boaters. Is this what we want for our town?

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