

## **MINAKI COTTAGERS RESPOND TO LODGE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL**

After four months of often intense activity – communicating with cottagers and organizing memberships, raising money, hiring and working with engineers and consultants, and drafting a complete presentation – the Minaki Cottager’s Association is submitting to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing a response to the proposed redevelopment of the Minaki Lodge site.

That redevelopment proposal, by Manitoba developers Bob Banman and Bob Schinkel, would put 160 seasonal condominium units on the Lodge property, with wastewater and sewage treated by the existing Minaki Lodge sewage treatment plant. MCA President David Hewlett summarizes the cottagers’ concern: “We are in favor of a redevelopment of the Minaki Lodge property, and are not opposed to the proposed use as seasonal residential units. But the density of the proposal – the sheer number of units – raises serious issues for all of Minaki and its water.”

A primary issue for MCA members is sewage treatment. The R. J. Burnside engineering firm in Toronto, engaged by the MCA to study the existing sewage plant, concluded that the sewage flow from the redevelopment would exceed the plant’s capacity, as rated by the Ministry of the Environment (“MOE”). The plant sends the effluence directly into the Winnipeg River, so “keeping the project density and the flows from the redevelopment down to a safe size, and allowing for full treatment in the plant, is critical,” explains Hewlett.

In addition, the permit issued by MOE contains no enforceable standards, only targets, for contaminants (including phosphorus which contributes to blue-green algae and total ammonia which is toxic to fish), and Burnside has pointed out that this lack of enforceable standards is inconsistent with other permits issued by MOE for more than a decade. The MCA is asking Municipal Affairs, as part of its planning control, to insist that the developers retrofit the plant so that enforceable limits can be met. In past operation, for example, the sewage plant let phosphorous into the Winnipeg River at levels four to ten times higher than current Provincial limits.

Density of docks and boats is another priority. The developers’ application did not study the impact of putting 160 unit owners’ boats in the narrow Lodge channel (“did not mention the issue,” Hewlett notes). But the MCA and its planning consultants expect that the proposed redevelopment would require 200 or more dock slips overall, and that all those boats would overwhelm public health and safety and impair neighboring properties.

The MCA is also concerned about the proposed loss of green space attributable to the historic Stanley Thompson golf course. “That space is part of the Minaki community’s heritage landscape,” says Hewlett, “and at an appropriate lower density it can be conserved without interfering with the developers’ ability to use the site.”

Besides issues of density, the MCA questions the use of the condominium ownership structure in unorganized territory. As part of the proposed redevelopment, the condominium associations made up of seasonal residents in unorganized territory will need to make sure that the sewage plant is properly operated, maintained, and repaired, and as Hewlett points out, must also “somehow or other replace the whole system when it wears out – and it’s already 25 years old.” The MCA also cautions Municipal Affairs about the effect as precedent of allowing the condominium structure in unorganized territory, where there are limited standards for approval and virtually no regulation once a condominium is in place.

Municipal Affairs is expected to rule on the redevelopment application in May. The MCA holds over 300 adult paid members, and the membership rolls continue to grow.