Getting telephone service

Getting telephone service to Little Silver and Rainbow Lakes was far from straightforward. The excerpts below are from the files in our archives, but it would be nice to flesh them out with reminiscences from those who were property owners at the time. This is one of a series of archival features we hope to mount on the net. The fortieth anniversary of our Association is approaching and we encourage neighbours to go into their files and send personal accounts of their experiences on our lakes to Eileen Barbeau at eileenb@primus.ca.

Facts from the Minutes of July 4, 1978

The nearest phone is at [a home] 1 mile south on CR.

[One of the residents on Silvery Lane] has installed a CB radio unit which could be used in emergencies.

The emergency signal is the continuous blowing of a car horn.

Quotation from the Minutes of July 7, 1985

Clay Hiltz raised the subject of telephones and telephone service. Jacques Noel took a survey to determine the level of service. There were 3-4 families interested in telephone service but the rest were not. Clay reminded everyone that he can arrange for emergency calls from his cottage should the need arise.

Quotation from the Minutes of July 6, 1986

Clay Hiltz noted that he can no longer connect by ham radio to the telephone system. He can, however, still contact the South Sherbrook Fire department through intermediaries if necessary.

The lack of telephone service was raised, and it was agreed that the Executive would investigate costs. (2 years ago, the Association was given a price of $44,000.00 to run a line from Maberly.)

Communication: September 4, 1986

J.P. Noel to LSL Owners: Owners are advised to phone Bell Canada if they want service. If there is enough demand, Bell will put service in.

Letter: September 14, 1986

Ken Jackson to Mrs. D.N. Symington (Bell): He has a list of 25 families wanting service, with possibly 2-5 more. The nearest phone is at Maberly, 6 miles away. Enclosed: a map and information about Little Silver Lake.

Letter: October 21, 1986

Ken Jackson to CRTC Complaints: The purpose of the letter is to "seek assistance in assuring that the fulfillment of a demand placed upon Bell Canada to reimburse its present customers for over-payment will not further delay badly needed new service to communities such as ours".

26 residents have applied for service, with a potential of 70. Three years ago, the phone company said that residents would absorb $44,000 to extend service from Maberly. Since then, the area has become the responsibility of Bell Canada. He had been informed that should demand exist, rural service at normal rates might be provided. 26 applications have already been submitted. The nearest phone is a payphone at Maberly; this is unreliable. We ask the CRTC for assistance to expedite service.

Letter: November 3, 1986

P.M. Godin (CRTC) to Ken Jackson: The telephone company will be asked to investigate and report;

then CRTC will respond.

Letter: November 21, 1986

P.M. Godin (CRTC) to Ken Jackson: The telephone company's obligation to furnish an exchange, contained in the Special Act of Incorporation, is limited to 165 metres of any road on which there are existing facilities. Little Silver Lake is in unserved territory. Since the cost to the Company is $175,000, Bell is not prepared to act.

Letter: February 9, 1987

Mrs. D.N. Symington to Ken Jackson: The addition of P.P. Pospisil to the list of applicants is acknowledged.

Letter: March 5, 1987

Ken Jackson to W.M. Tupper (MP, Nepean-Carleton): The letter follows a personal meeting the previous week and encloses a fact sheet. Westport and Bell have agreed on a boundary that puts Little Silver Lake in Bell Territory; the boundary is two kilometres to the south. The CRTC has given a negative response to request for service. The problem for the owners is that lack of electronic communication doubles response time for the fire department and that the OPP needs to deliver emergency communications. The assistance of Mr. Tupper is requested.

Appendix - Background Information

• *Little Silver Lake is in Concessions 4 and 5 of the Township of South Sherbrooke, County Lanark, approximately five kilometres south of Maberly, off Highway 7, and bordering County Road #5.*

• *Lake development began approximately 20 years ago and has grown to a community of over 80 landowners. To date, approximately 60 of these have developed their properties.*

• *Requests for phone service were made on an individual basis over the past 20 years, none of which were successful. In 1982,* **The Little Silver Lake Property Owners Association** *approached the Maberly Telephone Company, a subsidiary of Bell Canada, to explore the possibilities of service. We were informed thst we would have to absorb a cost of $46,000 to have a line run down from Maberly — a cost we could not possibly absorb.*

• *Since then, the need for phone service has grown rapidly, and our association approached Bell Canada's office in Brockville — within whose jurisdiction we fall — with another request for rural service. We were informed, albeit verbally, that if we could muster sufficient customers (some 15 to 20) a line probably could be extended at no extra charge, with four-party rural service installed at the regular rate.*

• *The association provided Bell Canada with 27 written applications for service, which are now on file in the Brockville office. We were led to believe that this gave us high priority and that service would likely be installed in 1987.*

• *Shortly thereafter, the dispute between Bell Canada and the CRTC over repayment of excess revenues erupted. We were informed — again only verbally — that Bell Canada was suspending extension of service as a pressure tactic, and that we should approach the CRTC for assistance.*

• *We made this approach (see enclosed letter) but the reply was not only disappointing, it was hardly credible! It said in essence that Bell Canada's charter places no obligation on the company to provide service, and that the cost of a line into the Little Silver Lake community, which would have to be borne by the customers, has escalated from $46,000 in 1982 to $172,000 today.*

• *The privately operated Westport Telephone Company provides service in the area directly south of Little Silver Lake, the agreed boundary of which is the CPR tracks, less than two kilometres to the south.*

• *The nearest phone to our community is on a farm approximately two kilometres away in the Westport Telephone Company's jurisdiction. Ontario hydro lines, which extend to our community, also pass through this farm.*

• *However, the manager of The Westport Telephone Company informed us last fall that they have agreed with Bell Canada to keep the CPR tracks on the boundary between them, and they wouldn't want to serve us because we have too many customers.*

• *A survey reveals that almost the entire area, even to the remotest farms, has had telephone service for many years. In some cases, lines have been run far beyond the 165 metres from Bell Canada service which Bell claims in the limit of their responsibility.*

KJ/sp 05/03/87

Letter: March 25, 1987

W.M. Tupper to Ken Jackson: Tupper has written to André Bureau, President of CRTC.

Letter: May 15, 1987

W.M. Tupper to Ken Jackson: Enclosed a letter from André Bureau; sorry that result is not more positiove.

Appendix – Letter: April 29, 1987

André Bureau to W.M. Tupper, forwarded to Ken Jackson: The Bell Canada General Tariff permits the company to apply construction charges for distances greater than 200 feet. From 165 to 1650 metres, the charge is $65 per 30 metres, plus $100 per 30 metres if the company cannot use existing support systems. The CRTC recomments Manual Mobile Telephone Services (MMTS) as a possible alternative. Enclosed is a CTRC decision and press release.

Appendix – Announcement of CRTC decision: July 31, 1986

The decision responds to a request by Bell for withdrawal of mobile service, in particular Manual Mobile Telephone Service (MMTS) and Automatic Mobile Telephone Service (AMTS) because both are obsolete and superseded by advanced systems. The CTRC ruled that AMTS can be withdrawn, but the MMTS must be maintained until at least December, 1988, although the rates charged can be adjusted.

Quotation from the Minutes of July 5, 1987

As requested by the 1986 meeting, the Executive once again pursued the possibility of obtaining telephone service. Despite a list of 28 families wanting service, Bell Canada again rejected the application stating it would cost over $176,000.00 to run service from Maberly. An application to the CRTC by a Federal MP on our behalf received no support. Westport Telephone Co., which has service less than a mile to the south, have agreed with Bell not to extend north of the tracks. They also claim we have "too many customers" to handle. The Executive will keep trying to find a solutions.

Letter: September 1, 1987

Ken Jackson to General Manager, Bell Canada: The members of LSLPOA appreciate the sympathy and assistance of Mrs. Donna Symington. The problem was resolved by the transfer of 30 applications from Bell Canada to the Westport Telephone Company which has offered to supply service; the move appears to be due in part to the efforts of Mrs. Symington.

Quotation from the Minutes of July 10, 1988

The Sec./Treasurer, Ken Jackson, reported that telephone service has finally been installed by Westport

Telephone Co., rather than by Bell, within whose territory we fall. Hook-up is available for a "one-time" price of about $50.00. Operating cost is about $5.00/month including mandatory rental of a company phone (standard phones incompatible). We expect 35 to 40 phones on line by fall.