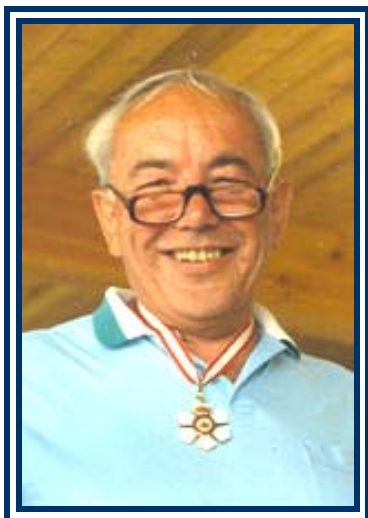

TIARA Newsletter

Spring 2011



Peter T. Macklem 1931 – 2011

It is with great sadness that we announce the sudden death on February 11 of our President, Peter Macklem. Known in the Thousand Islands as a passionate supporter of the River and of TIARA, he was also, as his family put it, a “husband, father, grandfather, brother, uncle, friend, mentor, physician, scientist, boater and environmental activist”.

On a wider scale, Peter was an internationally acclaimed leader in respiratory research and will be remembered as one of the most audacious and respected scientific minds of the global respiratory community. He was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1988 and was the recipient of many other medals, awards, fellowships and honorary doctorates.

He was elected President of TIARA in 2003, and worked tirelessly to recruit new members and to form coalitions with other area groups. He followed municipal politics closely, and produced the “Report Card” of the previous TLTI Council which helped to bring about the almost complete change of our municipal government last October.

A strong advocate of good planning for this area’s future, he was a credible witness on behalf of TIARA at several hearings before the Ontario Municipal Board, and made successful delegations to the federal government regarding the environmental impact of the Seaway. He was a founding member of the Frontenac Arch Biosphere and continued to be one of its strongest supporters.

It was Peter who initiated and guided TIARA’s efforts to nominate this section of the St. Lawrence River as one of Canada’s Heritage Rivers, and you can read about this project on page 2. Inspired by his vision and energy, TIARA is pursuing this initiative which was so dear to his heart, knowing that its success will be a fitting memorial to his love for his community and his country.

At present, TIARA Vice-President Debbie Lloyd has agreed to be Acting President until the Board

completes its succession planning process. We are delighted to report that Peter’s wife Joy continues in her role as a Director and Secretary to the Board.

Municipal Government Big Changes in TLTI Council

Last October, voters in the **Township of Leeds & the Thousand Islands** voted (online, for the first time) for municipal councillors. There had been much public concern with the previous Council’s mounting budgets and in particular with the new \$6 million municipal building complex which it had pushed through.

The result on election day was a sweeping change in TLTI’s council. **Bruce Bryan** has now replaced Frank Kinsella as Mayor, and there are four new councillors: **Heidi Conarroe** (who was chosen as Deputy Mayor), **Wendy Merkeley, Brigitte Lesage-Tye** and **Harold Emmons** (who has served on previous Councils). The only incumbents re-elected were **Velma Kelsey** and **Tom Lawler**. The new Council brings a fresh approach, and we wish them well in the many difficult decisions they will have to make. In late April, Tom Lawler resigned from Council leaving a vacancy in Ward 1.

In **Front of Yonge Township**, incumbents **Roger Haley** (Mayor), **Robert Morrison** (Deputy Mayor) and **Sean Burns** were joined by new councillors **Richard Marcoux** and **Joan Ruman**.

Another CAO for TLTI

Not only is the Council largely new in TLTI, but there has also been yet another CAO change. We reported in our last newsletter that Malcolm Morris had been appointed as the new CAO last May 2010, replacing Stephen Clark, now MPP for Leeds-Grenville.

This February, however, Mr. Morris was dismissed. Quite correctly, Council had conducted its deliberations in camera, following *The Ontario Municipal Act Sec.239 (2) (b)* since they were discussing a “personal matter about an identifiable individual, including municipal or local board employees”. Controversy about the lack of information was whipped up in the press, but actually Council was acting properly in not revealing the details. Treasurer Eileen Watson is now Acting Chief Administrative Officer.

Problems with the new TLTI Municipal Building

TLTI staff moved into the new municipal complex last July and right from the start, there were worries about it - beginning with the question of why it needed to be built at all, when the existing building had been specifically designed to be expanded and

at a time when many township residents were having problems with an increase in taxes.

Residents watching the building under construction were even worried about the site itself, which seemed low and swampy. The building's low level has required five sump pumps to take the water from the perimeter drain surrounding the exterior of the building across to a swale on the south side of the building.

At the Council meeting of April 11, 2011, township staff presented a long list of problems encountered with the new building. There are always problems to be expected with a new building, but the range was unsettling. Ironically, several of them concerned either too much moisture or not enough.

On the list were leaky roofs, cracking and shrinking wood beams causing damage to drywall and floor tiles, improperly installed accent reveals and the requirement for a humidifier system quoted at \$23,000. Some problems are classed as repairs, and will be paid for by the Township, but some might be considered deficiencies and should be handled by the engineers The Greer Galloway Group Inc. and the construction firm M. Sullivan & Son Ltd. The quotes and invoices for all these "maintenance issues" have yet to come in.

Heritage River Status for the St. Lawrence

This project will forever be connected in our minds with the energy and vision that Peter Macklem brought to it and his memory encourages us to bring it to fruition.

We are happy to report that the nomination paper is now ready and in May, on behalf of Peter, TIARA will formally present it to the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board of Directors at its annual general meeting in Killarney, Ontario.

If you would like to read this excellent document please go to www.slhr.ca

This summer's jobs, which Peter had already planned, include the development of a long-term management plan for the river and the establishment of the Stewardship Council with members from Kingston to the Quebec border. The role of the Stewardship Council will be to maintain the standards required for the designation of Canadian Heritage River.

Planning in the Thousand Islands

Soon after they were sworn in, the TLTI Council appointed a new **Committee of Adjustment**. It consists of Carol Ann Wagner and Bruce Craig from the previous committee, joined by newcomers Jim Kehoe, Peter Sibbald and Dianne Phillips.

This is an important committee, and its decisions can do much to either **support or undermine** the

Township's land-use planning. A landowner whose

wishes do not quite conform with Zoning By-law requirements can seek approval from this committee for what is called a "**Minor Variance**". There are four tests to ascertain if the variance can truly be considered "minor", tests which unfortunately have not always been applied in the past. See "**Hill Island planning problems**".

The committee can also grant permission to **enlarge, extend or change a non-conforming use**, or to **sever land**. We wish the new Committee members well and offer our support.

Hill Island Planning Problems

Here's one example of an unfortunate decision made by the *previous* Committee of Adjustment (COA), which permitted a so-called "minor variance" is at 75 Benson Park Road on Hill Island.

The landowners involved had already removed most of the natural vegetation on the River side of their property, paving over much of the natural waterfront space with a multi-level patio and pool plus a pool house (erected without a building permit), thus eliminating the natural buffer necessary to protect water quality and erosion control. They had already exceeded the 10% maximum lot coverage (which does not include hard landscaping such as paving).

They had gone to the COA for permission to build a second storey on their house, although they admitted they were actually intending to demolish the house to build a bigger one plus a garage.

The next-door neighbours, longtime TIARA supporters Bill Shine and Judith Gould, objected that these big changes were in fact not "minor variances" and should not be permitted since they made an already disastrous situation even worse, both aesthetically and environmentally.

Disregarding their objections, the COA approved the landowners' requests. The Township's Planner never appeared at these COA hearings to defend the Township's planning.

Bill and Judith were so upset at the COA decision that they appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) at their own expense. They hired a lawyer and a Professional Planner to present their case at a hearing in October 2010. TIARA representatives were also present and gave evidence to support them.

The OMB heard all the evidence and gave its decision that same day. Normally OMB decisions can take months. It overturned the permissions which the COA had given, ruling that the variances were not minor in nature, were not desirable or appropriate and did not maintain the general purpose and intent of the Township's Official Plan.

Although Bill and Judith got the ruling which they and TIARA had hoped for, it was a bitter-sweet victory, since they'd had to pay for it out of their own pockets.

In January 2011, they appeared before the new Council, asking for \$22,000 to recompense them for the personal expense they had incurred essentially doing what the Township Planner should have done, defending the Official Plan and Zoning By-Laws. Their request was denied.

The Township's Official Plan and Zoning By-laws were crafted with a great deal of public participation and are built on basic aims and objectives which reflect TIARA's own mandate of preserving the natural beauty and character of the Thousand Islands. We look to the Township to uphold its planning and regret these instances when TIARA, or in this case private citizens, make sacrifices to uphold it.

Little Island – Big House

There was an outcry when a large house was suddenly erected on a tiny island in Front of Yonge Township, quite close to the shore and highly visible from the Parkway. And shortly afterwards, a bridge was built to connect it to a new two-storey boathouse on the mainland. It was one of those cases when everything had fallen through the cracks. There was a loophole in the township's Official Plan which permitted it which has since been corrected. Provincial officials said it shouldn't be allowed, but in spite of TIARA's efforts, no-one dealt with it. All eyes are now on the new boathouse with a view to making certain that the second storey does not become living accommodation – which of course is exactly what it was designed for.

Membership Renewal

We hope you will renew your TIARA membership, or join us if you are not presently a member. The fee is \$40 for an individual member, and \$50 for a family (you, your spouse and children). A membership form is enclosed and you may mail a cheque to TIARA, RR1 Lansdowne ON K0E 1L0. If you prefer, you may renew or join online by visiting our website, www.tiara.on.ca and clicking on **Join** or **Renew**.

We very much appreciate your support, which enables us to do what we do. TIARA is the **only environmental advocacy organization** in the Canadian Thousand Islands.

TIARA's 2011 Annual General Meeting

Mark the date! Our AGM will be held at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday 13 August at the Barbara Heck Hall, Landon Bay Centre, 302 Thousand Islands Parkway. We will be announcing our guest speaker shortly. When you renew your membership, please include your e-mail address in order to receive up-to-date information, or visit our website, www.tiara.on.ca. We hope to see you there. The Landon Bay Centre is a wonderful natural setting with brilliant walking trails. Visit www.landonbay.org for details.

Thousand Islands Life Magazine

If you can't be on the river all year long, you can still stay in touch via a wonderful online magazine called "Thousand Islands Life". Its Editor is **Susan W. Smith**, well-known for her research and writing about the Thousand Islands. Every month it presents articles covering a wide range of subjects about the islands on both sides of the River. **Ian Coristine**, author of several award-winning books of photographs of the Thousand Islands, contributes his stunningly beautiful pictures.

The website is www.thousandislandslife.com and there you can "subscribe" to the magazine. There's no charge, but given your e-mail address, they will notify you when each month's new edition is ready for you to read and admire. The April 2011 issue, for instance, includes articles about plants that deer won't eat, the upcoming season at the Playhouse in Gananoque and a review of "The House That Jack Built", a recently published book of architectural drawings and commentary about the striking 1930 cottage on Niagara Island. This online magazine has brought the Thousand Islands to the attention of people all over the world. Check it out! You won't regret it.

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