

Strategic Plan 2020-2023

FOCA Moving Forward

A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR THE PERIOD 2020-2023

Ontario's waterfronts are part of the fabric of our Canadian lifestyles.

FOCA is at the centre of a diverse community of waterfront enthusiasts with varied backgrounds, experiences, influences and passions. We believe everyone needs to be vested in the health of our lakes and rivers, as well as the lands and watersheds that surround them, and the communities across rural Ontario that depend upon them.



What's in a name?

For over 55 years, this organization has been known as the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations. In our 2020 member survey, we asked if you saw yourself reflected in that name and—generally speaking—you told us that you do. Some survey respondents recommended a move away from terms like “Federation” or “Cottagers” to be more inclusive.

We recognize today's waterfront community is complex and consists of full-time lake residents, seasonal and occasional residents, local businesses, visitors, and others. This is a topic that we will continue to evaluate; however, we plan to stay with our recognized brand for the foreseeable future.

FOCA's work to communicate, to advocate and to educate is now more vital than ever.

FOCA is a bridge to the 250,000 waterfront property families across Ontario who contribute a combined \$800+million in annual property taxes, steward 15,000 kilometres of shorelines, and own 50,000 hectares of environmentally important lands.

Connecting and working towards a shared vision for the future of Ontario's land, lakes and rivers requires creativity and a collaborative approach. FOCA's goal is to achieve thriving and sustainable waterfront communities by energizing people across all regions of the province to become stewards of their waterways, and by working with like-minded partners in support of these goals.

While every year presents new challenges, the events of 2020 have been exceptional. Our waterfront communities are facing increased stresses, making FOCA's role in supporting lake associations more important than ever.

FOCA is a mission-driven organization whose key roles include:

- promoting environmental understanding, appreciation, and stewardship
- facilitating peer networking and sharing best practices with associations
- continuing government advocacy: providing informed advice, promoting sustainability, resilience, and affordability
- assembling and disseminating information about Ontario's lakes and rivers, and the communities that surround them.

FOCA is uniquely positioned as an organization driven by membership and supporters. Our over 500 member associations and hundreds of individual supporters, as well as our environmental, academic, private sector, and political partners keep FOCA connected, informed and rooted at the hub of a huge network of rural and waterfront knowledge.

FOCA follows a cyclical three-year planning process to ensure its priorities are reviewed and renewed to clearly express how FOCA intends to implement its vision, mandate, and priority goals to achieve its mission.

The **FOCA Strategic Plan 2020-2023**, builds on existing priorities, an in-depth survey with our members, the experience accumulated since our founding in 1963, and our ongoing dialogue with program partners, our supporters and policy makers.

This plan is FOCA's guide and provides the foundation for uniting supporters of thriving and sustainable waterfronts.

We hope that you see your waterfront priorities reflected in this plan. By working together as a community, we can keep our lakes and rivers great!



Marlin Horst
Board President



Terry Rees
Executive Director

MISSION

FOCA effectively serves and represents Ontario's lake associations, waterfront property owners (WPO) and waterfront communities through education, communication and government advocacy.

VISION

FOCA envisions thriving and sustainable waterfronts across Ontario, now and for future generations.

MANDATE

FOCA promotes and advocates for healthy lakes, rivers and watersheds, and is the voice for Ontario's 250,000+ WPO.



Image: Andy Metelka

Challenges & Opportunities

FOCA recognizes that waterfront communities across Ontario are diverse, and are facing significant challenges but have many opportunities, including:



Image: Twitter



Premier Ford at the 2020 Rural Ontario Municipal Association conference



FOCA's in-person and virtual AGM, March 2020



Image: Soyers Lake Ratepayers Association



Communities are impacted by COVID-19

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on our traditional waterfront community gatherings, association fundraising efforts, and social events. In 2020—more than ever before—we experienced the interconnectedness of our environment, our communities, and our health in ways we might never have imagined previously.

Escaping to the waterfront is a legacy worth protecting. As out-of-province travel restrictions continue rather indefinitely, we anticipate that Ontario waterfronts will be increasingly busy. A collective commitment to community health will remain important for the foreseeable future.



Changes in the regulatory and policy landscape

FOCA has community-level insights into the issues and challenges affecting local property owners. Accordingly, FOCA is an experience- and evidence-based voice of communities on waterfront issues, articulating policy positions, and monitoring developments at the federal, provincial and municipal levels, on issues of significance to the future of our lands, lakes and rivers.



Changing demographics and usage

FOCA understands the impacts of shifts in rural populations and waterfront usage, including intergenerational transfers of ownership, trends toward permanent residency, new-to-rural owners, and short term rentals, all of which are a part of the evolving “cottage country” community.



Expanding our reach

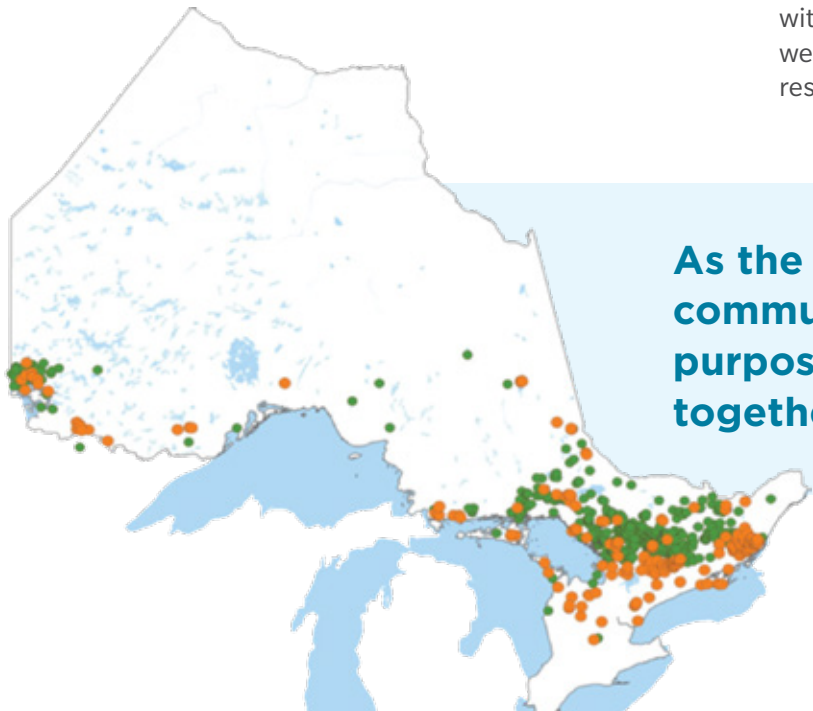
FOCA remains the go-to organization for topical and focused waterfront information. We will achieve our mission by serving and connecting with our current supporters, while expanding our outreach to a broader audience of waterfront enthusiasts.



Contributing to strong rural and northern communities

Waterfront property owners, both seasonal and permanent, are a significant force in Ontario. We recognize the important contributions they make in their rural communities, as residents, volunteers, entrepreneurs and engaged citizens.

A sustainable and resilient future will be founded on informed local groups working together productively with local government, businesses and residents, as well as non-government organizations, academic and research organizations, and private sector partners.



As the voice of Ontario's waterfront community, FOCA serves a collective purpose where we are more effective together than individually.

For a map of our members, visit:
<https://foca.on.ca/list-of-associations>

FOCA's Priority Goals 2020-2023



Promoting Healthy Lands, Lakes and Rivers

- support and grow volunteer monitoring and citizen science initiatives
- champion water quality monitoring emphasizing science, outreach and communications through the Lake Partner Program
- promote invasive species awareness, education and action
- provide education and advice about land use planning and broader waterfront impacts
- educate about the importance of healthy lake environments by creating and circulating tools and information



Serving Lake and Road Associations

- respond promptly to member association enquiries (the FOCA 'Help Desk')
- deliver topical and timely updates affecting the waterfront community using effective online and social media communications
- provide governance tools to assist member associations to work effectively
- deliver value through member-only product and services benefits
- support online meetings and provide other technical services for associations such as dues collection via the FOCA website



Fostering Community

- expand interconnectedness among and beyond members, to engage all waterfront enthusiasts in a shared vision of thriving and sustainable waterfronts
- partner with educational institutions to advance research in support of our mission, and communicate relevant science to a broader audience
- foster strategic private sector partnerships, to support mutually beneficial objectives and to leverage expanded audiences, expertise and resources

We all have a stake in healthy lands and waters. Together, we can make this a reality for future generations of dock jumpers.



Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks P.A. Andrea Khanjin at FOCA's 2020 AGM



Image: David Cornish of Talpines Property Owners Association



Image: Munro Lake Cottagers Association



Lake Kashtabog Residents' Association AGM



Advocating for Responsive Government

- inform about public policies pertinent to waterfront and rural living through advocacy primarily at the provincial and federal levels
- mentor local associations and individuals to do similarly at the county and township level, through robust municipal engagement
- communicate FOCA policies and backgrounders on key waterfront issues and files
- articulate and communicate the economic importance of waterfront property owners (WPO) in Ontario



Championing Affordable and Safe Rural Living

- advocate on priority issues including:
 - expanded rural and northern broadband and cell service
 - fair and reasonable electricity pricing
 - fair property taxation
- promote rural resilience and safety on topics including boating safety, fire safety, emergency preparedness and response in remote areas
- offer risk management advice and insurance options for lake and road associations and their volunteers
- provide exclusive member access to the CottageFirst group insurance program and related insurance information



Building Capacity

- increase operational resources through partnerships across the public sector, private sector, research organizations and among like-minded non-governmental organizations
- expand FOCA's positioning as a thought-leader through public outreach, traditional and social media
- convert FOCA's many followers into new supporters
- expand the network of expert resources and information made available through our communications channels and at FOCA events



Image: M.Lewin

YOUR ROLE

HELP FOCA EXPAND OUR REACH BY SHARING THIS CALL TO ACTION:

Get on FOCA's Elert list, the monthly e-newsletter filled with updates about cottage country priorities. Help us reach our goal of 50,000 subscribers to amplify the voice of the waterfront.

Sign up here:

<https://bit.ly/FOCAelert50K>