

via email to: [Catherine.McKenna@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Catherine.McKenna@parl.gc.ca)



November 23, 2015

**The Honourable Catherine McKenna**, Minister of Environment and Climate Change  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Minister,

On behalf of our Board of Directors and our members, I wanted to congratulate you and wish you well as Canada's new Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

The Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations (FOCA) is an incorporated non-profit organization that represents over 500 waterfront property owners' groups, with over 50,000 member families. For over 50 years, FOCA has spoken on behalf of, and supported, Ontario's 250,000 waterfront property owners.

These are challenging times for rural Ontario, and the way forward will have to come through productive and open working relationships between government of all levels, industry, and non-government organizations.

Waterfront property owners represent one of the single largest rural constituencies – over 250,000 families, located in nearly 200 Ontario municipalities who collectively own and steward 15,000 kilometres of the Province's shorelines, and over 50,000 hectares of economically and environmentally important lands.

Rural Ontario is a region where municipal governments rely heavily (as much as 90%) on residential taxes to deliver adequate infrastructure and important services to citizens. Waterfront residential residents contribute more than \$800 million annually in support of rural Ontario's public services through their property taxes.

On behalf of these families, FOCA has worked on many shared and important issues with the Federal and Provincial government in the past: as long-standing partners in delivering water quality monitoring, as supporters of freshwater science, through our involvement with Source Water Protection, and, as supporters of strong and measurable Great Lakes protection in Ontario. Our members have a front row seat for the changes in climatic conditions and are very much exposed to the challenges posed by shifting climates and extreme weather.

Needless to say we have very many touch points with your Ministry and a history of working on shared and important environmental priorities. To this end we look forward to a productive working relationship with you and with your Ministry colleagues in the weeks and months ahead. We are encouraged in this respect

by the statements in your mandate directives from the Prime Minister, including meaningful engagement and more constructive dialogue with Canadians, civil society, and stakeholders, including the broader public sector, and the not-for-profit sector.

As Minister of Environment and Climate Change, we are heartened by a renewed Federal commitment to protect our freshwater resources and the ecosystems to which they are so integral, to ensure that they remain healthy for future generations.

Specifically, we look forward to seeing results from your commitments:

- to treat our freshwater as a precious resource that deserves protection and careful stewardship, including a commitment to work with other orders of government to protect Canada's freshwater using education, updated mapping, and watershed protection generally.
- to work in collaboration with the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, to fulfill the commitment to protect the Great Lakes, the St. Lawrence River Basin and the Lake Winnipeg Basin (which includes the Lake of the Woods).
- to work with the Ministers of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, and Natural Resources, to review Canada's environmental assessment processes to regain the public trust, and:
  - to restore robust oversight and thorough environmental assessments of areas under federal jurisdiction, while also working with provinces and territories to avoid duplication
  - to provide ways for Canadians to express their views and opportunities for experts to meaningfully participate
  - to ensure that decisions are based on science, facts, and evidence, and serve the public's interest.
- to develop a pan-Canadian framework for addressing climate change.
- to support more sustainable economic growth by making significant new investments in green infrastructure.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you at your convenience to discuss how our organization and our membership can positively support and contribute to the interests of the Ministry in the months ahead. You can contact our office to make arrangements for a meeting with FOCA's representatives.

With your help and leadership, together we can support FOCA's mission: ***to protect thriving and sustainable waterfronts across Ontario.***

Sincerely,



Terry Rees, Executive Director  
Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations, Inc.