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OFAH Ontario Federation
of Anglers & Hunters

PO Box 2800, 4601 Guthrie Drive, Peterborough ON K9J 8L5

OFAH FILE: 333B
May 10, 2024

Mayor Rick Dumas and Council
Town of Marathon

Dear Mayor Dumas:

Subject: Marathon boat launch fees

The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH) is Ontario's largest, non-profit, fish and wildlife conservation-based organization, representing 100,000 members, subscribers and supporters, and 700 member clubs. It has come to our attention that the Town of Marathon has increased their annual boat launch fee by a significant amount, and we are writing to express our concern about the impact such a change would have on fishing, hunting, and recreational boating in the area.

Much like in the proposal of 2021, there is no clear justification for a fee increase of this magnitude at the Marathon boat launch, especially considering the location's history. Having been established and managed through the voluntary efforts of the Harbour Marina Boat Club, the Marathon boat launch has been a staple and, until recently, a free feature of the north shore for decades. Although we understand that recent improvements to the launch, largely made in response to the area's growing popularity, may justify a modest fee, it is not clear that these improvements justify a fee increase of this magnitude at this time. Any influx of launch-users must naturally be accompanied by greater municipal revenue via previous launch fees, which already exceeded those of any other jurisdiction along the north shore.

- Sault St. Marie: \$7 daily, \$61.97 seasonal
- Wawa: \$5.25 daily, \$80 seasonal
- Terrace Bay: Free
- Nipigon: Free
- Red Rock: \$6 daily, \$40 seasonal
- Thunder Bay: Free

What analysis has the municipality conducted to justify this dramatic increase in cost? Is it reasonable to expect Ontarians to pay between 2 to 4 times the cost of other launch locations to access the same shared resources? Several boaters have contacted the OFAH accusing the municipality of exploiting the fact that boaters would have to travel 82 km west or almost 200 km east to reach another public launch site.

It is likely that a yearly fee of \$152, or \$26 for a single day, will be prohibitive for many anglers, hunters, and boaters looking to simply utilize the resources for which they already pay. Indeed, limiting access to natural resources can complicate provincial fisheries management and conservation efforts significantly, since a full two-thirds of all fish and wildlife management in Ontario is funded by fishing and hunting licence revenues. This funding, which is funneled through the MNRF's Fish and Wildlife Special Purpose Account, supports regulation, science, enforcement, conservation, licensing, and education, making anglers and hunters directly responsible for the health of the waterways (and much more) that towns like Marathon enjoy.

Municipalities, by contrast, are under no obligation to pay toward these natural resources, and profit greatly from the tourism and tax base they attract. Angling alone is a \$2.2-billion industry in Ontario, engaging over 1.4 million citizens and representing one of the greatest sources of community revenue in northern Ontario. Has the town considered the potential loss in tourism and outdoor recreation related revenue that this new boat launch fee will cost?

In the absence of clear justification for the current launch fees we recommend that any fee the town feels is necessary for use of their facilities be comparable with launches in the area. We would be happy to discuss this further with township staff.

Yours in Conservation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew Robbins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Matthew Robbins
Fish and Wildlife Biologist

MR/jb

cc: OFAH Zone B Executive
OFAH Fisheries Advisory Committee
OFAH Land Use/Access/Trails Advisory Committee
Angelo Lombardo, OFAH Executive Director
Matt DeMille, OFAH Director, Policy & Programs
Mark Ryckman, OFAH Manager, Policy
OFAH Policy & Programs Staff