

To my honorable township, district, and provincial representatives-

It is with great concern and sincere hope that I ask you to protect our beloved Muskoka from the ecologically unsound land-use policy changes now proposed in the Muskoka Official Plan Review. As an American cottager, whose family has spent well more than a century of summers in Beaumaris, I can attest not only to the deleterious impacts (ecological AND economic) that have befallen overdeveloped lake communities in the US, but also to the increasing fragility of Muskoka's once durable ecosystem. It is typically only in retrospect that one can identify the impact to a community and a place of a single change in policy, but I firmly believe that the ramifications of the decision now before you could not be more starkly apparent or alarming.

It goes without saying that individual self-determination cannot be the principle by which a community engages and utilizes its natural resources. It follows, then, that as a means of mitigating our own poor behavior, we empower representatives like yourselves to enshrine in our aggregate policies and laws the kind of stewardship that we, as individuals, families, and communities must strive to demonstrate. As both the caretakers and beneficiaries of Muskoka's natural splendor, we hold ourselves accountable, through both binding law and ethical conviction, for the manner in which we treat the land, the air, the water, and the denizens of the natural community of which we are blessed to be part. Through trial and error, over decades and more, Muskoka's various governing bodies and agencies have created the legal and enforcement framework for Muskoka's protection, while generations of local residents and cottagers have shaped and been shaped by the overarching value system that governs our relationship to Muskoka.

Until now, wisdom has more often than not won the day in these legislative and administrative processes, and we have consistently bought ourselves time to responsibly address some of the more complex problems we face. To alter the current land-use and zoning policies to accede to the demands of those whose interests lay not in the preservation of Muskoka's natural bounty—rather in profiting at its expense—would unwind a hard-won legacy of thoughtful leadership and stewardship. Allowing resort properties to convert in part to high-density residential use would lead to considerably worse land and water traffic, dramatically increased effluent flow to the lakes, and permanent changes to shoreline viewsheds. Furthermore, the development of an energy plant in Bala would pose obvious, significant threats to water levels and water quality throughout the Muskoka watershed. Such profound policy reversals would forever mar Muskoka and stand as a shameful abrogation of trust between people and place. I sincerely plead to your wisdom and goodness to block the proposed changes, and to continue to work in a measured and diligent way to advance and protect Muskoka's future.

With deep respect,

[REDACTED]

In Canada:

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

In [the U.S.](#):

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]