

December 20, 2017

Our File No.: 172749

Via Email

The Chair and Members of District of Muskoka Council
70 Pine Street
Bracebridge, ON
Canada P1L 1N3

Attention: Clerk

Dear Sirs/Mesdames:

Re: Minett Resort Village - District Official Plan Policies Review

We are solicitors for Friends of Muskoka on land use planning and environmental matters. We are writing to you to request that the District carry out a careful review of the policies regarding the Resort Village of Minett as part of the District Plan review.

As you are aware, hundreds of citizens were in attendance at the November 23, 2017 public meeting before the District Planning and Economic Development Committee, and that the overwhelming majority of people who spoke (48 of the 52 speakers) voiced concerns about the draft District Plan policies relating resort development and the environment.

At the outset of the meeting, the Committee Chair and the Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development committed that the resort policies would be revisited before the next draft of the District Plan is released. The Staff Report to the Committee dated November 23rd, 2017, summarized the community public response to the resort policies as follows:

“Significant public opposition has been expressed respecting the proposed resort development and redevelopment policies. In particular, the potential inclusion of a mix of resort, commercial and resort related residential units on properties that are zoned and designated as a resort is causing concern from a variety of perspectives (e.g. environmental, economic, social, character, etc.)”

The Report reiterates the commitment of the Chair and the Commissioner by concluding that the resort policies should be revisited before the next draft of the District Official Plan is released.

Given that the District is undertaking a review of the Official Plan and has committed to revisiting the resort policies, it is extremely timely and appropriate that the policies of the District Plan relating to the Resort Village of Minett also be carefully reviewed.

When the Official Plan policies for the Resort Village of Minett were adopted 10 years ago, they were fundamentally premised on the extension of full municipal services to the area. The number of proposed units would never be permitted on private or communal services – the extension of municipal services was the critical determinant of the density approved. Construction of municipal services has not even commenced and instead, the area has been plagued by sewage issues and water quality impairment.

The passage of time has demonstrated that the policy permits too much intensification. The insolvency of the Red Leaves resort during construction, the lack of private investment in the “Resort Village”, the over estimation of growth which has not yet been borne out and the persistent high vacancy rates in Muskoka as set out in the District’s reports all serve to demonstrate that the scale of development contemplated in the District Plan is simply not supportable.

When the District Council approved the Minett policies, environmental assessments were not as comprehensive and development standards were far less sophisticated than they are today. The *Planning Act* requires that the new District Official Plan be consistent with the Provincial Planning Statement, 2014 (the “PPS”). The Minett policies in the District Plan were evaluated against a PPS which is over 13 years old. Council is required to re-evaluate the Minett policies in light of the current PPS using the vast knowledge that has been accumulated over the past 10 years, especially relating to climate change and environmental risk factors.

We ask that the District conduct a careful review of the current policies regarding the Resort Village of Minett as required pursuant to the *Planning Act*.

Yours truly,

Goodmans LLP



Catherine Lyons
CAL/al

cc: Summer Valentine
Friends of Muskoka, Laurie Thomson