



## **AMBASSADOR'S GUIDE**

*How to recruit new families to the MLA*



MAY 2023



## AMBASSADOR'S GUIDE

### *How to recruit new families to the MLA*

GOAL AND THREE PATHS	1
 TALK TO YOUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS	2
 PARTICIPATE IN MLA EVENTS	5
 ENCOURAGE FELLOW MEMBERS	6
RESOURCES	
HANDOUTS	7
THE VALUE OF MLA MEMBERSHIP	8
COMMON FEEDBACK AND SAMPLE RESPONSES	11



## GOAL AND THREE PATHS

### THE MLA'S GOAL AND APPROACH

We need even more voices to help the Muskoka Lakes Association fulfil its vision of protecting Muskoka for all generations to enjoy and value. Our goal is to double our membership.

#### Be an MLA Ambassador!

As part of our collective effort to meet this goal, we invite you to be an MLA Ambassador and sign up five new families. Prospective members are more likely to be persuaded to join the MLA by someone they know and trust – and that's you!

### THREE PATHS TO REACH THE GOAL

It's easier than you think! Take any or all of several paths.

Path A



Talk to you friends and neighbours

Path B



Participate at MLA Events

Path C



Encourage fellow members

## TALK TO YOUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS

### CONSIDER THESE STEPS

1. Brainstorm names you know
2. Develop your message tailored to your own style
3. Engage prospects in conversation
4. Lead them to additional resources
5. Refine your message

#### 1. BRAINSTORM NAMES YOU KNOW [15 Minutes ... Plus chips and dip]



Sit down with (or video chat) your family members and brainstorm a list of names of non-members you know. Members are listed in the MLA Yearbook.

Another source is people on your island or road. Perhaps they're not yet friends of yours. However, they share the same beautiful corner of Muskoka that must be protected.

It is much easier to build a list together as a group. People's ideas build on one another's.

You will be surprised how quickly your family can generate a list of 10, 15 or even 20 names!

It is best to create a list of many names before you talk to any of them.



## 2. DEVELOP YOUR MESSAGE TAILORED TO YOUR OWN STYLE [15 Minutes]

Review the messaging in the Prospective Members’ Version of the handouts (see page 7). Pick out a few phrases that resonate with you. For more figures, facts and benefits, refer to pages 8 to 10.

There is no need to memorize lots of data or write a detailed script. It is more important that you convey your love of Muskoka and what concerns you most about its future.

Tailor your message to the issues that likely interest the people you know. Urbanization of shorelines? Water quality? Fair taxation? Courtesy on the water? Other???

Jot down a few thoughts, that might sound something like ...

*Bill, I know you love Muskoka as much as I do. Both of our families were attracted here in recent years ...*

*Unfortunately, what attracted us is not guaranteed. For example, there are 100 km of shoreline that are at risk of major development ... subdivisions along the shore ... while your family and mine adhere to sensible rules about what we can add to our cottages ...*

*I belong to the Muskoka Lakes Association because the MLA works on responsible municipal decisions, such as reasonable development that maintains the magical look and feel of Muskoka.*

*Most of this work is done by volunteers who are experts in their fields ... they invest countless hours.*

*They aren’t asking for your time. But they’d appreciate you joining the MLA.*

*More members means that their efforts have more influence and more impact.*

*And the dues are only \$150 per year .... less than one trip to the grocery store ...*

Text like this can also be the basis of an email you could send your contacts.

Read through the Common Feedback and Sample Responses (see pages 11 to 15) and think about how you might respond to their comments.

## 3. ENGAGE PROSPECTS IN CONVERSATION

Look at your list. Start with a couple of names – perhaps the people you know best and would make you feel most comfortable.

Then, have the conversation.

It’s not “a sales pitch”. It is a “cottage country conversation” about mutual interests, hopes and concerns.



#### 4. LEAD THEM TO ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Show them the Prospective Members' Version of the handout (see page 7). It contains the key figures and facts.

#### 5. REFINE YOUR MESSAGE

As you talk to prospective members, you will likely find their comments and questions guide you to make your message clearer and sound more and more like “you”.

#### TRACK YOUR SUCCESS

After your conversation, pick up your phone or tablet and record your conversation to track your contribution.

The prompts make it quick and easy to do!



## PARTICIPATE IN MLA EVENTS

### 1. COME BE PART OF THE TEAM

Join us at the MLA booth at Farmers' Markets, Boat Shows, Seedling Day and other events.

Be part of a team with other MLA volunteers and watch them in action. Listen to how they explain MLA membership and answer people's questions.

Show them the Prospective Members' Version of the handout (see page 7). It contains the key figures and facts.

If they are already members, show them the MLA Members' Version of the handout (page 7) and encourage them to attract a new family or two this season.

New families you welcome as MLA members during an MLA event will "count" for you!



### 2. TRACK YOUR SUCCESS



After your conversation, pick up your phone or tablet and record your conversation to track your contribution.

## ENCOURAGE FELLOW MEMBERS

### 1. SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY

Fellow members are a great source of new members. A conversation can happen anywhere – at the office, around the board room table, at a dinner party, on the links or a chance encounter at the marina.

Explain the MLA's goal to double membership.

Show them the MLA Members' Version of the handout (see page 7). It contains the key figures and facts.

Explain what's at stake. In doing so, simply convey your love of Muskoka and your own concern for its future.

This is a great way to:

- Help expand MLA membership outside of the summer season
- Expand your impact beyond your own contacts and corner of Muskoka.



### 2. MAKE THE REQUEST

Ask them if they would be willing to attract a family or two to join the MLA. The sooner families join, the more MLA benefits they receive in their first year of membership.



### 3. TRACK YOUR SUCCESS

After your conversation, pick up your phone or tablet and record your conversation to track your contribution.





## HANDOUTS FROM THE OFFICE

Pick up a few handouts from the MLA office or download them.

**Go beyond  
the call of beauty**

There is strength in numbers.  
As members of the Muskoka Lakes Association,  
please help us increase our numbers and  
make our collective voice even stronger.

For MLA Members



SCAN ME

**Pull up a chair**

Let's talk about  
protecting everything you love  
in Muskoka.

For Prospective Members



SCAN ME



## THE VALUE OF MLA MEMBERSHIP

### MLA MEMBERSHIP IS INSURANCE

*Membership in the MLA is your best insurance to protect the ...*

- *beauty of Muskoka*
  - *the quality of our water*
  - *the enjoyment of our lakes*
  - *the value of your investment, and*
- ... and to advocate for responsible municipal decision-making.*

### THE NEED FOR A STRONG MLA VOICE

*The 2021 Member Survey indicates that:*

*Members value:*

- *water quality*
- *natural shorelines*

*Members worry about:*

- *degrading water quality*
- *over-development of the waterfront*

*Those who love Muskoka face two major threats:*

- *waterfront subdivisions masquerading as resorts*
  - *developers exploiting loopholes in outdated by-laws to build residential subdivisions on commercial resort properties; these are not resorts; they are permanent homes; there are no resort amenities or services*
  - *wholesale clear cutting of forest and rock blasting to level properties to make subdivisions*
  - *43 “cottages” (permanent homes) on 470 feet of shoreline (Legacy Cottages on Lake Rosseau)*
  - *applications to local governments for up to 100 boat slips*
  - *there are now over 500 commercial properties on 100 km of Muskoka shoreline at risk*
- *reckless development of residential properties*
  - *eg: clear cutting of forest and wholesale rock blasting*
  - *by-law enforcement needs clear direction, strong leadership, relevant resources and equipment*
  - *moderate fines are often viewed as a “cost of doing business”; they are not a deterrent.*



## HOW MLA HELPS

*The MLA provides knowledge and expertise (both volunteer and purchased services):*

- *land use planning*
- *municipal and real estate law*
- *ecology and conservation*
- *water engineering*
- *heritage*
- *landscape architecture*
- *finance and investing*
- *accounting.*

*To:*

- *monitor municipal planning and council meetings and where appropriate delegate and advocate*
- *conduct risk analyses of proposed developments*
- *advise and assist with the updating of Official Plans, zoning and other by-laws*
- *interview municipal election candidates and inform MLA members of those whose values align with MLA*

## EXAMPLES OF MLA SUCCESSES

- *election of municipal election candidates who:*
  - *are aligned with these MLA values*
  - *support stronger Official Plans to protect the environment*
- *2022 election of “aligned candidates”, eg:*
  - *all of Council of Township of Muskoka Lakes*
  - *most of Council of Gravenhurst*
- *Minett: helped achieve 50% reduction of waterfront subdivision (4,000 homes to less than half of that)*
- *unsuccessful LPAT hearings on Legacy (L. Rosseau), Villas (L. Muskoka), Touchstone (L. Muskoka) have motivated stronger municipal policies about resort properties*

## OTHER KEY MLA CONTRIBUTIONS

- *weekly flood watch reports to members for several weeks each spring*
- *assistance to cottagers and smaller lake associations to address local issues of common concern*
- *community events such as regattas, seedling day, food banks and a bi-annual vintage boat show*
- *information that promotes safer and more courteous boating*
- *a \$5,000 bursary each year to a deserving local Grade 12 graduate for their post-secondary education*
- *100 trained volunteers mobilized 4 times a year to measure and monitor the quality of our water throughout Muskoka*



## **THE NEED FOR MLA TO BOLSTER ITS MEMBERSHIP AND INFLUENCE**

*MLA is a strong, influential, collective voice of its members – a voice that gets attention, earns respect, has influence and impacts outcomes*

*Strategically, the MLA aims to double its membership within 5 years to:*

- *become a larger, stronger, more influential voice of its membership, and*
- *generate resources to purchase more land use planning, scientific, research and legal expertise.*

*Professional expertise:*

- *bolsters MLA's credibility, influence and impact*
- *addresses the rapidly growing list of environmental, land use and financial issues that are increasingly complex.*

## **THE ECONOMY OF THE MLA ANNUAL DUES [\$150]**

*An annual payment that is less than a single trip to the grocery store (or the gas dock).*



## COMMON FEEDBACK AND SAMPLE RESPONSES

This section provides frequent comments we encounter and sample responses.

### **1. This sounds good. What is the next step?**

*I'll have the MLA office call you this week. They can sign you up right on the phone. It takes only a few minutes. What is your phone number?*

### **2. I'll think about it.**

*Fair enough. I'm curious, what questions are on your mind?*

### **3. I need more information**

*Of course. I may be able to help. What information are you looking for?*

[NOTE: The information may be in the Prospective Members' Version of the handout – see page 7]

### **4. I am on a small lake (or river).**

*I'm not surprised. There are hundreds of rivers and lakes in Muskoka! Several of our Directors and committee members are on smaller lakes.*

*The MLA has directly assisted in many small lakes and rivers where property owners suddenly learned that there were plans before Council to bring urban-like development right to their shores.*

*To best serve all in Muskoka, the MLA needs members in every river and lake.*

### **5. I belong to my local lake (or river) association.**

*That's good to hear. Local associations contribute to the vitality of Muskoka. The MLA is here to support associations like yours on issues that require a deeper base of experts and volunteers such as on water quality, municipal planning, presentations to Ontario Land Tribunal hearings, etc.*

*The best way to protect what you love about Muskoka is to belong to associations at both levels.*



### **6. I already pay dues to my local lake (or river) association**

*Of course.*

*The good news is that paying dues to both your association and the MLA is not paying twice for the same services. Your local association builds the vitality of your community. The MLA protects what members of your community love about Muskoka – clean water, pristine views, reasonable taxation. And the annual cost of both memberships, combined, is likely less than a single trip to the grocery store.*

### **7. My local lake (or river) association already has “an MLA membership”**

*That is good to hear. Today, I am asking you to join as well. The issues that the MLA faces are increasingly numerous and complex. For example, the MLA is receiving and responding to more and more requests from local associations to help them out. To do so, the MLA needs more clout and more resources – ie: we need more members.*

*Paying dues to both your association and the MLA is not paying twice for the same services. Your local association builds the vitality of your community. The MLA protects what members of your community love about Muskoka – clean water, pristine views, reasonable taxation. And the annual cost of both memberships, combined, is likely less than a single trip to the grocery store.*

### **8. My grandmother is a member of the MLA**

*That is good to hear. Unfortunately, the beauty of the Muskoka that your family loves and celebrates every year is not guaranteed in the future. There are threats to the quality of our water. There are investors who do not share your family’s appreciation of Muskoka, but rather, are here to extract profit. There are pressures to increase your family’s taxes. All of these can impair the value of your family’s property and impair your family’s cottage experience.*

*Today, I am asking you to protect the legacy your family has built. I am asking you to join as well.*

*The issues that the MLA faces are increasingly numerous and complex. To preserve what your family loves about Muskoka, the MLA needs more clout and more resources – ie: we need more members.*

### **9. I already have an MLA “secondary” membership**

*That is good to hear. Unfortunately, what your family loves about Muskoka is not guaranteed. The issues we face – to water quality, responsible development, fair taxation – are increasingly complex. To preserve what your family loves about Muskoka, the MLA needs more clout and more resources – ie: we need more full memberships. For an annual cost that is less than a single trip to the grocery store.*



### 10. I am not on the waterfront

*I'm glad you brought this up. Many people believe that the MLA only serves those on the water. In fact, we serve the interests of all those who live, play and work in Muskoka. Take water quality, for example. If the quality of Muskoka water is not pristine, all of us suffer. To have even more impact, the MLA needs members from every Muskoka neighbourhood.*

### 11. I have heard bad things about the MLA

**NOTE:** This is often a case of misinformation. For example, there was a rumour in 2022 that the MLA sprayed its members' cottages from aircraft for gypsy moths despite the complaints of other Muskoka residents. The MLA played no role in gypsy moth spraying.

*I'm glad you brought this up. We need to know about this so we can take any corrective action necessary. What did you hear? Where did you hear it?*

*So, in summary, you have heard that the MLA ... [paraphrase the claim].*

*Is that correct?*

IF THE CLAIM SOUNDS CREDIBLE ...

*I am glad you told me. Give me your phone number. You will get a call back this week.*

Then please phone the MLA Office and pass this information along for follow-up. Call (705) 765-5723.

IF THE CLAIM SOUNDS FALSE ...

*I am glad you told me. I really doubt this is true. We've got to get to the bottom of this.*

*Give me your phone number. You will get a call back this week.*

*Rumours like this undermine the MLA's efforts to protect the quality of our water, promote responsible development, fight for fair taxation. To better get our message out, we need more people to belong to the MLA, which enhances our ability to address the issues that matter and to spread our message.*

*Please join us.*

Then please phone the MLA Office and pass this information along for follow-up. Call (705) 765-5723.



**12. I have heard that the MLA is already awash in money.**

*The challenges that the MLA faces in protecting your investment and what you love about Muskoka far exceed the MLA's capacity to address them all.*

*The MLA is a volunteer organization. While we have two employees and an office, which uses up some of our funding, the balance is used to support our activities, such as water quality testing (100 volunteers) and hiring planners and planning lawyers. We are not awash in money and, in many cases, we are up against developers with deep pockets.*

*The MLA board uses funds where they will make the most impact.*

*The MLA protects the beauty of Muskoka, the quality of Muskoka's water, and that value that we get from taxes – all for annual dues of \$150 per year – less than a single trip to the grocery store.*

*We also receive donations for specific activities, and we spend that money as donors request.*

*MLA leadership includes many experts in finance and accounting. Its funds are spent wisely and are prudently invested until they are ready to spend.*

*And, at the end of the day, the MLA is a not-for-profit organization that must use its funds to serve its Mission. That's the law.*

**13. I notice that the MLA squanders members' money on a fancy logo**

*Some members of the public have the impression that the MLA "is an exclusive club" for "old Muskoka families" and "cottagers on the largest lakes". That is not so.*

*We were told that the MLA sends mixed messages. Some interpreted our burgee logo from the 1800s as "old school", exclusive and not keeping up with the times. It was time to refresh it.*

*The MLA is modernizing. We serve all Muskokans who live on, work on or enjoy the lakes. We value diversity, inclusion and respectful collaboration.*

*The MLA board uses funds where they will make the greatest impact. The logo refresh was accomplished almost entirely with volunteer effort, prudently informed by limited professional advice.*

**14. The MLA has abandoned its roots. It is supposed to be a community to enrich the Muskoka experience. Instead, it is mixed up in politics.**

*Your comment really hits home. People like me get involved to do just that – enrich everyone's Muskoka experience.*





*Unfortunately, that experience is increasingly under threat. In addition to the social activities that you know to be hallmarks of the MLA – and those continue – Muskoka faces increasing threats to the health of the environment, beauty of the landscape and quality of the Muskoka experience. To serve the interests of all generations, the MLA has a responsibility to respond.*

*This is not a role we asked for. Many MLA members are giving up evenings at home and afternoons on the dock to protect your investment and what your family loves about Muskoka. They contribute their time and their talent. Many contribute their professional expertise – in ecology, water engineering, land use planning, business, finance and law, among others – for free.*

*The MLA undertook a survey of its members in 2019 and approximately 90% wanted us to provide them with information concerning aligned candidates for municipal elections.*

*We run a rigorous process, including sending candidates questionnaires and interviewing candidates about issues of interest to our members, attending all candidates' meetings and reviewing candidates campaign materials and websites (if they had one) and their social media presence. We did a great deal of research to assist our members. All candidates recommended were approved by our board. Of course, members can do their own research and vote for whomever they want.*

*Despite some negative comments made about the MLA, we refrained from any negativity.*

*It is not enough to simply make submissions to municipal councils on issues of importance to our members. We need to get out the vote (if you own or rent property in a municipality in Ontario, you are entitled to vote there, whether or not it is your principal residence) and let people know who we think are the most aligned candidates.*

*The first step to enrich the Muskoka experience is to nurture and protect it.*

*And, in the meantime, we in the MLA meet new people, we build new relationships. We still have fun!*

#### **15. I already belong to the MLA**

*Good to hear. Thank you! We need your help for the MLA to enhance its impact to protect your investment and your Muskoka experience. Our goal is to double MLA membership. Would you be willing to introduce a new family or two to the MLA?*

[Provide the MLA Members' Version of the handout and discuss it]

#### **16. I am new to Muskoka ... I do not know why I would join ...**

*Membership in the MLA is the best way to protect your investment and make the most of your Muskoka experience!*