

1 June 2015

To: Mr. Ian Beverley

President, Lake of Bays Association

ianbeverley@sympatico.ca

Dear Mr. Beverley,

RE: Township of Lake of Bays: Proposed Reduction in Minimum Backlot Size

Thank you for your recent inquiry regarding proposed modifications to the Township of Lake of Bays Official Plan with specific regard to the minimum permitted backlot size.

Muskoka Watershed Council (MWC) is a volunteer –based non profit organization with the mandate to champion watershed health. MWC is comprised of representatives from a wide range of stakeholders, including municipal, provincial and federal governments; lake associations; academia; local industry, tourism, real estate; and other interests from across our watersheds. In Muskoka, where there is no conservation authority, MWC provides a coordinated and science-based voice on issues affecting the environmental quality of our watersheds. On MWC’s behalf, I offer the following for your consideration.

MWC advises that whenever possible, the continuity of natural habitat must be maintained to preserve ecological systems and functions, and to promote biodiversity. Given that the existing minimum backlot size in the Township of Lake of Bays is 4 ha (10 acres), maintaining backlots of that size or larger may assist in the preservation of considerable amounts of contiguous habitat for multiple species and, in turn, assist in the preservation of local biodiversity. Large natural areas help to ensure “environmental connectivity”, which is best thought of as the opposite of fragmentation: it is the linkage of habitats, ecological communities, and key ecological processes. Two of the key land use activities that disrupt environmental connectivity in natural systems are construction/expansion of roads and urbanization. These activities may be increased to some extent if permitted backlot size is reduced.

MWC’s 2014 Muskoka Watershed Report Card illustrates that the Township of Lake of Bays’ biodiversity can be considered as being vulnerable-to-stressed, which suggests that ways to at least maintain and hopefully enhance the Township’s biodiversity should be sought. Our Report Card also advises that Muskoka’s natural areas should be maintained, in part through limiting the expansion of cleared areas in both the rural and waterfront areas. New development is best directed towards the existing communities and hamlets of Muskoka.

MWC’s position is further outlined in our recent Forest Health position paper, published earlier this spring, and also our 2012 paper: “Muskoka’s Biodiversity: Understanding Our Past to Protect Our Future”. Both are available online at <http://www.muskokawatershed.org/resources/position-papers/>

MWC appreciates the opportunity to contribute our considerations to the Lake of Bays Association and we thank you for your interest in our work.

Sincerely,



Peter F. Sale, Chair