

Update: Comments to the Township of Muskoka Lakes on the Proposed Septic System Inspection Program

(as reported in the Muskoka Lakes Associations e-news, News Bites)

March 2022

The **Muskoka Lakes Association** (MLA) and **Friends of Muskoka** (FOM) submitted a letter to **Township of Muskoka Lakes** (TML) Chief Building Official commenting on the proposed septic system inspection policy. The TML proposed policy can be found [here](#).

The Township's proposed policy categorized systems into 3 levels of risk based on age, material of construction and proximity to a waterway. Two levels of inspection were proposed, with the highest risk systems inspected first, in greater detail. Low risk systems (those less than 10 years old or not abutting a waterway) were not recommended for inspection at any frequency. Qualified inspectors were to be retained by individual property owners at their own expense.

The full MLA/FOM letter can be read [here](#).

MLA/FOM noted that Muskoka's natural environment and especially its lakes and rivers are the source of almost everything good that happens in Muskoka and are the engines that drive Muskoka's appeal and economy. With thousands of private sewage systems in the Township, inadequate or malfunctioning private sewage works represent a significant risk to the health of the lakes, drinking water sources, the local environment, and the economic viability of the entire region.

The letter summarized with the following recommendations on TML's septic inspection program:

- include all private systems regardless of age or proximity to water;
- include confirmation that the system is appropriate, by today's standards, for the site development;
- be conducted by credible independent contractors retained by TML; and
- be funded by the property owners.

The MLA/FOM letter cited examples of other successful inspection programs in Ontario.

There was a considerable amount of discussion at the Planning Committee meeting of March 17, 2022 mainly around who should retain inspectors – property owners or the Township – and how the policy would be implemented. Following the discussion, Committee recommended that the policy come back to Planning Committee for further consideration once an inventory of private sewage systems had been undertaken to a point where the Township could understand the magnitude of required inspections.

TML Committee asked for this report no later than August 2022.