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## NEWS

# MPs describe TSW situation as 'insanity'

By Ernst Kuglin, Trentonian

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TRENTON, ON (01/24/2013) Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock MP Barry Devolin speaks about issues surrounding the operation of the Trent-Severn Waterway and the Rideau Canal during a meeting with Quinte West Mayor John Williams, Northumberland-Quinte West MP Rick Norlock, Prince Edward-Hastings MP Daryl Kramp, Peterborough MP Dean Del Mastro and Marc Ackert, owner of Ontario Waterway Cruises Inc., at Quinte West City Hall in Trenton, ON., Thursday, Jan. 24, 2013. EMILY MOUNTNEY/TRENTONIAN/QMI AGENCY

A group of government MPs describe what's happening on the Trent-Severn Waterway as insanity and plan to take their concerns directly to the federal Conservative caucus. "Parks Canada is out of touch with reality when it comes to the fee consultation process. It's driving away business and boaters," said Peterborough MP Dean Del Mastro. The MPs also say they don't want any time restrictions on boaters being able to access locks,

including the shoulder season.

The four MPs met in Quinte West Thursday with Mayor John Williams and Mark Ackert, of the Orillia-based Ontario Waterway Cruises Inc.

The meeting focused on reduced hours of operation, proposed fee hikes and developing an alternative governance model for the waterway, which includes Haliburton's reservoir lakes.

"We don't want boaters trapped in Haliburton or between Trenton and Frankford, just because they can't travel through the locks in a timely fashion," said Williams.

The MPs also agreed the Trent-Severn should be yanked from Parks Canada.

Barry Devolin, MP for Haliburton-Kawartha-Lakes-Brock, is writing a private member's bill suggesting the federal transportation ministry may be a more appropriate federal agency to deal with running the waterway.

"Everyone is now fully engaged in this debate," said Devolin. "There's interest on many levels to see if the problems can be fixed. We've heard that in Ottawa."

The MPs and Ackert are looking into the possibility of writing a new governance model for the waterway.

Strategy Corporation has put together a proposal, but to complete a comprehensive report would cost an estimated \$200,000.

Just where the money would come from to pay for it remains to be seen, but the group isn't opposed to approaching the network of Community Futures Development Corporations.

"I really want something to happen," said Devolin. "Whether it's a Crown corporation or a different agency altogether. It would be a big move, but it needs to happen."

Del Mastro agreed, saying creating a new Crown corporation or another type of agency such as waterway authority may be an option.

"The bottom line is it should promote business and tourism opportunities," said Del Mastro.

"Its mandate should be to drive business and build partnerships with municipalities and businesses."

Prince Edward-Hastings MP Daryl Kramp said Parks Canada is "sandbagging" local economies when it comes to service reduction and fee hikes.

"This may sound partisan, but we have to get something done while we have a strong government mandate," said Kramp.

Northumberland-Quinte West MP Rick Norlock agreed.

"It's all about driving the local economy and doing what's right," he said. "We need to move the operation of the waterway in a different direction. We have to develop the waterway into something that is efficient and operates like a business. The bureaucracy that runs the waterway doesn't get that big picture."

Del Mastro said stakeholders don't have a lot of time to develop alternatives.

The group is submitting a proposed fee structure to Parks Canada prior to the mid-February consultation deadline.

They're proposing a \$0.90 per foot rate and return in 2013, increasing the fee by 10 per cent in 2014 and three per cent a year until 2018. A season pass would start at \$8.80 in 2013 and increase to \$9.68 in 2014 and increase three per cent annually to 2018. The fees are based on a 25-foot pleasure boat.

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