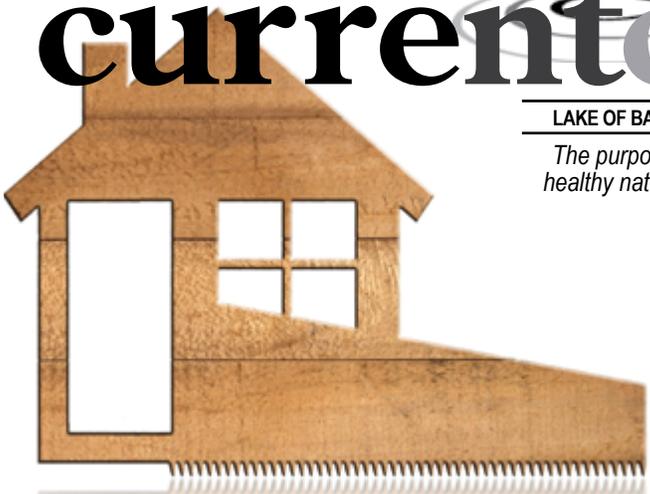


The purpose of the Lake of Bays Association is to promote, sustain and enhance a clean and healthy natural environment, a well-serviced community and a safe and peaceful Lake of Bays.



Your Questions ~answered

by Tim Hadwen

Q: What structures can I have on my lakefront property?

A: Under the Development Permit By-law, you are entitled to have one residence plus:

BOATHOUSE, BOATPORT

- Only one allowed and requires a permit
- Maximum length of boathouse or boatport is 15m from the shoreline
- Limited to one-storey
- No sleeping quarters or kitchen

SLEEPING CABIN, BUNKIE

- Only one allowed
- Requires a permit
- May have a bathroom, but requires appropriate septic approvals
- No kitchen

SHED, GARAGE

- Only one shed or garage allowed
- Requires a permit if greater than 10m²

GAZEBO, PUMPHOUSE

- Require a permit if greater than 10m²

...continued—page 2

Feeding the Birds

by Brett Tyrone

Without putting them at risk

Bird feeders let you see birds up close, take in every stunning detail, learn their vocalizations, and observe their habits and quirks. (And you can do all that from the comfort of your home, while sipping your coffee.)

“The best thing about bird feeding is it gives people a connection with nature,” says Kerrie Wilcox, who manages Project FeederWatch with Birds Canada. “And that’s what gets them to care about birds.”

When you care about birds, you want to protect them. So if you are going to put up bird feeders, it’s important to take precautions to keep birds safe. Here’s how to provide a healthy feeding environment for birds—and when it’s simply best to take bird feeders down.

“The best thing about bird feeding is it gives people a connection with nature... And that’s what gets them to care about birds.”

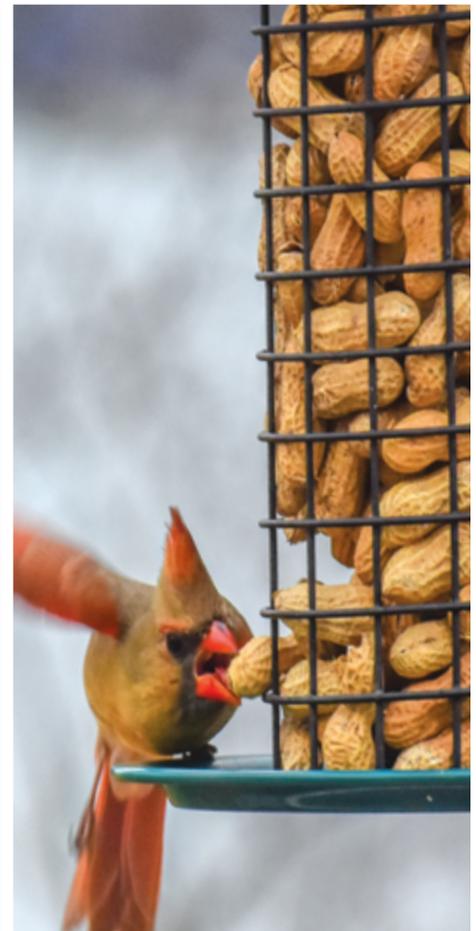
Regularly clean bird feeders and baths

“Feeders encourage birds to congregate more densely and more frequently than natural food sources,” says Dr. Jessica Rock, a wildlife rehabilitation veterinarian in Hilden, Nova Scotia. “So one sick bird’s respiratory or fecal secretions can cause a great number of birds to get sick.”

Rock says if you want to feed birds year-round, you need to thoroughly clean and dry feeders regularly. Any moisture makes it easier for a disease to spread.

...continued—page 2

right: Hang your feeder close to a tree. This gives your feathered friends cover for a quick getaway when spotting a predator.



Q: How much waterfront can I develop?

A: The Township of Lake of Bays Development Permit By-law governs development of your lakefront property. Under the By-law, the guiding principles are that:

- The natural waterfront is to prevail with building and structures blending into the landscape.
- Natural shorelines are to be retained or restored.
- The approved buildings and the associated activity areas will be delineated, and the remainder of the property should remain in a natural state.

To implement these principles, the Development Permit By-law establishes a Shoreline Activity Area (SAA) & SAA Frontage for each waterfront property:

- The SAA Frontage is the length of shoreline where structures and human activity (including cleared areas) may be located. SAA frontage can be up to 25% of your shoreline, or 23m whichever is less.
- The SAA is the SAA Frontage times the shoreline setback for the lake which is 20m for Lake of Bays.
- Within the SAA, only 40% of the square footage can be covered by the footprint of docks, boathouses, decks, dwellings, and other structures.

Your Questions Answered is a regular feature in the Current Connection newsletter. If you have questions you'd like answered, send them to info@loba.ca. And you can find information about the most common Township of Lake of Bays by-laws at lakeofbays.on.ca/en/municipal-services/by-laws-and-administrative-penalties.aspx, and Town of Huntsville by-laws at huntsville.ca/en/council-and-administration/bylaws-and-policies.aspx. 

Birds Canada recommends soaking and scrubbing bird baths and feeders every two weeks, using a 10 percent bleach solution (one part bleach to nine parts water). Hummingbird feeders should be cleaned every 2-5 days. Rinse feeders thoroughly and allow them to dry completely before refilling. You should also rake the ground under feeders and discard fallen seeds, which can get mouldy or contaminated with feces. (Wilcox has a table under her feeders, so she can clean up easily.)

Use multiple feeders

A single feeder can cause too many birds to congregate, increasing the risk of disease transmission. Set up a few feeders to give birds space and avoid crowding.

Choose the right feeders

Unfortunately, birds don't have the best table manners. So you should avoid open trays and platform feeders, which birds can stand (and poop) on. Feeders with small openings or "ports" can also be a problem, as the openings can become infected with a bird's saliva or nasal secretions. Tube or cage-style feeders are the best options. You can also cover your feeder with a plastic dome to keep it dry.

Choose feeders made of plastic, steel, or glass. They are easier to clean than feeders made of porous surfaces, such as wood or clay.

Keep cats indoors

Outdoor cats are the leading cause of human-related bird mortality. They kill between 100 and 350 million birds every year in Canada—and bird feeders are like an all-you-can-eat buffet. So it's important to keep cats indoors—or give them supervised outdoor time.

Unfortunately, you can't control what other people do with their pets, and many people notice neighbourhood cats stalking their bird feeders. If you see cats visiting your bird feeder, the responsible thing to do is take the feeders down.

Wilcox says you can try taking your feeders down for a week or two to dis-

courage cats—but you should be vigilant. "If a cat keeps coming back," says Wilcox, "Then take the feeder down for good, and maybe talk with the neighbour."

Prevent birds from colliding with windows

Millions of birds are killed in Canada every year from colliding with windows. Birds don't perceive glass, and they mistake reflections of sky or habitat as the real thing. Since bird feeders attract birds to your yard—and near your cottage windows—it's a good idea to make your windows safe for birds by putting up films, decals, cords, or screens that will break up reflections.

You should also keep bird feeders within three feet of your windows. That way if a bird is startled from the feeder, it won't build up enough momentum to seriously hurt itself if it does fly into a window.

Use native plants to attract birds

Whether you have bird feeders or not, gardening with native plants is a great way to attract birds to your yard. Native plants can provide food and shelter throughout the year, and they don't cause birds to congregate like feeders do. Plus they will attract a greater diversity of species, since not all birds eat seeds.

Birds Canada has a new Bird Gardens website that gives you plant recommendations tailored to your region and the growing conditions on your property.

Remove feeders when there is disease

Even if you clean bird baths and feeders regularly, they can spread disease—especially when there are large concentrations of birds. Feeders bring birds into close contact with each other and increase the likelihood of birds ingesting contaminated food or water.

If you see a sick or dead bird near your feeder, you should take feeders down for two weeks and clean them thoroughly. And if there is an outbreak of a particular dis-

ease in your region, feeders should be taken down altogether until the risk is gone.

“When those types of events happen we ask people to stop feeding to prevent the spread,” says Wilcox.

Rock says there are three diseases of major concern that can be spread by bird feeders: trichomoniasis, salmonellosis, and mycoplasmosis.

“Unfortunately all three of the diseases look very similar, spread very easily, and are associated with poor prognosis,” says Rock.

Here’s what to look out for:

Trichomoniasis

Trichomoniasis is a highly contagious disease caused by the microscopic parasite *Trichomonas gallinae*. This disease progresses rapidly, causing the inside of the mouth and esophagus to become inflamed and riddled with lesions. Unable to close their mouths or swallow, birds usually starve to death within 8-10 days. Infected birds may look emaciated, listless, or puffed up. They may have discharge in their eyes and be unable to close their mouths.

Trichomoniasis is spreading across eastern Canada and is prevalent in the Maritimes, where it has had the biggest impact on finches. If you have a cottage where trichomoniasis is present, you should take down bird feeders and bird baths during the warmer months.

Salmonellosis

Salmonellosis is caused by infection with *Salmonella typhimurium* bacteria. It is widespread and affects many species—especially feeder birds like finches and grosbeaks. Like trichomoniasis, salmonellosis causes inflammation of the esophagus and crop tissues, preventing birds from eating and drinking—and causing death from starvation and dehydration. Humans can contract salmonellosis by touching a sick birds or contaminated bird feeders. It doesn’t always make people sick, but it can cause fever, acute abdominal pain, and diarrhea.

...continued—page 4

president’s report

Wendy Gibson

It was a full house for LOBA’s Winter Town Hall held on Saturday January 27 at Bethune United Church in Baysville. The over 70 people who attended (an all-time high attendance!) were treated to a comprehensive presentation by Muskoka Watershed Council Director, Kevin Trimble. The topic: *Integrated Watershed Management—What is it and why do we need it?* was an enlightening call to action for a change in how we understand, manage, and protect the 5,100 square kilometres and 2,000 lakes that comprise the Muskoka Watershed. A brief introduction to this topic can be found in the article by Kevin on page 5 of this issue. We will be sharing a [link to Kevin’s presentation slides](#) in an upcoming NewsFlash. Everyone who cares about Muskoka needs to learn more about the critical turning point our watershed faces today and what we need to do to reverse the current trend of declining watershed health.

Thank you to District Chair Jeff Lehman and Lake of Bays Mayor Terry Glover for attending the Town Hall and providing updates on the activities of their respective councils. Highlights from their updates are on pages 4 and 6. Thank you also to Mayor Nancy Alcock who presented an update from the Town of Huntsville including their work on a new Strategic Plan based on the three pillars of Balanced Growth; Protected Natural Environment; and Lively, Healthy, and Safe Communities.

The one issue that was raised by every presenter at the Town Hall was Climate Change. As we accept that the wild swings of extreme weather are the new norm, climate adaptation and mitigation must be integrated into the policies and actions of our governments, associations, and personal lives. Read more about what steps are being taken locally to address climate change on page 7.

I was pleased to be able to present LOBA’s recently completed [2024-2029 Strategic Plan](#). Over the next five years our financial and human resources will be focused on the following core priorities: Environment; Development and Land use Planning; Government Relations; Community Engagement; and Corporate Sustainability and Effectiveness. Our updated mandate to EDUCATE, ADVOCATE and ENGAGE has been incorporated into the actions we have identified to reach our goals. You can read our Strategic Plan on the LOBA website under the About tab, and it will be published in the 2024 Yearbook. I invite each of you to look at what we are working on and if there is anything you are interested in or feel you can help with, please contact us at info@loba.ca. You, our members, are our greatest resource to ensure LOBA continues to be proactive and relevant. 



Everyone who cares about Muskoka needs to learn more about the critical turning point our watershed faces today

continued—Feeding Birds...page 3

Infected birds may show rapid, laboured breathing, shivering, incoordination, lethargy, fluffed up feathers, droopiness, diarrhea and convulsions. They may also drool or regurgitate food. If you see a sick bird at your feeder, you should take your feeders down for two weeks, and make sure to wash your hands well after touching the feeders.

Outbreaks of salmonellosis tend to occur in the spring and winter, especially when there are heavy concentrations of birds. This past winter, there was a deadly outbreak in BC that killed large numbers of pine siskins. If you live somewhere with an outbreak of Salmonellosis, take feeders down and put them up again in the spring.

Mycoplasmosis

Mycoplasmosis, also known as house finch eye disease, is caused by infection of Mycoplasma bacteria. The disease is most

common in house finches, but it can affect multiple species, including American goldfinches, evening grosbeaks, and purple finches. It is spread through the exchange of ocular or nasal discharge.

Symptoms of Mycoplasmosis can include red, swollen, or crusty eyelids, and clear discharge. Infected birds may have wet, matted feathers around the face, or fluffed up feathers. Mycoplasmosis can cause blindness and usually leads to death. It has caused significant declines in some bird populations, in some cases up to 40 percent.

Mycoplasmosis is more prevalent in the eastern part of North America, but it has been identified across Canada—including PEI, Ontario, Saskatchewan, and BC. If you see a sick bird or hear of an outbreak, take feeders down until the outbreak has subsided.

Take down feeders when bears are active

Black bears are shy, and they usually avoid people—unless they find a bird feeder. Birdseed has loads of calories, and a bear will go to great lengths to get its paws on some. Once bears start coming around, they can quickly become a nuisance, and if they can't get to your feeders they may try to get into your cottage instead. A nuisance bear may have to be put down—which is not only tragic for the bear, but can orphan its cubs. To prevent conflicts with bears, take down feeders in the spring and only keep them up when bears are hibernating

Originally published on CottageLife.com.

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GREETING FROM Township of Lake of Bays Mayor TERRY GLOVER

agement Plan. We continue to actively pursue improved services for you and the businesses within the Township. Our CAO and staff implemented several innovative solutions to challenges that save money while maintaining and improving our service levels. The new ice plant at the Lake of Bays Community Center is a good example of this. The Township is a leading municipality addressing climate change by implementing mitigative actions and fleet conversion. The Building and Planning Services Departments continue to yield large returns as we issued 644 Building Permits and conducted over 2,800 separate inspections of those buildings.

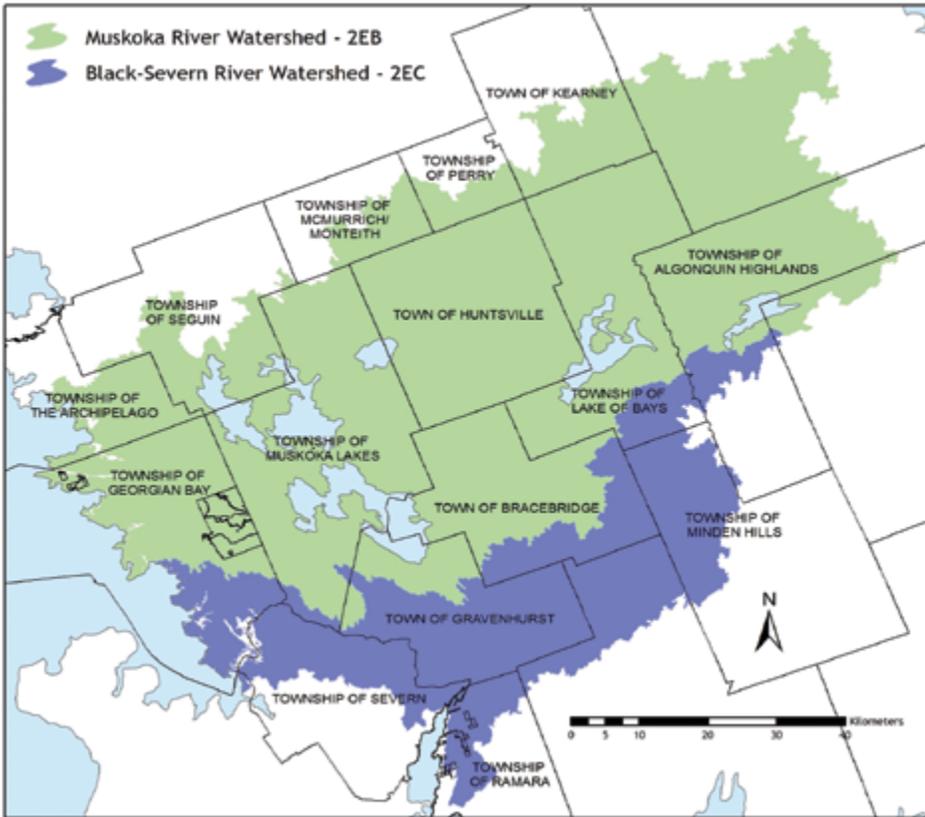
We made tremendous new advancements with the Township's first investment policy and the collection of tax arrears. We undertook a thorough review of the property tax arrears situation within the Township and reduced the outstanding property taxes from \$1.9M to approximately \$650,000 (65% reduction). We closely follow guiding principles that protect the Township legally and fiscally in our decision-making, so that our credit and financial status are well protected amidst increases in insurance and liability.

At the District of Muskoka, I serve as Chair of the Health Services Committee and participate on numerous other committees. The Health Services Committee is very active with the District beginning construction of a Long-Term Care home in Huntsville. Additionally, there is an agreement to partner with the District of Muskoka to raise local-share funds for the new Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare two-site hospital plan, which will vastly improve health care for our region. The District is committed to taking bold steps in 2024 to improve housing supplies for our region and make financial contributions toward addressing climate change.

I would like to express my sincere thanks for the support of Township staff, the residents of Lake of Bays and the Board and President of the Lake of Bays Association. I welcome the challenges that 2024 will bring and will continue to do my best to perform my duties as your Mayor. I look forward to continuing to hear from you regarding the Township or District's progress and hope to see you all enjoying our piece of heaven here in Lake of Bays. 

At the time of writing this message, the Township budget had not been passed. Financial challenges brought about by inflation COVID-related pricing and a lack of the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) reassessment that has caused a stagnation to our assessment base have caused municipalities across Ontario to make tough decisions as apparent by the budgets passed by responsible governments in Muskoka. Council and I will do our best once again to keep taxes as low as possible amidst these difficult times.

In 2023, the Township completed some significant studies, including the Parks, Open Space and Recreation Strategy, Community Improvement Plan and Asset Man-



to manage a rapidly changing environment in the Muskoka River Watershed. We also lack important watershed-based information, broad objectives and decision-making tools needed to achieve a sustainable environment.

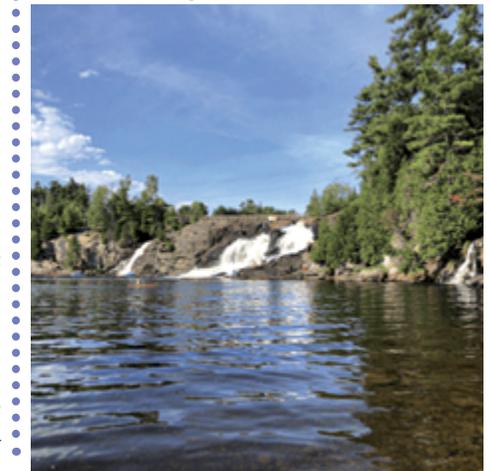
Without an obvious problem with our environment, constituents aren't yet demanding change from local politicians.

In addition, one of our greatest challenges in the near term is that it's difficult to see gradual environmental changes. Without an obvious problem with our environment, constituents aren't yet demanding change from local politicians.

MWC has begun the process of informing the public, hopefully generating the community will to empower the changes that are needed. It is important that a broad base of stakeholders rally around a common desired future in order to implement IWM.

IWM can't be implemented by a single government body, nor in only one part of a watershed. It requires strong collaboration across municipal governments and effective communication with business sectors, Indigenous communities, NGOs, residents and resource users. Municipal governments, as planning authorities for land-use decisions, have a major role to play in shaping IWM.

Below: One of the many beautiful features of the Muskoka River, High Falls



Integrated management of the Muskoka River Watershed

by Kevin Trimble

Time to get started!

Integrated Watershed Management requires a culture shift in the way we think but is a more effective way to manage our environment and economy.

Muskoka Watershed Council (MWC) has reported disturbing trends in our environment that will affect our quality of life if they aren't addressed. Information on MWC's website and in the media describes why the status quo will not maintain the high quality of our environment. MWC, the District of Muskoka, the Muskoka Lakes Association and other groups are calling for Integrated Watershed Management (IWM) as a solution. But it will take much time and effort before IWM can commence.

IWM is a process for concurrently addressing multiple issues in conservation and land-use planning at a watershed ecosystem scale. Present management focuses on solving localized, individual problems as they come up. IWM re-

quires a culture shift in the way we think but is a more effective way to manage our environment and economy. It is being used elsewhere in Ontario, across North America and in other countries, but until recently, it hasn't been considered here. IWM addresses environmental management in a context of economic development, climate adaptation, land-use decisions, community amenities and infrastructure planning.

We currently have 17 municipalities attempting separately to manage a rapidly changing environment in the Muskoka River Watershed

Do we have those capabilities in place now? Do we have the knowledge to predict and set multidisciplinary, watershed-wide goals for all of our local planning decisions? No. We currently have 17 municipalities attempting separately

continued—Muskoka Watershed...page 5

To design and implement IWM, we must first characterize how our watershed works as a whole complex system, what it is most vulnerable to and, most importantly, what our environmental targets should be. What do we want our watershed to look like in the future? Muskoka has long benefited from a highly engaged community of citizen scientists, municipal politicians and active public sector research and monitoring of the environment. Recent projects funded by the province have significantly enhanced that knowledge base. We must now synthesize existing information and expand on it. This requires co-ordination among multiple partners, a clear understanding of what we need to do and the funds to get there.

IWM also requires integration of environmental and socio-economic management. Our communities and our economy are also part of the watershed.

What we value and how we make decisions are a critical part of understanding how we can manage and adapt to the changing environmental conditions in our watershed. We've started to work toward IWM, but we all have work to do.

Kevin Trimble, M.Sc.

Director, MWC

Chair of IWM Community Roundtable

Kevin is a retired ecologist with over 30 years of experience in many public and private sector projects across Ontario and beyond. After cottaging on Lake Simcoe for most of his life, he and his wife moved from Caledon to Brandy Lake near Port Carling in 2014 where he immediately got attracted to join the Muskoka Watershed Council. He chaired MWC in 2018 and was a member of the Muskoka Watershed Advisory Group that made recommendations for the Province's \$5M watershed projects. 

2024 Tax Increases across Muskoka

District Municipality of Muskoka:

3.94%

+0.4% for hospital redevelopment

Township of Lake of Bays:

9.06%

Town of Huntsville:

10.68%

Town of Bracebridge:

6.8%

Town of Gravenhurst:

2.99%

Township of Muskoka Lakes:

14.3%

Township of Georgian Bay:

9.9% (not yet approved)



GREETING FROM JEFF LEHMAN

District Municipality of Muskoka Chair

First though, a word on 2023. Your District Council was extremely hard at work in our first year—we wrote a new Strategic Plan which sets out 10 priorities for the District, we made a record investment in affordable housing, we approved and began work on the new, 160-bed Fairvern Long-Term Care home, agreed on a substantial commitment to the reconstruction of hospitals in Bracebridge and Huntsville, and we took important steps in expanding work to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

In 2024, Council has directed that we move faster and farther on two of these key issue—housing and climate change. Watch for more very soon, as the District's plans for community greenhouse gas reductions will be coming to Council in the February and March meeting cycle. This will complement our work on Integrated Watershed Management, which I'm sure will continue to be of great interest to LOBA.

From staffing shortages to growing demand on social services, the shortage of affordable rental housing in Muskoka makes life challenging for anyone on a modest income and is holding back our economy and our public services. We will certainly need the Federal and Provincial governments to come to the table and invest, but Muskoka is full of public sector innovators and private sector entrepreneurs who are working on the problem as well, through initiatives like our Housing Task Force. I'm confident we'll make even bigger strides in building a better Muskoka in 2024. 

As I write this in early January, I can see open water all the way across to Bigwin Island. Certainly, it's easy to recognize this year's late freeze as another sign of our changing climate...which is an excellent segue to the key issues for the District of Muskoka as we move into 2024!

by Lauren Valliere

A Call to Climate Action for Lake of Bays Residents

Addressing an important issue touching the very fabric of our community

Amidst the tranquil beauty of Lake of Bays, it is imperative for us to confront a pressing issue that impacts us all—climate change. The world is experiencing unprecedented shifts in weather patterns, rising temperatures, and ecological disruptions. Our beloved region, with its pristine lakes and breathtaking landscapes, is not immune to these changes. It's vital for people everywhere to understand climate change, and to take action. In the District of Muskoka, there are several initiatives underway that provide and support actionable steps for residents to contribute to a sustainable future.

Climate change refers to long-term changes in temperature, precipitation, and other atmospheric conditions. While natural factors do play a role, the overwhelming scientific consensus attributes the extent of the current changes to human activities, particularly the emission of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide and methane. These emissions trap heat in the atmosphere, leading to a warming planet. The consequences are far-reaching, but locally, Muskoka is experiencing increased flooding, increased frequency, intensity and duration of extreme precipitation and extreme heat events, tornados, reduced winter temperatures and precipitation, and other impacts all attributed to climate change.

The effects of climate change extend beyond scientific observations—they touch the very fabric of our community and the environment we cherish. Warmer temperatures can alter the delicate balance of ecosystems, impacting the flora and fauna that call Muskoka home. Extreme weather events, such as storms and heavy rainfall, can result in flooding, affecting property values and the safety of our residents. Changes in weather patterns impact the ability of residents and visitors to enjoy activities in our natural environment, which ultimately impacts our economy.

The consequences are far-reaching, but locally, Muskoka is experiencing increased flooding, increased frequency, intensity and duration of extreme precipitation and extreme heat events, tornados, reduced winter temperatures and precipitation, and other impacts all attributed to climate change.



The District of Muskoka is promoting and supporting environmental stewardship within its own operations and across the Muskoka community. Through several initiatives, the District is working to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of its corporate operations such as electrifying its fleet, providing energy efficient upgrades in its social housing units, and prioritizing energy efficiency in capital upgrades at its facilities. In parallel, the District is also working to support the community in taking key climate actions. Through implementing electric vehicle (EV) chargers for public use, providing environmental information such as its monthly [Climate Corner blog](#) and [Flood Prevention and Recovery information](#), supporting programs including the [Clean Muskoka Together](#) litter cleanup program, expanding [green bin](#) services to divert organics from going to the landfill, supporting community initiatives like the upcoming [Love Muskoka, Sustain Muskoka—Climate Action](#) exhibit at the Muskoka Steamships Discovery Center, and in other ways, the District is excited to support environmental stewardship in Muskoka.

...continued—page 8

continued—Climate Action...page 7

The reduction of GHG emissions in Muskoka will require action from everyone. The District's community initiatives are only as successful as the level of participation and engagement from community members. Over the coming months the District, together with the Muskoka community, will issue its Community Energy and Emissions Reduction Plan (CEERP), which has been created collaboratively with consultants ICLEI and LURA as well as community members (including a representative from LOBA) through the Climate Change Mitigation Taskforce. The CEERP will include actions for all levels of government, businesses, community groups and individuals that will drive meaningful climate action in Muskoka. Stay tuned for that report and get engaged in local climate action! 

By **Lauren Valliere**
Climate Initiatives Coordinator
District Municipality of Muskoka



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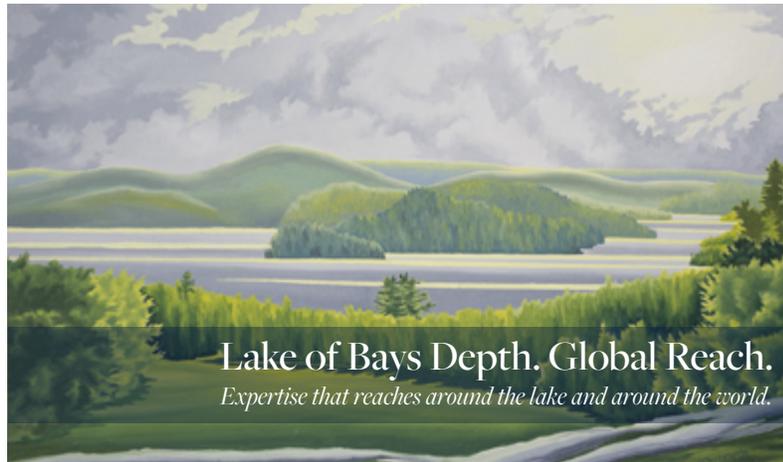
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Time's running out ... Renew your LOBA membership for 2024



Your membership fee supports our efforts to educate, advocate and engage in issues that impact the sustainability of the environment, economy, and natural beauty of our lake community. Where a strong united voice is required, each member counts. Go to loba.ca to renew/join and pay online or download membership form to renew by mail.

Questions about your membership?

Please contact the office at **705-767-3395** or by email at admin@loba.ca

Support Businesses that Support LOBA

We know you like to support local businesses and particularly those who support your lake association! When you are looking for a service provider or retailer refer to the 2023 Yearbook or the back page of any Current Connection newsletter.

Advertising in the 2024 Annual is now open. Contact Bryan Dearsley at bdearsley@live.ca.

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