

News Release

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Skyline Investments Inc. refuses to discuss re-opening S.S. Keewatin for a 2022 season with Friends of Keewatin

Port McNicoll, ON

Skyline Investments Inc., owner of the 114-year-old S.S. Keewatin, has refused to discuss re-opening the ship for a 2022 season with Friends of Keewatin - the volunteer organization which restored and has operated her as an historical attraction since 2012 - according to the President of the charity, Wayne Coombes.

“This means KEEWATIN will be closed for a third season in a row,” said Coombes. “After struggling to self-fund and execute repairs over seven long years to bring her to near fully restored condition, having to stand outside and watch her deteriorate is hard to take. And we know she has been deteriorating since Skyline assumed direct custody: the repair to the top deck at the bow was interrupted when Skyline locked us out 18 months ago.”

“The word ‘disappointed’ doesn’t come anywhere near describing how we feel,” said Coombes. “For me ‘betrayed’ is more accurate. Skyline returned KEEWATIN to Port McNicoll promising to donate her to the community. Based on that promise volunteers contributed an estimated 100,000 hours to restore her and operate her to pay for that restoration. But now Skyline has changed its management, reneged on its promises, locked us out, and intends to gift her to a different recipient.”

Coombes bristles at the suggestion that it was the charity’s failure to secure Category B designation that led to this situation. “The offer to donate KEEWATIN to the community wasn’t presented as ‘conditional’ and the volunteer contribution couldn’t be,” said Coombes. “Skyline created the charity, controlled its board through the 2018 season, and controlled its management through the summer of 2020. Skyline’s lawyers handled the application and Skyline refused to provide the financial backing it knew would be required for the charity to attain designation for the ship, despite seeking a multimillion-dollar windfall. Any ‘failure’ was Skyline’s.”

What about the Marine Museum of the Great Lakes at Kingston? “They announced they’ve been conditionally awarded Category B designation for KEEWATIN by Canadian Heritage back in December,” said Coombes. “That’s no surprise: they’re a fine organization and KEEWATIN is an amazing artifact. I understand they still have several hurdles to cross. Ultimately both organizations want the best for KEEWATIN. She sure isn’t getting that now!”

Attached: photo of S.S. Keewatin. For more information, contact wayne.coombes@sskeewatin.com.

