

March 12, 2024

Dear Mayor Kelley and Members of Council.

Re: Township of Muskoka Lakes Official Plan Appeals to Ontario Land Tribunal

In 2019 the Township of Muskoka Lakes (TML) council embarked on what has proven to be, a long journey to a new official plan. Some of you were on the previous council for the entire journey, and some of you were not part of council at the time - regardless, now we must finish the job.

Council set out a process and an engagement strategy to ensure that those of us who will live with the outcome of the policies in the plan would have the opportunity to work with staff and council on the content of the OP – and that we did.

Members of the Muskoka Lakes Association (MLA) and Friends of Muskoka (FOM) along with other sectors, including developers, sat on the Official Plan Working Committee dedicating weeks of time to review, provide input, debate and revise. The Working Committee also participated in discussions with the Planning Committee, facilitating a fully transparent process for discussion of policy directions and later policy itself. There was not always unanimous consensus, but everyone was given the opportunity to express their views and concerns were heard.

The organizations submitting this letter reviewed numerous drafts and provided technical and practical feedback on the policies – many of which were adopted in the final plan. **This plan is truly reflective of community input.** It reflects years of work, consideration of the variety of opinions shared by citizens of Muskoka and lays out the vision and direction for Muskoka.

In the end, the document is one that Muskoka Lakes can be proud of as it recognizes the importance of the environment to the economy and lifestyle in Muskoka, making its protection front and center while still making room for growth.

However, the plan has been appealed to the Ontario Land Tribunal. The basic tenets of the plan – protecting our lands and waters with an environment-first objective – are being challenged. Each of the organizations signing this letter have requested Party Status at the Tribunal, for we believe that the approved official plan is the best chance we have of ensuring that Muskoka will remain clean, green and resilient for the future of our families and in the face of climate change. We are prepared to use our limited resources to defend the policies in the plan with legal, technical, and planning experts.

We are offering to partner with TML in the sharing of resources to ensure that we both have access to the best experts and can contribute to the outcome that we desire – upholding the 2023 TML Official Plan.

**We implore council to support the vigorous defense of the official plan.** Anything less will signal a willingness to accept compromise. Compromise does not result in a world-class Muskoka.

Sincerely,



Susan Eplett  
President Muskoka Lakes Association



Laurie Thomson  
President Friends of Muskoka



Jeff Crocker, Co-Chair  
Skeleton Lake Cottagers Organization



Lawry Simon, P. Eng, Co-Chair



President  
Leonard Lake Stakeholders Association

**LEONARD LAKE  
STAKEHOLDERS ASSOCIATION**

c.c. Derrick Hammond, CAO, TML

David Pink, Director Development Services, Environment and Sustainability