

Open letter to federal party leaders on issues important to cottagers

Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations asks federal parties to respond to six environmental questions

by Terry Rees

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The Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations (FOCA) is a not-for-profit membership organization that represents 50,000 families across rural Ontario

As we approach the October 19th Federal Election, the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations (FOCA) has some outstanding questions about issues that are important to our community.

FOCA is a not-for-profit membership organization that represents 50,000 families across rural Ontario, and since 1963, has spoken out on the important issues that face the Province's 250,000 waterfront property owners.

FOCA's mission is to protect thriving and sustainable waterfronts across Ontario; implicit in our work is the understanding that fiscal and environmental sustainability are inextricably linked.

We appreciate your responses to the questions below, as an indication of your vision for our future, and commitment to a strong and prosperous Canada.

The questions:

1. Protecting source water

The Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations has been working on what has been called "source water protection" since FOCA was founded in the 1960s.

Specifically, what commitments will your party make to federal legislation and water research to ensure that water is adequately protected?

On Thursday, October 1st, FOCA sent this list of questions to each of the Federal Party Leaders.

2. The costs of climate change

In recent years, Canadians have experienced first-hand how shifts in climate, precipitation, and extreme weather events can overwhelm our urban and rural infrastructure, and wreak havoc on our economy.

How will your party address the unsustainable shift in infrastructure costs from the federal government to local governments with small and limited resources?



3. Protecting the Great Lakes basin

Ontario borders on four of the five Great Lakes, and is blessed with over 250,000 inland lakes that all need our care and protection.

Describe your party's action plan and funding commitment to meet the targets needed to protect the Great Lakes basin.

4. Chemicals in the Great Lakes ecosystem

Three years after the signing of the revised Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, there has been only modest progress on the provisions to deal with chemicals in the Great Lakes ecosystem which continue to pose a threat to human health and/or the environment.

What is your party's plan to achieve virtual elimination and zero discharge of known toxins and persistent chemicals, and chemicals of potential concern, including pharmaceuticals and personal care products that could adversely affect the health of Ontario's aquatic ecosystems?

5. Strengthening the Fisheries Act

Over the past five years, the Federal Government made changes to the Fisheries Act that reduced protection for fish habitat and created a "permit by rule" approach that puts all our waters at risk.

Would you work to see the Fisheries Act revitalized and adequately funded to become a strong regulatory regime for all fish species and their habitats?

6. Protecting lakes and rivers

Canada's first environmental law hit the books in 1882: the *Navigable Waters Protection Act*. Now called the *Navigation Protection Act*, [changes to this act](#) created huge inequity in the way lakes and rivers across Canada are "scheduled" for protection, leaving many vulnerable to unmanaged development.

Would you reinstate essential protections for our vital waterways, under a revised *Navigable Waters Protection Act*?

The leadership of our great country has a daunting role: to show the world a way forward in an uncertain time, but is also faced with tremendous opportunity to leverage Canada's place as a leader with much to offer.

Canada's leaders should proudly declare their commitment, not to fear and despair, but to positive and progressive action.

Did you know you can vote in your cottage riding?

According to Elections Canada, if you declare your waterfront home as your "ordinary residence" and can produce the approved proof of identity and address (or appear at the polling station with a neighbour who can attest to your residence), you can vote in your cottage riding. More information is available at the [FOCA website](#).



Terry Rees

Terry Rees

Terry Rees is the Executive Director of the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations (FOCA), and is based in Peterborough, Ontario. FOCA has represented the interests of Ontario's waterfronts for over 50 years, and is one of the largest landowner membership organizations in the Province.

Visit the FOCA website at foca.on.ca and follow Terry on Twitter [@treesatthelake](https://twitter.com/treesatthelake).

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