

THE DOCKS OF THE BAY

“By the time you finish all the work on your docks, the water levels will be back up and you’ll have to do it all over again, you know.” Words of advice from some of the ‘old timers’ in our Georgian Bay neighbourhood. And of course, they knew exactly what they were talking about! They have seen the cyclical patterns of the Bay and have watched the significant rising and falling of the water. This isn’t to say that there aren’t additional environmental and other factors associated with our changing water levels, but only that folks who have been on the Bay for generations do have some insights!

For years property owners on Georgian Bay were concerned. Worried, even! Local cottage associations, provincial associations, environmental advocates, scientists, cottage, home, and business owners all researched, speculated, advocated and planned for the dropping water levels. On the Bay, our docks were a huge issue. There were docks leading to nowhere — the water had disappeared. There were cribs that were completely out of the water. There were docks resting on the bottom of the lake. There were water access cottages that became virtually inaccessible, and island properties that were difficult to approach as they had so little water around them that boats couldn’t get close to the shoreline. There were long docks with extensions and extensions on the extensions, just to reach enough water to dock a small boat. Municipalities scrambled to put plans in place and added amendments to their bylaws to allow dock extensions, etc. for the low water levels. It was unnerving to say the least. We held onto the words we had heard, “...the water levels will be back up again ... you know!”

Waterfront specialists, like **Taylor Docks Incorporated** were called upon to assist property owners. We needed them in a big way! They moved docks that were bottoming out in the low water, added dock extensions, and replaced short steep ramps with longer ones, raised docks, and much more. In fact, Taylor Docks installed our dock ramp and at one point the water was so low that we needed to add an additional platform to reduce the slope of the moveable ramp. And it was still on a steep decline ... billy goats come to mind! But, those days are over ... remember the ‘old timers’ words of wisdom?

The water on Georgian Bay took a turn two seasons ago and the water has been rising ever since! Really rising! It is up over 3 feet and now property owners on Georgian Bay have a different challenge with their docks and boathouses. Many fixed structures are under water and need to be raised. Now this means repairing or replacing cribs, moving structures, creating new structures, and generally dealing with a mirage of different problems associated with high water on the Bay.

Compounding these challenges are the new bylaws and legislation associated with docks and boathouses. Both your local municipality and

the Ministry of Natural Resources & Forestry (MNRF) need to be contacted to obtain the proper permits. The MNRF may require a work permit for your dock or boathouse, and this approval may be required prior to the township issuing a building permit. Also, depending on the location of your property, and where you are putting your dock or boathouse, you may be required to obtain additional approvals and/or permits from Fisheries & Oceans Canada (DFO), Parks Canada, or Transport Canada (Navigable Waters Protection Program).

Once you have received your permits and approvals, be sure to have your structure built according to your approved plans. Local municipalities will do site visits to complete framing and final inspections on work to ensure the structure complies with the Ontario Building Code while other organizations often inspect on a random audit basis.

Working with an experienced and competent dock and boathouse building company can make this potentially complex process much easier. They have the skills needed to take you through the planning, permit, and building stages with confidence. In the case of Taylor Docks Incorporated, permits are their job, not your headache. They work on your behalf to obtain the necessary permits. And when necessary, this process may include obtaining a variance to accommodate a structure with limited frontage, or by creatively situating a building in a narrow waterway to meet building and bylaw requirements. The professionals at Taylor Docks Incorporated are able to assist you with navigating Georgian Bay’s ever changing shoreline. Give them a call!



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