

lake of bays ASSOCIATION currentconnection

LAKE OF BAYS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER VOLUME 37, NUMBER 1

SPRING 2026

Through education, advocacy and engagement, our mission is to foster a healthy natural environment, responsible waterfront development, a thriving community, and a Lake of Bays shared respectfully and safely by all.



Your Questions ~answered~

Q: *2026 is a Municipal Election Year—
who cares?*

A: Municipal government decisions affect your life directly. Municipalities are responsible for land-use planning and building permits, by-laws and their enforcement, roads, fire services, waste management, libraries, parks, economic development and much more. Check out the diagram on the next page to see all the services for which the Township of Lake of Bays, Town of Huntsville and District of Muskoka governments are responsible.

Monday October 26, 2026, is Municipal Elections Day in Ontario. Once again for the 2026 Municipal Elections, you will be able to vote by internet and telephone for approximately ten-days leading up to Election Day. That means if you are a seasonal resident, you do not need to make a special trip to the cottage to vote. And it makes voting easy for permanent residents as well.

Q: *I'm a seasonal resident, can I vote?*

A: YES! If you own or rent property in the Township of Lake of Bays or Town of Huntsville, you are eligible to vote, provided you are a Canadian citizen and at least 18-years-old on Election Day. You can vote in BOTH your permanent and seasonal municipalities and you should.

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LAKE OF BAYS Water Quality Monitoring program

THE RESULTS ARE IN



by Penny Thomas, LOBA Environment Chair

For over three decades, LOBA has had a robust volunteer-lead water monitoring program on our lake. The water quality testers follow strict protocols and draw samples from 26 sites around Lake of Bays during the summer months. We appreciate their commitment and diligence as they contribute to this very important database of water quality information.

The final report for the Lake of Bays Water Quality Monitoring Program shows that total phosphorus and bacteria sampling results from summer 2025 were well below provincial guidelines, indicating excellent water quality. ...continued—page 2

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Q: Why Does LOBA Care About Municipal Elections?

A: Directors, volunteers and staff of LOBA interact with local politicians on a regular basis. Over the past four years, LOBA has been actively involved in reviewing the Township of Lake of Bays, and District of Muskoka's Official Plans, and Community Improvement Plan. We comment annually on budgets. We speak up on behalf of our members when appropriate. Having a productive working-relationship with municipal elected officials is imperative for our work on your behalf.

For the 2026 elections, a team of LOBA volunteers will be monitoring the local municipal races closely and sharing information with our members in NewsFlashes, in our Autumn 2026 Current Connection newsletter and at loba.ca. We will be asking the candidates to answer a variety of questions that are of key interest to our members. As Election Day approaches, we will also provide information on how to make sure you are on the Voters' List.

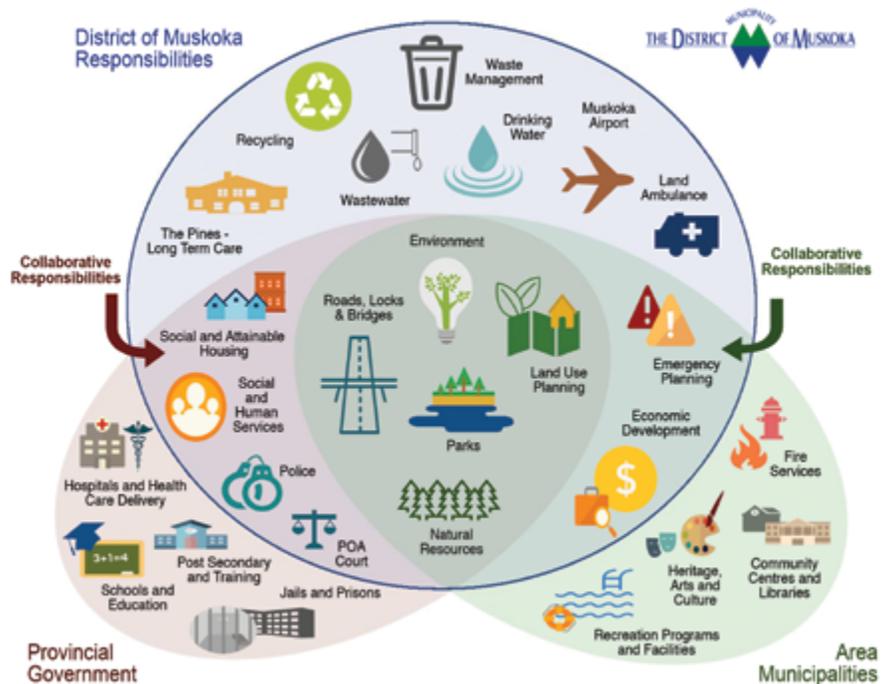
At the January Town Hall meeting, each of the politicians suggested reaching out to your local and District councillors. If you think they have been doing a great job, let them know. Find out if they are running again. If they are not, ask yourself who would do a fabulous job and approach them. Consider running yourself. 

Q: Who currently sits on council?

- Township of Lake of Bays
Terry Glover
Mayor
- Franklin Ward
Nancy Tapley
Ward Councillor
- Sinclair/Finlayson Ward
Rick Brooks
Ward Councillor
- Ridout Ward
George Anderson
Ward Councillor
- McLean Ward
Jacqueline Godard
Ward Councillor



- Franklin/Sinclair Ward
Mike Peppard
District Councillor
- Ridout/McLean Ward
Robert Lacroix
District Councillor
- Town of Huntsville
(not a complete listing)
Nancy Alcock
Mayor
Monty Clouthier
Brunel Ward Councillor
- Daniel Armour
Deputy Mayor and District Councillor
- Scott Morrison
District Councillor
- Bob Stone
District Councillor



continued—Water Quality...page 1

The report notes that statistically significant increases in total phosphorus, observed in the past, were absent with the addition of the 2025 data. The full report will be posted to our website in the coming weeks. The water quality testing program will be in operation in 2026. You will see our dedicated team in the early hours both on a shoreline or in the deep water in the coming months.

For the past four years, Kieran Molony has expertly headed up our water testing program, bringing a tremendous amount of knowledge, commitment, and professionalism to the role. We are incredibly grateful for the leadership and high standards he has established during his tenure, and we wish him nothing but the very best as he continues to pursue his professional career. While he is stepping down from his leadership position, we are thrilled that Kieran will be remaining with the program this season, working alongside our H2O team as a water-quality tester to ensure our continued success.

Thanks also to rest of the team—Pascale Cloutier, Kim Davidson, Wendy & Scott Gibson, Virginia McKinnon, Bill Mueller, Lynn Pankurst, Mary Ann & John Peden, Geoff Shaw, Paul & Penny Thomas, Stephan von Buttlar, and Mary Wheelwright. 

president's report

Paul Gleeson

I was delighted to welcome 50+ guests to the LOBA Town Hall meeting on January 24, despite the -37 temperature.

This is an excerpt from my update.

Organic Waste

As of January 1, the clear bag policy is in effect across the District for both garbage and recycling, whether you have curbside pick-up or take your waste to a transfer station. If you are unsure where your waste goes, download the District's Waste Wizard app, which will answer most of your questions—search for Muskoka Waste at the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#).

The District is in Phase 3 of the Muskoka Solid Waste Master Plan. A final report is scheduled to be completed by June. I have participated in the Community Based Steering Committee for 18 months providing input into the plan and proposed strategies. The primary objective of the Master Plan is to reduce the amount of garbage going into the District's sole landfill site which in turn will extend its lifespan by several years. A number of options are being considered, two of which are pertinent for our members:

- 1.** The implementation of a bag-tag system. Discussion is on-going as to how many bag-tags would be allocated per residence.
- 2.** Consideration of curbside pick-up for Lake of Bays, which has proven to be a better way of ensuring proper separation of garbage, organics and recycling.

Official Plans

The Township of Lake of Bays and District of Muskoka are updating their Official Plans and LOBA has been an active participant in both processes. Official Plans set out local gov-



ernment's vision about how growth is to occur and the guiding development standards that are to be used. Both plans will be finalized and approved in 2026.

Both draft Official Plans have proposed major shoreline protection policies that seek to reduce the density of future development within the Waterfront Area.

We are very pleased that shoreline preservation and maintaining water quality are high priorities for both levels of government. While the overall health of Lake of Bays is very good, climate change along with the cumulative effect of small actions like removing shoreline vegetation, over-fertilizing lawns and gardens, or neglecting septic maintenance can significantly impact water quality. Both draft Official Plans have proposed major shoreline protection policies that seek to reduce the density of future development within the Waterfront Area. Minimum lot frontages are proposed to increase from 60 to 90-metres and minimum lot area requirements from 0.4 to 1.0-hectare. A natural vegetative buffer of 75% of a property's shoreline frontage at a depth of 30-metres from the water's edge is proposed—the min-

imum necessary to remove 85% of sediment from overland runoff. Part of LOBA's Mission is to foster a healthy natural environment and responsible development so we greatly favour the direction of the Official Plans, however we have advised the District and Township that we need greater clarity on the standards and criteria that will govern redevelopment of existing properties, particularly those that will no longer conform to the new standards.

Community Planning Permit System

Should you plan on making changes to structures on your property or to remove trees and other vegetation, particularly along shorelines, you must be aware of the Community Planning Permit System (CPPS) and ensure that you are not violating by-laws which could result in penalties. The Township's CPPS brochure summarizes what property owners should know before altering their shorelines or removing vegetation. LOBA distributed the brochure to all Lake of Bays waterfront properties last summer and you can download it from the Township website lakeofbays.on.ca/invest-and-build/planning-and-development/. We recommend that you contact your municipality's planning department before you undertake any projects.

Presentation to Township Council

Representatives from LOBA presented to Township of Lake of Bays Council on January 13 to both acknowledge actions we are pleased they are taking and highlight areas we would like to see improved. We were pleased with this year's budget process which was transparent and involved every department. We are very pleased additional attention has been given to by-law enforcement but still see room for improvement. In particular, we would like the Township to develop a quick response protocol to protect trees and shoreline vegetation. Often large or partial clear cutting on lots occurs before a By-Law Enforcement Officer can get to the scene. Given limited resources, we understand why this is the case, however we suggested that once the Township is made aware of an infraction, a telephone call is made to the property owner advising them

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to cease all activities until a By-Law Officer can inspect their property and ensure proper permits have been obtained.

It has been several years since the Township last carried out a septic tank inspection program. LOBA has strongly supported this initiative as malfunctioning septic systems are a real threat to water quality. The Township has approved a septic inspection program and are implementing it on a ward-by-ward basis. LOBA requested that there be a Township-wide approach for high-risk systems defined as over 30 years old or without a permit on file. Low- and moderate-risk systems should continue with a ward-by-ward inspection process.

Finally, we advocated for improvements to the notification process for development applications. We would like to see earlier on-line posting of development applications so that LOBA and neighbouring property owners can thoughtfully respond to them. We suggested that dockside posting in addition to roadside notice would create greater awareness of development proposals and QR codes to provide easy access to plans and application detail.

We look forward to hearing the Township's response to these suggested improvements.

Area Stewards

Area Stewards are our boots on the ground. They welcome new owners to the lake and neighbourhood, provide insight into issues that may be impacting their areas, and encourage and sustain membership in our Association. We currently have 41 Area Stewards but need representatives in the following areas:

Maple Drive

Port Cunningham Road

Grainger Grove/Rat Bay

Wallington Lane

Bastedo Bay Road/Austin Lane

Highland Park Road/Rockwood Drive

Echo Bay Road

Seabreeze Road

If you are interested in becoming an Area Steward, please contact us at info@loba.ca.

Following my remarks at the Town Hall meeting, District Chair Jeff Lehman and Mayors Glover and Alcock provided updates. You will find highlights from their talks later in this newsletter. 

An Update from the Town Hall Meeting 2026

Township of Lake of Bays initiatives

Mayor Glover updated the 2026 Town Hall meeting on the following Township of Lake of Bays initiatives:

- Paramedic Services for the northeast section of the Township (Dwight) will be full-time and year-round as of summer 2026. Councillor Mike Peppard was instrumental in having this reinstated in the District budget.

- Touch-screen kiosks have been installed in both libraries to provide local information and resources for residents in crisis. Information to help access assistance, programs and services around food insecurity, homelessness, mental health, poverty and more is available.

- The property tax increase in the Township for 2026 is 4.47% which translates to \$28.83 on \$300,000 of assessment. This is the lowest increase in Muskoka, and the Lake of Bays portion of your property tax assessment represents one-quarter of the taxes you pay.

- With the leadership of Chair Lehman and resulting from community input into the Township Community Improvement Plan, the Baysville District Road 117 corridor revitalization is underway. This joint project is the first of its kind for the Township. Slowing traffic as it passes through the village and providing safe places for pedestrians should encourage people to stop and enjoy Baysville amenities. Completion is scheduled for summer 2026.

- Under the leadership of Parks Superintendent Scott MacKinnon, Norway Point Park has been renovated so the water and swimming area is clearly visible from the park. Picnic tables have been installed. This is once again a wonderful location for families to safely spend time.

- The Dwight library expansion is well underway. This expansion was discussed for years, and it took real courage and foresight for this current Council to take money from reserves to fund the project. The upgraded building will include a kitchen and a brand-new library space that will offer better access to information, entertainment and educational programming.

- The Baysville splashpad is scheduled to open spring 2026 and will be a destination for local and visiting families. The splashpad and playground were funded by the Township and a generous donation from the Babb family.

- Township Council saw an opportunity to enhance Dwight by purchasing the Logging Chain Resort which includes land running from Highway 60 to Dwight Beach Road. There are lots of ideas about how to use the land and buildings, but no decisions have been made. The public will be widely consulted.

- Rising OPP and waste costs are of concern to the Township and District. Mayor Glover finished his remarks by reminding everyone that 2026 is a municipal election year and encouraged people to thank their councillors, find out if they are running again, and consider running for local office. And he thanked the audience for their support. 



MAYOR GLOVER

Make a Clear Commitment

by the District Municipality of Muskoka
Waste Management Program



Muskoka's waste management services are evolving to maximize diversion and extend the life of our one and only operating landfill—Rosewarne. This program aims to encourage everyone to work diligently and make conscious decisions about what belongs in the trash—making a clear commitment to sustainable waste management.

This program began in March 2025 for curbside collection and January 2026 for waste-drop-off facilities. This means that opaque-coloured bags are no longer accepted at Muskoka's waste drop-off facilities (transfer stations) under the free weekly drop-off limit. Residents who drop off opaque-coloured bags will be charged the applicable fees.

Every banana peel and popcorn bag you place in your green bin helps extend the life of the Rosewarne landfill, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, helps mitigate costs for future disposal options and supports a more sustainable Muskoka.

A clear bag program supports diversion initiatives, like the blue box recycling collection and a green bin organics (kitchen waste) collection.

Switching to clear garbage bags has many benefits, including:

Better Recycling:

More recyclables and green bin organics will be sorted out from regular garbage.

Landfill Conservation:

It will save space in Muskoka's only landfill, Rosewarne, helping it last longer.

Worker Safety:

Garbage collectors will be able to see what is inside the bags and avoid dangerous items like sharp glass and needles.

Hazardous Waste Removal:

It helps keep hazardous items like lithium-ion batteries, paint, medicines, oil, and gasoline out of the regular waste stream.

Resident privacy and safety is very important. With a clear bag collection program, you are able to have up to two privacy bags inside each larger clear bag. Privacy bags are classified as smaller opaque bags that let you hide items you don't want others to see. Keep it grocery bag-sized (no bigger than 20x20-inches).

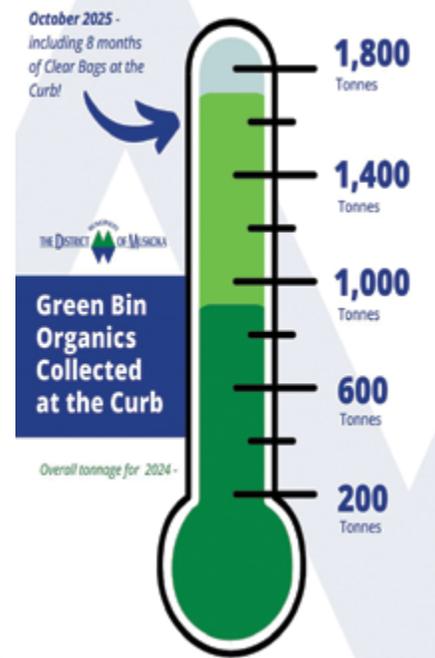
Thanks to strong community participation, the Clear Bag program is already making a measurable impact on local waste diversion in our community. After eight months of the program the following results have been realized:

Garbage Reduction:

There has been a 38% decrease in the tonnage of garbage collected at the curb to date compared to 2024. Rest assured, this does not mean garbage is being left behind; rather, it reflects the community's proactive shift of food waste and organics from garbage bags to green bins.

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continued—Clear Commitment...page 5



Green Bin Success

The most encouraging news is a 99% increase in tonnage of green bin organics collected at the curb. This outcome highlights the community's commitment to reducing waste and making a substantial environmental impact.

Every banana peel and popcorn bag you place in your green bin extend the life of the Rosewarne landfill, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, helps mitigate costs for future disposal options and supports a more sustainable Muskoka. The goal is simple: keep food waste out of your clear garbage bag.

You might be surprised by how much is compostable through our program! Download the Muskoka Waste App and use the Waste Wizard to learn what goes where.



Click here to make the **Clear Commitment!**

engagemuskoka.ca/clear-bags

An Update from the Town Hall Meeting 2026

Town of Huntsville Initiatives

Huntsville Mayor Nancy Alcock started her remarks at the Town Hall meeting with comments about how well the Towns and Townships are working together to address issues across the District. Mayor Alcock echoed Mayor Glover's and District Chair Lehman's comments that municipalities are being asked to do ever more with less money. She explained Council's focus in this final year is to complete mandated projects.

Mayor Alcock provided updates in the following areas:

Environment

- Meeting with District and area municipality staff in late January to begin drafting a memorandum of understanding for integrated watershed management within the Muskoka River Watershed.
- Working on an update to our Clean Yards Act and exploring a provision allowing pollinator gardens, including resources for native planting guides that promote biodiversity and climate resilience.
- In the early stages of creating a guide for homeowners undertaking shoreline restoration projects that would equip residents with important knowledge of best practices for re-naturalizing shoreline areas.

Physician Recruitment Update and Nurse Practitioner Clinic

- As of July 2025, six physicians were confirmed for a five-year commitment through the Town of Huntsville's incentive program and as of January 2026, two more family physicians are in the process of reviewing the agreement.
- The Town also confirmed in July 2025, another 3-year participation to fund the Human Health Resources Recruiter position (\$25,000 annually) for the regional physician recruitment efforts through the Muskoka Almaguin Ontario Health Team.
- Recently launched the Huntsville Community Fund, in partnership with the Muskoka Community Foundation. There is a dedicated Healthcare Professional Attraction and Retention project through the Huntsville Fund on the Foundation's website.
- Nurse Practitioner Clinic is now open five days per week.

Housing

- In May 2025 passed a 20-point Housing Action Plan.
- Reviewing Height and Density Evaluation criteria, as well as the Community Planning Permit by-law.
- Working with Muskoka Community Land Trust.



MAYOR ALCOCK

UPDATES TO PLEASURE CRAFT LICENCE PROGRAM

Transport Canada has updated the Pleasure Craft Licence (PCL) program, and several key changes came into effect as of December 31, 2025. These changes help modernize the licensing system, improve safety, and ensure accurate vessel information across Canadian waterways.

Here's what's new:

Five-Year Licence Validity—New and renewed pleasure craft licences are now valid for five years, replacing previous lifetime or longer term licences. Licences without an expiry date have been assigned an expiry date.

New Licence Service Fee

There is a \$24 service fee for issuing, renewing, transferring, or replacing a pleasure craft licence.

Update Your Info Sooner

Licence holders must now update any change in name or address within 30 days (previously 90 days). There is no fee to update.

Additional Boats May Require Licensing
Starting December 31, 2027, certain windpowered pleasure craft over 6 metres long (even without a motor) will also require a PCL.

Accurate Records for Safety

These changes support better identification in emergencies and help manage hazardous or abandoned vessels.

If you boat recreationally, be sure your licence is up to date and reflects your current information. These changes help keep our waterways safer and better regulated for everyone.

For more information visit the [Transport Canada website](https://www.transportcanada.ca):

[Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca) > [Transport Canada](https://www.transportcanada.ca) > [Marine Transportation](https://www.transportcanada.ca/marine) > [Vessel Licensing and Registration](https://www.transportcanada.ca/vessel-licensing) > [Licensing a Pleasure Craft](https://www.transportcanada.ca/licensing) > [Apply for or Manage a Pleasure Craft Licence \(PCL\)](https://www.transportcanada.ca/apply)



Remarks from the Town Hall Meeting 2026

District Achievements Highlights

District Chair Jeff Lehman began his remarks at the 2026 Town Hall meeting with:

“This District Council set out to be ambitious in moving Muskoka forward and solving community challenges, and it has had many successes. On housing, the environment, the economy, childcare and more, the District has delivered projects and programs that are directly benefitting the people of Muskoka.

“It has been a challenging three years. We’ve faced “black swans”, including three weather emergencies that forced the community to pull together, and the District to pivot or react. These weather emergencies are reminders that climate resilience and planning are critical for Muskoka’s future.

“The District was formed to “do the big things” that could only be accomplished by communities working together across the region – which describes many of the challenges Muskoka faces today. This Council has shown a remarkable commitment to progress, and the results are now evident across the District.”

District Chair Lehman went on to highlight achievements in the following areas:

Housing

- Created, approved, and started delivering the Big Move on Housing to accelerate affordable housing construction:
- From 2014 to 2022, the District of Muskoka funded an average of 19 units of affordable housing a year. Since 2023 this pace has increased to 51 units per year.
- Now on track to see roughly 340 new affordable homes built by the end of 2026, more than 4x the annual pace of housing built prior to 2023.
- Funding for a further approximately 117 units has been approved.
- Launched innovative head lease program and received 10 potential projects
- Increased homelessness supports across the District, held summit on homelessness in 2025, supported 192 households experiencing homelessness.

Economy

- Small business support—The District has become a regular partner with local Chambers of Commerce to host local business events, including Muskoka Business Week and the Reignite Conference.

Environment

- Introduction of the Clear Bag program for curbside pickup has reduced the volume of garbage into landfills by 38% and doubled green bins organics volume. A bag tag system has been approved for the Township of Lake of Bays.
- Sampled 87 sites on 70 different lakes in 2025 as part of a new five-year partnership with the Dorset Environmental Science Centre.

Taxes and Fiscal Performance

- Muskoka’s tax increases in each of the last three years were the lowest or second lowest of all regional municipalities in Ontario, and well below the average tax increase for all peer regional municipalities.
- Municipalities are being asked to do more with less and despite this, the District has made significant investment while remaining fiscally responsible.



MAYOR LEHMAN

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LAKE OF BAYS

MUSKOKA
LANDSCAPERS

LET'S BE CLEAR

The Colour of Your Bag Matters

Only clear garbage bags will be picked up, or accepted for drop-off, in Muskoka



Time is running out!
Renew your membership for 2026
Renew Today!



Go to loba.ca to renew/join and pay online or download a membership form to renew by mail.

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