



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On behalf of the St. John's Institute (SJI) Board of Directors, I wish to inform you of recent developments in relation to the Camp BarVNok property. No actions are required by you at this time, however considering the importance of the camp property to many in our community, we feel it is important that we are transparent in our actions.

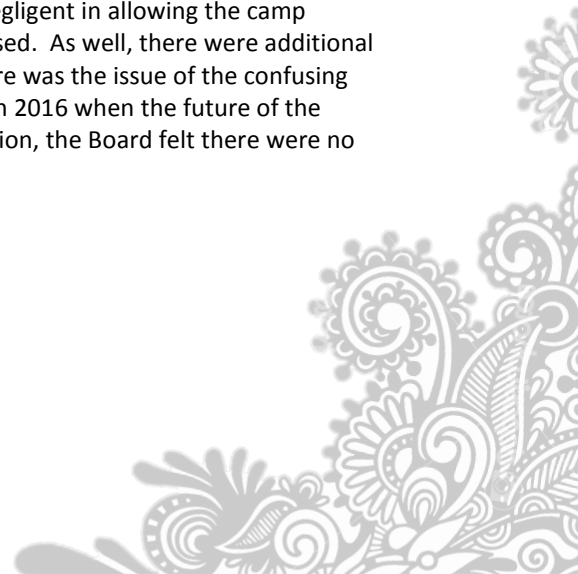
In September 2015, SJI held an information meeting to update the community on our rationale for pursuing the sale of the BarVNok property. As discussed, SJI can no longer afford to pay the annual costs of the camp which are in the neighbourhood of \$78,000/yr. Significant funds are also required to repair and/or renovate the property to meet insurance standards and make the property financially viable and sustainable for the future. Therefore, the Ukrainian community was encouraged to consider options for assuming responsibility and ownership of the property. At that meeting, the Council of Ukrainian Orthodox Churches of Edmonton (CUOCE) agreed to serve as a coordinating body so that the community might engage in these important discussions.

Since BarVNok was deemed unsafe and uninsurable to host the 2-week Ukrainian Orthodox summer camp program in 2015, we successfully ran our program at Camp St. Basil, also at Pigeon Lake. Similar arrangements and deposits were made to Camp St. Basil's to once again hold our summer camp program in August 2016. Several months ago, a committee, under the guidance of the CUOCE approached SJI with the idea of securing the funds and contracted/volunteer labour to repair the camp facility to a sufficient insurable level such that the facility might host the summer camp program.

SJI consented to allow the committee to proceed with its plans and laid out a series of conditions that would be required, including insurance for any workers involved in the project and that any donations for this work be solicited only by the CUOCE. As well, a series of deadlines, occurring through the mid and late spring, were suggested to determine the feasibility of this project, in part to ensure that Camp St. Basil's would be given adequate notice. Keys were provided to the CUOCE committee and they began arranging the necessary inspections and repair estimates with an aim to bring the required elements up to an insurable standard.

In early June, after the suggested deadlines had passed, the CUOCE contacted SJI to inform us that it had secured funds, volunteers and a contractor and wished to proceed with repairing certain portions of the camp facility that would be needed for the operation of the two week camp program at the BarVNok facility. Buildings that were not going to be repaired were going to be cordoned off for the duration of camp.

In discussing the matter with SJI's Insurer and legal advisors, it became apparent that we would be liable for any events that occurred on the property in the areas that had not been repaired. While the camp committee could do their best to ensure the areas deemed unsafe were not accessible to our young campers, if any accident or injury were to occur in those areas, SJI would be at great risk for being found negligent in allowing the camp program to proceed on the property when not all deficiencies had been addressed. As well, there were additional risks around the workers and volunteers operating on the property. Finally, there was the issue of the confusing message it would send to be seen repairing the property for two weeks of use in 2016 when the future of the property after that time had not been resolved. After much debate and discussion, the Board felt there were no reasonable mitigation strategies against these risks.





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As such, the CUOCE is denied permission to proceed with their repair work at BarVNok. The Board expects the remaining deposits to be paid to Camp St. Basil and looks forward to another successful camp program this summer at our rented site. The camp property will remain closed to all rentals and use until the future ownership question is decided.

We understand this decision will be deeply disappointing to some within the community. However, while community members may feel attached to, and a "sense of ownership" for, the property, it is the SJI Board that bears the fiduciary responsibility for the camp BarVNok property. Furthermore SJI holds the liability for any event that might occur to a volunteer, worker or child while they are on that property. While the risk of an event is low, the consequences would be very high, and were deemed an unacceptable risk.

Camp BarVNok holds a special place in the hearts of many of you, including our Board members, and there are those who feel very strongly that people and organizations can be rallied to provide the necessary ongoing financial support and commitment to keep the camp within the Ukrainian Orthodox community. Our Board strongly encourages those who feel that way to work with the CUOCE to address this much more important question of future ownership of the property and to ensure this issue is been broadly and adequately discussed within the community. The SJI Board will be bringing the matter of the sale of the property to its membership for a decision by December 2016. We will need to hear by then if the Ukrainian Community can clearly articulate how they might support keeping the camp within the community, as SJI simply can no longer afford to pay for the property.

If you would like to discuss this matter further, please don't hesitate to contact the SJI Office or myself directly.

Yours in Christ,

Tania Mysak  
Chair, St. John's Institute

