

October 16, 2017

**District Municipality of Muskoka
70 Pine Street,
Bracebridge, On
P1L 1N3**

Attn: District Council

Dear Mr Chairman and Members of Council:

RE: District Council Composition

The Muskoka Lakes Association (MLA) represents approximately 2300 families in Muskoka. While the majority of our members, reside on the big three lakes of Muskoka, Rousseau and Joseph, a significant number, own properties on over 22 of the smaller lakes in Muskoka. Most of our members are seasonal owners. But an increasing number choose to become full time residents and live on the waterfront or in the towns of Gravenhurst and Bracebridge.

A review of the district council composition is a significant undertaking. One that we do not expect to be completed by December 31st, 2017 in time for the 2018 election.

But by initiating the review now, all of us have time to research and discuss the composition of a District council that is representative of its population today not one that was determined over 50 years ago.

In the review, we suggest that council consider 5 items:

Seasonal Population

The seasonal population should be weighted at 100%

Seasonal residents contribute to Muskoka 's community through their taxes, their membership on boards such as Muskoka watershed council, the Muskoka health board, and a number of other volunteer organizations, similar to the permanent population. Seasonal residents view themselves as much of the community as permanent residents and should have full rights to be represented at 100%.

Various methods of determining the seasonal population have been proposed. The Town of Kawartha Lakes which has a significant seasonal population and which went through an OMB hearing on the issue decided to use the municipal voters list to determine its seasonal population with a 100% weight.

Another proposal is for the area municipalities to include an enumeration survey in the tax bill at a nominal cost and with a nominal monetary reduction of the tax bill (eg \$100.00) if the survey is completed and returned.

Representation by Population

Democracy has been based on equal representation by population. To suggest that district council representation be equally distributed amongst all 6 municipalities ignores this basic principle.

Reduction in Size of District Council Not necessarily Desirable

A reduction in the number of councillors on District council would have minimal impact on the district's finances as the remuneration for council members comprises less than 1% of the district's overall budget.

Of more significance is the ability of its citizens to access their district councillors. While less councillors may not necessarily mean less access, it may mean delayed access, as each councillor then has to take on a greater workload and potentially is less available to its constituents.

Area Municipality's Role in obtaining Public Input

Each area municipality is responsible for overseeing the election of members to District council. The district council membership and the area council membership are intertwined. As such, a decision regarding the composition of the district council has ramifications at the area level.

The MLA requests that each area municipality have a PUBLIC meeting to address how that municipality recommends changes to the district council and its impact at the local level. The purpose of the public meeting is to allow each municipality's residents to provide input.

District Councillors elected at Large or by Ward

The towns elect district councillors at large, the townships by ward. Each mayor automatically sits on district council. The role of the district councillor is to debate and determine actions that are best for the district as a whole while still representing the concerns of their area municipality. To the credit of those district councillors from the townships sitting on district committee, the MLA has noted that in the majority of times and in the committee work undertaken, most district councillors act for the district as a whole or at a minimum for the benefit of their municipality. They do not appear to be simply representing the views of those in their ward.

Perhaps it is time to recommend that all district councillors be elected at large. While we recognize that this may mean added costs in campaigning, that only occurs every 4 years. The benefit would be more global thinking on behalf of the district councillors at the local council level and better recognition of the role of district councillors as representing a more senior level of government.

In summary

The MLA supports:

Weighting the seasonal population at 100%

Representation by population

Not necessarily reducing the number of district councillors

Public Input required at the local area municipal level

Time to consider electing the district councillors at large by area municipality

The MLA hopes that the above comments provide a focus for discussing how the district council can continue to represent its populations and be a benefit to all.

The MLA welcomes the opportunity to provide further input and request notice of future committee and council meetings which discuss this endeavour.

Respectfully submitted



Anne McCauley, MLA
Chair of the Political and Land Use Committee



Robert Ensor, MLA
President