



Township of Muskoka Lakes

Mayor's Message

January 2019

Dear Residents:

Firstly, it is such a privilege to be able to write to you as your newly elected Mayor of Muskoka Lakes. It is a position I am both humbled and honoured to have. My promise to each of you over this term of Council is to utilize our amazing team of staff and your talented new Councillors to manage the business of Muskoka Lakes, in a respectful and dedicated fashion, ensuring Muskoka is protected for our children, our grandchildren and our great grandchildren.

So, on behalf of myself and your entire Council and staff, I would like to welcome you to 2019 and what is the starting point to what I believe will be a more engaged Council, and a more engaged community, to offer a more respectful dialogue in all that we do.

2019 Property Tax Bill

Included in this envelope (if you are not on a monthly pre-authorized payment plan) is your 2019 interim tax bill. As the 2019 budgets have not been finalized, the amount calculated for this installment is 50% of your 2018 tax levy. In June, we will be sending out the final tax bills that will include any taxation increases required for 2019.

For more information on alternatives for paying your taxes, including pre-authorized monthly payments and credit card options, please contact the Tax Department at 705-765-3156. For mailing address changes, you can either call or email propertytax@tomls.ca.

New Year, New Council, New Opportunities

As we enter the New Year, we often reflect on the past and make resolutions on how we will "do better" in the coming year ahead. For 2019, I too have done the same with both reflection and foresight for 2019 and beyond. So looking back, this past October during the fall municipal election, a new Council was elected to represent your properties through 2022. This new Council, with six new Councillors and four returning to their third term on Council, offer a balance of new ideas and energy, with history and experience in all things Muskoka.

One significant change we are working towards is to have a more engaged council with you and your local issues. To help facilitate this when you have a question or concern, you are encouraged to reach out to your local councillors first and engage them with your issue. In practical terms, this means you don't have to reach out to "all of council" thereby allowing each councillor to become a specialist in their respective Wards. Remember we are a team on council each with councillor respecting the other and most important, respecting you the tax payers.

Council Contact Information

MAYOR		
	Phil Harding pharding@muskokalakes.ca	705-765-3156
DISTRICT AND TOWNSHIP COUNCILLORS		
A	Ruth-Ellen Nishikawa rnishikawa@muskokalakes.ca	705-706-4393
B	Allen Edwards aedwards@muskokalakes.ca	705-769-2214
C	Frank Jaglowitz fjaglowitz@muskokalakes.ca	705-706-3401
TOWNSHIP COUNCILLORS		
A	Donelda Hayes dhayes@muskokalakes.ca	705-687-8252
A	Glenn Zavitz gzavitz@muskokalakes.ca	519-591-8878
B	Susan Mazan smazan@muskokalakes.ca	705-765-3156
B	Gordon Roberts groberts@muskokalakes.ca	705-394-4471
C	Barb Bridgeman bbridgeman@muskokalakes.ca	705-765-3597
C	Peter Kelley pkelley@muskokalakes.ca	705-765-3244

There are a number of other changes that Council will be rolling out over the coming months and years. Stay tuned for a new, more efficient Committee and Council schedule that engages the public even more but at the same time allows for greater efficiencies. An updated and improved Township website as well as the long-awaited web casting of Council meetings so you can see first hand everything Muskoka from anywhere in the world without having to be in our Council Chambers. Our project list also includes updating our Official Plan, consideration of Recreational Carrying Capacity of lakes when considering development and even increased septic inspections and / or enforcement. Lots to do and it does not all have to be done in year one so stay tuned.

Environment First at the Township and the District

Over the past year the one thing that became very clear to everyone on Council, is that the Environment must be our number one priority. Our lakes and the health of our lakes are the foundation on which Muskoka has been built and must continue to be respected and protected. If we get it wrong, if we make a mistake, if we miss the mark, the long-term ramifications will assuredly destroy everything good about Muskoka. You will start to hear more and more about the environment in everything we do and it is not just at the Township but it is at the District as well – stay tuned.

This past December, the new District Chair was to be elected by District Council after a campaign period. At the close of nominations for this ALL MUSKOKA position, John Klinck who previously served as District Chair was the only candidate and thereby was acclaimed to the position for his third term. Muskoka Lakes has always had a good working relationship with Chair Klinck and it is anticipated that this will continue.

District Council has also made some changes to its internal structure to better serve the public and as such, there has been some updates to the committee structure there as well. Representing you at District Council are returning Councillors Ruth Nishikawa who will serve on Health Services Committee, Allen Edwards who will serve on Community and Planning Services Committee, new District Councillor Frank Jaglowitz who will serve on Finance and Corporate Services Committee and myself who once again will serve as Chair of Engineering and Public Works Committee.

Minett & Resort Redevelopment

Over the past year, one can only assume you were made aware of some of the issues in Minett and other resort properties across Muskoka. To offer a brief recap, in May Council passed what is known as an Interim Control By-law for the Minett area that effectively freezes any development for a year while specific studies are completed to ensure appropriate development. This fall, the Township and District put together a joint Steering Committee to evaluate and fully understand the issues surrounding Minett with a goal to provide specific recommendations as to what is or isn't appropriate for the area. The Steering Committee is meeting monthly and it is anticipated in late spring they should have some information to report back to Council.

One other issue currently facing the Township is that of resort redevelopment and is currently in front of the Local Area Planning Tribunal (formerly OMB) with a scheduled hearing April 16-18, 2019. The focus of this tribunal is to ensure resort properties remain commercial in nature and available to the travelling public.

Resorts in Muskoka are afforded differing development rights than waterfront residential properties such as increased densities and heights in order to promote tourism, employment and visitors to Muskoka. When these resorts apply for condominium descriptions, which are increasing in popularity, the Township and District need to ensure the appropriate controls are in place to maintain the commercial use of the property and that units are available to the traveling public. These commercial units must not be utilized as high density residential development on the waterfront, which is contrary to the Official Plan. This is significant cause for concern to the Township and District and as such, we are vigorously defending the commercial use on these properties.

Mayor's Golf Tournament

This is one of the best parts of the new Mayor's job in that I have the honour of hosting a golf tournament in support of a local charity. Details are still being finalized, but please look for the 2019 Mayor's Golf Tournament to be the golf tournament of the year in Muskoka. Tentatively right now, the date is June 24th so please put this on your calendar and check the Township website for more information coming in the next couple of months.

Look at Problems from Another Perspective

A number of years ago, my daughter and I were in a discussion about an issue and we each believed we were right. The result of this discussion was a great learning lesson for both of us and I know it is appropriate for everyone on Council, all of staff and for every taxpayer that will ultimately want to chime in on an issue in their local area. The topic of discussion (or disagreement) is irrelevant, but the concept of understanding is completely relevant. With that said, please see the diagram below and remember, regardless of your perspective, there is always another side and often you are both right, and respecting a different opinion is essential in everything we do.

