

About Ontario Municipal Elections:

Why they matter to lake associations and waterfront property owners

The Municipal level of government is where many of the services we rely upon get managed including roads, local policing and emergency services, parks and recreation, transit, child care, water and sewers...and more. Once every four years, you have an opportunity to vote for your Municipal Councillors and Mayor/Reeve.

Quick Election Facts:

- When is the next municipal election? **Monday, October 24th, 2022.**
- Who can vote? Canadian citizens, 18 years of age or older, who are a resident of the municipality, or a property owner or tenant, or spouse/same sex partner of an owner or tenant in the municipality during a specified time just before the election.
- **You can vote in each municipality where you own property**, but only vote once per municipality (If a resident has properties in 2 wards of a municipality, they can only vote in one ward).
- Who determines “residency”? You do.
- How do you know you are on the voters list? Visit VoterLookUp.ca closer to the election.
- If you're not on the voters list, you will need to show both proof of identity *and* proof of residence in order to vote.

Who can run for office?

- You must be eligible to vote in a municipality in order to run for a position on council.

Why is it important for waterfront property owners, including cottagers or seasonal owners, to vote in municipal elections?

1. It protects your financial investment; municipal budgets impact your property tax levels, and municipal services (or lack of them) could affect your property's value.
2. Waterfront property traditionally has a higher assessment than non-waterfront or town property & therefore waterfront owners contribute significantly to the municipal tax base.
3. Cottages tend to be held longer, often multi-generationally – long term perspective and commitment demands a strong and stable municipal government.
4. Demographics – in rural Ontario the number of voters (perhaps 2-3,000) per councillor is considerably smaller than in larger municipalities (50,000 or more constituents)

= Your vote could have a greater impact

Voting Methods?

- Council has to pass a by-law to adopt alternative voting procedures, which might include voting by mail, Internet or telephone. Determine what your municipality is doing. Thanks to FOCA's efforts, alternative voting has been in place since 1996!
- The municipal council must decide by May 1, 2022 which voting method or methods will be used in the election. If an alternative voting method is used, the municipal clerk is responsible for establishing the policies and procedures for voting, and for informing electors how they will cast their ballot.

Associations:

- Inform your members about the candidates, and the importance of voting.
- Invite the candidates to your association AGM; ensure they understand your priorities.
- Compile a short list of your most important questions/issues and ask all the candidates to respond in writing; responses can be shared with your members.
- Plan and participate in All-candidates meetings - these should be held before Labor Day before many people leave the area.
- Note: Endorsing specific candidates is problematic as you may need to register as a third-party advertiser. Regardless, you will have to work with the new council for the next 4 years! Avoid name-calling by directing your members to the *ISSUES* that are most important in the coming vote, rather than the names.
- Ask the Clerk if you can have the unofficial results provided to your association.

Candidates – getting to know the incumbents:

- This can be challenging if you are a seasonal resident, as municipal decisions continue to be made year-round.
- Use the municipal website, local media to see meeting agendas & minutes; sign up for e-news updates – many municipalities offer this now!
- Review the committee involvement of the incumbents, and their history of outreach and involvement with your community.
- Review any recorded votes, determine whether councillors vote independently, or as a pack; and their voting record on waterfront issues, development, environmental issues, budgets, local services – or anything else you think is important.

Some tips to get your issue onto your candidates' radar:

- Identify yourself as a constituent of their riding.
- Give a short explanation of how the issue affects you personally, and whether you support or oppose it.
- Use facts and figures to support your argument.
- Be concise and stick to the issue if you want to express your opinion or ask for their stance on an issue.
- Hand them a 1-page brief on the issue to take away and reference in the future.
- Thank them for their time, and remind them you will be discussing the matter with your neighbours, and voting to support the issue at hand.
- Mention specifically if you want a written response, then follow up with their office staff in two weeks if there has been no reply.

Final thoughts:

- Most importantly: stay in touch with them throughout their term, not just at election time.
- Your vote is important – it is your property and your community at stake!

For more about municipal government, visit our website:

<https://foca.on.ca/municipal-government-partners/>