

Dear member,

I am writing to update you about changes that the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR) is undertaking to comply with an Ontario Superior Court of Justice decision regarding docks and boathouses.

Under the *Public Lands Act* (PLA), a person requires a permit to construct or place a structure that occupies more than 15 square metres of shore lands (e.g., lake bed). Historically, MNR permits were only required for docks and boathouses that rested on or were attached to more than 15 square metres of shore lands, usually lakebeds. Typically, these structures only touched shore lands in the form of cribs and footings and most would not have exceeded the 15 square metre threshold.

In its decision, the Court held that a dock or boathouse floating above shore lands is considered to be occupying the lands beneath the structure, regardless of whether it is resting on or attached to the shore lands. As a result, a person with plans to build a dock or boathouse floating above, resting on, physically attached to or otherwise covering more than 15 square metres of shore lands will now require a permit under the PLA. This includes new, replacements or expansions of existing, and seasonal docks and boathouses.

The Court's decision also reconfirmed the need to have municipal building permits for dock and boathouse construction in municipalities. This is a separate authorization that can be obtained from the local municipality.

My ministry's district offices will endeavour to process these PLA authorizations in the most expeditious manner possible. We have developed a streamlined application process that will provide the ministry with the information necessary to process permits. There is no cost associated with these PLA authorizations and they will be valid for a period of up to five years.

We understand that all individuals may not be aware of this change. My ministry's primary goal at this time is to promote compliance with legislated requirements by focusing its efforts on education and permit processing.

I understand that this has created an administrative burden to Ontarians and therefore, I have directed officials to explore options to address this situation.

If you have any questions, please contact your local district office. You can find your nearest office at [www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-natural-resources-and-forestry-regional-and-district-offices](http://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-natural-resources-and-forestry-regional-and-district-offices). You can also visit [www.ontario.ca/page/crown-land-work-permits](http://www.ontario.ca/page/crown-land-work-permits).

Sincerely,

Bill Mauro  
Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry