

## Community centre key kerfuffle

Posted 3 months ago

To the Editor:

I am responding to the article of November 27th, "Oxtongue residents defend their community centre."

After reading the article, one overwhelming fact kept circling – it might be beneficial if council looked at things a little differently.

Look at practicalities.

Having to drive to Dorset to pick up the Oxtongue Lake community centre key is not practical – issues such as travel time, gas prices and weather (to name a few) are obviously going to impede the building's use by local residents. I suspect if the people of Dorset had to drive to Oxtongue Lake to pick up their centre's keys, the council would see a marked decrease in centre usage in Dorset (and that shouldn't happen either).

In the article, it was stated that Reeve Eleanor Harrison noted "there liability issues with too many keys floating around and that samples from the building's water supply must be submitted for provincial tests before events can take place at the facility." I do not understand – that makes two keys – one that could be kept at Oxtongue Lake, and one for the person who has to test the community centre's water.

Look at the numbers.

Determining what is viable usage is subjective and open for interpretation. There are roughly 300 residents in Oxtongue Lake; there are exactly 365 days in a year. How many activities can 300 people accomplish in a year before it becomes viable enough to satisfy individual council members? Ten per cent of Algonquin Highlands's tax base should not have to defend their right to keep a community centre. And, given the number of people that council had sitting in front of them at the November 20 meeting, it's clear that a high percentage of Oxtongue residents are not prepared to lose their community centre.

Look at what's not there.

Instead of discussing whether or not to take away the one public building that exists in Oxtongue Lake, it might be advantageous for council to look at ways it can enhance the community's public facilities. For instance, tennis courts and other public buildings that are notably lacking in Oxtongue, also mentioned in the article. It would be a wonderful way for council to work with Oxtongue residents to show that they are aware and dedicated to meeting the needs of the "small, distant" community.

Look at sustainable community.

Anyone who has spent time at Oxtongue Lake knows it has always been a sustainable community and independently proud. Residents see the community centre as an important and functional focal point, and if taken away, its presence would be greatly and sorely missed. If the only public building is taken away, then where would Oxtongue Lake residents hold or organize gatherings. Would they have to drive to Dorset for that too?

Finally (and sadly), if council's goal is to access the financial gain that could come from selling the community centre, council is truly not looking where it should.

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