

Welcome to the June 2017 issue of MLA NewsBites -



Happy Canada 150! The MLA hopes you take advantage of all the July 1st festivities throughout Muskoka. For a full listing of events please see [here](#).

SAVE THE DATE – JULY 28TH – Your Board would love to meet you personally at the Port Carling Community Centre for our Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Friday, July 28th at 6:30 p.m. It's your chance to hear first-hand what we've been doing for you, and have a sneak peek at future plans for preserving Muskoka for future generations to enjoy. **All are welcome!**

This issue of NewsBites contains a great deal of information regarding proposed government changes at each of the provincial, local municipal and District levels. **All levels of government are looking for your feedback and it is vital that, as both permanent and seasonal residents, your voice is heard!**

Key Dates to remember:

1. **Friday, July 28th**- (6:30 - 9 p.m.) Port Carling Community Centre -MLA Annual General Meeting (AGM).
2. **Now until August 31st** – Complete the on-line Second Home Study survey.
3. **July 13th and August 17th** (9 a.m.) TML Council Chambers, Port Carling – TML Public Meetings re feedback on community services & council composition. An on-line survey will also be available for your feedback.
4. **July 17th** (7 p.m.) District Council Meeting, District Council Chambers, 70 Pine Street, Bracebridge - District Council discusses possible changes to District Council Composition.
5. **July 15th** (9 – 11 a.m.) and **August 17th** (7 -9 p.m.) District Council Chambers, 70 Pine Street, Bracebridge – Open Houses re the District's new Official Plan.
6. **August 29th** (7 -9 p.m.) Statutory Public Meeting, Rotary Centre, 131 Wellington Street, Bracebridge - Last opportunity to address council on the District's new Official Plan.

The MLA strongly urges you to take part in these public meetings and fill out the important on-line TML community survey and the District's 'Second Home Study' of seasonal residents.

The future of Muskoka rests in your hands!

DISTRICT OF MUSKOKA

Second Home Study-In an effort to understand the seasonal population better, the District of Muskoka has developed an on-line survey called the 'Second Home Study'. ***NOTE: There are more seasonal residents in the Muskoka region than permanent residents, and the District recognizes the significant contribution of the seasonal population.*** The survey is expected to take 15 to 20 minutes to complete and will provide vital information which will help formulate future governance decisions; in particular the composition of District Council (see item below for more information on this). The survey is on-line until August 31st. The results of the survey will be made available on the District's website before the end of 2017. Use this link to access the survey [here](#). The District also has paper copies of the survey if you require one. ***The MLA cannot stress enough the importance of filling out this survey. Your input will help shape future governance, taxes and economic development in Muskoka. Please make sure to complete the survey by August 31st.***

Discussion on Changes to Council Composition –District council convened a special meeting on June 19th to discuss the composition of District council. The existing structure was established in 1971, based on 1969 population calculations, and has not changed since. New provincial legislation Bill 68 states that as of January 1st, 2018 all Ontario councils are required to conduct a review of their councils 'composition within the first two years of their office, unless otherwise reviewed. Eight months ago, District council defeated a motion to hire an expert to facilitate discussions on a new composition of council.

Over 3 hours, councillors discussed adding 2 more members, keeping the current 22 members and reducing the size of council to either 18 or 12 members. No decision was made. Currently District council is made up of 22 members: 4 councillors from each of these areas: Bracebridge, Huntsville, Gravenhurst and the Township of Muskoka Lakes, and 3 councillors each from townships Georgian Bay and Lake of Bays. The composition is based on representation of 100% of the permanent population and 50% seasonal population.

By the end of the meeting councillors had voted on 3 motions as follows:

1. **A motion to agree in principle to a District council based on the premise of representation by population which includes 100% weighting for the seasonal population. Carried by a slim majority of 11 to 9.**
2. **A motion that District formulates a request for proposals seeking a consultant to review District council composition, including seasonal population with equal weighting and a potential reduction of members. Terms of reference to be determined. Carried on a vote of 12 to 8.**
3. **A motion to reduce the current 22 member council to 12 members. Defeated by a vote of 15 to 5.**

The motions above will be placed on the July 17th District Council meeting agenda for further consideration and ratification. ***The MLA is watching this item closely. We are very pleased to see movement towards equal weighting of the seasonal population. Since 1971 the calculation to determine municipal and District council representation was based on 50% of the seasonal population while the permanent population was weighted 100%. The number of councillors needed to represent that higher population could increase so as to retain the same ratio of population to councillor, as is present today.***

Changes regarding the District Chair in the 2018 Election – Bill 68 now requires that the District Chair be elected by general election in 2018. This is a change from the newly elected District councillors voting on a District Chair.

Bill 139 – Proposed OMB Changes- A review of the OMB was launched in June 2016. The province has now released Bill 139 which proposes possible changes. Bill 139 (the proposed Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act, 2017) proposes to replace the Ontario Municipal Board with the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT), which is still represented by provincial appointees. The bill also proposes amendments to the Planning Act in an effort to give local communities a stronger voice in land use planning. Grounds for appeal on major matters would be limited to their failure to conform, or be consistent with, provincial and local policies. **This proposal has been posted for a 75 day public review. The comment period runs from May 31, 2017 to August 14, 2017. Comments can be provided by email to OMBReview@ontario.ca. The second reading of this proposal will occur after Labour Day. The MLA appreciates the opportunity to give local communities a stronger voice and is reviewing the proposal.**

Update of Flood Plain Mapping Funding –The District has received Federal funding of \$450,000 for flood plain mapping of the Muskoka River watershed. The total cost of this project is estimated at \$900,000. The District has written to key lake associations and all municipal area CAOs requesting help matching the federal funds. In order to finalize the agreement with the Federal government, District planning committee has recommended that pending the outcome of negotiations with potential funding partners, that up to \$450,000 be withdrawn from the Planning Reserve Fund to finance this project. As financial contributions come into the District from new funding partners, the Planning Reserve Fund will be replenished. ***The MLA supported this initiative with the District to help identify key areas in Muskoka that are prone to flooding. The MLA is giving consideration to making a moderate contribution to the project, as it may also be a valuable initiative for achieving change in watershed management in Muskoka.***

Update on Muskoka GIS Mapping-The District's GIS department makes Muskoka's geographic data accessible to everyone through their Muskoka Map site, found [here](#). Every month staff adds new layers of information onto the Muskoka maps. This month they have added something no other area has – a new site called "Shoreline View". Videos of 600 lakes in Muskoka have been integrated into the website. Now you can search for a specific

lake and click to launch a video of that lake. There are 15 to 16 individual videos per lake. No addresses or ownerships have been identified on the videos. It's a great way to see Muskoka's landscape from your chair! ***The MLA notes this is a great way to view all the new development along Muskoka's ever-changing waterfront.***

Council requests a section of Hwy 60 be renamed "Tom Thomson Parkway" – District Council has requested that the Ministry of Transportation consider naming Highway 60, from Highway 11 to the West Gate of Algonquin Park, the "Tom Thomson Parkway". This was initiated to recognize the 100 year anniversary of the passing of famous artist and founder of the Group of Seven, Tom Thomson.

TOWN OF BRACEBRIDGE

Bracebridge Invites You to Check out 'VisitTheBridge.ca'– The Town of Bracebridge is inviting provincial, national and international travelers to www.VisitTheBridge.ca to learn more about the many unique visitor experiences that are available for tourists planning to come to Bracebridge and Muskoka. The new web portal provides an innovative opportunity for potential visitors to explore Bracebridge, the "Heart of Muskoka," and to gather some unique suggestions on numerous exciting activities to undertake while experiencing the area. For more information, see the Town's press release [here](#).

TOWN OF GRAVENHURST

Mayor's Open Letter regarding the Muskoka Regional Centre – Mayor Paisley Donaldson's letter thanked everyone who is supporting the Maple Leaf School proposal on the previous Muskoka Regional Centre site. She writes: "I wish to thank everyone that has embraced this proposal. I was extremely pleased to learn that over 500 letters have been submitted by members of our community to the Province in support of continued negotiations. I can reaffirm to everyone that this project is still very much in play, negotiations are continuing as a secondary offer was recently submitted for the Province's consideration." The full letter can be found [here](#).

The Muskoka Wharf Marina is now Open – The Muskoka Wharf Marina is located at **295 Steamship Bay**. Currently the marina is limited to fuel and sanitary pump out services only.

Hours of operation: Monday to Thursday 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.
 Friday and Saturday 8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.
 Sunday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

For more information on Town boat launch areas, please see [here](#). ***It's great to see another marina on the lakes, as so many have disappeared over the years.***

Keep Informed about Gravenhurst by listening to 'Lake Effect' on Hunters Bay Radio 88.7 FM– 'Lake Effect' with Jason Harnett is a show that focuses on news, politics and community events in Gravenhurst. The show broadcasts on Hunters Bay Radio 88.7 FM from Sawdust City Brewery, Wednesday mornings at 11:30 a.m. Gravenhurst Mayor Paisley Donaldson, Gravenhurst councillors and town staff have all been interviewed. District and Gravenhurst Councillor Sandy Cairns was most recently interviewed about Gravenhurst's 'Communities in Bloom' program. To hear Councillor Cairns interview and to keep abreast of many other events happening in Gravenhurst, see [here](#).

SEGUIN TOWNSHIP

Councillor Jack Hepworth's Latest Update – Councillor Hepworth's latest report includes a financial update, a Q & A about the Rosseau Nursing Station, appreciation for Rosseau Lake College's fundraising in support of the Nursing Station's wellness programs and a summary of the June 19th council meeting. The councillor reminds all of the upcoming **Rosseau Classic Cruise Show** on August 5th from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Rosseau waterfront and to fill out your **Safe Quiet Lakes** survey on-line (open to July 10th). ***For full details see: www.jackhepworth.ca***

The MLA continues to be impressed at how Seguin Township stays within budget, maintains healthy reserves and still provides quality services to the community.

TOWNSHIP OF MUSKOKA LAKES (TML)

Community Input Requested re: Service Levels & Council Composition –On July 13th and August 17th TML is holding public meetings where residents can provide feedback to council on the township's budget/taxation decisions, in light of possible service reductions. The community is invited to let councillors know your thoughts on possible closures of community centres, fire halls and/or arenas. In addition, council also wants to know your thoughts on the appropriate size of TML council. Are ten councillors too many or is that how many are needed for the size of the township? If you are unable to attend, TML will also be providing an on-line survey in the next few weeks to receive feedback. ***These public meetings will take place at 9 a.m. in the Port Carling council chambers. The MLA strongly urges you to try to attend to let your voice be heard regarding the provision of services and the potential closure of facilities. Your council also wants to know if you think a possible reduction to seven councillors is worth the estimated \$16,000 savings per councillor.***

Council Denies Proposed Pit and Quarry 2 kms. North of Skeleton Lake – More than 250 people filled the Port Carling Community Centre where council met to decide on an Official Plan amendment and a rezoning application to allow a pit and quarry two kms north of Skeleton Lake. Councillors heard from 31 delegates, most of whom strongly opposed the application citing concerns of noise, dust, road safety and environmental degradation of the surrounding area and lake. After several hours, Council voted unanimously to deny the rezoning of the property. It is unclear whether the applicant will appeal the decision to the OMB. It is noted that the province is the approval authority for pits and quarries. ***The MLA was present at this meeting and was pleased Council's decision reflected the concerns of the local community to protect Muskoka's environment.***

Discussion of Short Term Rentals Regulations –With rising taxes, maintenance and hydro costs many more cottagers are now renting out their summer properties. AirBnB and local rental agencies are quite common. Neighbouring cottage owners are experiencing increased noise, parking issues, garbage problems, nightly bonfires, fireworks and non-stop boat usage during the week. The rental turnover may be weekly or even just for the weekend. TML council is exploring ways to regulate residential dwellings as rental properties.

TML's consultant on short term rentals advised that if TML wanted to regulate short term rentals, they need to do three things:

- 1) Amend their Official Plan
- 2) Amend their Zoning By-law to create a definition of what a short-term rental is, in order to differentiate it from residential use, and identify where short-term rentals are permitted
- 3) Pass a licensing by-law with enforcement provisions

In addition, TML could regulate the length of time for rentals. Other Ontario municipalities have regulated rentals to 30 days or less. Licensing would force the owners to be responsible for their property renters' behavior. The licensing system would detail the cost of a license and other specifics, such as the maximum number of people allowed at the rental property. The property owner would be issued the license and if more than 3 complaints are received in one year, the license could be revoked. The Town of Blue Mountain has enacted this rental system with success, as have other Ontario municipalities. The City of Toronto has just proposed new regulations around rentals as a result of AirBnB's popularity. Council has requested staff to produce a draft licensing by-law to allow for further discussion on this. ***MLA members have expressed concern about poor behavior at some rental properties. Having a constant turnover of noisy guests at a neighbouring cottage reduces the peace and enjoyment of one's own cottage. The MLA will be interested to see what the township proposes and will continue to update you on this process. The MLA would appreciate your comments on this matter. Do you rent out your cottage and if so, for how many days per year? Please send your comments to political@mla.on.ca***

TML withdrawing from the District's IT Shared Computer Services – The District of Muskoka currently fully manages the Township and the Township's library computer services. In an effort to save money and improve service, council voted unanimously to hire Near North Business Machines as their new service provider. Although there will be some capital start-up costs in 2017, staff anticipate payback should occur within 1 year. The savings for 2018 is estimated at \$20,000 with a further 2% savings each year thereafter.

'Villas of Lake Muskoka' Resort (former 'Tamwood Lodge' property)-This new resort development has been a continual topic of discussion at TML council. The first phase of this development, with 15 units and a clubhouse, is nearing completion and TML has approved their site plan. Concerns regarding MOECC approval for the updated on-site septic system had been addressed. However at the June 16th council meeting, a member of the public alerted council that effective October 2011 the Ministry of the Environment & Climate Change (MOECC) enacted a new regulation, whereby any new development is subject to an Environmental Compliance Approval (ECA). The owner is now addressing the requirement for an ECA.

The same member of the public delegated at the District's planning committee meeting on June 22nd at which District planning committee was giving approval, subject to conditions, of the proposed plan of condominium. Villas is to be a commercial resort whereby the units are available in a rental pool, as opposed to wholly owner-occupied units. The applicant proposed that the units be placed in a rental pool for a minimum 8 weeks, of which only 2 weeks were between the summer months of June 1st and September 1st. The delegate requested that the minimum rental pool of 2 weeks in the summer be extended to 30 days between July 1st and August 31st to ensure the units remain a commercial resort during the high season in Muskoka. The committee approved the condominium with the condition as requested by the applicant; as being a minimum 8 weeks available for rent during the year, but with only 2 weeks required in the summer. District committee gave approval subject to conditions. ***The MLA supports efforts to ensure that resort commercial developments remain open to tourist for rental, and not become 100% residential in nature. The MLA has delegated to District on this very issue as regards their resort policies in their new Official Plan. See our MLA May 17th letter [here](#).***

Milford Bay Community Centre Outdoor Ice Rink to be Demolished –Council agreed that TML public works staff should demolish the Milford Bay outdoor rink due to age and safety issues. All associated labour expenses have been accommodated within the 2017 operational budgets. Mayor Don Furniss requested that if the community wanted to reconstruct a new rink in future, that the municipality would give consideration to assisting with the reconstruction. Council unanimously supported the idea.

TML's ATV By-law – TML's All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) By-law had a 1 year term; that term is now up. As there have been no issues and/or complaints raised by the community, councillors recommended that the by-law remains in effect.

Library Survey – The Port Carling and Bala libraries want to know what you think of the services and programs they currently offer. The survey can be found here: <http://www.olsn.ca/muskokalakes/>

[Summer in Muskoka is the time for Farmer's Markets!](#)
[Here's](#) an easy reference - listing dates and times

The MLA hopes you have an enjoyable summer season