

To the editor:

When your landlord decides to do something with the property next door to the lot you lease, you take an interest in the plans, but there's not much you can do to influence them. And since the plans influence the leasehold improvements you have been planning for years, some people mistakenly identify the landlord's plans with your improvements.

That is the situation the Kelowna Yacht Club finds itself in with City of Kelowna's proposal to move the bridge pontoons to bracket the boundaries of the Kelowna Yacht Club's water lot.

KYC leases the area used for our moorage basin from the city, which in turn leases it from the province. We have been saving for years in order to expand the moorage, which we all agree is desperately needed. We applied for the required approvals from all levels of government well over a year ago, hoping to have the expansion work completed over the winter, but our application was apparently delayed somewhere in the system.

Many people whom I and my fellow Kelowna Yacht Club members have spoken with have the impression that it was the yacht club's idea to move the pontoons to form a breakwater and that we will be benefiting from it while city taxpayers will be paying for it.

I would like to clarify this point.

While we welcome the creative thinking from city staff and recognize there are some potential benefits to the yacht club, we want to make very clear that this is not a KYC initiative. We have been planning our moorage expansion for years and the applications were made long before the pontoon proposal was brought forward.

As with any change there are always positives and negatives. We were told earlier this spring that city staff was considering the pontoon idea.

At that time we expressed some of the concerns that we thought our members would have.

- The opening at the northwest corner of the proposal would provide access to most powerboats, but would force all sailboats to use the southwest opening. This includes forcing the hundreds of children who take advantage our popular public learn-to-sail programs to sail into a heavily congested area west of the fuel dock, an area heavily plied by tourists renting powerboats and personal watercraft, the many commercial vessels operating from the city docks and all of the watercraft coming in to refuel at the dock or pump out their sewage at the public pump-out station maintained by KYC and situated on our dock.
- The location of the pontoons will almost certainly contribute to ice buildup within our basin, and ice causes major damage to boat hulls. The ice also provides access to our docks each winter, which vandals and thieves use to their advantage (and occasional detriment when they break through into freezing water).
- Other concerns would be ongoing maintenance, public safety, and security.

While we applaud the idea of creating additional public access to the lake and public moorage, we would like everyone to realize that this is not a proposal by the Kelowna Yacht Club.

Many of our members attended the public forum to voice their opinion as a member of the KYC and a taxpayer of the City of Kelowna.

We have not had consultations with the city on this issue since they told us about the pontoon proposal. We look forward to that process.

Cairy Holtby, Commodore, Kelowna Yacht Club, May 7, 2009