



8 April 2019

Local Government Policy Branch
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
777 Bay Street, 13th floor
Toronto, Ontario M5G 2E5

By email: regionalgovreview@ontario.ca

Re: Regional Government Review

The Lake of Bays Association (LOBA) represents approximately 1200 permanent and seasonal families living around and near Lake of Bays in the District of Muskoka. We would like to provide the following comments regarding the Provincial review of two-tier regional governments.

1. **Environment:** In Muskoka the environment is the economy. Therefore, regardless of what form regional government takes, there must be sufficient protection, monitoring and management of the environment. In the absence of a Muskoka Conservation Authority, we feel the Muskoka Watershed Council, whose stated goal is *to sustain and enhance the air, water and terrestrial ecosystems of the watersheds of Muskoka for the environmental, health, economic, spiritual and intrinsic values they provide*, is vital to retain for environmental protection in Muskoka.
2. **Seasonal Residents:** Taxation in the District is based on assessed property values, and all residents whether seasonal or permanent are taxed at the same rates. However, representation at the District Council level is based on a 1970-era representation formula that counts permanent residents as one and seasonal residents as half. Due to the formula, the three Towns (Huntsville, Gravenhurst and Bracebridge) have more District councillors and regularly out-vote the Townships (Georgian Bay, Muskoka Lakes and Lake of Bays) which leads to inequities. One particularly egregious example is how OPP costs are allocated across the District (see attached letter dated 4 August 2017). This unequal counting must be corrected.
3. **Taxation:** Any decisions to change or maintain the current municipal governance structure must consider the impacts on both upper and lower tier's taxes. We expect government efficiency and fair taxation for services.

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We would like to conclude by saying that we have always worked closely and effectively and have been well represented by both our Township and District councillors and staff. We appreciate the local perspective of Township councillors and staff, and in particular their expertise in local land use planning and development matters. We also appreciate the broader mandate of District councillors and staff, in areas such as social services. Whatever the final governance structure, we would like to see elements of both retained.

Respectfully,



Mary Ann Peden, President

Attachment: *2017-08-04 LOBA letter to Premier regarding OPP costs allocation (2 pages)*

cc:

Norm Miller, MPP, Parry Sound Muskoka
District of Muskoka via District Clerk
Township of Lake of Bays via Township Clerk
Town of Huntsville via Town Clerk
LOBA Board of Directors
LOBA members via Newsflash and website