

# Lands & Forests Minister Outlines Department Policy Concerning the Sale and Development of Cottage Areas

The following address was given by Hon. Rene Brunelle, Minister, Ontario Dept. of Lands and Forests, to the Annual Meeting of the Federation of Ontario Cottage Owners' Association, at the St. Lawrence Hall, Toronto, February 5, 1970.

It is indeed a great honour and pleasure for me to be here today to talk to you for a few minutes on some of the things which are of mutual interest to cottagers and to my department.

The summer cottage has been a matter of prime interest to the Provincial Government and especially the Department of Lands and Forests for a very long time.

We have long recognized that cottaging and the activities that go along with it provide an important recreational experience. To many people, the cottage is a second home of which more use is being made than ever before.

Cottaging brings urban dwellers in closer contact with nature, and helps to instil a greater appreciation of nature's beauty and its importance to man's life.

For many years, the Department sold cottage lots for a very modest price. For a few years after the second world war, cottage lots having 300 to 400 feet of frontage were available in Southern Ontario for 30 cents a foot plus a \$65.00 fee.

## Demand Increased Problems

The post war economic boom and the trend to urbanization increased the demand for cottage lots and as this demand grew, changes in the price structure and in the methods of selling lots have been required.

In the south particularly, many owners sub-divided their lots, which increased the number of cottages on lakes much beyond what was intended. In many cases, this has lowered the quality of the recreational experience.

Also, and again particularly in Southern Ontario much of the land fronting on lakes was in private ownership, having been patented for agriculture, mining or other development, many years ago.

Much of this land was and continues to be sub-divided for cottages, and in many places we are facing problems of over-development and the difficulties of trying to prevent it.

## Lake Development Limited

As problems of over-development became evident hindsight is always better than foresight — controls to prevent this were introduced. We now limit development of lakes to a maximum of 75% of the shoreline, and in many cases it is much less. Also, we have instituted a "Single Cottage Clause" in some patents, to prevent over-development of these lots.

While this has been quite a significant step forward, it is not nearly adequate to meet the requirement of making the most of our resource. By this, I mean that what we must do is plan to provide the best possible use of our land — including water

— and the resources dependent on the land, for the citizens of Ontario. And, of course, we must implement these plans.

This involves a lot of things. It means that we must somehow measure or rate social benefits and the economics associated with them.

Perhaps it could be said that we must try to provide the "best" social benefits, in light of economic realities.

It means determining what quality of recreational experience we can afford to provide. It means determining what degree of water purity we need, what we would like to have and somewhere in between what we can afford. It means what density of cottagers we would like to have, what we can live with, and again, what we can afford.

What are some of the criteria we can use? These must vary because individual people vary both in what they want and what they can afford. By influence, then, we can say that we ought to plan for variety.

If we were to plan the development of cottage areas simply to provide variety, what "mix" should be used?

## Outlines Program

What is being done and what we are trying to do to the utmost of the human and financial resources available to us, is this:

We start with the capability of the land, this information is coming out of the Arda Canada Land Inventory and the more detailed Ontario Land Inventory which are conducted jointly.

This data provides a description of the physiography of the land . . . eg. the soil material, its depth, slope, etc. From this we can assess and rate the availability of, for example, lakeshore to sustain cottages. We know what portion of shoreline should not be developed (for example, the thin soil areas); what portion could have single cottages widely spaced; what portions can provide intensive cottaging, either in fairly close, single-tier sub-divisions, in multiple tiers, or in clusters back from the shore; and what portions are better suited for public uses, such as Provincial Parks, Access Points or a Community Beach for use by cottagers who have no beach.

## Provides Greater Recreation

With this data for a wider area and with other information such as lake size, points of special interest, location of fish spawning beds, location of marshes used by brooding ducks, water level fluctuations, water depths and flows, present and future feasible road access, proximity of population centres, present or potential boating

or canoe routes, etc., we can then plan for a wide variety of recreational experience.

The variety I speak of means that some lakes in the area will not be developed for cottages, but will be used to ensure an opportunity for fishing or perhaps just for quiet enjoyment. Many small, cold water trout lakes will not sustain both intensive recreation use and fish.

It also means that large areas on some lakes will not be developed.

Our lake survey data, which provides clues on fish production and reproduction, is used to determine the lakes which warrant such fisheries management programs as stocking, "put and take fishing", safeguarding of spawning beds, and limitations on daily catch, etc.

Development of this kind of advanced planning has been in the North Georgian Bay Recreational Reserve and it is now proceeding in other areas to the extent that we are able or to the extent our resources allow.

## Additional Controls Likely

To make this kind of planning effective, additional controls and procedures are necessary. For instance, in some cases, it will be necessary to designate where, on a lot, a cottage may be situated. Also, in some cases, it may be necessary that lots be disposed of by lease rather than sale. The leasing procedure may also be desirable in order to make lots available to people who find the sale price prohibitive.

Throughout Northern Ontario, that is North and West of North Bay, each district has an inventory of cottage lots which are available for purchase by application to the local district office. The total inventory of lots varies between 2,500 and 3,000.

## New Auction Method

In Southern Ontario and especially in the areas south of Algonquin Park, the demand for cottage lots exceeded the supply. For some time now, new subdivisions in this general area have been offered to the public by tender or auction. The tender system is unsatisfactory and has been largely discontinued except when only two or three lots are involved. The amount of compilation to record a large sale by tender is awesome. In the end there may be no bids for 10% of the lots offered and the top price may be higher than for comparable lots sold by auction. The auction method has a number of good features. The sale is conducted in a quick, clean and open forum. The purchaser can, for a price, get the lot of his choice and friends may purchase adjoining lot.

It has been proposed that consideration be given to selecting cottage purchasers by

the drawing of lots. As you are no doubt aware, these so-called lotteries can be an emotional issue with some people. At this time, we are not proposing to sell a chance to draw a cottage site for a dollar. Rather, we are thinking in terms of pricing, by appraisal, the land to be offered.

Interested people would be invited to meet on an appointed day and be registered. The first ticket drawn would give the holder the right to purchase any lot in the subdivision at the appraised price. A committee of Senior Officers in my Department are exploring the problems in this procedure. If the problems are overcome we may try an experimental lottery this summer involving about 10 lots in the Lindsay District.

**500 To Be Offered This Year**

Nearly 500 cottage lots will be offered by auction, by tender or by lottery in 1970. Our present plans include the following:

**LINDSAY DISTRICT**

Eels Lake, Cardiff .....	36
Little Erson, Monmouth .....	26
	(Lottery)
Monrock, Monmouth .....	14
Lochlin, Glamorgan .....	36
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	112

**TWEED DISTRICT**

Mephisto, Cashel .....	17
Kamaniskey, Bangor .....	73
Madawaska R., Bangor .....	69
Big Gull, Clarendon .....	58
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	217

**PARRY SOUND DISTRICT**

South Tasso L., Finlayson .....	23
Herb, Clear & Deer, Ockley .....	100
Drane, Three-Legged, Conger & Cowper .....	15
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	138

These lots, together with approximately 2,500 lots on inventory across Northern Ontario, allow any interested party a choice of lots at any time.

The pollution of recreation waters is an area of major concern to the Government of Ontario, and in particular, of course, to my colleague, The Honourable George Kerr.

It is a problem for which there is not a single simple answer — each cottage area presents an individual problem.

**Pollution Problems**

We know that many septic tanks cannot be doing the job. A means of locating and dealing with malfunctioning tanks is being sought, but this is not an easy thing to deal with. For one thing, the picture

changes from week to week. That is, a septic system that is functioning effectively in the middle July may not be by the first week of August . . . depending for example, on how much the system is used.

It may be that in some cases, holding tanks will be the answer. In others, it may be possible to connect to a municipal sewer system. In still other periodic inspection of septic tanks may be required.

What is required is the full cooperation of all cottage owners to work in a combined effort with The Ontario Water Resources Commission and the Department of Health to study and resolve the problem. Infinitely better than policing, would be the conscientious effort by each cottage owner to ensure that he is not contributing to pollution. Among other things, where a septic system is in use, this entails knowing precisely how septic tanks work, knowing when the system requires inspection, what to do about it if there are signs of malfunction . . . and of course, taking the corrective action.

In this connection, it is most heartening and gratifying to note that your federation is already playing an important role by circulating a procedure for testing the effectiveness of septic tanks.

**Various Agencies Involved**

I would not be honest if I left anyone with the opinion that the Department of Lands and Forests plans and disposes of summer cottage sites singlehandedly, for in actual point of fact, there are many agencies involved. Some of these are the Department of Municipal Affairs, the Department of Health, the Local Medical Officer of Health, the Ontario Water Resources Commission, the Department of Highways and the District Advisory Committees on Recreational Land Use Planning — and each plays a role.

I once heard, but at the moment cannot confirm, that Ontario has a higher per capita ratio of cottage owners than any country in the world.

Whether this is true or not, the summer cottage a very important part of the life of many Ontario people. I realize that I have barely scratched the surface in discussing some of the matters of concern and if at any time you have any questions which relate to the activities of my department, we are always ready to do our utmost to provide a satisfactory answer.

**SPECIAL COMMITTEE  
SEEKS SUGGESTIONS**

The Special Committee on revision of the Ontario Land Surveyor's Manual will be pleased to receive and consider suggestions as to form and contents for the proposed revised Manual. Correspondence should be sent to Maurice Hewett, O.L.S., Committee Chairman, c/o P.O. Box 112, Owen Sound, Ont.