

## Media Release

# FOCA Calls for Action: Sustaining Ontario's Waterfront Communities Ahead of the Provincial Election

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As Ontario prepares for a new provincial election, the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations (FOCA) urges candidates and policymakers to prioritize critical issues affecting the province's waterfront communities. FOCA's new document, *Sustaining Ontario's Waterfront Communities: A Vision for Growth and Stewardship*, outlines key policy recommendations necessary to maintain vibrant, resilient communities along Ontario's treasured shorelands.

Representing over 250,000 families who live seasonally and year-round on waterfront properties, FOCA highlights the enormous economic and environmental contributions these families make. Waterfront property owners' annual spending supports over 150,000 full-time equivalent jobs in the province and generates \$11.66 billion of Ontario's GDP. Collectively, these families own and steward 50,000 hectares of waterfront land, and 15,000 kilometres of sensitive Ontario shorelines.

"Waterfront communities are vital to Ontario's economy and natural environment, yet they face growing threats from healthcare gaps, invasive species, climate risks, and more," said FOCA's CEO, Lesley Lavender. "This election is an opportunity to commit to solutions that protect these communities and ensure they thrive for generations to come."

FOCA's key provincial election priorities include:

1. **Stopping Municipal Downloading:** Establish predictable funding models to prevent rising property taxes and ensure municipalities can maintain essential services.
2. **Strengthening Forest Fire Protection:** Invest in fire prevention, detection, emergency planning and coordinated responses to safeguard homes and natural areas.
3. **Lake Water Quality Monitoring:** Expand funding for lake monitoring in collaboration with community partners like FOCA.
4. **Guaranteed 24/7 Emergency Healthcare Services:** Strengthen funding and staffing incentives to ensure round-the-clock emergency services in rural and cottage regions.
5. **Flood Management:** Invest in watershed planning, monitoring technology, and infrastructure to enhance resilience and ensure that our communities are prepared.
6. **Reinstating Public Appeal Rights:** Restore public rights to appeal Official Plans and Zoning By-laws to safeguard transparent and accountable land use decisions.
7. **Combating Invasive Species:** Maintain robust funding for prevention, early detection, and education programs to protect Ontario's ecosystems.

“These priorities reflect the voice of 250,000 families who care deeply about their communities and Ontario’s environment,” added FOCA Board Chair, Deborah Martin-Downs. “We stand ready to work with the next provincial government to build a stronger, more sustainable future for waterfront communities.”

To view FOCA’s full election priorities document, visit <https://foca.on.ca/provincial-elections/>.

**About FOCA:**

The Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations (FOCA) is a not-for-profit organization that champions the interests of Ontario’s waterfront property owners and promotes sustainable waterfront communities.

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