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Statement to MLA Members and the Muskoka Community

Some of you may have heard that inexcusable and offensive comments were made by a Director of the Muskoka Lakes Association (MLA) when presenting at a District of Muskoka committee meeting on January 18th, 2021. He was speaking to our position on proposed changes to District governance as outlined in a January 15th, 2021 letter to the Municipal Modernization Committee. In his unapproved and unsanctioned closing comments he used an inappropriate racial analogy that referred to the tragic incident that led to the death of George Floyd.

This was rightfully called out by Committee members and subsequently others in the Muskoka community. While written apologies were made to the Committee members immediately by both the speaker and the MLA, this was not enough. As a direct result, Mr. Munro is no longer a director of the MLA.

We too were shocked that this analogy was used by one of our directors. It does not reflect who we are or what we stand for. We wholly reject the implication in the use of that analogy that some municipalities in the District are oppressors or that the waterfront landowners are oppressed. We acknowledge and recognize our privilege in owning property in beautiful Muskoka. And with privilege comes great responsibility. That is why the MLA's volunteer Board works hard for our members and supporters to engage on issues of importance in the municipalities and District. However, we must not allow our passion for Muskoka to cloud our judgement.

You have our commitment that the MLA will take steps to ensure that our directors' model inclusive and anti-racist behaviour. We will be training our directors in respectful and anti-racist communications, revising our director recruitment with the goal to increase the diversity of our Board, as well as improving our communication review and approval protocols to ensure that this does not happen again.

We unconditionally apologize for that statement and for the offence it has caused. We will take this opportunity to learn and to prove that we can and will do better to work effectively and respectfully with all the communities in Muskoka.

Deborah Martin-Downs
President