

August 6, 2009

Editor, Kelowna Daily Courier

Dear Editor,

It appears that there are many opinions regarding both the City's plan to re-use the pontoons for a public pier and the alternative approval process that is being used to gauge the public's support for the project. Unfortunately, many of the project's detractors, such as letter writer Ian MacLean, tend to make assumptions on which to base their arguments rather than using level-headed reasoning and investing in a minor amount of research.

It's obvious Mr. MacLean disagrees with the City's process but in so doing, slams the Kelowna Yacht Club for no apparent reason other than he thinks to make cheap points with similarly-minded readers who prefer to view the world through their assumptions. To be specific, he refers to the pontoons as a "security wall around the private (no commoner allowed) Kelowna Yacht Club".

Let's check the assumptions in that statement. The term "security wall" brings all kinds of pictures to mind, but let's examine the facts. The Kelowna Yacht Club has existed in that location since 1945 and has always maintained a dock moorage system surrounded by a breakwater. This breakwater, as is the case with all marinas, serves to protect the enclosed waters from wave action. It does not act as a security wall and since the pontoons are wider, taller and meant to be open to the public, they will actually provide less security in some ways than the Club's current log breakwater.

In fact, many Club members I've spoken to are concerned the number of boat break-ins will increase, the pontoons will contribute to major ice-build-ups around the docks and the ice will make it much easier for thieves to obtain access. They also point out the pontoons will block their view of the lake and lakeshore to the south, west and north. Finally, they raise concerns for the many hundreds of children, most of whom are non-members, who learn to sail using the Club's boats and instructors, since the pontoons will restrict the access and sight-lines of these small sailboats as they leave the boat basin.

Speaking of non-members, let's look at Mr. MacLean's second assumption – the remark about "no commoner allowed." According to my Webster's, a "commoner" is someone without rank or status. Since the Yacht Club members come from all walks of life, from truck drivers to professionals to store clerks to secretaries and retirees, I'd expect they would all meet Mr. Maclean's definition of a commoner. Nobody I spoke with knew of any royalty amongst their membership.

As for access, I remember seeing thousands of people actually walking in and out of the Yacht Club building and docks just last April, when they freely let all manner of "commoners" in for their boat show. Why, just last month, they took 350 kids with disabilities, their sisters and brothers and caregivers out for a day of fun on the water, all for free. Are kids with disabilities commoners, Mr. MacLean? There's an annual Blind Fishing Derby, where they not only take people with visual impairments out on their boats to fish, they also provide prizes at an awards banquet, again all for free. Perhaps Mr. MacLean would classify the visually impaired as commoners.

Then there are all those free mooring buoys out on the lake. Perhaps even Mr. MacLean has tied a boat to one. The Kelowna Yacht Club spends approximately \$700 every year per buoy maintaining them and keeping them safe for all those "commoners" to use.

I stated at the beginning of my letter that it takes only a small bit of research to find out the truth. For those who are interested in the facts rather than vitriolic assumptions, I suggest they do as I did and view the KelownaYachtClub.com website. Click on the "About Us" tab on their homepage. I think most of us have no idea just how involved this Club is in our community.

Sincerely,

Ken Smith