



#201 – 159 King St.
Peterborough, ON
K9J 2R8

The Honourable Glen Murray
Minister of the Environment and Climate Change
Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change
77 Wellesley Street West
11th Floor, Ferguson Block
Toronto ON M7A 2T5

Dear Minister,

It has come to FOCA's attention that some resorts in Ontario that rely on large on-site / septic systems to treat their wastewater are permitted by your Ministry to periodically drain their effluent into neighbouring bodies of water.

FOCA is the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations, a not-for-profit membership organization with over 500 member associations across Ontario that represent 50,000 waterfront property owning families.

One of our member groups, the Muskoka Lakes Association (MLA), has approached FOCA with concerns that this practice would negatively impact the water quality in their area. By example the MLA refers to Touchstone Resort on Lake Muskoka which is allegedly permitted to drain its sewage effluent into Lake Muskoka twice a year.

We believe local residents and indeed none of our members are aware of this Ministry policy and on their behalf, FOCA needs to understand the rationale for this practice and what safeguards are in place to ensure lakes or other surface waters are not contaminated. Accordingly, we ask you to explain the protocol for even considering this practice, and further, inform us as to how often such approval is sought, and given, via MOECC.

As long-time contributors to various aspects of Source Water Protection in Ontario, FOCA remains concerned about gaps that exist in wastewater management and oversight – **the example above is significant and particularly concerning, and warrants a formal response, at your very earliest opportunity.**

FOCA also looks forward to the opportunity to discuss a number of additional outstanding concerns related to septage.

With better Provincial oversight and guidance, more comprehensive planning for domestic rural wastewater can be achieved through collaborations between Municipalities, other Planning Act approval authorities, developers and septage haulers.

Understanding the amount of septage generated in a community, the number of treatment facilities available, and septage management solutions can help in the development of municipal septage plans. Such plans can be a useful tool for informing official plan reviews and approval authorities when making decisions on land use applications including:

- the development and review of official plans, comprehensive reviews and official plan amendments, such as for secondary or area plans and settlement area expansions; and
- approval of site-specific development plans, such as those for subdivisions and consents.

A municipal septage plan can also inform and educate residents about the true environmental (and financial) costs of their waste management, and can support environmental assessment requirements for facility expansions or alterations to serviced municipal areas.

FOCA looks forward to advancing this concern, and trying to improve the situation for the full lifecycle aspects of on-site waste management, along with our members and our industry and government counterparts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Terry Rees".

Terry Rees, Executive Director

cc Muskoka Lakes Association
Rick Esselment, Ontario Onsite Wastewater Association
John Klinck, District Municipality of Muskoka
Don Furniss, Mayor, Township of Muskoka Lakes
Ken Grant, President, FOCA