

Meet your Ward A Candidates, potentially serving you for the next four years

Ruth Nishikawa, Acclaimed, District and Township Councillor, Ward A

Ruth Nishikawa has not yet responded; nor did she attend the Chamber All Candidates Meeting on Sept. 29.

About Responses from Township Councillor Candidates, Ward A

October 8: Please know that we did not form these responses and you should not hold anything against the candidates for how they are formatted as they have a lot on their plates (and so do we at the Chamber). Responses are listed alphabetically by last name.

Please scroll down to see responses from Candidates **Cassandra Ford, Mary Ellen McIntyre, David Skoric and Glenn Zavitz.**

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CASSANDRA FORD

1) HOUSING & TALENT

- a) According to the Ontario government's goal of 1.5 million new homes within 10 years, Muskoka is short 4,400 homes already and within 10 years that increases to 6,700. What are you planning to do or think could be done in Muskoka Lakes to help close the gap?

Given the significant acknowledgment of all council candidates/mayors that there is a housing shortage, I would hope that the chronic lack of housing would be a top priority for the next council. It must be a priority for any actions or solutions to be brought forward by council.

In my opinion, we should be able to solve this issue in Muskoka. Muskoka is unique in that there are developers and investors that enjoy Muskoka and have

lakefront property homes. We need to bring land, investors, and developers together to get all types of housing build in the coming years. Council and the District needs to ensure that they are prioritizing these types of builds and ensuring that all mechanisms that can be actioned are actioned to attract developers to commit to building in the urban areas and potentially rural areas around Muskoka to attract more workers fulltime and seasonally.

- b) Do you have a vision of how this council could be led to attend to the issue of staff and housing availability as equally as it pays attention to waterfront properties?

The next council should ensure that the draft official plan that is targeted at development highlights housing developments in the urban and rural areas. The plan must address all issues not just those of the waterfront residences.

- c) If elected, will you encourage affordable housing in both urban and rural areas, or will you feel obligated to respond to associations such as MLA/FriendsofMuskoka that appear to be against such development in your decision making?

If elected, I recognize that I will be only one voice however, the draft official plan must address urban and rural development for housing. I do not believe that the MLA or the FOM are focused on urban development at all. Their objective seems to focus on very restrictive development for resort and significant changes to individual property developments. I believe that the next council needs to understand the economic impact that the new guidelines could have on housing developments and how it impacts individual property rights of lakefront property owners. A balanced approach is needed to ensure that the official plan is fair for all. The plan must not just reflect the interests of the few that have had significant time to provide their input to the official plans over the last number of years.

- d) What would you do to help Council and staff bring talent and skilled workers to Muskoka Lakes?

To attract workers, we need to have housing solutions for individuals and families to call Muskoka home. If we are successful at achieving some housing, then I would suggest the following:

1. Township Of Muskoka Lakes forward funds to the Chamber of Commerce to develop their website and for that to become a job bank for its members. This would be an enhancement over what is currently available.
 2. The Muskoka Lakes Chamber work with social media experts to promote the opportunities for skilled labour and unskilled labour to Muskoka.
 3. The Muskoka Lakes Chamber of Commerce run events in areas like the GTA, Barrie, Orillia and into the schools to promote the opportunities for work in Muskoka.
- e) Does the Official Plan include a Directive to develop municipal incentives to build off water attainable housing in Muskoka Lakes (attainable housing is considered housing affordable for the working class)? If not, why not or why do you think it isn't there?

I am not aware that there is a directive in the official plan for attainable housing. That may have changed with the coming draft. I believe that we need a variety of housing options within the Township, and I believe that there is enough contacts, talent and skills throughout our community that could put plans together to effectively build units.

2) DOING BUSINESS IN MUSKOKA LAKES (Conditions for Business and Sector Specific Questions)

How should Township plan to help small business through the looming recession, and how are you planning to stay accountable on those promises?

I think it is important to understand that no one council member can make promises. Priorities need to be developed at a council level and then action plans need to be put in place. The TML have recently issued some incentive programs to assist small businesses with property improvements within the core of the urban centers and some incentives for tax rebates related to housing development. I believe the council is limited to what they can provide to businesses other than potential tax relief which would be welcomed given the last two years of pandemic and the effect that a chronic shortage of workers has had on businesses in the communities in 2022.

Being accountable will again fall on the entire council.

- a) What is your position on development restrictions versus economic vitality?

Every development should be evaluated for its own merits. I don't believe that you can have a broad brush and say "no" to all development. There are many older resort properties and cottage properties that need to be developed and both of those are good for the Muskoka economy.

- b) When can we start to lobby ride share services like Uber to operate here? The question noted these are major drivers of local travel and hospitality.

I am not aware of any reason that those rides share programs could not operate here. It probably needs to be licensed like taxis.

- c) Muskoka Lakes is revising its Official Plan. Presently the lower floor of a boathouse can only be used for boats and related items. Do you support, or not support, residential use (bedrooms, recreation, etc) in this space? Please be specific about the use you support, and why?

I do not have a problem with the lower floor of a boathouse having aspects of residential use for recreation. Many properties in Muskoka are enjoyed by multiple generations. Small children and the elderly would benefit from bathroom facilities close to the lake for convenience and practicality. Facilities are also very good for our environment. Having the ability for people to get out of the sun but still enjoying the lake is a good idea too. I do not believe that you could ever realistically control whether someone sleeps in their boathouse on the ground floor or not.

- d) If the lakes continue to have blue/green algae blooms, our livelihood will be affected. Do you have a plan for the monitoring of old septic beds?

It is my understanding that the TML has a plan in place for monitoring old septic beds. The question is whether there is an action plan and if some property owners are identified as having significant septic issues, but they cannot afford to rectify right away perhaps a plan where the TML loans the money to change the systems then charges a fee on the tax bill for a period could be considered to ensure all gets addressed as quickly as possible.

- e) How will you encourage new business when there are staff shortages and most of the businesses in town are presently real estate offices?

We need housing to attract people. New businesses can find solutions for space by renting, building, or working with those real estate companies for partnerships.

- f) In this question, the person asking suggests that the lack of affordable housing is tied to short-term rentals. They ask: What action(s) would you support the Township take to address this situation....and....Do you support a minimum 30 day stay for short term rentals?

A minimum stay of 30 days is not realistic. A stay of 7 days is more realistic. I believe short term rentals have impacted seasonal housing since people can earn more from their assets however, I would also suggest that there are other reasons such as unreasonable “renters” and the impact on landlords in a tight market. I do support a short-term rental licensing systems that impacts the owners of the properties for the weekend party groups.

- g) A survey of Muskoka Lakes residents in 2018 showed 70 percent of them supported allowing legal cannabis sales. At the time, Council decided to take a wait and see position. Today we’re the only township in the entire riding that still doesn’t allow this...and in the recent term, all but one Councillor voted against cannabis retail. **For candidates who are campaigning to return:** Why are you stopping a legal business from setting up here.... For all candidates; Today, would you vote to allow or disallow legal cannabis stores in Muskoka Lakes? If you would vote against, what is your reasoning for doing so?

I am not in support of legal cannabis. Given that I work in the hospitality industry, I believe that addictions have only grown since the implementation of the legalization of cannabis. I believe that the more accessible that cannabis is that it only leads to more addictions.

- h) COVID made it hard for the public to engage with the Township planning department, which slowed my business from getting open. What can Council do to improve or speed up such service for businesses?

Having experienced the frustrations of working with planning and the building departments, I believe that a plan to leverage technology as much as possible should be implemented to offer the best solution possible for the taxpayers of Muskoka Lakes. I think this should be a priority as it relates to the current official plan and certainly if the new plan comes into effect. The reality is that the builders “know the rules better than the building department and the planners” in many instances since there is staff change and inexperienced staff for inspections and such.

I also believe that a property owner portal should be developed that links all aspects of property to the township services such as planning, building, payment of taxes etc. Some of this is currently available but I do not believe that the architecture of the software supports a single entrance to the property roll number. With this type of system all information could be kept up

to date and all information would be available from one taxpayer to the next for property sales. All types of communication such as building inspector notes which are currently still done via paper should be mobile and all should be a self-service model like the rest of the corporate world.

3) **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COLLABORATION**

- a) What do you think should be in a 5-year plan to accelerate economic growth throughout the region?

HOUSING! HOUSING! HOUSING! ---- We can't accelerate growth throughout the region without a solution to the chronic lack of all housing in the area.

- b) The Township collaborates with many organizations for the betterment of the community. The Chamber is one of them. If elected, what's your vision for collaboration with the Chamber during your term?

In my opinion, the Chamber's objectives versus internal economic development should be evaluated and if the Chamber is more effective at delivering for the business community, then I would support releasing funds to the chamber for the chamber to manage and potentially increase their head count and reducing head count at the township. The chamber would need to be monitored to ensure that the objectives are met but, the chamber can move faster than the municipal government.

- c) There are 6 municipalities but none to call that represents Muskoka overall. If a business wants to start up somewhere in Muskoka.... Who do they call? What would you do to solve this problem?

This will not be solved at a District level since each municipality are independent. In the Township of Muskoka Lakes, it should be the responsibility of the Muskoka Lakes Chamber of Commerce.

- d) What has the present Economic Development policy of Muskoka Lakes done for our business community, and what would you change in a Township Economic Development program going forward?

The current plan as recently released took 4 years to be developed and it is flawed. The first thing that should be done is for frank feedback to be provided and then for the program to be fixed ASAP. Going forward, I believe that the Township needs to properly invest in a staff person that understands the business community and who

can drive initiatives. If it can't be accomplished in-house, then we should provide funds to the Muskoka Lakes Chamber of Commerce to achieve that goal. I believe the chamber provides a better return on the investment compared to staff and the Township provides a pittance of funding to the ML Chamber of Commerce.

- e) As a business member of the chamber, I'm frustrated by a lack of communication between Council and the chamber. The councillor appointed to the Chamber Board recuses whenever chamber issues are brought to council. Can you suggest a better way to improve council and business relations going forward?

I believe that the council member that sits on the chamber should be an advocate for the chamber and that they should not recuse themselves from voting. It might be appropriate to have more than one council member on the chamber as well.

- f) n/a as was a question for mayoral candidates.
- g) While The township has gone from one bylaw officer to two-and-a-half recently, there is still no one on duty from noon Friday and over the weekend when most noise, fireworks, and short term rental issues occur. What will you do to ensure that complaints are effectively followed up and violators caught?

I believe this statement is incorrect. There are bylaw officers that work over the weekend for parking infractions. Bylaw officers should be on call for noise and short term rental issues but a plan would probably need to be developed with OPP also in support for those types of calls since one bylaw officer especially if they are female could be in a dangerous situation by trying to control short term rental parties. I do not believe that the fireworks bylaw can be enforced ever. It would be better for the TML to have promoted why fireworks are an issue to change social behavior.

4) EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND SEASONALITY

- a) How would you improve the staff situation for summer businesses that rely on seasonal staff?

We need housing of all sorts. Perhaps people would consider renting a room for summer staff if there was a tax incentive to participate in a pool which would help over the next few years. They would still charge a rent but to encourage homeowners to participate for seasonal workers some incentive could be developed as well.

- b) One questioner commented... The election campaign has been made ugly by the Friends of Muskoka/MLA. If elected, how will you address what some see as an 'abuse of power' by associations and how can you ensure that all Muskoka Lakes residents are represented in future votes?

I believe that most people who will vote in a municipal election will make their own decisions as to who to vote for. I don't know if you labelled these groups and others as lobbyist whether anything would change. I think the MLA and the FOM need to change from within as opposed to imposing some law to deal with them.

- c) What would you do to increase tourism in the shoulder and winter months in Muskoka Lakes?

That is a tough question. Businesses do not operate fulltime in the winter because they cannot afford to operate at a loss especially after two years of the pandemic and another year of chronic staff shortages. If we can solve housing, then we can promote a more vibrant community and attract people to the area to live and work fulltime. Promoting the offerings for the rinks and the outdoor skating rinks would help with winter tourism as well as snowmobiles but, both of those are obviously weather dependent. In Bala we no longer have any type of hotels to attract tourists to our community however perhaps a mixed-use development could assist in that regard.

- d) Would you encourage employers to pay a living wage for Muskoka and the area?

I am not sure how a living wage is defined however; the labour market is very competitive so employers need to compete for talent.

- e) The draft Official Plan doesn't say much about off water planning. Shouldn't our large off water area be part of an overall plan for the Township? Your thoughts please?

Yes – the official plan should include all aspects of the Township of Muskoka Lakes Official Plan. The official plan needs a great deal of work in the urban and rural development areas to attract developers to build off water. Our communities need to remain vibrant as opposed to the forgotten towns.

(Cassandra Ford responses end)

MARY ELLEN MCINTYRE

Note: Candidate McIntyre chose to rephrase the questions before her answers.

1. HOUSING AND TALENT

- a) There is a housing shortage across Muskoka but also across the province, country and world. The issue is to determine what kind of housing is required. The housing shortage in Muskoka encompasses many different kinds of housing:

Affordable housing – a single person on welfare at this time receives a basic entitlement of \$733 per month. For families it is not much better. Muskoka has a large population of people who live with this level of poverty and need housing that is affordable and healthy;

Homelessness – homelessness often results from addiction and mental health disabilities. Many municipalities are grappling with this issue. In recent years, as the housing crisis has developed, many municipalities are exploring creative options for housing people facing homelessness including communities of tiny houses for example. This provides the potential for individual housing for individuals but also community supports;

Houses – there is a shortage of houses available for the residents of Muskoka as well as those who would like to move to Muskoka to work and raise their children. Meeting this need is essential to grow the economy and the businesses in Muskoka.

The housing crisis has been recognized by both the provincial and federal governments and programs are being developed and offered to face this crisis. The first step would be to assess the offerings of these governments to find the programs we could access to begin to address this crisis.

- b) The vision of how to attend to staff and housing availability for waterfront properties.

There is a long history of resorts in Muskoka relying on summer employees to staff the resorts and the resorts providing housing for the summer staff. In this housing crisis this only makes sense. There is a limited amount of housing available in the price range for staff and it does not serve our communities to require staff to compete with the community for that housing.

- c) Affordable housing in rural and urban areas.

There are many models in place now that require developments to include a certain percentage of affordable housing units. While this may be an issue in Muskoka due to transportation issues between communities and within communities, I would argue it is a place to start discussions.

- d) There are many people who want to work in Muskoka. The issue is that there are limited community supports available to people who want to move here to work. These include lack of available affordable housing, lack of transportation within and between communities, lack of internet services to a substantial portion of communities, lack of accessibility in many communities because accessibility seems to vary widely between communities and finally lack of employment opportunities. It is not enough to talk about housing. There are many other supports that are required and are presently lacking.
- e) The issue would likely relate to the cost of taxes for lakefront properties. Taxes will affect the affordability of properties for many working class people requiring affordable housing.

2. DOING BUSINESS IN MUSKOKA LAKES

- a) The first thing to determine from the small businesses is .0which businesses or business sectors require help and within that sector what is the help that is needed. A dialogue can then happen with those affected as to how to best resolve those needs. Dialogue is key – different businesses have different needs and therefore different solutions for the township to consider.
- b) This is a very difficult question to answer as stated. The issue in almost every case is one of recognizing the balance – balancing the interests of development and economic vitality v. the individual interests of homeowners and residents of Muskoka.
- c) The lack of transportation within and between communities in the Township of Muskoka is a key priority in the development and accessibility of the Township communities to all individuals. Traditionally in Muskoka there has been a problem for individuals to keep appointments or to attend government offices or even at times to perform daily functions such as shopping. There have been experiments in the past to address this issue such as bussing but this proved to be limiting and inconvenient. One municipality has addressed this issue by contracting with a ride sharing program so use of the program by residents would be subsidized by the Township. This could provide a functional transportation system between and within communities.
- d) The difficulty with the idea of allowing the lower floor of a boathouse to be used for housing would be the balance between the needs of the inhabitants v. the potential environmental impact. Recognizing this, it may be possible to balance these interests but would require some serious, environmentally focussed regulations that would require ongoing enforcement.
- f) Assuming businesses have done the background work to establish there is a need for that business in the Township and the possibility of establishing a profitable business plan the next step is likely to determine where this could be established taking

into account the factors outlined previously: shortage of workers, lack of transportation to get to work, lack of housing. Taking these factors into account at this point in time points to establishing businesses in the community centres where there is more chance of these needs being met. If the Township wants to create an environment to develop new business interests these needs would have to be addressed.

- g) In many municipalities in Ontario there has been found to be a direct link between housing availability and short term rentals. For example, many properties in Toronto that used to be available to the rental market are no longer available because the property owners have recognized they can earn a lot more money without the legislative requirements for rental properties. It is not clear if this is an issue in Muskoka so I would suggest there needs to be a study, an assessment as to whether this is an issue in the current housing shortage in Muskoka. Once this has been determined then a discussion can take place as to whether action needs to be taken to address any impact on access to housing.
- h) While there may have been hesitancy at the beginning to allow cannabis sales within the Township the cannabis business is now well established in Ontario. It may be time to revisit the previous decision in view of the provincial experience of cannabis stores within communities.
- i) One of the initiatives of the provincial government in terms of the housing crisis has been to introduce legislation to address delays in the planning process. This may be of assistance or may serve as a template for discussions within the Township.

3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COLLABORATION

- a) To develop a five year plan the first step would be to talk to businesses already carrying on business in the region. Different types of business would require different approaches. There may not be the same requirements if the businesses were retail v. construction companies or real estate offices.
- b) The Chamber of Commerce and the Township share a mutual goal: to encourage and support economic development in the Township of Muskoka Lakes. It is apparent as part of the economic development plan that they work together. One of the suggestions that was made would include a more formal relationship, a relationship in which Township councillors and District councillors would meet on a regular basis so there can be collaboration.
- c) If Economic Development is a priority for the Township of Muskoka Lakes perhaps it is time to have an office and employee(s) whose sole responsibility is to work with business start-up interests. This accomplishes two goals: a name and face to attach to this priority and a name to provide to people enquiring about start-up interests.

4. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND SEASONALITY

- a) The main issue for seasonal staff seems to be lack of housing and lack of transportation. Until these issues are addressed these issues will remain for seasonal workers and will have to be addressed by those businesses that rely on seasonal staff.
- b) There will always be special interest groups in the Township. The issue once again is balance: how can we ensure all interests are heard so there can be balanced decision making.
- c) There are many activities that are presently pursued in winter by many residents and visitors including ice fishing, snowmobiling and cross country skiing. This would be a place to start to determine what amenities are required for visitors to pursue winter activities, whether we are presently providing these amenities to ensure visitors to Muskoka can enjoy activities in the non-summer months.
- d) Muskoka is perceived to be a region serving an affluent public. It is necessary in our society that workers are able to earn a wage they can live on. This should be adopted as a priority for the Township.
- e) This has been answered to a large extent by a previous question: the Chamber of Commerce and the Township share a mutual goal: to encourage and support economic development in the Township of Muskoka Lakes. We need to develop a mechanism for these interests to collaborate.

(Mary Ellen McIntyre responses end)

DAVID SKORIC

HOUSING & TALENT

According to the Ontario government's goal of 1.5 million new homes within 10 years, Muskoka is short 4,400 homes already and within 10 years that increases to 6,700. What are you planning to do or think could be done in Muskoka Lakes to help close the gap?

This is a challenge that every municipality in Ontario is facing, but especially TML because of our large flux of seasonal workers. TML needs to encourage the development of residential properties in our serviced area. We also need to encourage the creation of laneway/ secondary suites on existing properties. We have been told that TML has a number of areas slated for homes, but nobody to build them. We need to advocate for that development, and ensure it includes housing stock at all levels. We also need to be looking at Modular and tiny home options in our township. This is a quick and effective way to create more rental stock, affordable housing, and housing for seasonal workers. These are all initiatives that can be accomplished while keeping the charm and environment of Muskoka at the forefront of the decision making.

Do you have a vision of how this council could be led to attend to the issue of staff and housing availability as equally as it pays attention to waterfront properties?

TML needs to Push / Lobby / get more directly involved in the process of creating staff housing. We need rental units whether that be in a multiplex, a set of tiny homes, laneway suites, or a facility specifically designed to house seasonal staff. We simply must make it a priority, Our businesses cannot function without somewhere to house seasonal staff, and year round staff are just as hard to find when there are almost no attainable properties for sale or rent in Muskoka.

If elected, will you encourage affordable housing in both urban and rural areas, or will you feel obligated to respond to associations such as MLA/FriendsofMuskoka that appear to be against such development in your decision making?

The fact of the matter is that affordable housing cannot be a debate, it must

simply be a fact. Nobody should be against development, but everyone should be conscious of responsible development. We are not looking to “Pave Muskoka in concrete” or anything to that effect. We need to build affordable housing projects that fit into our Muskoka ecosystem and provide attainable living arrangements for generations to come.

What would you do to help Council and staff bring talent and skilled workers to Muskoka Lakes?

First and foremost, the township needs to do everything in its power to help the housing crisis because the fact the matter is that nobody will come to work if they cannot also live here. This needs to include options to buy or rent homes in Muskoka. Secondly, we need to constantly promote our township as a beautiful place with a great work-life balance to people who live in other areas of the province and country. A few years ago, the government of Saskatchewan ran a marketing campaign on Facebook highlighting the great jobs, homes, and recreation available in the city of Saskatoon. Before that I had never thought of Saskatoon, and obviously I did not move there, but it is things like that which could make a positive impact in our community. We need to market ourselves.

Does the Official Plan include a Directive to develop municipal incentives to build off water attainable housing in Muskoka Lakes (attainable housing is considered housing affordable for the working class)? If not, why not or why do you think it isn't there?

What I have kept hearing from our current slate of councillors is that the “Official Plan” is not done yet. One of the things I do see in the plan is the decrease of the minimum home size from 750 to 250 sqft, and the allowance for extra residential units on non-waterfront properties. What I would like to see more of is an opportunity for tiny homes, modular homes, and a push to make these things happen. We cannot just rely on current home owners to take care of this crisis.

DOING BUSINESS IN MUSKOKA LAKES (Conditions for Business and Sector Specific Questions)

How should Township plan to help small business through the looming recession, and how are you planning to stay accountable on those promises?

The township should continue to be an active partner to the Muskoka Lakes Chamber of Commerce with an emphasis on creating events and promotions that bring people to Muskoka both as guests and residents. It is only with community support that our businesses will thrive.

What is your position on development restrictions versus economic vitality?

The two cannot be put in opposite corners of the room. The idea that “Safe and clean development impedes our economic vitality” is a very “American” notion which we must wipe from our heads. The environment of Muskoka, our forests, rock faces, clean lakes, this is our brand, our lifestyle, and the reason people choose to live and play in Muskoka Lakes. We all know this, and it is a resource we must protect for our economy to be viable at all. Any development policies put in place at TML should not make a quality life in Muskoka unattainable.

When can we start to lobby ride share services like Uber to operate here? The question noted these are major drivers of local travel and hospitality.

TML needs a transportation plan that includes rideshare services. This is not only a driver of travel and hospitality, but also currently one of the roadblocks to finding more talent for our businesses. In larger towns and cities, workers who cannot afford a car can walk, bus, or rideshare to work. Without these resources available in TML, we will always be rejecting a portion of our workforce.

Muskoka Lakes is revising its Official Plan. Presently the lower floor of a boathouse can only be used for boats and related items. Do you support, or not support, residential use (bedrooms, recreation, etc) in this space? Please be specific about the use you support, and why?

A boathouse is for boats, that is why they call it a boathouse and not a lakeside living room. I hold no objection to people having large glass doors on their boathouses, or housing some of their patio furniture inside, but we should not be creating living spaces at water level. It is not only a misuse of the boathouse but also quite the property risk to

the home owner in the event of flooding for there to be living space right at the waters edge.

If the lakes continue to have blue/green algae blooms, our livelihood will be affected. Do you have a plan for the monitoring of old septic beds?

I am not an expert on Algae Blooms, so to that matter I would need to defer to scientists who study and know these things well. It is obvious none the less that we must take any environmental issues seriously with both study and action to determine the best course. I will support the monitoring and checking of septic beds in Muskoka Lakes to further determine environmental risk.

How will you encourage new business when there are staff shortages and most of the businesses in town are presently real estate offices?

While I will agree that there are a lot of realtors in Muskoka, I do not believe that most commercial buildings in our township are occupied by real estate offices. Please refer to my many comments above about how we should address staffing issues, housing issues, and our Chamber of Commerce to make a more vibrant economy in Muskoka Lakes.

In this question, the person asking suggests that the lack of affordable housing is tied to short-term rentals. They ask: What action(s) would you support the Township take to address this situation....and....Do you support a minimum 30 day stay for short term rentals?

I believe that the idea of a minimum 30 day stay at short term rentals is a proposal that has been proven a failure in many other townships across the world. One such example is Collingwood Ontario where there are still hundreds of illegal rentals happening in the area and the township could never hire enough staff to enforce that regulation. Additionally, the vast majority of renters are not bad, but at always it is the few who ruin it for the many. I will support the township's official plan to create a licensing and reporting system to monitor rentals in our township. This will drive property owners to make sure they are renting to respectful people and to ensure their rentals are properly managed. As someone who has direct Private and Airbnb rental experience I understand what is need to bring good renters to our community,

*A survey of Muskoka Lakes residents in 2018 showed 70 percent of them supported allowing legal cannabis sales. At the time, Council decided to take a wait and see position. Today we're the only township in the entire riding that still doesn't allow this...and in the recent term, all but one Councillor voted against cannabis retail. **For***

candidates who are campaigning to return: *Why are you stopping a legal business from setting up here.... For all candidates; Today, would you vote to allow or disallow legal cannabis stores in Muskoka Lakes? If you would vote against, what is your reasoning for doing so?*

I will support any business with a good business case and plan opening in Muskoka and that includes Cannabis stores. We now know that these stores have been safe and successful in many other townships across Ontario.

COVID made it hard for the public to engage with the Township planning department, which slowed my business from getting open. What can Council do to improve or speed up such service for businesses?

With COVID easing across the country hopefully these kinds of delays will not continue. Regardless of Covid we need to ensure all of our services are assessable online and within a reasonable timeframe.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COLLABORATION

What do you think should be in a 5-year plan to accelerate economic growth throughout the region?

Homes, Homes, community events, Township marketing and Homes. It really is that simple. We need more people to buy into the year-round Muskoka lifestyle.

The Township collaborates with many organizations for the betterment of the community. The Chamber is one of them. If elected, what's your vision for collaboration with the Chamber during your term?

The Muskoka Lakes Chamber of Commerce is a critical backbone of our business sector. We need to actively engage this resource to regularly be informed about how our businesses are doing and what challenges they are facing in our market. Likewise, we need to encourage our businesses, our chamber, and our township as a whole to decide how much and to what extent we wish to be more than "a seasonal town" and create a plan to implement it together.

There are 6 municipalities but none to call that represents Muskoka overall. If a business wants to start up somewhere in Muskoka.... Who do they call? What would you do to solve this problem?

Business licenses are obtained through the province of Ontario and I would encourage anyone looking to start a business to do their market research, and speak to their local chamber of commerce about potential opportunities.

What has the present Economic Development policy of Muskoka Lakes done for our business community, and what would you change in a Township Economic Development program going forward?

I am not an expert on the current economic development policy for our Township, but we need more community buy-in to enhance our year-round economy. That includes year-round businesses that are affordable for both locals and cottagers, and the development of businesses here so that people do not need to leave the township to get products and services. It is also important to acknowledge that this is only possible if we have a large amount of community buy-in towards being more than a seasonal town.

As a business member of the chamber, I'm frustrated by a lack of communication between Council and the chamber. The councillor appointed to the Chamber Board recuses whenever chamber issues are brought to council. Can you suggest a better way to improve council and business relations going forward?

Councillors must always recuse themselves from any situations which may cause a conflict of interest. As the chamber of commerce is an independent organization and not a department of the township, it is understandable that the councillor would not be able to directly advocate on behalf of the chamber. In the same way we would expect them not to directly advocate for a lake association they are involved with. At the same time Council needs to recognize that the chamber is different than other groups. Across the board the township needs to grow our partnerships with groups such as the chamber who want to enhance our community. We should find a way within the township framework to allow for more partnerships in our township.

Our bylaws are the backbone of our municipality. While many new bylaws have been introduced, and more are coming, what are you going to do as mayor to ensure these bylaws are enforced?

This question appears to be for the Mayors, but I would say the biggest thing is education not enforcement. The more education we provide people with about our bylaws, the less violation we will have.

While The township has gone from one bylaw officer to two-and-a-half recently, there is still no one on duty from noon Friday and over the weekend when most noise, fireworks,

and short term rental issues occur. What will you do to ensure that complaints are effectively followed up and violators caught?

To my knowledge TML has released an online platform to help tackle the issue of reporting bylaw offences to they can be followed up with.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND SEASONALITY

How would you improve the staff situation for summer businesses that rely on seasonal staff?

As stated in a few other questions above, we need to ensure that seasonal staff have a place to live. This means encouraging projects and rideshare services that will bring more rental accommodation to our township.

One questioner commented... The election campaign has been made ugly by the Friends of Muskoka/MLA. If elected, how will you address what some see as an 'abuse of power' by associations and how can you ensure that all Muskoka Lakes residents are represented in future votes?

The challenge with special interest groups or property owners associations getting involved in small town elections as described above is that with their Volunteers, Directors, and donations they can easily outspend and out work most individual candidates which creates a large imbalance in the election campaign. An example of this is dock-dropping materials which is something most individual candidates would not have the time or resources to do. The best thing we can do is to encourage associations to inform their members about candidates through meetings, or specific questions, so that their member base can decide for themselves who to vote for, rather than being told "These are the people you should vote for". It has become obvious through the course of regular counsel that the township should be keeping track of who is lobbying, how often, and on what issues to ensure that decisions being made are of benefit to all Muskokans.

What would you do to increase tourism in the shoulder and winter months in Muskoka Lakes?

We need to encourage year-round business that attracts tourism and resident participation in the shoulder months. How successful we are in the off season is not based on the actions of town counsel but rather on the engagement of our community and businesses.

Would you encourage employers to pay a living wage for Muskoka and the area?

Every business needs to pay a living wage. That is plain and simple. If you do not offer a wage that would allow people to live a life in your community, then chances are this will not come. The township does not set minimum wage requirements in our province, and this is largely up to individual businesses to decide what quality work is worth to them.

The draft Official Plan doesn't say much about off water planning. Shouldn't our large off water area be part of an overall plan for the Township? Your thoughts please?

As stated above, off water planning is going to a critical part of building a sustainable community and vibrant economy. We need houses, businesses, and jobs to keep our community and tourism flourishing. **(David Skoric responses end)**

GLENN ZAVITZ

HOUSING & TALENT

According to the Ontario government's goal of 1.5 million new homes within 10 years, Muskoka is short 4,400 homes already and within 10 years that increases to 6,700. What are you planning to do or think could be done in Muskoka Lakes to help close the gap?

-We must collaborate with the District, our relative Municipalities and the Province to create solutions. This consensus-building includes local TML Developers and Investors to gauge appetite for longer-term housing projects with 'reasonable' returns while creating affordable accommodation.

Do you have a vision of how this council could be led to attend to the issue of staff and housing availability as equally as it pays attention to waterfront properties?

-I envision a unique TML Housing Committee to spearhead the issues referenced in this question. In concert with Cottager Associations and other Stakeholder's, there may well be solutions right in front of us...underused cottages and homes, large tracts of vacant land, flexible housing arrangements to name a few.

If elected, will you encourage affordable housing in both urban and rural areas, or will you feel obligated to respond to associations such as MLA/FriendsofMuskoka that appear to be against such development in your decision making?

- I am not of the opinion MLA/FoM are 'against' affordable housing...in fact they have focussed on lakefront issues as their masthead ambition, no harm, no foul. Of course I will encourage affordable housing and seek to find locations most suited for re-purposing or new construction efforts within our identified developmental nodes of Bala and Port Carling.

What would you do to help Council and staff bring talent and skilled workers to Muskoka Lakes?

- We first need to understand the livelihood and accommodation pieces to this puzzle. Of course I'd support any/all endeavours to entice new folks to move and create a familial environment, BUT first we need this bank of understanding what it is TML has to offer and how that is accomplished.

Does the Official Plan include a Directive to develop municipal incentives to build off water attainable housing in Muskoka Lakes (attainable housing is considered housing affordable for the working class)? If not, why not or why do you think it isn't there?

-Interestingly as Chair of the TML Budget Cmtee these past years of Council, it is a clear and unrefutable fact there is very little TML can or has to offer fiscally in this regard. Again, the District and Province MUST be partners in an 'off water attainable housing' plan of approach.

DOING BUSINESS IN MUSKOKA LAKES (Conditions for Business and Sector Specific Questions)

How should Township plan to help small business through the looming recession, and how are you planning to stay accountable on those promises?

- I would like to see TML embrace the MLCC (Chamber) in a more fulsome and inclusive manner, perhaps with additional funding and more cohesive, defined relationship, a Marketing Plan if you will. This is different in goal and focus than the current MOU we collectively work under. I am going to push hard on "Continuous Improvement" and Consensus Building. I would welcome the opportunity to represent Council in an Advisor Role (not the current Councillor Board Role which is too restrictive).

What is your position on development restrictions versus economic vitality?

- This is a rhetorical question as I see no evidence here in/by TML of this occurrence. Examples, please?

When can we start to lobby ride share services like Uber to operate here? The question noted these are major drivers of local travel and hospitality.

- Good one, of course...transportation of the public is most difficult here, with haphazard habits and visiting occasions whether here in TML and/or to outlying areas. So very costly due to reasons stated, there must be District and Provincial subsidies as there is no payback/heavy private losses were a Service be contemplated. Trains don't stop anymore, busses could not make a go but a bright light is a new upstart Torrance Taxi Service...perhaps entrepreneurism can rule the day?

Muskoka Lakes is revising its Official Plan. Presently the lower floor of a boathouse can only be used for boats and related items. Do you support, or not support, residential use (bedrooms, recreation, etc) in this space? Please be specific about the use you support, and why?

- I do support SOME use of that referenced space, let's say 30% for the following uses ONLY...sun relief lounging, refrigerator, counter, entertainment table (ping pong, etc) 2 pc washroom BUT no habitable space/accommodation.

If the lakes continue to have blue/green algae blooms, our livelihood will be affected. Do you have a plan for the monitoring of old septic beds?

- Absolutely, we've recently instituted a widespread Septic Inspection Bylaw which will be rolled out in phases, worst case oldest units first and so on. This is vital to our lake health and welfare. Old septics are ticking timebombs.

How will you encourage new business when there are staff shortages and most of the businesses in town are presently real estate offices?

- I will focus my efforts where I feel most effectively contributing, as indicated elsewhere in this document.

In this question, the person asking suggests that the lack of affordable housing is tied to short-term rentals. They ask: What action(s) would you support the Township take to address this situation....and....Do you support a minimum 30 day stay for short term rentals?

- I will support a "Made in TML" solution, this is not a remedy however. Believe new Council must gather intel and understanding of the machinations around cottage renting as it is a centuries old practice. Once collaboration and consensus can occur, I envision a practical and simple process for the Cottage Rental to exist harmoniously with the neighbours.

*A survey of Muskoka Lakes residents in 2018 showed 70 percent of them supported allowing legal cannabis sales. At the time, Council decided to take a wait and see position. Today we're the only township in the entire riding that still doesn't allow this...and in the recent term, all but one Councillor voted against cannabis retail. **For candidates who are campaigning to return:** Why are you stopping a legal business from setting up here.... For all candidates; Today, would you vote to allow or disallow legal cannabis stores in Muskoka Lakes? If you would vote against, what is your reasoning for doing so?*

- I voted for it the first time and drove the Council to consider a second time and supported it there also-both times it was turned down. I'll give it another go with the new Council and we'll see? Firmly in support.

COVID made it hard for the public to engage with the Township planning department, which slowed my business from getting open. What can Council do to improve or speed up such service for businesses?

- I firmly believe that Planning and Building Staff are ramping back up to speed, given back to work, more Staff and technological improvements like GeoHub and Building Permit avenues. Electronic Site Inspection, etc, is coming online as well.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COLLABORATION

What do you think should be in a 5-year plan to accelerate economic growth throughout the region?

- TML embraces a 4 year cycle/plan timed to the Municipal Elections Act. 'Accelerating growth' takes on multiple meanings and iterations dependent upon subject matter, does it not? Interestingly, I count 4 newly established Bala businesses which occupy space, sell to customers and speak to 'growth' in that place. I'd welcome the MLCC engaging in this type of longer term planning with TML...as for outcomes, it remains to be discussed, right?

The Township collaborates with many organizations for the betterment of the community. The Chamber is one of them. If elected, what's your vision for collaboration with the Chamber during your term?

- I have referred to my appetite in establishing a stronger bond with MLCC...it is vital to cohesive forward-looking growth and vitality in our business community.

There are 6 municipalities but none to call that represents Muskoka overall. If a business wants to start up somewhere in Muskoka.... Who do they call? What would you do to solve this problem?

- I simply do not see this as a problem-Call the District of Muskoka and or search same and then seek out “Economic Development” ...you’ll be steered in the right direction based on the questions asked by the DMM contact person.

What has the present Economic Development policy of Muskoka Lakes done for our business community, and what would you change in a Township Economic Development program going forward?

- I believe Councillor Kelley was asked this question and will defer to his response on the first part ...however, as it relates to going forward, I would like to see an Economic Development & Affordable Housing Committee struck with a wider and more far-reaching mandate. Comprised of public and council figures, powers would be considerable and impacts more duly considered.

As a business member of the chamber, I’m frustrated by a lack of communication between Council and the chamber. The councillor appointed to the Chamber Board recuses whenever chamber issues are brought to council. Can you suggest a better way to improve council and business relations going forward?

- This was a first-time occasion and I do not feel it paid dividends. Council does not need a seat at the Chamber Board but certainly an Advisory Representative makes perfect sense, forgoing some legal implications of the existing dual role Councillor/Board rep.

Our bylaws are the backbone of our municipality. While many new bylaws have been introduced, and more are coming, what are you going to do as mayor to ensure these bylaws are enforced?

- Hire 1 more full time Bylaw Enforcement Officer in 2023.

While the township has gone from one bylaw officer to two-and-a-half recently, there is still no one on duty from noon Friday and over the weekend when most noise, fireworks, and short term rental issues occur. What will you do to ensure that complaints are effectively followed up and violators caught?

- in the summer months there IS weekend Duty of Bylaw. More Officers as suggested above is the only solution and I support 1 more.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND SEASONALITY

How would you improve the staff situation for summer businesses that rely on seasonal staff?

- I would work with the Chamber in a Marketing sense, crafting a solid plan to inform and entice students and seek employment for the summer in this beautiful place. How? Employers need to engage accommodation and wage issues, working on viable community supported solutions(shared housing/transportation/flexible hours/job sharing). The old days of employers up here not assisting in these issues are long gone.

One questioner commented... The election campaign has been made ugly by the Friends of Muskoka/MLA. If elected, how will you address what some see as an 'abuse of power' by associations and how can you ensure that all Muskoka Lakes residents are represented in future votes?

- This is a free country last I checked...they can do as they please, others may any other special interest group, as long as the Provincial checks and balances are observed. I believe they have and see no issue ...sure it is likely difficult to not be endorsed by them but this is a Cottager's Association of great history and impact on our Muskoka Lakes.

What would you do to increase tourism in the shoulder and winter months in Muskoka Lakes?

I'd set up a Consultant group of entrepreneurs, then define wants, needs and desires to do so. Exploring financial viability is paramount to enticing a potentially different public in those shoulder months.

Would you encourage employers to pay a living wage for Muskoka and the area?

- I would...most important to a competitive stature, notwithstanding the fun times afforded here, people are attuned to value for service.

The draft Official Plan doesn't say much about off water planning. Shouldn't our large off water area be part of an overall plan for the Township? Your thoughts please?

- This question is similar in nature to other fiscal sustainability queries referenced here...again, TML must engage with the District and Province(Feds also) to identify funding viability for off-water development nodes(water and sewer) in Port Carling and Bala.

>One Question Specific to Candidate Glenn Zavitz follows:

You seem to be supporting Mayoral candidate Peter Kelley. What do you think Peter will bring to the table to help local businesses that is an improvement to what Phil Harding has done in your 4-year term together?

-Thank you for the question and pleased to answer...I have worked and collaborated closely with Councillor Kelley (and other Councillors) these last 4 years. We have accomplished much and contributed considerably with the consensus-building that occurred as those opportunities permitted. Cannot say the same of Mayor Harding, simply put. If we are to run as Candidates on our last 4 years, I gladly do so knowing there was much interaction and the seeking of common ground and a way forward on many issues this Council faced. Likely in receipt of no more than 10 calls over that time initiated by the Mayor to check in. Hard Stop. If that represents Balanced Leadership, my understanding and Corporate life had a very different meaning in practice.

(Glenn Zavitz responses and all responses end)