



Saturday, March 2, 2024
from 9:00am to 3:00pm

by Zoom webinar & in-person at
the Bayview Golf & Country Club

2024 FOCA AGM & Spring Seminar Event Summary

FOCA held our **Annual General Meeting and Spring Seminar – “Water Matters”** as a hybrid event on Saturday, March 2, 2024. There were 100 attendees in person at the Bayview Golf and Country Club in Thornhill, and an additional 150 participants by Zoom webinar, making this one of our largest events to date!

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This document contains a summary of the day’s events. All registrants received a separate link to view the event recording. **Below are links to the slide presentations:**

[Slide Set #1](#) (download PDF, 6 MB): **FOCA’s Year in Review & Updates** from the outgoing Executive Director, and welcome to the incoming Chief Executive Officer, by Terry Rees

[Slide Set #2](#) (download PDF, 5 MB): **FOCA Annual General Meeting** of members & thanks to retiring Board Members, Chaired by the Board President, Ian Crawford

[Slide Set #3](#) (download PDF, 11 MB): three sessions:

- **Stories of Cottage Climate Champs** by Leslie Garrett of BlueDot Living
- **Understanding Aquatic Plants:** update on the forthcoming FOCA Guide by Kaleigh Mooney
- **Fire Safety Equipment** for Rural Properties by Trevor Ferguson of Municipal Equipment

[Slide Set #4](#) (download PDF, 5 MB): two sessions:

- Association Success Stories & Presentation of the **2023 FOCA Terry Rees Achievement Award** by John Hickey, Chair of FOCA’s Member Services and Benefits Committee
- Update on **Property Taxation & Regional Trends** in Waterfront Valuation by Lynne Cunningham of the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation

[Slide Set #5](#) (download PDF, 7 MB): two sessions:

- **Land Use Planning Updates** by Deborah Martin-Downs, FOCA Board Vice-President
- **Boating Updates** from Transport Canada by FOCA, and **2023 Boating Season Safety Statistics** by Sgt. Dave Moffatt, Provincial Marine Coordinator, Ontario Provincial Police

With special thanks to our valued Sponsors of this event:

**Refreshment
Sponsor:**

 Cottage Life

**Lunch
Sponsor:**

 **YAMAHA**
Revs Your Heart

Event Sponsor:

 hydro one

**Connectivity
Sponsor:**

 **ROGERS**

A Summary of the Day's Sessions

Board President **Ian Crawford** began the event with a land acknowledgement. FOCA Executive Director, **Terry Rees**, welcomed in-person and webinar attendees to the 61st Annual General Meeting of FOCA Members and Annual Spring Seminar. The event title – “**Water Matters**” – reflects FOCA’s enduring priority since 1963, our ongoing priorities as a community of waterfront enthusiasts, and the personal commitment we have to ensure thriving and sustainable waterfronts across Ontario.

Terry thanked our **Event Sponsor**, Hydro One, for supporting this annual event and our community over the past year. As they continue to update our important electrical grid, we rely on them to provide power reliably and safely to our notoriously hilly, rocky, remote (and increasingly stormy) forest homes. Remember to consult the Hydro One outage map on their [Storm Centre webpage](#), and report outages by texting 92887 (WATTS) or by calling 1-800-434-1235 or through their free mobile app. Customers can also sign up in advance for text or email notifications at hydroone.com/outages.



Terry also thanked our **Connectivity Sponsor**: Rogers Communications, and welcomed Ayaz Vankalwala, Senior Director of Marketing at Rogers, who spoke to our attendees about Rogers’ efforts to improve rural connectivity, their new 5G Home Internet offering (for as low as \$50/month for 12 months – [explore the details online](#)), and a new plug-and-play modem that was demonstrated at the Rogers sponsor table by representative Shawn Zerback, whose contact information is included in Slide Set #1 – slide #12.



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Words from Special Guest: Hon. Graydon Smith, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry

Minister Smith joined us by webinar to speak about the Ministry (MNRF) which is responsible for so many aspects of our waterfront experience – from Crown land management, fisheries, flood management, forestry, wildland fire management, aggregates, and much more. In his introduction, Terry noted the Minister has been a strong supporter of innovation in Ontario’s natural resource sectors, and continues to expand natural disaster management for flooding and fire. The Minister thanked FOCA for working tirelessly to protect our lands and waterways. He highlighted some of the work of the Ministry:

- banning floating accommodations on Ontario’s waterways last year
- ongoing work to mitigate the impacts of flooding on municipalities and property owners, and to ensure timely information reaches the public during high water events
- new funding for mapping flood hazards to mitigate risk
- protecting against the threat of invasive species by adding 10 new species under the Invasive Species Act, and investments in invasive species control.

The Minister also noted the great challenges presented by forest fires in 2023, and new investments in fire suppression technologies, including drones and multi-jurisdictional collaboration. Finally, he wished everyone a great summer season, and noted the work will continue.

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FOCA Year in Review & Updates from the Executive Director Terry Rees

Terry directed attendees to read the [2023 FOCA Year in Review](#) (download PDF, 5.5 MB) which provides an overview of our current programs, recent advocacy efforts on hot topics and ongoing files, communications campaigns, and member services and benefits. **Please share the digital copy of the 2023 FOCA Year in Review with fellow members!** Access it from our webpage: foca.on.ca/news/publications-videos/, or [contact the office](#) for additional print copies, while supplies last.

More highlights from Terry’s talk (refer to Slide Set #1, slides #18-32):

- FOCA works throughout the year on the issues that matter most to waterfront property owners and lake associations. **We leverage our connections** with government, academia, the media, other

non-governmental organizations, and through collaboration with all of you. Addressing these issues together means we can protect thriving and sustainable waterfronts, and the quality-of-life benefits that our wonderful lands, lakes, and rivers offer us, to ensure they're available to future generations.

- We need strong local associations: organizing, looking out for our lakes, monitoring for invasive species... **FOCA contributes through our support of associations** with templates, resources, and best practices tips, and by sharing others' examples and success stories. We curate timely information on top issues to support you through our ongoing communications. Through our programs, we engage you and your volunteers to take action locally, and FOCA advocates to, and collaborates with, government on the issues most important to us all.
- We've recently expanded **FOCA's staff** complement to better serve membership and ensure we can deliver on all our priorities. We've also invested in our **website technology** to deliver more members-only content through a new individualized member login. Through our FOCA **phone/email "helpline"**, we answer your association governance questions, provide member benchmark statistics, respond to questions about private roads, invasive species prevention and detection, risk management...
- Please take advantage of **your member benefits** including website materials, our publications and fact sheets, case studies, programs, and the member rate you receive for participation in events like this one – or free, in the case of our popular Cottage Succession Seminars.

Terry invited **Ross Fraser of Cade Associates Insurance Brokers** to speak about one of the largest dollar benefits of FOCA membership: our insurance programs:

- **FOCA Association Insurance Program:** All FOCA Member Associations get a discount on insurance underwritten by Aviva Canada, and administered by Cade Associates. Many of our Member Associations are covered under this program which protects your association, and your volunteers, in case of a legal action or liability claim. This coverage also includes unlimited access to a Legal Helpline for general liability questions for your association.
- **CottageFirst Personal Insurance Program:** As members of FOCA, all your association member families are eligible for this group insurance program – where you can bundle coverage for your home, cottage, car, boat, and other collections or vehicles. This program has been offered since 2014 and is underwritten by Travelers Canada.



FOCA encourages you to reach out to Cade Associates and get a quote on your personal or association insurance. Also, **ensure your fellow association members know about this important member benefit!** Details and links are available on our webpage: <https://foca.on.ca/risk-management-insurance/>. Contact Cade: call 1-844-223-3178 or email clientservices@cadeinsurance.com.

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Terry wrapped up his talk by speaking about the work he has committed to over the past 30 years, volunteering and working with FOCA. He thanked all the volunteers who have kept FOCA going over the decades. **Some additional excerpts from Terry's final comments:**

We form associations in our communities to share common interests, and to work on common goals to make life better for our neighbours and our community. And we gather as members of FOCA to multiply that effort, share best practices, learn, and celebrate with each other. I know the future will be bright if we continue to invest our time, efforts, and resources to keep our waterfronts thriving and sustainable. I'm hopeful and positive that with the support and involvement of all of you, together we can continue to have a strong voice, common purpose, and positive results in our communities. Thank you to all of you for your local efforts, for sharing your experiences, setbacks, and triumphs, and for your continued support for the cause. Your investments today will continue to yield benefits for your kids and grandkids. FOCA requires collective action from all of us, to protect a freshwater legacy that is the envy of the world. Thank you.

Introduction of the incoming FOCA C.E.O.



Ian Crawford then encouraged attendees to please join us in welcoming **FOCA's new Chief Executive Officer, Lesley Lavender**. Lesley joins FOCA after an extensive national search. She has a significant background in association management, where she demonstrated her skills building a sustainable and inclusive community through advocacy, education, relevant programming, and networking. Welcome to the FOCA community, Lesley! Terry's last day will be March 28, and Lesley will begin her full-time duties with FOCA at the start of April 2024.

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FOCA Annual General Meeting – Chaired by Ian Crawford, FOCA Board President

Board Chair Ian Crawford opened the Annual General Meeting (AGM) by thanking the current and past Board Directors, and our more than 525 member Associations and 50,000 member families all across Ontario. Ian noted that the Notice of Meeting was circulated in accordance with the bylaws to all listed executives of FOCA member associations, by email on February 1st, 2024. We easily met quorum (25) for the meeting, with more than 150 associations represented by a voting member! **Members voted and passed each of the following Motions during the 2024 AGM:**

- ✓ to approve the minutes of the FOCA Annual Meeting held on March 4, 2023.
- ✓ to receive the Financial Statements of FOCA, which are comprised of the Statements of Financial Position, Operations and Net Assets, and Cash Flows, all for the year ended September 30, 2023.
- ✓ to appoint Clarkson Rouble LLP as FOCA's auditor for the 2023-2024 fiscal year.
- ✓ to approve that Member Association fees be increased to a base fee of \$150 (from \$125) and a per-member fee of \$5 (from \$4). The maximum Membership Fee will be raised to \$3,750 (from \$3,150). These fees shall apply, effective membership renewals beginning May 1, 2024.
- ✓ to approve the amended FOCA bylaws and the amended Articles of Incorporation to comply with the Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act.
- ✓ to elect the slate of Directors recommended by the FOCA Governance & Nominations Committee including new Directors Carol Armstrong, Katherine Devlin, and Diana Piquette.
- ✓ to adjourn the 2024 FOCA Annual Meeting.

Please refer to the [Meeting Materials Package](#) (download PDF, 2 MB) for support materials related to each item of business above. Incorporated Members who need to update their own **bylaws to comply with ONCA** may [contact the office for a sample set](#), derived from FOCA's ONCA-compliant bylaws.

Also review Slide Set #2 (see the link on page 1 of this summary) which contains 44 slides with detailed information related to FOCA's financial presentation, fees presentation, updates to the Bylaws and Articles, and election of the Board Directors.

If your association has questions related to the business of the AGM, please email info@foca.on.ca.

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Celebration of the outgoing Executive Director led by Ian Crawford, Board President

Terry was celebrated in a [slide presentation](#) (download PDF, 12 MB) of images from his tenure at FOCA, and well-wishes from members, friends, and colleagues. The Board presented Terry with a gift: a Green Mountain Grill that is rotisserie-enabled and has a "Smart Control" that enables temperature adjustments by wifi from your phone. Thank you to Matt of KW Pellets in Southwestern Ontario who helped FOCA make this gift possible. If you're interested in a smoker, contact Matt and be sure to tell him you heard about him from FOCA!



Thank you to:
KW Pellets

<https://kwpellets.ca/>

Thank you to Cottage Life, our **Refreshment Break** Sponsor.

During the break, attendees networked and spoke with our **Corporate Sponsors** who had display tables and materials available:

- [Cade Associates Insurance Brokers](#)
- [Rogers Communications](#)
- [Hydro One](#)
- [Bionest Wastewater Treatment Solutions](#) (septic systems and services)
- [Municipal Equipment](#) (Mercedes Textiles fire hose and accessories)
- [Action First Aid](#) (first aid training, supplier of automated external defibrillators)



Meanwhile, during the break, the Board of Directors met and **elected the Officers** for the coming year:

President: Deborah Martin-Downs

Vice President: Donna Commerford

Treasurer: Rick Blickstead

Secretary: Michael Peterson

See more about all the Board of Directors and FOCA Staff: <https://foca.on.ca/about/team/>

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Stories of Cottage Climate Champs by Leslie Garrett, Editorial Director of BlueDot Living

(Slide Set #3, slides #5-27) Despite the negative outlook surrounding climate change, Leslie presented an inspiring talk about actions we can take individually to make a difference. Sharing data in “heat stripes” which depict warming trends in recent history, she emphasized that we can move beyond a state of paralysis.

Leslie shared **stories of everyday people, to inspire and activate us to action in our own communities**, including Leora Berman’s work to create “Turtle Guardians” and UK beachcomber, Tracy Williams, who collected sea-themed Lego from the beach in the years after a 1997 cargo ship lost a container coming from overseas. She created a Facebook group called “Lego Lost at Sea”; today, they are a group of 75,000 people talking about plastic pollution in our oceans, its impact on wildlife, and steps we as citizens can take. Another example: Douglas Tallamy created “canoe pollinator gardens” which he calls “homegrown national parks” to promote biodiversity.



Leslie’s “take-away” message: share your stories about what you see changing, and take action in your own community to re-imagine your world. For more stories about climate champs or to sign up for newsletters, visit the BlueDot Living website: bluedotliving.com, and for good news climate stories focused specifically on what's happening in and around Toronto, visit toronto.bluedotliving.com.

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Understanding Aquatic Plants: Update on the forthcoming FOCA Guide by Kaleigh Mooney

(Slide Set #3, slides 29-38) Kaleigh, a student at Trent University in the Restoration Ecology program, presented an update on the forthcoming **FOCA Guide to the Underwater World of Plants**, which she is compiling. FOCA receives many inquiries from members and the public concerned about the “weeds” in their lake. **This Guide is intended to help you determine what a certain plant is, and what should be done about it. In many cases, the answer is: leave it alone; it’s meant to be there, and it has a job to do.**

The Guide will include information about plant **ecology** (why plants are where they are, and their roles – what they do for us and other creatures in the ecosystem); a list of over 30 common aquatic plants in southern and northern Ontario lakes, including their habitats, physical descriptions, photos, and illustrations to help you **identify** them; and finally, an overview about risks and regulations to consider when deciding if **management** (i.e., removing plants) is the appropriate option or not. The Guide will be released this summer, announced through the FOCA Elert, our monthly e-news; [sign up for Elerts here](#).

LARGE LEAF PONDWEED

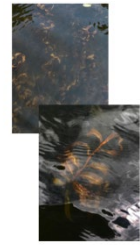
Potamogeton amplifolius

This plant you will find as you are taking your watercraft out towards the open water. It is a submersed species that grows in water from around 1-3 meters in depth in both the Kawartha lakes and in related lakes. It enjoys deep, nutrient rich sediments.

Key ID features:

- Large submersed leaves (3-7cm wide and 8-20cm long)
- Submersed leaves alternate with wavy edges, brownish colour
- Floating leaves present later in the season

This species occupies a similar habitat to Eurasian watermilfoil, so the two are often competing. Studies have shown that in ideal conditions this plant can outcompete EWE.



Fire Safety Equipment for Rural Property Safety by Trevor Ferguson, Municipal Equipment (Slide Set #3, slides 40-47) Trevor from [Municipal Equipment](#) spoke about their work providing **Mercedes Textiles' fire products** to municipalities and the forestry service. Mercedes has created a new Wick Value Protection Plan being launched for individual cottage usage. These are smaller portable pumps (80 to 250 PSI) that can be used with sprinkler systems on towers or on the rooftop, to protect structures and property against wildfire. Tower sprinklers offer protection with a range of up to a 160 ft radius. Irrigating perhaps once a week during the height of fire season can keep your property green and create a protected area resistant to fire, as seen in the images below.



Thank you to our **Lunch Sponsor**, Yamaha Motor Canada. During the lunch hour, attendees networked, spoke with our sponsors, and collected FOCA materials from our display table.



Lake Stewards in attendance were invited to enter their names in a draw to win a **“Secchi disk coffee mug”** – depicting the black and white circle which is used by our Lake Partner Program volunteers to determine the water clarity of a lake. For more on how a Secchi disk is used and the Lake Partner Program, watch FOCA’s video: <https://youtu.be/8NUFVK8eQ6Q?si=MJeTSLzujL5nVKte>

2023 Terry Rees Achievement Award presented to the Lake of Bays Association by John Hickey, Chair of the FOCA Member Services and Benefits Committee

(Slide Set #4, slides 3-15) John began by noting the Board has renamed the annual **FOCA Achievement Award** as the **“Terry Rees Achievement Award”** in recognition of our retiring Executive Director! This Award celebrates the successes of the FOCA community and encourages us all to share success stories and best practices among member associations.

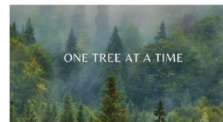
Before announcing the Award recipient, John spoke briefly about some activities brought to our attention in various nominations for member associations:

- We were inspired by the story from our members at **Golden Lake and the Bonnechere River Property Owners Association** who created a community skating loop and rinks for hockey, skating and games early in 2023 as part of a pandemic-recovery community effort.
- It was also inspiring to hear about a small group of **independent volunteers from the “Eight Lakes”** in the Sudbury region, who took it upon themselves to liaise with local emergency responders to help improve response time in emergency situations by acting as an information relay. A donated defibrillator has also been placed in the community – a vital piece of emergency equipment in case of a sudden cardiac arrest.
- Congratulations to the **Paudash Lake Conservation Association** in Haliburton, who celebrated their 50th anniversary as an association with a whole range of fun activities, branded merchandise, and a seedling planting initiative: “50 for 50”.
- More fun was had by youth in the Hasting Highlands area, due to the efforts of the **Lake St. Peter Property Owners Association** who helped to supply the local library with Nature Discovery Backpacks that kids could borrow for learning about their local environment. (That sounds like a great way to encourage the next generation of lake stewards!)
- We also had 2 nominations from member associations that have been undertaking local efforts to manage the invasive aquatic plant, Eurasian Water Milfoil: **Picard Lake Cottagers Association** in Trent Lakes area, and **Wollaston Lake Home & Cottage Association** in Hastings County.



50 Trees for 50 Years

PLCA members can get tree seedlings for free!
Read on... [1]



above: Paudash Lake Conservation Association 50th anniversary t-shirts and tree seedlings



above: “Nature Discovery Backpacks” lending library, in partnership with the Lake St. Peter Property Owners Association

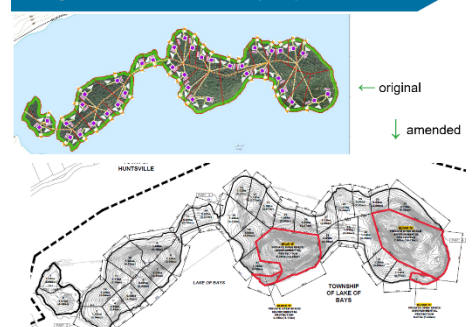
Congratulations to all the hard-working volunteers in all those communities. We hope you get inspired to try something new with your own association.

Finally, John announced that **the recipient of the inaugural Terry Rees Achievement Award** is the **Lake of Bays Association** for their work over several years to weigh-in on a land development plan in their area. In 2018, when they learned of a development proposal on Langmaid’s Island – which is one of the largest undisturbed properties on Lake of Bays, and is designated as a Muskoka Heritage Area in the Lake of Bays and District of Muskoka Official Plans – LOBA partnered with a sister organization, the Lake of Bays Heritage Foundation, to weigh-in. The proposal would have seen Langmaid’s Island subdivided into 36 residential lots with mainland access from two waterfront landings nearby.



Their 5-year community effort focussed mainly on ensuring conformance with the Lake of Bays and District Official Plans as they pertain to this property, and the core values that the Muskoka Heritage Area designation represents. The organization hired lawyers, attended countless meetings, and ultimately sought party status in a 23-day hearing at the Ontario Land Use Tribunal – or “OLT” – an appeal that was launched by the developer. In June 2023, and after 5 years of ongoing efforts, LOBA and the Heritage Foundation communicated their overall disappointment with the OLT decision which was in favour of the application to redevelop this heritage site.

Langmaid’s Island original vs. amended proposal



So – if the development is still going ahead – why the award?

LOBA and partners achieved some significant wins that would not have happened without their participation as parties to the OLT process. (See slide #12 of Set #4 for an overview.) In all, 30 conditions must be fulfilled for final project approval to be granted.

Wendy Gibson, President of LOBA, received the Award on behalf of the association. In her remarks, she said a land tribunal appeal is nothing she could recommend to any fellow association, noting the process is costly, adversarial, and heavily favours development. Nevertheless, on the theme of sharing stories, Wendy noted the following **best practices for any association facing development proposals**:

- 1) As an association, sit down and have a serious conversation to set a clearly articulated mandate about when (and when not) to get involved in land development issues. This will help you choose your battles and prevent knee-jerk emotional responses once you're in the process.
- 2) LOBA maintains an Action Fund from voluntary donations; this option is on their renewal form. This reserve allows them to respond quickly to development issues as they arise, and hire professional help when needed.
- 3) Initially, without spending any money, they took their concerns to local professional planners, to get objective opinions about whether their position was a defensible fight to undertake.
- 4) LOBA attempts to keep a professional planner on their board committee; look for one in your community and try to get them on your board as a resource.
- 5) Spend time crafting transparent, clear communications to keep everyone informed and engaged in the fight.
- 6) LOBA undertook considerable fundraising to fund this specific campaign.
- 7) If you have large areas ripe for development that are currently unprotected, work now to secure their preservation through a land trust or conservation easement; the Official Plan (OP) designation did not protect this land, as an OP can be challenged or amended over time.



image of Langmaids: Rob Stimpson

Please continue to share your association successes with FOCA, as you undertake your own activities throughout 2024. We all benefit from your shared stories. Thank you.

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Update on Property Taxation & Regional Trends in Waterfront Valuation by Lynne Cunningham of the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC)

(Slide Set #4, slides 17-41) Lynne is MPAC’s Regional Manager with Municipal and Stakeholder Relations in Central Ontario. MPAC is responsible for determining the **current value assessment** and classification for all properties in Ontario. Municipalities determine their budget requirements and correspondingly set municipal taxation rates to fund municipal services; property owners pay the property taxes. When properties sell, those prices inform current value assessment. Today, **property values continue to be based on the market at January 1, 2016** due to the pandemic which prevented the usual 4-year update that would have happened in 2020. Eventually, MPAC will be directed by the Minister of Finance to update the valuation date, but not until a current review of the property assessment and taxation system is concluded by the Province of Ontario.

Property values have certainly increased since 2016; however, this does not necessarily mean your property taxes will increase this year. **It is how your property’s value has changed relative to other properties in your area that affects the distribution of taxation.** Watch a video about this: <https://youtu.be/nrWry5i3TBU> (this video link is also on slide #22 in Slide Set #4). MPAC notes that \$1.18 Billion of new assessment growth captured in Ontario in 2023 was for waterfront properties. Lynne explained factors that affect your property assessment (see slides #29-30) and she shared

1	Muskoka Lakes Township \$105,766,000	6	Lakes of Bays Township \$37,650,500
2	*Province of Ontario \$77,423,762	7	Kawartha Lakes City \$36,215,000
3	Dysart et al Municipality \$48,034,100	8	Tiny Township \$23,659,000
4	Seguin Township \$41,216,000	9	Trent Lakes Municipality \$22,730,000
5	Gravenhurst Town \$39,162,881	10	Huntsville Town \$22,705,000

*Province of Ontario represents small northern communities that are unincorporated.

some snapshots (see slides #33-34) about municipal and waterfront new assessment growth. MPAC is bringing out a new “Insights” campaign that will be launched this Spring. FOCA posts related information about MPAC and property taxes on our webpage: <https://foca.on.ca/property-taxation-assessment/#mpac>

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Land Use Planning Updates by Deborah Martin-Downs, FOCA Board President

(Slide Set #5, slides 2-12) Deb provided updates since the FOCA’s 2023 FOCA Spring Seminar presentation on **Ontario’s Omnibus Bill 23 and environmental implications of that Act**. As written, the Act would have prevented third-party appeals to zoning bylaws or Official Plans – such as the one LOBA engaged in, as described on pages 7-8, above – but this was amended before the Act passed (although not on minor variances or consent applications). Similarly, Bill 23 initially removed the ability to control landscaping on a property through site plan control (i.e., tree removal, buffers, or other features that could affect storm water management), but this was amended to allow for certain kinds of sustainability measures such as green roofs. Also, Bill 23 reduced development charges payable by developers, which puts the shortfall back on the taxpayers as the municipality still needs to fund the administration related to development.

Deb noted that Bill 23 had also removed the ability to use **site plan control (SPC)** for settings with less than 10 units. Traditionally, SPCs help ensure the environment is prioritized in a small development in a natural setting, by protecting trees, avoiding blasting, etc.

FOCA and the MLA met with the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry and wrote to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to decry this change. Eventually, Schedule 6 of Bill 97 was tabled in April 2023, and we were pleased to note it amended the Act to provide that such activities do in fact constitute “development” if the parcel of land includes land in a prescribed area such as within 120 metres of a wetland, shoreline, river, lake or stream valley. (See Slide #6 for the definitions.) This is a win, in our eyes. Deb reminds everyone to speak with Ministry staff and your elected representatives to ensure your concerns are heard.



Changes were also made to **how wetlands are evaluated**, diminishing how the presence of endangered species contribute to a wetland’s evaluation as “significant”, removing provincial government oversight; further, there is no requirement to publicly release the evaluations.

However, Deb also shared a success story in Bracebridge about a planned private school property at the border of Henry Marsh. A local environmental group paid for a wetland evaluation under the new regulations, and the wetland was determined to be provincially significant and worthy of protection. The issue went to the Ontario Land Tribunal, and the decision came out in November 2023 confirming more environmental impact studies must be done, and the buffer between the wetland and the school must be increased.

Significant changes have also been made to the **Conservation Authorities Act** since 2019, and there was an update released in mid-February 2024. This update outlined that certain low-risk activities are exempt from permit requirements if outside a wetland or watercourse, including seasonal or floating docks 10 square metres in size or less, and some other accessory buildings (see slide #11 for details.)

Deb noted there are more changes coming, including in the Ontario “Get it Done Act” (Omnibus Bill 162) and potentially a revised Provincial Policy Statement which would make it easier to have multi-lot residential development in rural areas. FOCA will be watching as this unfolds, and will continue to update members through the [FOCA Eler](#) and through information posted to our webpage: <https://foca.on.ca/land-use-planning/>.

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Boating Updates from Transport Canada (TC) by Terry Rees

(Slide Set #5, slide #14) FOCA sits on the Ontario Recreational Boating Advisory Committee (ON-RBAC) and Terry provided a few updates, including the modernization of TC's **Vessel Operation Restriction Regulations (VORR)** process, speeding up the process for municipalities to implement local restrictions. TC also opened a public consultation period in December 2023 and launched a survey related to **Long-term Anchoring** related to the use of floating shipping containers as accommodations on Ontario waterways. A working group is being formed to develop regulations pertaining to the issue. Of great interest to all of us (and a long-standing effort by the Canadian Safe Boating Committee, Lifesaving Society, Ontario Provincial Police, and other safety organizations) **mandatory PFD (personal floatation device) wear** is still being contemplated by TC, with possible thresholds for age (children vs. adults), vessel type (powered or not), and vessel size (under or over 6 metres) under consideration. We expect to hear more this year about a public comment period and will update members accordingly. FOCA posts information on all these topics on our webpage: <https://foca.on.ca/boating>.

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2023 Boating Season Safety Statistics by Sgt. Dave Moffatt, Provincial Marine Coordinator, OPP

(Slide Set #5, slides #15-29) Sergeant Dave Moffatt is the Provincial Marine and ATV Coordinator for the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) and is responsible for 170 OPP boats across Ontario. Dave provided **updates about OPP enforcement statistics for the 2023 boating season**. The OPP stopped about 35,000 vessels last year and laid many charges. There were 23 boating fatalities in 2023, which is down in comparison to the previous 3 years, but is still a terrible reality. Among marine fatalities in 2023, nearly 70% were age 45 or older, and the vast majority (96%) were men. Among 22 marine fatalities this past year, 9 were individuals in canoes, kayaks, rowboats or stand-up paddleboards; while the remaining 13 were on motorboats, pontoon boats or personal watercraft. Further, 88.5% of marine fatalities over the past 9 years occurred in vessels under 6 metres in length (see slides #17 and 18) and over the past 13 years, 87% of fatalities were people not wearing lifejackets.

Dave explained how he has participated in the cold-water research experience called "**Shock Factor**" where individuals are involuntarily immersed in water (warm and then cold) when the researchers trigger falls, and then measure the participant's heart rate, breathing, and involuntary gasp response (which would cause you to ingest water in an emergency situation, and drown). Dave also stressed the importance of being properly trained for the boat or vessel you are using. FOCA adds: for boating safety courses, visit: <https://www.cps-ecp.ca/ecommerce/course-calendar/>.



Dave was wearing his "very comfortable" **personal floatation device (PFD)** during the presentation, and to demonstrate the ease triggering a PFD manually, he surprised everyone in attendance by pulling the cord and inflating the PFD. He offered to let any attendees try on the PFD following the presentation. His message to you and all your fellow association members is to make good decisions on the water this year, wear your lifejacket/PFD, and get your passengers engaged.

Dave's slides include a 1-888 phone number (see slide #28) to call in a non-emergency situation – for example, to report nuisance boating – with tips about the information the OPP will require about the situation, in order to possibly lay charges. Dave provided his contact information at the end of his slides and offered to attend local association meetings by webinar or in person, where possible.

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Thank you everyone who participated in our event! We look forward to seeing you at the next one.

Please remember to share these updates with your fellow association members. If you need the material in an alternate format, contact communications@foca.on.ca.

FOCA 2024
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