



Understanding Solar Energy

As solar panels quietly turn sunlight into clean electricity throughout Ontario, conversations are happening on docks and in Council meetings about solar projects in Muskoka. Installation of solar panels on suitable existing buildings rarely faces opposition and is usually encouraged. In Gravenhurst, several proposals for the installation of solar panels on buildings (most of which are municipally owned) have received the support of Council. And in a poll led by the Gandolf Group, of the approximately 800 people surveyed 86% were in favour of providing solar electricity to the province and 79% of Ontarians favour the increased use of solar panels in fields in rural areas to meet the future energy needs of the province.

Even so, some concerns often work their way into the conversation.

A number of residents have objected to a proposed ground-mounted solar farm development on 700 acres in south Gravenhurst that crosses the border into the adjacent Simcoe County. In fact, protest signs have been erected along Highway 169 near Washago. Further, in the Township of Muskoka Lakes there were up to seven applications presented to Council last year for solar farms. Municipal support for Juddhaven Road and Medora Lake locations was refused by the Township and a number of community members in Windermere have also rallied against a proposed development on a former dairy farm.

Protestors to large, ground-mounted solar plans cite concerns regarding potential negative environmental impact and visual pollution. The Ontario's Feed-in-Tariff (FIT) program has set requirements on ground-mounted solar projects which include avoidance of prime agricultural areas, set-backs, and appropriate visual screening with guidelines regarding the type and placement of natural vegetation, berms and/or fencing. While there are no lands classified as prime agricultural in the District of Muskoka, the Provincial Policy Statement on Land Use Planning from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing governs the efficient use and management of land and infrastructure, protection of the environment



and resources, and ensuring appropriate opportunities for employment and residential development, including support for a mix of uses.

Ontario currently has 1,636 megawatts (MW) of solar generation installed in the province with another 739 MW contracted and under development; enough to power about 300,000 homes. There are also three procurements underway: The Large Renewable Procurement that targets solar generators that can provide up to 140 MW of power; the FIT4 for projects over 240 MW; and the microFIT program that continues with a target of 50 MW this year.

The price of electricity from generators, including nuclear, gas-fired and renewable varies and is almost always subsidized in some way by the provincial government. The Global Adjustment Charge on your hydro bill reflects the differences between the market price of electricity and the regulated, subsidized or contract prices that are paid to generators for the electricity they produce. The charge is calculated by the Independent Electricity System Operator each month and can be either a credit or a charge depending on the changing market price; however, since

2006 it has generally been a charge. Often, it is the subsidies that are blamed for driving increased electricity prices in Ontario. While it is true that cost recovery for subsidies does form part of the Global Adjustment Charge, solar power accounts for less than 1% of the electricity supplied in Ontario, so the impact to the end-user is minimal.

The Global Adjustment Charge also covers the cost of building new electricity infrastructure such as transmission lines desperately needed to modernize the antiquated system in the province, as well as providing conservation and demand response programs. These, combined with the Debt Recovery Charge are the main causes of increasing hydro rates.

Procurement for renewable energy run in Ontario includes prioritization for demonstrated community support. Proponents have a strong incentive to seek support from, and agreements with, municipalities and first nation

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The summer that never arrived – many of us will remember it this way. We had some nice days throughout the summer and then a couple of really hot weeks in early September; I don't recall ever enjoying a Sept. 10th evening swim in water that was nearly 80 degrees Fahrenheit in Lake Muskoka. But Labour Day has passed, and the Muskoka dynamic is already shifting. The days are shorter, the leaves are turning, and the lakes are quieter. James Ross captures the splendor of fall in Muskoka in his story on page 7.

Unfortunately, there are invasive species that could threaten the natural health and beauty of our landscapes and waterways; Beech Bark Disease and Invasive Phragmites, a perennial grass that has been damaging ecosystems in Ontario for some time and is now creeping further north toward our region. Separate articles in this edition explain these invaders and what we can do to help prevent destruction.

At the MLA, we strive to stay on top of issues that most affect our members. You've been reading about rising taxes owing to the new OPP funding model, and soaring hydro prices and categorical changes to their billing structure in earlier editions of ShoreLines. For this issue we approached an expert in the field of solar energy, and did our own research to bring you some of the key facts about solar farming in Ontario.

Bala Falls is still one of the hottest and controversial matters in Muskoka and the MLA re-confirmed its position earlier in the year, and continues to actively review the various opinions, options and direction. We support the environment and green energy, but believe this particular use of land and its costs are just wrong. The damage to Bala will be irrevocable. We will continue to watch this very carefully and if further action is warranted, we will take it.

Many of you already know that contrary to the wishes of the people of Muskoka, the Board of Directors of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare (MAHC) has approved the "one hospital model" as the preferred model

for hospital service delivery in the future; the impact to our members could be material. We are in agreement with the Town of Bracebridge, that this model will be ineffective and we support their fight to dissuade the Ontario Government from accepted MAHC's proposal. We will continue to track and fight this issue on your behalf.

But our efforts are not solely focused on what needs to be improved in Muskoka; we also promote the enjoyment of Muskoka through annual aquatic and sailing regattas. In keeping with our support of environmentally friendly sports and silent marine based water activities, the MLA hosted the prestigious Ontario Laser Master Championships in August. Top sailors from around the province attended two days of racing. We had some good exposure for the sport and these single-handed sailboats in the South Muskoka Sailing Club racing area on Lake Muskoka.

Our success as an association is driven by volunteers; the Board of Directors, committee members and most importantly, those hundreds of volunteers who contribute their time to our water quality program, regattas, seedling day, etc. In mid-September we showed our appreciation and welcomed our many volunteers to a BBQ hosted at the Muskoka Brewery in Bracebridge. We had some good conversation, and delivered our personal thanks over some afternoon refreshments. We are always in need of more volunteers (in addition to members). Should you have interest and some time to contribute, please contact Lisa or Marilyn in our office at 705-765-5723.

By the team you read this issue of Shorelines, it will be Thanksgiving and while most of our members are winding down, the MLA board and its committees are ramping up for 2016. At our annual strategic planning session in September we successfully developed some new strategies that will be refined over the winter and rolled out in spring 2016. And look for our Water Quality Report on our website at www.mla.on.ca in early winter.

On behalf of the MLA Board members, we wish you a Happy Thanksgiving and all the best for the fall season.

Michael Hart - President

Understanding Solar Energy

communities. This is extremely important for project developers because the procurement is usually over-subscribed; the program is popular and highly competitive.

Solar has the potential to open up economic development opportunity for residents, local businesses and municipalities who can decide to finance and own solar generation assets or participate in the market by hosting projects on suitable sites. Plenty of buildings in Muskoka that have unobstructed southern exposure, Landfill transfer stations, water treatment facilities, decommissioned quarries and old industrial sites rehabilitated into solar farms could be a proven way for municipalities to increase their revenue stream. The District of Muskoka has already recognized the prospective value of renting old garbage sites to solar energy suppliers which could produce steady revenue for Muskoka. The public will be given the opportunity to provide input to this proposal.

The MLA is a strong supporter of the environment and green energy and realizes the possible benefits should some of these projects take shape. But we will be monitoring all applications closely to ensure that our mandate to protect and preserve the unique Muskoka environment is being met.

Marilyn Vogel - Communications Manager

Keep your Advantage Card Close!



Summer may be coming to an end, but many businesses throughout Muskoka continue to offer discounts and other incentives throughout the fall and in some cases, all year round. So keep your card close and your retailer list handy (available at www.mla.on.ca, by scanning the URL code on your card with your smart phone, or in hard copy at the MLA office in Port Carling).

Support your local community. Stock up in Muskoka!



Invasive Phragmites – *Phragmites australis subsp. australis*

Invasive Phragmites (European Common Reed) is an invasive plant causing damage to Ontario's biodiversity, wetlands and beaches. Invasive Phragmites is a perennial grass that has been damaging ecosystems in Ontario for decades. It is not clear how it was transported to North America from its native home in Eurasia.

Invasive Phragmites is an aggressive plant that spreads quickly and out-competes native species for water and nutrients. It releases toxins from its roots into the soil to hinder the growth of and kill surrounding plants. While it prefers areas of standing water, its roots can grow to extreme lengths, allowing it to survive in relatively dry areas.

Impacts of Invasive Phragmites

- crowds out native vegetation, thus resulting in decreased plant biodiversity;
- generally provides poor habitat and food supplies for wildlife, including several Species at Risk;
- grows very quickly thereby causing lower water levels as water is transpired faster than it would be with native vegetation;
- increases fire hazards as stands are composed of a high percentage of dead stalks; and
- can affect agriculture, cause road safety hazard and impact recreational activities such as swimming, boating and angling.

Identifying Invasive Phragmites

One factor making the identification of invasive Phragmites difficult is the existence of a closely related native subspecies. Generally, native Phragmites does not grow as tall as the invasive plant and does not out-compete other native species. A number of characteristics of the plant can be useful in distinguishing between the native variety and invasive Phragmites. The following information can help in identifying invasive Phragmites.

Invasive Phragmites:

- grows in stands that can be extremely dense with as many as 200 stems per square metre;
- can grow so densely that it crowds out other species;
- can reach heights of up to 5 metres (15 feet), and
- has stems that are tan or beige in colour with blue-green leaves and large, dense seedheads.

Native Phragmites:

- grows in stands that are usually not as dense as the invasive plant;
- well-established stands are frequently mixed with other plants; and
- usually has more reddish-brown stems, yellow-green leaves and smaller, sparser seedheads.

What You Can Do

- Learn how to identify invasive Phragmites and how to avoid accidentally spreading it through its root fragments and seeds. This is especially important if you are planning to do work in an area which contains invasive Phragmites.
- Do not plant invasive Phragmites. Native Phragmites have the same appearance and do not pose an ecological risk.
- Gardeners should use only native or non-invasive plants and are encouraged to ask garden centres for plants that are not invasive.
- Stay on designated trails. Leaving trails or entering areas containing



invasive Phragmites can encourage the spread of this plant. When leaving an area containing invasive Phragmites, brush off clothing and clean equipment onsite to avoid the transfer of seeds to new areas. Remove all visible portions of plants and dispose them in the garbage.

- Do not compost invasive Phragmites. Both seeds and rhizomes (horizontal plant stems growing underground) can survive and grow in compost.
- If you find invasive phragmites or other invasive species in the wild, please contact the Invading Species Hotline at 1-800-563-7711, or report a sighting online at <http://www.invadingspecies.com/report/>.

Other Resources

- Ontario Invasive Plant Council
- Invasive Species: A Threat to Ontario's Biodiversity
- Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs – Ontario Weeds
- Invasive Species Centre

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Beech Bark Disease – *Nectina coccinea* var. *faginata*

Beech bark disease is a new threat affecting beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) trees in Canada's hardwood and mixed forests. This disease is caused by a combination of an introduced beech scale insect (*Cryptococcus fagisuga*) from Europe, coupled with a nectria fungus. While the nectria fungus was likely native to North America, the introduced scale insect provides an opening to a new host tree for the fungus. The disease begins with many scales feeding on beech tree sap while they form a covering of white wooly wax over their body. Once the scales have opened wounds in the bark, the nectria fungus begins to colonize the bark, cambial layer, and sapwood of the tree. This stage of the disease produces cankers sometimes resulting in isolated tarry spots oozing from the bark and /or raised blisters and calluses on the outer bark covering much of the trunk.



Beech bark disease results in severe die-back in mature Beech trees, potentially creating a significant threat to wildlife, biodiversity, and sustainable forestry in Ontario. While this new disease poses a significant threat to Ontario's majestic beech stands, not all beech are killed by the disease, and prevention on individual beech trees is possible.

Range

After introduction of the beech scale insect to Nova Scotia in 1890, the nectria fungus began infecting wounds opened up by the insect. Beech bark disease is marching from east to west through the maritimes, Quebec, and throughout the northeastern United States including New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Michigan. Recently, the disease has been identified in southern Ontario

Impacts of Beech Bark Disease

- Beech bark disease attacks mature trees over 8 inches in diameter, rather than small, more vigorous stems.
- Decreases the amount of forage trees for wildlife. The beechnuts are an important food source for wildlife, especially black bears.
- Severely weakens trees, exposing them to other stresses.
- Reduces the marketability or use in wood products.

How to identify Beech Bark Disease

- Mature beech scales are a soft bodied, wingless insect, 0.5 – 1.0 mm long.
- After feeding on the sap under the smooth beech bark, the scale is easily recognized by the covering of white wooly wax on their outer body.
- In fall, the fungal fruiting bodies can be seen as deep-red, lemon-shaped structures in the bark.
- Infection by the nectria fungus may also result in oozing from the bark.
- Tree crowns appear yellow and die back.

What You Can Do

- Learn how to properly identify the signs and symptoms of beech bark disease.
- Individual high-value ornamental beech trees can be controlled with commercially available products.
- Look for large, healthy individuals with no signs of disease within areas of high infection. These mature trees may be immune to the disease and can provide an excellent seed source for the next generation of beech bark disease resistant trees.

Report all sightings to the Invading Species Hotline at 1-800-563-7711 or on line at <http://www.invadingspecies.com/report/>.

Editor's Note: Beech Nightmare is Here!

Mature Beech trees in Muskoka are already becoming infected with Beech Bark Disease – it's a killer.

On one MLA director's property on Wilson Island and those of his neighbours, there has been an abundance of mature beeches, until now. Sadly, four trees were lost last year putting hydro lines, septic beds and buildings at risk. Once infected, it appears they die quickly.

Beech trees provide food for many animals, is typically an interesting tree in shape, but can be a danger when impaired. Beech wood is heavy, and the grain is inconsistent – even twisted, making it a challenge to split the wood by hand. This cottager is \$2,500 poorer having had to bring in professionals to take down and discard of the infected trees.

If you see your beech trees starting to lose leaves before the fall, or have a standing tree that's dead, have it checked for the disease and take it down before it falls down and takes out something else you treasure.

There may be remedies (soapy water/oils have been suggested), but timing is important. Consult an arborist for insights.



Primary care for residents of Port Carling and surrounding area will be provided temporarily at the Wahta Health Hub site, 2350 Muskoka Rd. 38, in the community of Wahta, until construction of the permanent port Carling Hub Site is completed in the spring of 2016.

Call Linda Kowitz, MN, NP-PHC at 705-394-8353 to book an appointment.

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New Wellness Centre is a model of community vision, collaboration

This time next year, Port Carling will be a different place. And the MLA applauds the unprecedented community collaboration – permanent and seasonal residents, service clubs and church groups, ambitious volunteers and dedicated donors – that will make the Muskoka Lakes a better, safer destination for generations.

All eyes are now turning to the \$8-million Wellness Centre on the west side of Port Carling, on a 13-acre site just north of the Foodland store, between Hwy 118 and the Indian River.

Named for the local philanthropists who donated the site and \$750,000 to spark construction, the Brock and Willa [Napier] Wellness Centre will add three important institutions to the Township of Muskoka Lakes: a nurse-staffed “health hub” open five days a week; a 30-unit seniors’ residence; and Andy’s House, a high-tech hospice that will provide a caring and professional setting for the terminally ill and the friends and families who visit them.

Although these projects have been led by year-round Muskoka residents, they will be available to cottagers as well. It’s the MLA’s hope that our members and other seasonal residents will help the community raise the funds required to complete these essential projects.

Each project is a separate entity, with its own specific needs. But if you can’t decide which one to support, you can write a cheque to the Brock and Willa Wellness Centre, c/o the Township of Muskoka Lakes, and your contribution will be divided between all three.

The first building to break ground is the Health Hub. The timing depends on raising the required funds; the Health Hub has raised more than \$1.3 million, and needs to raise another \$700,000 to finish the building and equip it properly. Staff for the permanent Port Carling Site have already been hired and will be ready to begin providing care to residents of Port Carling and surrounding areas out of the Wahta Hub Site located at 2350 Muskoka Rd 38, Box 239, Bala ON, by late August or early September until construction of the permanent location for the Port Carling Hub is completed in the spring of 2016.

“The community support has been absolutely fantastic,” says Allan Edwards, a Township of Muskoka Lakes councilor who chairs the funding

drive with his wife, Linda. Besides individual donations, local businesses, church groups, farmers’ markets, entertainers and even the Mayor’s annual golf tournament have raised money for the facility.

Edwards says the need for a nursing station was identified in 1999, but it took the Napiers’ participation to get the project off the ground. The 3200-sq.-ft. “hub” will also include facilities for visiting professionals such as medical specialists or psychologists. There will also be a room for meetings and health classes.

“Right now we have enough to put the building up,” says Edwards. Additional facilities and equipment will be added as funding allows.

Aside from providing local access to basic health care, diagnostic and prescription services, the health hub will save taxpayers money by managing patients who might otherwise incur higher costs at a hospital. “It keeps the overall cost of health care down.”

As well, Edwards says the three facilities will create good jobs, year-round, and encourage economic development in the township by attracting and retaining residents who need regular health services and don’t want to travel too far to access them.

“There are so many benefits [from these facilities] that most people don’t understand,” says Edwards. “They’re wonderful community catalysts.”

In another example of synergy, all three low-rise, wooden buildings have been designed to resemble each other and honour their Muskoka setting. To maximize efficiencies, they are all being built by the same contractor. “It’s a great example of community collaboration,” says Andy’s House fundraiser Mary Grady, who is also vice-chair of Hospice Muskoka, which provides non-medical supportive care to residents of South Muskoka.

Andy’s House is a product of collaboration between Hospice Muskoka and the Andy Potts Memorial Foundation, set up to remember OPP officer Andy Potts, who died in a collision in 2005. Andy’s House will provide a warm, professional setting for palliative patients who have no need or desire to be in hospital. The 8,000-sq.-ft. building will include 10 private rooms (initially, three will be used for respite/convalescent care), a kitchen, a quiet space/chapel, and communication equipment for remote

Continued on page 6

The 3200-sq.-ft. “hub” will also include facilities for visiting professionals such as medical specialists or psychologists. There will also be a room for meetings and health classes.



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New Wellness Centre is a model of community vision, collaboration

collaboration with physicians and other medical resources.

Unlike hospital settings, family members staying with loved ones will be able to grab a nap or a coffee or bowl of soup any time of day. "It keeps the whole family together in a home-like setting," says Grady.

She says it will be entirely appropriate for a cottager who loves Muskoka to choose to be cared for in Andy's House, in a quiet, wooded setting overlooking the Indian River.

With the Health Hub campaign nearing its end, Andy's House is ramping up its own \$2.6-million campaign, which has already raised \$400,000. "We're now getting out and making our presence known," says Grady. "We're hoping people will donate as generously as they have to the nursing station."

Of the \$2.6-million total, \$2 million will go to construction and equipment, and \$500,000 to startup operating costs. Patient costs will be covered by the health-care system. Like the health hub, Andy's House will help reduce overall health-care costs, as the daily costs of patients in hospice are less than half of those incurred by patients in hospital.

"I hope seasonal residents will support Andy's House for the same reason they chose Muskoka: they love it," says Grady. "If there's an option for them to be in Muskoka on the last stage of their journey, we would love to make that happen for them."

The third pillar of the new health cluster is the Port Carling Lions Club's long-sought seniors' residence. Its 30 apartments will be for seniors who can live independently, with half the spaces designated as affordable housing.

Longtime community volunteer Susan Daglish, who leads the fundraising campaign with her husband Ted, says the facility will enable

longtime residents (including seasonals) who can't care for their house or property any longer to still live in Port Carling. And easy accessibility to health-care and groceries right next door make the location ideal.

Daglish says each unit will have its own patio, with one side of the building overlooking the river, and the other opening into a landscaped area. "Both sides will be gorgeous," she says. "People will be able to look out their window and see a deer or a fox walking by."

The Lions have already raised nearly \$500,000 to pay for planning and grounds-clearing. Since the 50,000-sq.-ft. residence is eligible for a CMHC mortgage, the Lions need to raise just \$1.1 million more (CMHC requires a 15% community contribution). To avoid fund-raising fatigue in Port Carling, Daglish says they are targeting "one to five really generous donors" to help them meet their goal.

Together, the Wellness Centre represents one of the largest projects in the Township's history. The MLA is excited by its potential to serve so many needs and boost the year-round economy. Best of all, the co-ordination and co-operation of these three groups shows just how much a unified community can accomplish. As Daglish says, "We all get along really well. When one of the organizations gets a success, we all rejoice together."

Rick Spence

The MLA encourages all residents of Muskoka to support these incredible projects. For more information, contact Allen Edwards at (705) 769-2214, Mary Grady at 762-3409, or Susan or Ted Daglish at 765-0330. You can also send a cheque to support all three projects to: The Brock and Willa Wellness Centre, c/o The Township of Muskoka Lakes, 1 Bailey St., Box 129, Port Carling, ON P0B 1J0.

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Autumn Spell

“To the attentive eye, each moment of the year has its own beauty, and in the same field, it beholds, every hour, a picture which was never seen before, and which shall never be seen again.”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

I drive along one of the pretty meandering backroads of Cottage Country in the warm enchantment of a sunny afternoon, passing through rock-cuts of pink granite, dipping down through valley bottoms and alongside leaden lakes now quiet after the summer rush. The road flings itself around the shoulders of hills, dips and rises, and carries on through a quiet forest. I drive in solitude, thinking that here, in autumn, I have this roadway all to myself.

The road crosses a bridge, climbs a small hill and then straightens along the side of an open valley. I am surprised to see a tour bus pulled over where the shoulder widens, and a group of people standing gaping off across the wide expanse. They have their cameras out and arrange themselves in small groups taking photos, with the far hillside as a backdrop. At first I wonder what they see, and slow to look for a moose or bear. I see nothing but a valley and distant knoll.

I slowly manoeuvre around them, shake my head and carry on, a little annoyed that this herd of tourists has invaded by quiet excursion. The road climbs a little higher and then snakes through a wide meadow. Suddenly, I see it. The late afternoon sun throws its enriching light over the hillside. The explosion of colour; vivid reds and vibrant oranges, mixed with golds, greens, burgundies and yellows, overpowers the senses.

This kaleidoscopic display butts up against a rocky escarpment and sweeps down to the narrow bay of a Muskoka lake. Here the colours are mirrored in the shimmering royal blue of the water. It is like a painting. The view is awe-inspiring. I pull off to the side and grab my camera. The bus chugs past and I see smiling faces turned my way, much nicer than the slightly annoyed look I had so recently given them. I wave, a salute, and a thank you for helping me to see.

Sometimes we can get a little complacent about the beauty of the world around us. The charm and wildness of our surroundings becomes so commonplace that we lose our ability to see. We find the spectacular when we go looking for it, in the far-away places we visit, but we neglect it right under our noses.

I am on my way to the cottage. It is time to close the place for winter.

I had set out on my journey in kind of a sullen mood, but the big views of rock, blue-green lakes and the resplendent colours of the forest have done their work. I know when I arrive at the lake and trek up the path to the cabin I will enjoy the thick, vibrant carpet that cushions my steps. I

will look skyward at the geese flying south. There will be the wonderful smells and textures of the fall-cured grasses and the slightly decaying odour of fallen leaves. In the evening there will be the smoky smell of the woodstove and the soft glow of the lamp light. Perhaps the cold, crisp night sky will welcome me with a magnificent display of stars, or even the northern lights. Muskoka in fall is a beautiful place in the world, as the busload of tourists I passed well knew.

I was not looking forward to this trip to the cottage, but now autumn has cast its spell, and I am thankful.

Why Leaves Change Colour

Trees turn into an impressive array of colours in autumn as a result of the chlorophyll disappearing from their leaves. Chlorophyll is the pigment in trees that gives leaves their green colour, and it plays a vital role in photosynthesis, a process that turns light energy into food (sugar) for the tree. As winter approaches, photosynthesis stops in deciduous trees because there is not enough available water or light, and chlorophyll disappears from the leaves. As the chlorophyll disappears, the other pigments already in the leaves become visible. Carotenoids, xanthophylls and anthocyanins are responsible for the brilliant yellow, orange, red, purple and crimson colours in the leaves. Now you know. I just think it is pretty!

A few blustery days will blow the majority of leaves from the trees where they will decompose and return valuable nutrients to the soil, turning them into humus and other soil components necessary for plants to grow. So don't get rid of them at the cottage. At the very least, rake them into the trees and let them do their work.

Fall Colour Report:

www.ontariotravel.net/publications/fallcolourreport.pdf



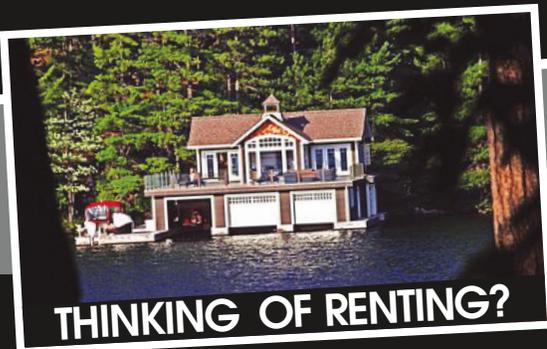
James Ross

Is the author of the books “Cottage Daze” and “Still in a Daze at the Cottage” (Dundurn Press), featuring the best of his cottage stories.

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1. Canned, tinned and dried foods with a long use-date are most valued.
2. People don't always have can openers, so cans with pull-tabs are very handy.
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6. Unopened / Unexpired products only please.



Contact Us

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