



15 Falcon Street, Toronto, Ontario M4S 2P4
416-985-7378
rkindersley@georgianbay.ca

www.georgianbay.ca

April 16, 2022

Peter D. Henry, R.P.F.
Director, Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry
Policy Division, Crown Forests and Lands Policy Branch
70 Foster Drive, 3rd Floor
Sault Ste. Marie, ON
P6A 6V5

Dear Mr. Henry:

Re: ERO number 019-5119: Comments to Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR) on Floating Accommodations on Waterways/Public lands

We are writing to provide comments on the above with a view to establishing clear regulations for Floating Accommodations on Waterways and Public lands that maximise protection of the environment, in particular water quality.

The Georgian Bay Association (GBA) is an umbrella organization for 18 community associations along the east and north shores of Georgian Bay, representing around 3,000 families. We have been advocating on behalf of our land-owning members for over 100 years and estimate that we reach and influence around 18,000 residents of the Georgian Bay. Our mandate is to work with our water-based communities and other stakeholders to ensure the careful stewardship of the greater Georgian Bay environment.

Travelling by boat along the east and north shores of Georgian Bay is the most common type of transportation. Around 93% of our members' properties are water access only. The waterways and water quality are therefore of paramount importance, providing drinking water, recreational opportunities, and the primary transportation system. The water itself is the most significant aesthetic element of our region.

We commend the provincial government for reviewing the current regulations on Floating Accommodations on Waterways/Public lands, in response to this growing issue, and is strongly supportive of appropriate changes that will ensure the continued protection of our waters.

Below are the MNR questions and GBA Responses:

MNR Questions	#	GBA Responses
Should the types of water-craft that are allowed as “camping units” be clarified?	1	Yes, the types of watercraft units permitted should be clearly described to distinguish between Floating Cottages*, houseboats, other large vessels and all smaller vessels (canoes, kayaks etc.) to allow for different regulations to be developed and enforced for each type.
Should the meaning of “camping purposes” be clarified?	2	Yes, there should be a distinction between camping on land and camping on a vessel attached to land, so that different permitted lengths of stay can be implemented.
Should changes be made to the camping rules set out in Ontario Regulation 161/17 as they relate to camping on waterways over public lands? Are there other rules that should be applied to camping on water?	3	Floating Cottages*, houseboats, & other large vessels should be subject to lower limits (fewer days) for camping on water and the minimum distance should be increased above the current 100m. Current rules are OK for all smaller vessels. Strict rules on garbage and human/animal waste disposal should be clearly articulated and enforced.
Should more restrictive municipal bylaws apply where they exist / are created?	4	MNR should inform municipalities that they have the option to enact such bylaws.
Should municipal bylaw requirements that are more restrictive than the provincial regulation apply? <i>For example, should they not apply if they are more permissive than provincial regulations and laws?</i>	5	Yes. Where municipal bylaws are more permissive, then provincial regulations should apply. Furthermore, where municipal bylaws are more restrictive, then they should supersede provincial regulations.
Please provide any other information / concerns / suggestions regarding camping on waterways over public lands or the use of floating accommodations on waterways over public lands that you think the ministry should consider in the future.	6	Environmental protection should be the primary concern. Therefore, strict rules are needed on wastewater management, garbage and human/animal waste disposal, fuel storage / safety, and fires. In addition, shoreline degradation and impeding access to public land and waterways must be prevented. Also see below.

* We define Floating Cottages as being accommodation units on rafts that are clearly designed as accommodation units not boats, as opposed to houseboats which are clearly designed as boats.

Additional Recommendations, Questions and Comments:

- The regulations should be further amended to prohibit Floating Cottages from camping on waterways and to only permit camping on vessels designed to an appropriate safety, navigational and environmental standard, as well as being registered with the appropriate federal authorities.
- Floating Cottages are being constructed and used, without minimum building or navigational standards, which raises significant health and safety concerns:
 - They may not have adequate wastewater management systems and could therefore negatively impact the local environment and water quality.
 - They increase the demands on local community services, without financially contributing to the local government.
- Overall, Floating Cottages have the potential to create significant negative impacts for all water-based communities and we do not consider them to be an appropriate use on lakes, rivers and waterways.
- Currently the rules include:
 - limiting the number of days a person can camp on water, at one location, to 21 days; &
 - the distance watercraft must move is 100m if a person camping wishes to stay longer than 21 days.

What is the definition of “camping”? How is the 21-day rule enforced? Was the 100m moving provision related to minimizing environmental impacts at the location? If so, what was the basis, and why is there no distinction between the type of vessel used by visitors? The larger the vessel and the more on-board accommodation it has, the greater the potential environmental impact. This is germane to our recommendations on Q3 above.

GBA appreciates the opportunity to provide input and supports changes to regulations that will continue to provide the strongest environmental protections for our shared waterways. We would welcome the opportunity to hold a follow up discussion on these matters, if possible?

Yours sincerely,



Rupert Kindersley
Executive Director

Copy to:

Pauline Desroches, Manager, Crown Lands Policy Section, MNR
Julie Reeder, Sr. Program Advisor, Crown Lands Policy Section, MNR
Public.Lands@ontario.ca