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January 22, 2021

Dear Premier Ford, Minister Yakabuski and Minister Yurek.

Cc. Minister Clark,  
MPP Miller

Firstly, we want to thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedules on November 24<sup>th</sup> to meet with Mayor Harding to once again discuss the Muskoka River Water Management Plan (MRWMP) and flooding in Muskoka. As I'm sure that you can appreciate, shoreline residents across Muskoka are very concerned about their permanent and seasonal homes and the continued risk of ongoing floods. We were encouraged that at the end of the discussion the Premier suggested that the Province should begin the process of addressing the MRWMP.

You may recall it was referenced that the pre consultation process on the current MRWMP (pre 2006), where the public raised significant concerns about the potential of flooding. It was further noted that despite those considerable fears, the plan was approved and implemented without revision. With water at the top of, or above, the "new" Normal Operating Zone for at least 7 of the last 10 years, significant erosion and flooding damage has occurred on shoreline properties. In fact, on December 1<sup>st</sup> of this year, Lake Muskoka was almost 3" higher than any other December in the last decade. Clearly, the plan is broken and needs to be re-evaluated.

You will also recall from the conversation that based on the results of a recent survey of infrastructure on the lakes completed by the District of Muskoka, it has now been determined that when water levels are at the top of the current Normal Operating Zone on Lake Muskoka (or 225.74M), 85% of the properties (Docks/ Boathouses) were only 6" above this level. With only 6" between the top of docks with glass calm water, it is clear that damage can and will be caused by any minor amount of wind or waves, let alone boat wakes.

During the meeting of November 24<sup>th</sup>, Premier Ford encouraged the community to raise concerns about the MRWMP at the December 3<sup>rd</sup> Communications Committee meeting in an effort to put some cards on the table and start a dialogue. Unfortunately, Minister Yakabuski had to leave this meeting shortly after the introductions and long before the conversation really started. During that meeting, on several occasions the community's issues with the current water levels, the MRWMP, spring flooding as well as suggestions on how to mitigate flooding were raised by many elected officials, unfortunately, MNRF staff politely ignored the comments and continued to only focus on how to improve the dissemination of water level information.

It should also be noted that during the December 3<sup>rd</sup> Communications Meeting, all elected officials reiterated that while we are appreciative of increased communication, ultimately the solutions to flooding issues across the Muskoka Watershed must be found by dealing with the obvious problem, the MRWMP. Municipal stakeholders left that meeting thankful that the MNRF took the initiative to start a dialogue but were disappointed that the discussion was limited to how water level information will be disseminated, rather than how the issues could be addressed.

Additionally, under the MECP, the Muskoka Watershed Advisory Group have submitted a report to Minister Yurek, in which they too have recommended evaluation and updates to the MRWMP. This follows from the countless municipal council resolutions addressing the need for updates to the MRWMP passed by municipalities across the Muskoka watershed. So why is an update or re-evaluation of the MRWMP so difficult to start? We need your help.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of November Minister Yakabuski made it clear that to change the MRWMP, we need to be very specific in our asks to the Ministry. To that end and in addition to the various council resolutions, we as a collective group affected by the MRWMP across the watershed, are today making a formal request to immediately start the process of updating the MRWMP. In addition, below please find some very specific short-term requests to help mitigate or eliminate flooding for the spring of 2021.

Within the next 60 days;

- 1) An evaluation and report of the water levels (winter low and spring high) on a lake by lake basis contained in the MRWMP, as compared to prior water management plans (pre 2006);
- 2) An evaluation of, and consideration for, greater winter drawdowns to accommodate climate change;
- 3) An evaluation of, and consideration for, a 2-week delay in raising spring water levels (April 1<sup>st</sup> to April 15<sup>th</sup>);

- 4) An evaluation of, and consideration for, moving the target operating line of each lake to a point ½ way between the bottom of the Normal Operating Zone and the Target Operating Line for winter 2021 operations;
- 5) An evaluation of, and consideration for, moving the Top of the Normal Operating Zone to a point ½ way between the current Target Operation Line and the Top of the Normal Operation Zone for winter 2021 operations;
- 6) An evaluation of, and consideration for, moving the High-Water Zone to the top of the Current Normal Operating Zone for winter 2021 operations;
- 7) The establishment an MRWMP Update Working Group comprised of;
  - a. three municipal elected officials from across the watershed,
  - b. a member from the Muskoka Watershed Advisory Group,
  - c. two members from hydro production facilities,
  - d. a member from the District of Muskoka,
  - e. staff members from the MNRF, the MECP and Municipal Affairs and Housing;

Within the next 180 days;

- 1) Identification of choke points across the watershed; and
- 2) Provide options for removal of choke points across the watershed;

We thank you for your time and attention to this most urgent and sensitive of matters. It is our sincere hope that together we can remove the bureaucratic hurdles involved with traditional updates and amendments to watershed plans. In doing so, we want to begin to affect some change and protection for the environment as well as shoreline property owners across the Muskoka watershed. We look forward to starting this process immediately and will make ourselves available at your convenience to move this process along.

Thank you,



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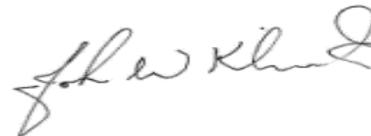
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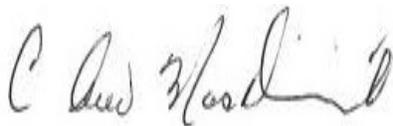
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