

Cottagers returning to Bancroft

By Sarah Sobanski

It's cottage season again. Last year I wasn't around to celebrate Victoria Day in Bancroft. I dare say, the rumours are true. The traffic in town has already picked up. Events are happening more and more frequently each week. We were supposed to have our first 30 degree day this past week. Summer isn't official until June 21, but you could've fooled Bancroft.

That's good news for area business owners. With the influx of people, we're going to see some more dollars coming into local tills. Bancroft businesses and their charitable hearts keep this community running along with its tireless volunteers.

Local lumber retailers might see a larger boost than usual as cottagers come home to a surprise. Area flooding may have caused damage to their properties. So it won't be the regular opening of cottages this year.

If you have had damage to your property, it's important to note that the Province of Ontario has opened disaster recovery funding to those in Renfrew County, including the City of Pembroke. Disaster Recovery Assistance for Ontarians is active only when a sudden and unexpected natural disaster causes costly and widespread damage.

According to the Red Cross, floods are the most frequent natural disaster in Canada. If you're returning to a flooded property, remember to watch for damage that may have compromised the structure of your home or cottage. The Red Cross recommends looking for buckled walls and floors and sagging ceilings. If you see any of these, leave the home and contact authorities. Your water may also be compromised with contaminants. The Red Cross states, "Do not use your tap water for drinking, cooking and washing dishes until it has been tested and/or confirmed safe for use by local authorities."

While draining, it recommends releasing the water from your home at a third of the volume daily. "If the ground is still saturated and water is removed too quickly, the walls or floors could buckle. Use pumps or pails to remove standing water, then a wet/dry shop vacuum to mop up the rest."

If you're returning to the area, or have been here all year round, also watch out for what the OPP is calling flood fraud.

In a recent release, the OPP reminded home, business and property owners that fraudsters may seek vulnerable populations impacted by flooding and those who want to help them. They might also pretend to bring disaster relief funding or be those sent to that your water is safe for drinking. Warning signs include "high pressure or threatening telemarketers who want you to contribute immediately, someone calls and thanks you for a pledge you don't remember making, and copycat names - names that might be misleading or deceiving." The OPP said to always ask for the identification of an insurance company, building inspector, or any other authority. You can check their business on the Better Business Bureau and Ontario Ministry of Consumer and Business Services (www.sse.gov.on.ca/mcs/en/pages/default.aspx).

Otherwise, if it's just a regular seasonal opening for you, grab what I like to call a dock-book and kick back and relax. If you'd rather save relaxing for later and see what's new in town, our Getaway Guide came out this week - it has everything you need to know to plan your summer season. Also, check in with us - community calendar has all the need-to-knows too.