

Raise Your Political Voice!

Politics 2011 for Cottagers



This year, we have faced a Provincial election *and* a Federal election, the fourth in less than seven years. What are the implications for waterfront property owners – and how can we get involved?

The next important opportunity to make your mark is the October 6, 2011 Provincial Election!

NOTE: You can choose to vote in your cottage riding OR your permanent residence riding.

Visit the FOCA website to find out how: www.foca.on.ca/Hot_Topics

Who handles what?

For waterfront property owners, the bulk of our issues are managed at the Provincial level, including health care, education, income and property taxation, tourism, industrial and natural resources management, energy policy and most legislation and accompanying regulations.

The municipal level of government is also where many cottage issues lie: roads, policing, land use planning, bylaws development and enforcement. However, municipalities are also a creature of the Province, owing their very existence, their powers and obligations to the Province under the Municipal Act. (Many municipalities saw significant turnover in the Fall 2010 elections.)

The May 2011 Federal election touched on national issues which include infrastructure and funding, navigation/boating, fisheries, and great lakes/international issues, among others. Ontario has 107 of Canada's 308 federal electoral ridings, and thus has a fair amount of clout regarding national policy.

About our Community

"Cottage"-related household expenditures in Ontario amount to **over \$8-billion annually** (excluding real estate). The property taxes on the estimated \$75-billion of privately-owned residential cottage real estate is over \$550-million, directly supporting local governance, programs, and infrastructure in more than 280 rural Ontario municipalities. Ontario has over 50,000 hectares of waterfront lands and over 15,000 kilometres of lake and river shorelines under private residential ownership. We represent a significant physical and financial force in rural Ontario.

What can FOCA do?

FOCA represents and advocates on behalf of cottage interests, and acts as a conduit on many important public policy issues. FOCA is non-partisan; there are rarely straightforward answers that would satisfy all waterfront property owners at one given time. We work collaboratively with government and other groups to advance waterfront issues where there is a common perspective or interest to defend.

In the lead up to the 2011 Provincial election, FOCA has posed some key questions to the party leaders on a number of "Hot Button" issues. You are encouraged to review these questions and consult them when you speak with your local candidates.

Hot Topics

Some issues that are important to our members include:

Property Taxation, Energy, Mining & Exploration, Land Use Planning, Septic Regulations

**For background on these subjects, including a summary of what FOCA has been doing and how you can help, visit the new "Hot Topics" section of the FOCA website: www.foca.on.ca/Hot_Topics*

FOCA participates in many provincial, regional and municipal governmental groups, and works with scientists and advocacy groups to represent waterfront property owners' interests in emerging and ongoing issues. Cottaging is an iconic and well-loved part of our cultural fabric. We are working to preserve a way of life, and a quality of living for our kids and grandkids.

FOCA's efforts are delivered by our staff and volunteers, with your support. As a result, membership fees and donations are critical to finance this work of advocating on behalf of waterfront property owners.

What can I do?

- 1) **Write a letter** to your municipal councillor, MPP, MP or political candidates
- 2) **Call their office**, and ask them specifically what they propose to do about your issue or situation
- 3) **Schedule a visit** with your elected official or candidates, attend their events or invite them to attend yours. Introduce yourself if there is a meet-and-greet and follow the tips below
- 4) **Encourage your neighbours** to do the same
- 5) **Support FOCA's advocacy efforts** through membership and/or donations

Some tips to get your issue onto your candidates' radar:

- Identify yourself as a constituent of their riding
- Give a short explanation of how the issue affects you personally, and whether you support or oppose it
- Use facts and figures to support your argument
- Be concise and stick to the issue if you want to express your opinion or ask for their stance on an issue
- Hand them a 1-page brief on the issue to take away and reference in the future
- Thank them for their time, and remind them you will be discussing the matter with your neighbours, and voting to support the issue at hand
- Mention specifically if you want a written response, then follow up with their office staff in two weeks if there has been no reply

Remember:

- Politicians want to be associated with issues that will get them (re-)elected and will show that they have done a good job. They won't know how constituents really feel unless we communicate with them. Each comment received directly from a voter carries weight, as it suggests broader trends.
- It is part of an elected official's responsibility to study all available information on a topic. But don't waste their time; know your issue and be brief. Provide facts and suggest solutions.
- Visit the "Hot Topics" section of the FOCA website (www.foca.on.ca/Hot_Topics) for **online links** to find your political candidates and elections information.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

- Margaret Mead