**Lake of Bays Association**

**Presentation to Muskoka District Council**

**June 16, 2014**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of Council, for this opportunity to address you tonight. I am appearing here on behalf of Lake of Bays Association. Our Association represents over 1300 members in Lake of Bays and area. My name is Bill Rogers and my role is to serve as contact between District Council and the Board of Directors of LOBA. It is my pleasure to attend most District Council meetings, and selected Committee meetings, on behalf of the Association.

We are making this presentation today to comment upon the Development Charges Bylaw which is on your Agenda this evening.

This new bylaw has been previously discussed at Committee, and in open Community meetings. We thank you for the openness of the process that has been followed. At this point in the process, however, we are concerned that submissions to Council have been almost entirely representing “developer“ interests. The developer presentations made at the recent open meeting were excellent, fairly representing the problems that they face in successfully operating their businesses. You did not hear, however, from existing Muskoka citizens and property owners, whose property taxes are covering the majority of the District Operating and Capital Budgets.

Inevitably, new development comes with a cost, particularly infrastructure capital costs. New and expanded roads, water systems, and waste water systems are the largest cost elements. As your Consultant from Watson and Associates has outlined in earlier meetings, the Development Charges Bylaw process has been established by the Province of Ontario to facilitate local government’s ability to recover fair and reasonable costs related to new development from the developers themselves. Should this recovery not occur then the cost of new development related infrastructure would fall upon existing taxpayers rather than the developers. Allowing these development costs to fall upon existing taxpayers would be unfair and unreasonable to the existing taxpayers of Muskoka.

Lake of Bays Association strongly supports maintaining the Development Charge Bylaw in a form generally foreseen and approved by the enabling Provincial legislation. We urge District Council to pass a new Development Charge Bylaw today.

However, the members of LOBA are also sensitive to the needs for additional affordable housing capacity throughout the District. Achieving additional affordable housing is a significant economic challenge. We recognize the need for some form of economic support for affordable housing development. The District is presently in the implementation year of a new affordable housing grant system. We support the objective of this program and look forward to reviewing the results it achieves through the year.

In addition, Lake of Bays Association supports the proposals for implementing a more progressive scale of Development Charges based on “liveable” dwelling size. Considering the vast range of size in homes being built in Muskoka the present practise of charging by dwelling type rather than dwelling size is regressive and unfair to the builders and purchasers of smaller homes. We recognize that there are a variety of administrative issues to be resolved prior to implementing such a change, but we urge that District Staff be encouraged to complete the work required such that the changes can be implemented within the “life” of the current Growth and Development Charge studies.

In conclusion, Mr. Chair and District Councillors, Lake of Bays Association urges the approval of a Development Charge Bylaw that:

* provides the District with a revenue stream that finances the cost of new infrastructure directly from the projects for which the infrastructure is required, and from the developers or their purchasers who will benefit from it.
* provides continued use of incentives to encourage the affordable housing construction that Muskoka needs.
* in the longer term provides a new and fairer basis for calculation of development charges based on liveable dwelling size.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address you this evening.