

October 5, 2011

Contrary to Popular Belief: Yes, you can vote at the cottage!!

As a province-wide association representing 50,000 waterfront property owners in Ontario, the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations (FOCA) **has information that contradicts recent media coverage about the vote tomorrow.**

While it is true that you can only vote in one location (not two), [Cottage Country Now](#) reported today that, "For example, if someone has a home in the Greater Toronto Area as well as cottage country, that person can only vote in the electoral district where his or her permanent lodging is located." The Cottage Country Now article supposes that this person could only vote in Toronto. **This is false, and could misinform the estimated 250,000 cottagers in Ontario about their right to vote at their self-defined "residence."**

FOCA has been in discussion with Elections Ontario throughout the past several weeks, and intensely in recent days, on this topic. We have received written confirmation from Elections Ontario that a cottager may choose to define their cottage as their residence for the purpose of voting in the provincial election this week.

Please see the notice sent by FOCA to our membership on September 30th, 2011 (below) and also note the following:

- **Yes, you CAN vote in your cottage riding, but NOT if you perceive or present yourself as a temporary or occasional resident.**
- According to the Election Act (see online link in the notice below), your residence is "the permanent lodging place" to which you intend to return whenever absent. Furthermore, a person "may only have one residence at a time," for the purposes of the Election Act. *[both quotes are taken directly from the Election Act, Chapter 1.1]* Thus, you must consider your cottage to be your residence in order to vote there. The Act also states that you, yourself, declare where you are an elector.
- Contrary to what one Elections Ontario representative on the "We Make Voting Easy" 1-888 phone line told a FOCA member on September 28th, it does NOT have to be the place where you have been most frequently in the past five weeks. (This is a misinterpretation of a further section of Chapter 1.1 which applies to people with no permanent residence at all—i.e., the homeless!)
- You do NOT have to change your address with Elections Ontario to your cottage mailing address in order to vote there. Elections Ontario has clarified in writing to FOCA on September 29, 2011 (see notice below) that the Director in charge of the Permanent List of Electors confirms you can choose NOT to update your information on the Permanent List of Electors. This is particularly crucial for some of our members, who have only General Delivery or a P.O.Box address at the cottage, and prefer to receive all important correspondence at their alternate (usually urban) residence.

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FOCA Update about Voting in Cottage Country

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One of our members—who is also on the FOCA Board of Directors—reported to us that he spent over 1½ hours in the returning office of his cottage riding (Lindsay) on September 30th, trying to vote there. He was initially denied because the tax bill he brought as proof of address also included his Whitby residence as the mailing address. He stood his ground and was finally permitted to vote by the Chief Returning Officer there, Jerry Ford. **NOTE: It has come to our attention that this might be the very Elections Ontario official Cottage Country Now spoke with while preparing their article.** Our member was told, as he sat down with Mr. Ford to plead his case to vote in the riding of his cottage residence, that the Returning Officer had just finished a conversation with a reporter and that he had, “set her straight” that voting at the cottage was not permitted. Yet, after another 30 minutes of conversation, Ford reversed his original stance and allowed our member, finally, to cast his vote.

Another FOCA member, in Algoma-Manitoulin, reported the following on September 27th about their unsuccessful attempt to vote:

Hi - With respect to your comments re: how and where to vote in the Provincial election: We attended the advance poll to-day for our cottage riding Algoma-Manitoulin. We had our ID, copy of Township taxes and notice of Registration for our riding in London. After much discussion among the members of the Advance Poll voting we were advised that the only way we could vote for the local candidates was to change our home address to our cottage address. We are here from mid-May to mid-October so naturally we have our mail redirected. If we are not very careful and happen to use the cottage address on mail the Junk mail starts to arrive and then the Post Office want us to redirect our mail from the cottage to our home which is a great nuisance and therefore we decided not to vote. Perhaps we misread some of your instructions but that was the result of our attempt to vote today.

Warning bells are ringing! How many Ontarians with a legitimate right to vote will be turned away at cottage ridings this Thursday?!? The media should be watching for this, and should cry “foul” if it happens.

Sincerely,



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FOCA Executive Director

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