

Leech Lake **Cottagers' Association** **NEWSLETTER**

THANKSGIVING 2023

President's Message – Susan Baskin

I love this time of year. The autumn weather has been wonderful and the fall colours around the lake are glorious. It's a great time of year to hike and to do your last few paddle-board, kayak or canoe spins around the lake before cooler weather sets in.

We hope you will enjoy yet another fantastic newsletter. There is lots of interesting information to catch up with.

Some of you have been asking about snow plowing. We are now in our third year of our contract with Muskoka Landscaping. They offer us a good rate for members who wish to have their driveways plowed. Please see details in the newsletter.

We are still looking for people to step up and take their turn to help run our fabulous cottage association. We're a cordial group, and it is a joy to work with our current group of volunteers. Please let me know if you are interested.

Thanks as always to our dream team LLCA Executive.

Best wishes to everyone for a happy and healthy Thanksgiving Weekend.

Green Bins at Leech Lake – by Susan Baskin

Another poorly thought-out 'One-Size Fits All' rollout by the DOM.

On August 29th the District of Muskoka (DOM) dropped a green bin off on our property—and probably on yours as well.

I was unaware the green bin initiative was coming. I do not recall having received any prior notification—although the DOM maintains that flyers were mailed out during the summer to ALL taxpayers. Did you receive one?

Along with the green bin comes a change in curbside collection for the summer months: we are now down to one garbage bag a week and all green waste should be put out for collection in the green bin.

In the 'off season' months, beginning on November 6, we can deliver four garbage bags (with organic waste inside) to the truck that comes every other week to the Fraserburg Road/Lorne Road intersection (last curbside pickup is Oct 23).

In addition, you can take garbage, recycling, and now organic waste to the Rosewarne Transfer Station off of Taylor Road in Bracebridge.

As in many other municipalities in Ontario, the District of Muskoka is trying to reduce the quantity of waste going to landfill sites by collecting up organic waste and turning it into compost. See [here](#).

I fully support this kind of green initiative, but what I do NOT support is the way the DOM has gone about implementing the green bin program. They have given little if any thought to the issues that their rural cottagers face.

As soon as the green bins appeared our LLCA Facebook Hub came alive with excellent questions and concerns from our members:

- Where am I supposed to store the green bin? I don't have a place for it inside my cottage.
- I am afraid to put the green bin in my shed or garage. I am worried that it will attract animals.
- The green bin is too big for our bear-proof bin. What am I supposed to do?
- If I put out the green bin when I leave the cottage on Sunday afternoon, won't it attract bears and raccoons?
- When I leave my cottage on Sunday afternoon, I am afraid to leave the green bin on the roadside. What if animals come and make a huge mess on the road, and I'm not there to clean it up?



In my efforts to represent our members I set out to find more information and hoped to find a sensible resolution to the green bin issue. I found the information that the District put out to be puzzling, confusing and incomplete. The information linked [here](#) describes the green bin initiative.

The DOM's website notes the following:

*Organics collection is available to **residential households in Bracebridge, Huntsville and urban areas of the District**. We are working to expand the green bin organics collection program to all residents in Muskoka.*

Did you know that our cottage properties are considered to be residential households in Bracebridge? I actually checked with the District to find out if that is true, and it is. Even though our roads are NOT municipally maintained and only a small percentage of our members live on the lake year-round, we are all considered to be 'residential households.'

The DOM's website also includes this:

Please visit our [Find Your Collection Schedule](#) – if your collection day indicates "Green Bin," you are within the green bin service area and receive weekly curbside green bin organics collection.

I dutifully checked our 'Collection Schedule'. NO green bin collection is listed. *Side note: As of Monday, October 2, the Collection Schedule still does not show 'green bin' collection, even though I alerted the DOM over a month ago, and they said they would update their website.*

I decided to try to speak to our elected officials. Our Mayor, Rick Maloney, told me that the District oversees waste management, and suggested that I contact our District Councillor Brenda Rhodes who sits on the DOM Waste Management Committee. Although it took some perseverance on my part to reach her I finally spoke to her by phone.

I shared our concerns with Brenda, including the confusing information on the website and the collection schedule, and the fact that once again there was no prior consultation or notification from the DOM as to the change to waste management.

Brenda was sympathetic and open to the conversation. She told me that she lives in an apartment in Bracebridge and admitted that she had not thought about issues that might be raised for rural property owners (*maybe she should do some visiting to her more rural constituents—I plan to invite her*).

I remarked to Brenda that it was extremely unfortunate that the DOM had rolled out the green bins as a ‘one-size-fits-all’ project and had not given sufficient consideration to the rural population. I suggested that a possible solution to the issue would be for the DOM to provide smaller bins that could be more easily stored indoors and would fit into more of the bear-proof garbage bins, and I also requested that until modifications were put in place, that residents around our lake be allowed to put two bags of garbage out through to the conclusion of weekly curbside pickup on October 23.

Brenda promised to get back to me promptly. I have not heard from her.

I have also spoken to our local Councillor Barb McMurray who tried to advocate for us and got nowhere.

I have spoken with Stephanie Mack who works in the DOM’s Waste Management office and is responsible for the program. I shared our concerns with her, and asked and if there is any alternative to using the green bin provided—including a smaller size bin. She said she was unaware of smaller bins, so the answer was NO, and she stated the following: ***Only curbside Green Bins can be used for collection. If you are unable to use the Green Bin provided then you can take your organic waste to the transfer station.***

So there it is: ‘one-size-fits-all’ thinking in the District of Muskoka.

I have done some research, and it turns out that other municipalities DO provide a smaller green bin. I will let Stephanie and her boss, James Steele, at the DOM know, and maybe we can get them.

I have reached out to our neighbours on Pine Lake, Big Wind Lake, and McKay Lake, with whom we work as a ‘Coalition of Fraserburg Cottage Associations’ to try to get some joint resolution to the issues we share. We are especially concerned by the continuing lack of consideration for our rural communities, and the abysmal communication. We have requested a meeting with James Steele, the Commissioner of Public Works, to discuss our issues, and it is being set up. Sadly, our local politicians have proven to be ineffectual in these kinds of matters.

By the time curbside collection rolls around again in the spring of 2024 I hope that I will be able to report that some progress has been made.

Fleming College Program 2023 – by Valerie McCoy

After making application late in the summer, LLCA was fortunate to be chosen – again – to be part of the Fleming Ecosystem Management Technician/Technologist Program’s 2023 Credit for Product program. Our project was smaller than last year, and we were awarded a well-qualified and enthusiastic team of students.

The team of four Fleming students – Victoria MacMillan, Wilson Weir, Prairie Beath and Daniel Sisnett – executed the field sampling weekend on Sept 22-24. The students were hosted for the weekend by

Murray Hall and family – a huge thank-you goes out to them for their hospitality and generosity in hosting and providing food.

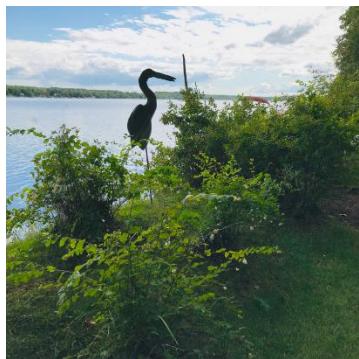
Now that the sampling is done, the students will be busy conducting many analyses and drawing up their report. This will be delivered to us by the end of November.

After we have a chance to digest it and ask questions of the Fleming team, we will organize a meeting to present the results of the project. This will likely take place in Q1 2024. Watch for further details near the end of the year.

Shoreline Renaturalization at Leech Lake – by Valerie McCoy

Last year's Fleming project included an extensive shoreline survey. It showed that while some of our shoreline is excellent at supporting the lake, we can always be better and make our lake healthier. The results were shared at our AGM in June, and in a brochure distributed at the Regatta. If you would like a copy, please reach out to the Stewardship email at leech.lake.stewardship.committee@gmail.com.

As a result of the students' work, we reached out to the Natural Edge, a program of Watershed Canada, for help and support. We learned there was a long wait list for consultations. However, we were told if we could get more than 10 people they would do a group presentation.



A virtual presentation to capture the max number of people took place on June 14th, and it was heartening to see the interest from Leech Lakers about this important topic. Rob & Candace McGill decided as a result to use their property as a model for us all, and we've had two updates from them in earlier editions of this newsletter.

Rob McGill and Valerie McCoy worked the Stewardship table at the Regatta communicating the results, encouraging people to renaturalize and handing out literature (planting guides, Fleming brochure etc.) If you are interested in any of these materials, email the Stewardship email and they can be forwarded.

As a result of these efforts, nine families have signed up to have their properties assessed by the Natural Edge team on Oct 12th & 13th. Rebecca Willison and her team from the Muskoka Watershed Council will spend approximately one hour per property. They will take photos and measurements and draft a planting plan for each property. This is free of charge, and an excellent way to learn about shoreline renaturalization generally as well as what steps we can take as property owners to help keep our lake healthy.

Thank you to everyone who is interested in Leech Lake shoreline renaturalization, and a shoutout to the nine properties who are stepping up and having an assessment done. Small steps lead to big impact!

There's Bad Neighbours, and then there's Invasive Neighbours

Invasive Phragmites is an insidious perennial grass that can take over and clog up our lakes and waterways. It has been damaging ecosystems in Ontario for decades and it seems to be getting worse. We don't think there is any of this marauder on the lake yet, but be on the lookout for this particular horticultural menace. Check it out [here](#).

Winter Driveway Plowing

Winter is just around the corner and the snow is sure to follow once the colder temperatures arrive.

The LLCA has a contract for winter snow plowing with Muskoka Landscaping. They plow all three of our roads from November through April. They will also plow your private driveway for a fee.

Here are the fees for PRIVATE DRIVEWAY snow-plowing this year:

Full Season: \$496.12 + \$64.50 (HST) = \$560.62

Single Plow: \$57.75 + \$7.51 (HST) = \$65.26

To sign up please contact Guy Pattison of the roads team at leechlakeroads@gmail.com.

Mark Your Calendar

<p><u>Ash Drive:</u> Come hug a tree and help save a forest. Have you been saving your campfire, fireplace, pellet or woodstove ash over the summer? If you have, then a big thank you for your efforts.</p> <p>The 2023-2024 ash drives put on by the Friends of The Muskoka Watershed would appreciate your ash contributions. The ash donations can be dropped off at the Ash Drive tent and collection station located inside the District's waste facility located at 1062 Rosewarne Drive on the dates listed.</p>	<p><u>2023</u> Sat Oct 21 Sat Nov 18</p> <p><u>2024</u> Sat Jan 20 Sat Feb 17 Sat Mar 10</p>
Last 2023 Curbside Garbage Pick-up:	Mon Oct 23
First 2023 Drop-off Garbage Collection (at Lorne Rd.):	Mon Nov 6
First 2024 Curbside Garbage Pick-up:	Mon May 6 2024

August bottle drive results

The rains had hindered some of our weekend collections over the month of August but we are happy to report the donation value was on par with the 2022 bottle drive. Cheers and thanks to all who participated.

The final total was \$600.00 which will be split evenly between:

- Big Brothers - Big Sisters of Muskoka
- Hospice Muskoka



Things to do in Muskoka in the Fall, Part 2 – by Guy Pattison and Leslie Wood

Boat Cruises: A wonderful way to spend a few hours in the fall is on one of the many boat cruises that toodle around the big Muskoka lakes and rivers. Check them out [here](#). There are also sunset boat trips available [here](#). The sunsets amid the fall colours are positively jawdropping!

The Dorset Fire Tower - located near Dwight, Ontario – is a scenic tower lookout buried deep in the Ontario countryside. The tower is maintained by the Township of the Algonquin Highlands and stands 500 feet high, with observation posts at 100 feet and 465 feet. The original tower was only 82 feet high and was used as a fire lookout. The Tower has been the main attraction for a park that was essentially built up around it, with picnic tables, a gift shop and a hiking trail. It's a wonderful morning or afternoon activity. Check it out [here](#).



Bowling or billiards? As the weather cools and the rains come down, it may be time to consider some indoor fun if all the puzzles are done and the board games are making you bored. Head for the Quality Inn and check out the bowling alley and billiard room. Info [here](#).



Muskoka zipline and aerial park: Take your life to new heights along the tree tops at this adventure activity. There's an aerial adventure course with rope bridges, obstacles, cargo nets and more. You can also zip through the canopy of trees and see the views from the zip line. It's right by Santa's Village so not far at all. Get more info [here](#).

How about some day- or night-time Mini-Putt? Find it where the green T-Rex with his T-Rex sized putter towers over the trees, across the road from the Quality Inn. They have a snack shack that serves Kawartha Dairy ice cream, and Muskoka Springs cold drinks. Shop local! More info [here](#).

The Bala Cranberry Festival: The modest cranberry comes into its own in Bala during harvest time. This is a fun-filled weekend for everyone! This year it runs Friday Oct 13-Sunday Oct 15. Live music, entertainers/performers, attractions, arts and crafts, great food, kids' entertainment and activities and so much more. Check it out [here](#).



Muskoka Oktoberfest: Who knew Muskoka has its own Oktoberfest? This year it runs Friday Oct 20 – Sunday Oct 22. This is a music, culinary and beer festival taking place in participating breweries and restaurants across Bracebridge, Gravenhurst, Huntsville, Lake of Bays, Muskoka Lakes and Georgian Bay. Information and tickets [here](#).

Keepers of the Lake

It takes an army of people to build community. We know there is lots of helping and kindness that goes on around Leech Lake, and we want to call out some of our helpers in each newsletter. If you know someone you'd like to have recognized for something they did, please email leechlakesecretary@yahoo.com and we will get it in our next newsletter.

For this edition, we want to call out and give a big thank you to a few Keepers of Leech Lake:

Dennis and Ann Marie Hodges - for their post-regatta shoreline clean-up. We are also thankful to them for removing the styrofoam batts from the orphaned dock at the boat launch and taking those to the town dump.

Rick McCoy - for installing the red and green marine navigation floats to help people get to and from the boat launch safely.

What the Heck is FOCA??

The LLCA is a member of the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations (FOCA) and that means all LLCA members are FOCA members as well. FOCA advocates for healthy lakes and rivers, and is the voice for Ontario's 250,000+ waterfront property owners. The FOCA website is chock full of useful and interesting information; it's easy to get lost in all the info on their web site (can you say rainy-day rabbit-hole??) but you can see more about its strategic priorities and the issues and programs on which the organization focuses [here](#).

FOCA Fall Seminar Member Event: *Understand the Changing State of our Lakes*

Saturday, November 4, 2023 by webinar (9am-noon)

The event includes a range of environmental topics, including:

- an overview of the recent **Ontario Climate Change Impact Assessment Technical Report** by the President of the Climate Risk Institute
- **the nature of our lakes** and how they're changing over time by our feature speaker [Dr. John Smol](#), the Canadian Research Chair in Environmental Change
- the state of our **loons** - an **indicator species** for waterfront health by Bird Studies Canada
- updates from partners on the **top aquatic invasive plants** threatening our waters, and the most recent news about recent **Grass carp** sightings in Ontario
- an update on our longstanding citizen science program, the **Lake Partner Program** among other topics. [Register now for this webinar!](#)

Bits 'n Pieces

1. **FOCA Alert:** the most recent Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations newsletter is full of great [information](#).
2. **Thanksgiving, now you know!** – The first Canadian Thanksgiving was reportedly hosted in 1578 by the English explorer Martin Frobisher in what is now Newfoundland. At the time, Frobisher

and his expedition attempted to travel through the Northwest Passage safely. The celebration marked their safe arrival to the New World.

For a while, the Thanksgiving holiday did not have a set date. It moved around all over the calendar, from mid-April to November, before the Canadian government finally settled on the second Monday of October. In 1957, the Canadian Parliament made the holiday official with the following proclamation: *A Day of General Thanksgiving to Almighty God for the bountiful harvest with which Canada has been blessed – to be observed on the 2nd Monday in October.*

LLCA Contact Information

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