

February 13, 2020

Dear Mayor Harding, Planning Committee Chair Bridgeman and Councillors,

**Re: Official Plan Review**

Friends of Muskoka (FOM) and the Muskoka Lakes Association (MLA) have reviewed the Director of Planning's Report dated February 14, 2020 regarding the Township's Official Plan (OP) review and draft vision statements produced by LURA Consulting for consideration at tomorrow's Planning Committee meeting.

As we explained in our delegation to Council yesterday, FOM and the MLA believe the Township should have one 'umbrella' vision statement that guides all of its activities and decisions, and that reflects the community's input.

The community gave extensive input on an appropriate vision for the Township during the summer of 2019, which is summarized in the Community Visioning Summary prepared by LURA Consulting dated August 2019. One theme resonated throughout the visioning work: since the environment is our economy, the Township should adopt an Environment First principle.

FOM and the MLA strongly encourage the Township to adopt a vision statement that recognizes the link between our environment and our economic prosperity. There can be no 'balancing' between the two, since this would require a trade-off between the environment and economic growth. We can choose to develop and grow in a sustainable manner, as the community clearly wants us to do.

Director Pink's Report lists these two vision statements proposed by LURA consultants to the Planning Committee:

*1. The Township of Muskoka Lakes is recognized for its picturesque heritage landscape with a vibrant mix of lakes, rivers, forests and towns. The Official plan will take a leadership role to protect Muskoka's character and environment for climate resilience, while supporting a thriving year round economy for sustainable growth.*

*2. The Township of Muskoka Lakes is a leader in environmental stewardship, sustainable urban towns and balanced tourism fostering quality of life for all.*



In our view, neither of LURA's vision statements reflects the link between protecting our environment and the success of our economy. In addition, the first alternative wrongly suggests that the OP will be the leader, and only protects Muskoka's environment for climate resilience.

We encourage you to support this vision statement circulated to Council by the MLA, since it creates the needed link between environmental protection and economic success, and reflects the values of our approximately 6500 combined members and their aspirations for Muskoka:

*"The unique character of Muskoka Lakes' natural and cultural environment is understood, valued, protected and enhanced. It is at the core of a sustainable and thriving community and will be passed on to future generations."*

Finally, we agree with Director Pink's recommendation that the OP's resort policies be reviewed after the conclusion of the review of the Minett policies. However, if the Minett policies are finalized before the OP review is completed, as we expect, we encourage the Township to include the resort policies in the OP review.

In addition, if Council decides to accept Director Pink's recommendation that the Township's resort policies be reviewed jointly by the District and Township, we would note that the Township is permitted to have more restrictive resort policies than are in the District's OP if Council believes this is appropriate.

We hope these comments will be helpful.

Sincerely,

**Friends of Muskoka**



Don Lang, Chair

**Muskoka Lakes Association**



Lawton Osler, President

cc. David Pink, Director of Planning

