

Ms. C. K. D. Seagram
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To Whom it May Concern,

RE: Proposed amendments to Planning Laws to permit residential/mixed resort developments at Minett, Ontario currently for the Lakeside Lodge and Cleveland's House sites.

As with all developments, globally, for a successful one there has to be a social license from all within the community particularly those who will be impacted by the development. Developments must also be environmentally responsible and at best seek to improve the Muskoka experience for everyone, not degrade it. The current community outrage at the Lakeside Lodge and Cleveland's House sites at Minett demonstrates the lack of open and transparent communication throughout the development process and seeking to push these amendments to the planning laws through during the quieter residential months does not engender a sense of trust in the current process either.

Economic impact:

If the resort model isn't working as has been implied through the process being undertaken then why did the developers purchase the properties in the first place? If they want to transform their investment into traditional real estate then they should be subject to the current planning rules and regulations regarding any waterfront residential property with required lot size, shoreline minimums, setbacks, heights, density of buildings etc. otherwise it creates a very unfair situation for those who have invested in property, some for generations, in the area. It is not the council's responsibility to ensure economic viability for developers and resort owners, these are commercial decisions they have to make at the time of purchase and if they want to request rezoning to residential then have to comply with and adhere to all the current regulations of property owners throughout the municipality must comply with as residential properties.

There seems to have been no independent Council commissioned 'risk – benefit analysis' when it comes to the development and proposed changes to the planning laws. This type of document is an essential tool when when looking at such important decisions and changes to legislation.

Councils are there to service all of their taxpayers....not just make resort owners models viable. These developments will also devalue properties due to degraded amenity and overcrowding of services, resources and degraded water quality.

Environmental impact:

The proposed changes will force additional pressure on a sensitive environment already under stress from the current demands on it. Lake Rosseau, has a Precambrian Shield geological base which has little to buffer the water from excess nutrient loads causing algal blooms and e-coli bacterial level contamination. Even without a development there this will be exacerbated in coming years as climate change continues to see hotter summer conditions and more violent storms. Yes, contaminants and nutrients may settle to the bottom of the bay as pointed out in the environmental report from 2006 but as also pointed out with each wind/water churn event (wind, boat traffic, swimming, walking on the lake bottom) will see these excess nutrients/contaminants stirred back into the water column further degrading the state of the bay and the lake, encouraging more algal blooms, parasites and further water contamination. We saw the impact of acid rain on the Muskoka lakes in the 1970s and 80s and how they could not cope then. We know increased nutrient and contaminant loads will not only degrade but can kill the water column in the area by depleting it of oxygen due to the algal blooms, thereby creating a eutrophic portion of the lake killing the local ecosystem.

The Township of Muskoka Lakes Council is making judgements based on out of date environmental reports particularly with water quality with areas in Wallace's Bay and on the Marriot foreshore currently significantly exceeding e-coli levels during the summer season. These reports try to blame a few ducks and geese and rain incidents on these elevated e-coli levels, this is a farce when the water column is buckling under the strain of the current infrastructure; accommodation, marina, aging septic, water parks and resorts.

Before the Marriot at Rosseau was developed I expressed my concerns to the then Mayor who assured me there would be no further degradation of the water in the area due to the development. That did not happen and there has been a further decline in water quality in the Minett/Wallace's Bay area.

If these amendments are made and this proposed development is allowed to proceed it will be a permanent change to the area, not one that can be reversed, once the smaller titles are created and sold. This will set a dangerous precedence for all future developments in the region. This is a once in a lifetime decision, once these properties are developed and sold you will never be able to go back and the negative impacts this will bring will continue to degrade the whole Muskoka experience, the lake, the brand, the ambiance and the very things that attracts so many to the area. We must seek progress with prudence and conduct due diligence on any development's impacts, positive and negative.

Traffic and water safety:

The impact of increased traffic on the lakes and roads has not been examined closely...or at all...which is irresponsible at best. Do we have the infrastructure to cater to this increase in traffic and the congestion everyone leaves the city to escape from? Do we have the resources to deal with the increased risk of significant accidents and injuries, these impacts have not been taken fully into account.

Compliance and Alternatives:

Resort developments can allow a more considered and lighter touch on the environment than high density housing estates, regardless of the stipulations on use put in to place proposed for the amendments that will be nigh on impossible to police for compliance. The resort model currently used was popular in the 1950's and 60's, for tourism to thrive in the region these resorts have to innovate and refresh their offerings. Golf once the dominant activity in the area is now well, if not over, supplied. We need to look beyond this old model at new markets and explore new opportunities and experiences for the resort visitor.

Eco resorts globally are enjoying huge success capitalising on their wilderness and natural environment and leaving a minimal footprint on the community and the surrounds. Architecturally sensitive and tucked into their environments and using the natural assets of the area to provide unique tourism and resort experiences particularly for international visitors wanting the true 'Canadian wilderness' experience, they usually have to travel to BC to find this. Ontario and Minett has this opportunity to tune into this new style of tourism to revitalise the resort offering and innovate to create something very unique for the Muskoka region. A Newfoundland resort has done a great job on Fogo Island <http://www.fogoislandinn.ca>, if they can create a huge resort drawcard to one of the most desolate and remote places in the country I dare say Minett with it's access to Toronto, the Pearson International Airport and the rest of the world could do this easily.

Summary:

This development and the proposed planning amendments do not have a social license, pose a loss of amenity and increases risk to current residents, seasonal and permanent, through traffic on water and road. It will have a significant impact on the water quality of the lake and could kill the water column. It is not of the scale appropriate for the site or could comply with current planning laws for residential developments and should not go ahead as is currently being proposed.

I strongly urge you to choose caution in this case and not be drawn into overdevelopment. As property owners we are not able to build to increase density on our properties, move closer to the lake or subdivide our properties

in such a way as is being proposed so why should these resorts be allowed to increase density of permanent and seasonal residents so significantly?

Please don't be swayed by the 'decrease in density in some areas' that the developers consultants have been talking about as we know if you tear down the hotel and pop a few units on there that immediate area will have density decrease but that is more than compensated for by the myriad of accommodation dotted across the properties, increasing the density across the entire property and thus the impact that will have.

The last time I saw outrage even close to this level was in the 1980's during the acid rain battle. The community was outraged and rightly so. The wider Muskoka community and landowners will not take this current proposal lightly, the outrage is palpable and needs to be listened to.

The proposed amendments to the planning laws are not socially responsible and they are not environmentally responsible. Our Township of Muskoka Lakes Councillors are elected as representatives of our community, they are stewards and custodians of these very special places and should not be putting the short term interests of developers ahead of those of the wider community.

I, Kim Seagram, have a BSC Honours in Biology specialising in limnology (freshwater biology) and have 3 years of experience in molecular genetics research. I currently help run 5 small to medium businesses in the hospitality, tourism, fitness and alcohol production industries and have two more in the development stage. I also sit on and Chair numerous corporate, government and NFP boards and work closely with these organisations. Almost a decade on our State Tourism board allowed me to fully grasp the importance of the visitor economy to a region and the opportunities this creates as economic and social drivers for the wider community. I have seen first hand how proposed inappropriate developments can tear a community apart but how considered consultation and revised proposals can reunite. Thank you for taking the time to read my concerns here, please let me know if you need clarification or have any questions.

Sincerely,

Kim Seagram