



THE FRIENDS OF THE BRUCE DISTRICT PARKS ASSOCIATION

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The Sounding Line

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This issue of the Sounding Line is intended to give a brief update of the activities of the Association over the last few weeks. Summer is half over, as is our season at the Light Station. We have had hosts for about 7 weeks, and will have hosts until about the middle of September. Sales in the store have been brisk, far surpassing expectations. The Museum was opened in June, after a long closed period. There had been water damage in the hallway to the upstairs of the Museum building, necessitating plaster repairs by Parks staff, and painting and cleaning by volunteers. The opening of the Museum allowed for the store to reopen inside, making it easier for hosts to operate the store and interact with guests. Overall, the visitor experiences have been extremely positive as noted in our guest book.

There have been some glitches with systems, necessitating a new Jackery inverter being purchased. The original Goal Zero unit that powered the lights in the host house would no longer take a charge. The new Jackery Explorer Pro 2000 features Lithium Ion batteries, has multiple charging modes, and supports multiple load types. It has been a bit tricky to keep charged with the existing solar panels, and has needed topping up a few times with short runs of the portable generator, but by and large it has been a good arrangement. The water system is challenging, and a more permanent fix is required. The line into the bay is subject to damage by northerly winds and wave action. We are discussing with Parks some more permanent options. Transporting items, particularly store inventory, is challenging. Some items have been lugged across from the main boat dock to the Light Station, a hike of about 1.2km. The majority of items, such as propane tanks, large water jugs, cases of soft drinks, chips and chocolate bars have been ferried right to the Light Station pier by a work boat owned and operated by Blue Heron Cruises, without which we would be out of business. A huge thank you to Rick and Ashley Salen, and the Blue Heron boat crews, for all their ongoing assistance, including transport of Association volunteers in addition to all of our goods. The moving of items is as well only possible with the help of other volunteers, too numerous to mention, who help load and unload vehicles and vessels.

Some other items of interest on the Island:

1. The gardens and planters are doing very well, thanks in large part to volunteer Bruce Prail, a former greenhouse owner, whose knowledge and love of all things green is obvious from the photo below;
2. We are working with Parks on dealing with garbage and recycles generated at the Light Station, and have a recycle bin in place, on a trial basis;
3. Board Members Ann Miller and Rob Tomchick discovered an invasive species of plant (Greater Celandine) near the Light Station, and Rob has been working with Parks to try and eradicate it;
4. The stairs on the way to the Light Station were in need of repair. This issue was brought by us to the attention of Parks, and new stairs have been constructed;
5. The focus and content of the Museum is being discussed at the Board level, with the hope that some new items can be added to the existing displays, to enhance visitor experiences;
6. The host program has, again, been very successful, with several groups of previous hosts, interspersed with first time hosts. Board member Ann Miller has put together a very thorough instruction/information manual, and the feedback from hosts has been very positive. We rely on hosts to complete routine maintenance items, such as painting and lawn care and running the store, but most importantly, to be a positive liaison with visitors;
7. We are attempting to get a better idea of the number of visitors to the Light Station, but Parks last year indicated there were about 100,000 visitors to the Island, and about 20 plus percent of those visited the Light Station. If that number of about 20,000 visitors is accurate, we have a great opportunity to expose this large number to the history and beauty of the Island.



In addition to Island enhancements, Friends has been working with Parks on collaborative projects, such as outfitting the former Warden's cabin at the main dock, purchasing of some first aid items, for example, AED's, and possible interpretative signage, all of which take time to explore and cost. With the Light Station major repairs completed, the Association is able to now work towards further fulfilling its mandate of projects enhancing all aspects of the Parks.

As well, Friends was able to resurrect a version of the Orchid Festival, with a good attendance, knowledgeable speakers, and enjoyable refreshments, hosted at the Visitor Centre. This event will spawn discussion about what form the Festival may take in the next few years.

The Board is also pleased to welcome Teresa Fogal as its administrative assistant. Teresa is on an hourly contract arrangement, and will assist in updating membership information, preparing meeting minutes, review of correspondence and emails and generally assisting with administration and record keeping. Welcome aboard Teresa.

Friends continues to rebound, like other organizations, from the effects of Covid, and in addition, to the challenges today faced by all volunteer organizations. We hope to expand the use of The Sounding Line, and social media, to update members, and the general public, about the good work done by The Friends.

Friends and Parks Canada have a good working relationship. Below, Board Member/Acting Chair Richard Ottewell, and Parks employee Reid Cameron, work together to reinstall the damaged water line at the Light Station-a true sign of our ongoing co-operation. A big thank you to Curtis Lyons, Technical Services Co-ordinator, and Ethan Meleg, Acting Superintendent, for their continued support and co-operation, and to all those who support Friends.

