



Date: 2026-08-21

To: Township of Lake of Bays Mayor and Councillors  
Geoff Carleton, Township of Lake of Bays CAO  
Carrie Sykes, Township of Lake of Bays Clerk  
Daniel Mercer, Township of Lake of Bays, Director of Planning Services  
Helena Thisdelle, Township of Lake of Bays, Manager of Planning Services

Re: **Consideration of New Township Official Plan 2026– Shoreline Protection**

---

The Lake of Bays Association (LOBA) requests that Township Council amend the draft Township Official Plan (Township OP) to set a standard of 30 metres for shoreline yard setbacks and vegetation buffers, combined with clear allowance for the redevelopment of non-complying properties.

LOBA represents more than 1,200 waterfront property owner families around Lake of Bays. We advocate for a balanced approach to shoreline development that protects the natural shoreline.

LOBA has consistently supported the 30-metre setback since it was initially proposed, and throughout the extensive consultation process that followed, for three reasons:

### **1) Better environmental protection**

Climate change and the risk of overdevelopment are growing threats. The Township should be establishing setbacks and vegetation buffers that provide good shoreline protection for Lake of Bays.

As set out in the Hutchinson Environmental Sciences Limited, *Review of Lake System Health Program*, commissioned by the District of Muskoka, “30 metres is the minimum necessary to maintain biological functions and remove 85% of sediment from overland runoff”. Put another way, a 30-metre buffer provides the needed wildlife habitat and mitigates the effect of development on lake quality. Scientific insight has clarified that 20 metres is inadequate protection. Lake of Bays should be better looked after.

## **2) Explicit allowance for non-complying properties**

The draft Township OP, even with standard setbacks at 30 metres, clearly recognizes the rights of non-complying property owners as follows:

- Permitting redevelopment of an existing lot with a natural vegetative buffer of 20 metres in depth “providing that the existing conditions are not worsened and an overall net benefit is achieved” (draft Township OP Sec 3.6.2.3 q));
- Making a 30-metre building setback subject to an exception for a minor addition to an existing building (draft Township OP Sec 4.1.1 d) iii)); and,
- Allowing a non-complying building to be enlarged, repaired or renovated provided there is no further increase to the extent of non-compliance, through a by-law amendment or the issuance of a Community Planning Permit (OP Sec. 9.3.6 c) i.).

We understand that, when considering such a bylaw amendment and/or the issuance of a Community Planning Permit, the Township will continue to evaluate applications according to the policies found in the Community Planning Bylaw, as amended.

The 30-metre standard will mean applications to redevelop non-complying properties receive careful scrutiny, which is appropriate to ensure good environmental protection of our lake. At the same time, explicit provisions of the OP will recognize the rights of owners of non-complying properties by continuing to permit the redevelopment of non-complying properties with 20-metre setbacks, in a manner that is consistent with OP policies.

## **3) Conformity with the draft District Official Plan**

The draft District OP sets a 30-metre setback for all District waterbodies to ensure equal protection. To protect water quality, “the precautionary approach, where there is uncertainty about environmental risks, will be continued and all lakes and rivers in Muskoka will be afforded the highest standard of protection” (draft District OP, C.2.6.3.2 General Policies, a) and b)). For this reason, and to support the District’s Water Strategy, “all of the lakes in the District are considered to be sensitive surface water features”, and they are all to be subject to the same setbacks “to ensure these lakes and their related hydrologic functions will be protected, improved or restored.”

While the draft District OP establishes 30-metre standards, it also recognizes the right to redevelop non-complying properties by providing an exception to the 30-metres standards for redevelopment of an existing lot where the setback is not further reduced (draft District OP, C. 2.6.4.2 Standard Protection Policies, j)).

The District approach of a 30-metre standard combined with allowance for non-complying properties is workable and should apply universally. Lake of Bays should not have second class protection.

At the June 30 Planning Matters meeting, Council passed the resolution for 20-metre setbacks on Lake of Bays without a full discussion of all the issues, and without hearing all perspectives. There was no reference to the improved environmental protection of 30-metre setbacks, no discussion of the explicit allowance for non-complying properties, and no discussion of the reasons that the draft District OP establishes a 30-metre setback. LOBA requests that Council now reconsider its resolution; delete the differential 20-metre setback treatment for Lake of Bays (and 5 other lakes) set out in the new draft Township OP Secs. 3.6.2.3 p), 4.1.1 c) and i), and finalize the Township OP with the 30-metre standard, so that Lake of Bays has the same level of environmental protection as the other lakes in Muskoka.

There is one other aspect of the new setbacks that warrants further review. With the vegetation buffer and the building setback set at the same distance, there are concerns about how construction can be managed and whether there is adequate room for Fire Smart Guidelines to be followed. We will be requesting the District give further consideration to these issues in the course of finalizing the District Official Plan.

Thank you for your attention.

Respectfully,

Paul Gleeson  
President

Tim Hadwen  
Chair, Planning, Development and Government Relations Committee

Copies: LOBA Planning, Development & Government Relations Committee  
LOBA Board of Directors