

Wollaston to go it alone with library

By **Jim Eadie**

Wollaston township council has decided to begin the process of dissolving the Wollaston and Limerick Union Public Library, and establishment of a Wollaston Library with or without the support of the Township of Limerick.

In July, Wollaston council received a letter from Limerick township Reeve Sharon Carson outlining the township's intention to withdraw from the library union at the end of 2016. The letter indicated that library services "have become much more diverse in the 21st century", and that information was now available from the Internet. Carson later told *Bancroft This Week* that the decision was also a budgetary choice. She questioned the library's value to the municipality and wondered who was using the library and how frequently.

The library was created in 1972 as a union library, and at that time also included the Township of Tudor and Cashel. In 1985 Tudor and Cashel withdrew. The library has continued to this day with the two remaining townships. The current agreement is based roughly on population, and has Limerick paying one third of the municipal contribution. In 2016, the Limerick share of the library cost is \$9,330.

On Sept. 12, a contingent including members of Wollaston council, administrative staff, and the librarian Bonnie Purdy, attended the regular monthly meeting of Limerick council to discuss the future of the library. Wollaston Reeve Graham Blair asked Carson to share her rationale for withdrawing from the library union. Blair noted that statistics kept for the Aug. 11 to Sept. 21 period showed 21 per cent of the people coming through the library door were from Limerick township.

"The numbers don't mean anything to us," Carson told Blair. "You may be right but I don't know how you came up with those numbers. Townships have mixed addresses? who exactly are the 21 per cent. It would be really nice to know exactly who they were."

Purdy told the meeting that she is uncomfortable giving out lists of names and addresses of library users due to the provisions of the Ontario Privacy Act.

"Really, we need to have more information from you," Carson continued. "I don't know what can be done about the building. It is a very old building. It is hard to heat. It is an old school portable. I would like to see air quality tests done."

"The library building is owned by the (Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board). I am pretty sure they concern themselves with the safety of their buildings," noted Blair.

Currently a grant application has been made to replace windows, insulation and the skirt around the building "hopefully this fall" according to Wollaston Councillor Bob Ireland.

"I would like to see a letter from the school board that they are happy with what you are doing, and that the building is OK," Carson summed up. "I need clearer information on who uses the library. Wollaston is not in the same position as Limerick. Seventy per cent of our residents are seasonal. They drive all the way up to their cottages, put their boat in?they are not going to go to a library. The needs for our municipality are far different from yours and the hamlet that you have."

"It is fair to say, Wollaston township in my view will keep the Wollaston library," said Blair. "We will keep it alive, and I doubt that we would ever refuse any Limerick children. The dissolution of the library?I view this very seriously? and as a Limerick township resident and tax payer I am truly offended."

The following day, Wollaston township held their regular council meeting in Coe Hill.

"Their mind is made up in my view," said Blair.

"They are asking us for all kinds of stuff that won't help. They just don't want a library," said Ireland.

"There will be more discussion, and they will ask for more information," said Jennifer Cohen, Wollaston township clerk. "In my view, they are pretty stuck on that idea, and I don't think they are going to change their mind."

"We must look at what it takes to dissolve the board," said Blair. "Next year we will be looking at a different library board."

"The municipality should begin the dissolution process soon," said Verna Brundage, Wollaston township treasurer. She told council there is a lot of work to be done before the end of the year to complete all the changes required.

Council unanimously passed a resolution instructing staff to begin the process of dissolving the present library board, and the establishment of a Wollaston library board.