

Comments

Opinion

The river crossing

Last week members of the West Carleton community gathered at the Fitzroy Harbour Community Centre to hear from the operator of the Quyon ferry about the environmental impact of a new, much larger cable ferry being proposed to provide service between Ontario and Quebec.

For Don McColgan it is a matter of bringing in sufficient revenue to maintain the family business after Transport Canada ordered restrictions on the size of the vehicles the ferry could carry safely.

McColgan has been under fire over the past few years from a couple of nearby Ontario residents due to noise, hours of operation, line-ups and behavior of waiting drivers on Ferry Road.

Some of the concerns — parking in front of driveways and driver behavior — are valid complaints but others, considering the century-long service, are more of a nuisance than anything else. If you don't like ferries, don't buy a house near one. It's a grandfathered service and it is not going anywhere soon.

A ferry has operated between Quyon and Ontario for a hundred years and has provided an invaluable service for business, pleasure and tourism. McColgan has operated the ferry for 50 of those years.

The pressure has also been on the federal and provincial governments to build a bridge between Ontario and Quebec near where the ferry operation is located.

A coalition of supporters of the bridge proposal, for both negative and positive reasons, had some early success with the concept but with examinations of several locations both east and west of Parliament Hill the possibility of a crossing near Quyon has all but disappeared.

Federal Transport Minister Lawrence Cannon has quashed the idea and the preference for a location east of downtown Ottawa for a new \$200-million bridge has been favoured by a selection committee.

All that said, an upgraded ferry, which operates in a quieter mode, is more environmentally friendly, and can carry large trucks and campers connected to vehicles, makes perfect sense if a bridge is not contemplated for the next 40 or 50 years.

We have had a strong relationship with the Pontiac over the past century and it is important we get back to cross-river business for farmers, tourism and our neighbours.

Still there are questions to be answered before the ferry project gets too far down the road such as water levels, port authority dock operations, costs and summer and winter navigation for others.

It is not a matter of whether the ferry is upgraded and full service is restored, it is a matter of getting it right the first time around and making sure McColgan can make a living from this valuable tie between Ontario and Quebec.

Internet column has had its day

This column (Pete's Home Page) first appeared in the *Arnprior Chronicle-Guide* and the *Renfrew Mercury* in late 1994 and for several years closely covered the issues and growth of the Internet.

In those early days, the World Wide Web was a novelty, mainly the preserve of technically-suave people. To the average person it did not impact their lives at all.

In recent years the Internet has become a fact of life, fundamentally changing the way we communicate, do business and conduct our lives.

This column predicted that growth back in the 1994/1995 period and attempted to educate the uninitiated about the capabilities and limits of the Internet and of course, how best to make use of it.

If anything, those early articles in this series underestimated the net's importance and growth.

Recent statistics locally now show that home sales can suffer if your property can not get high-speed Internet service.

Fully 40 per cent of real estate companies in the Arnprior and McNab-Braeside area report they have lost at least one sale in the past three months because of this very deficit.

The same data shows 30 per cent of people buying homes right now list high speed Internet service availability as a

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PETER DeWOLF

firm requirement.

In other words, no matter what the other amenities and features of a home, they will not buy unless service is available.

Over 50 per cent of the reminder of buyers list service availability as an important feature that could tip the balance.

Even more interesting is that 90 per cent of local real estate agents believed that these trends are growing.

In simple terms, the high speed Internet service is becoming a necessity, rather than a curiosity or a nice extra for the average person.

Soon it will be as important as running water and electricity.

To get a feel for how far things have come in the last 15 years since this column began, take a trip down memory lane and actually read the early articles in this series. See how antiquated they sound now, just over a decade later.

For those interested in the first few articles in the series, they are

still available at www.igs.net/~whisper/artsndx.htm.

Over the years I have tried to dismiss the myths about the Internet and to help new users appreciate its capabilities. It has been a learning experience.

Those early articles were submitted in WordStar, and sent through a 14.4 kilobyte dial-up connection.

It was by doing this column I learned a lot about the Internet and was able to put the newspaper on the Internet as early as 1997, and made the *Chronicle-Guide* the very first paper in Canada to appear fully in an Adobe format (now the standard for complete on-line papers) in 1998.

Now my home is equipped with a high-speed wireless connection and a hotspot to allow for laptops to operate completely independently.

All my banking and communications are done on the Internet and even my music comes in from Internet Radio.

I listen regularly to my old colleague from Arnprior's CKOA radio, who now works at Ocean 95 in Victoria, British Columbia, all through the Internet.

From home or anywhere in the world on my laptop, I can access these services as well as my personal and business e-mail and even check my appointment calendar which is on a server for Metroland Newspapers in Toronto.

This last article in the Pete's Home Page series will be sent through a high-speed connection in less than a second, edited and prepared for publication completely electronically.

The page you are reading this on will be laid out using a special program and sent electronically through the Internet to our presses in Renfrew.

Only then will it take on printed form, unless of course you are reading it on the Internet!

This is a whole new world and I hope this column over the years has helped introduce you to it, or at least answered a few questions you may have had.

If so, it was my pleasure to write it.

In the most recent years, I have scaled the series back, only putting out a new one once or twice a year, since there are now so many alternate ways to get the same information.

So the time has come to let it go and concentrate my efforts on my other columns and articles.

Many of these are available right on these pages, or on the personal site I named after this column, Pete's Home Page. It is at www.igs.net/~whisper.

Don't forget, this paper is also available on-line at www.runge.net.

The only thing left to say is — welcome to the Internet and see you on-line!

We like to hear what you have to say about the issues and news in and around West Carleton-March, send your letters to the editor to terry.boland@metroland.com and speak your mind

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