**Environment - Community Growth**

After examining the effect of the urban environment on Mary Lake in some detail, it became evident that this could only be examined over time.

I also am looking at environmental issues that affect both Huntsville and Mary Lake. The most important element on Mary Lake is the lake itself ..and so it becomes the central element in tracing the environment issues between the two entities.

When the first settlers arrived and settled around the lake, obviously the environment wasn’t an issue. The lake was to be used for transporting logs or to wash away tannery effluent. It was only in the late 1800’s when people came to the lakes to escape the smog of the cities and to find a clean place away from the ravages of tuberculosis, that some thought for the environment occurred. At the same time the forests started to return after being thoroughly stripped from the country side. The result was a blossoming of lodges and rooming houses around the lake and soon afterwards cottages began to appear.

**Thus began three major uses/attitudes about the lake.**

**1.The Lodges**

The many lodges have been reduced to a few in number. Fire took many of them and many changed function. They have either modernized their operation, or else have been forced out of business. Those that changed their operation have continued to do so

What happened to the lodges around Mary Lake.

**Arcadia House torn down  
Avon Lea a private home  
Balsams an apartment building  
Belleview Hotel an apartment building  
Breezy Point torn down  
Broadview Lodge (the original one) burned  
Clyffe House a housekeeping lodge  
Fairview burned  
Ferndale a private home  
Flag Inn an Inn  
Grunwald burned  
Gryffin Lodge a lodge  
MacInnes House a restaurant   
Marshall Cabins unused  
Mary Lake Inn an apartment building   
Mulvaney Cabins unused  
Muskoka Lodge torn down  
Nichol’s campground not in use  
Pine Lodge a lodge  
Ridge Cove Cottages operating  
Riverside House burned  
Rosewood an apartment building  
Spruce Lodge torn down  
Sydney Hotel burned  
Victoria Villa a private home**

The other alternative was to expand as Deerhurst has done resulting in clashes with local cottagers.

Deerhurst village may threaten historic canal: residents  
HUNTSVILLE – It was standing room only as people piled into a public meeting to voice their concerns about plans for a proposed village at Deerhurst Resort.  
More than 160 people attended the Town of Huntsville public meeting at the Active Living Centre at 7 p.m. on July 31. The meeting included an overview of a proposed town official plan amendment that would get Skyline International Development Inc. a step closer to adding 650 housing units, 46,000 square feet of retail and service commercial space, and 144 more hotel rooms to the resort.  
The plan will cost about $400 million. Staff estimates it would take 15 to 20 years to complete the phased development.   
Property owners and cottagers spent much of the evening passionately advocating for the protection and preservation of the cultural and natural features of the historic canal that travels from Pen Lake to Fairy Lake.   
Skyline’s plans include development near the canal.   
“We would like to be in favour of the proposal, but we’re not there yet,” said Rob Hurst, president of the Peninsula Lake Association.   
Hurst said Skyline has been responsive to many of the association’s concerns, but issues regarding water quality, an endangered bird, the peer review of consultant studies and the location of a maintenance shed and a proposed parking lot were still outstanding.  
He said the association was also asking for the creation of a stewardship committee to restore the canal.  
The village plans include four-storey accommodation units as well as a parking lot near the canal, both of which residents and cottagers are concerned will be visible from the waterway as well as damage wildlife habitat and harm water quality.   
Councillors later asked if Skyline had considered an alternate location for the parking lot and four-storey buildings, but planning consultant Glenn Lucas said few other areas of the 600-acre parcel is suitable for development.   
“Skyline hired a team of consultants to take a look at expanding the resort to ensure it continues to be a sustainable, economic generator for the town,” said Lucas.   
He said the village, which the company has been working on for about two years, is part of that plan. The company had already held three other public meetings about the village plans, he said.  
“We’re not going to create glass towers like you see in Toronto. We want to make sure the development respects the character of Muskoka,” said Lucas.  
But when he later commented the development would not affect the canal, audience members uttered cries of disagreement until Mayor Claude Doughty called order.  
Lucas noted development is part of the area’s past.   
“You have to be careful not to take a snapshot of the area and say, ‘That’s the way it has always been,’” said Lucas near the end of the three-hour meeting. “Development has always been a part of the area’s history.”   
 Council did not make a decision on the official plan amendment and instead tabled the motion until a later date.   
Staff stated the official plan amendment may be discussed at the council meeting on Aug. 25,   
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**2.Cottages:**

The first cottages were a far cry from those of today. Only one or two of these first cottages still exist around the lake. They were meant to be used seasonally and were primitive. Over the years available land for building cottages got used up and more cottagers were occupied year round. This is partly a result of an increase in urban land values making more money available to potential cottage owners and in an influx of city people.

Cottagers also have developed a sense of entitlement. The length of time that cottagers have been owned and their increased value have resulted in this. It can be seen in the organization of the cottagers into ratepayers groups like ours and the cottagers’ reaction to non-traditional cottage uses. Some of these are:

**Cottage rental:** Although this use has just started on Mary Lake, it is seen as a problem by many cottagers. The issue is complicated by deciding how many days will be considered okay for legitimate rental and on the other hand deciding what is commercial rental. It is further complicated by Huntsville’s decision to not include it in the Planning Bylaw.

**Shared Ownership**

Another way of increasing the number of people around lakes is shared ownership. It is not seen as an issue as yet by most cottagers and again it is just beginning to occur around Mary Lake.

**3.Difference of attitude.**

There always has been a difference of attitude between the local cottagers and the largely urban residents.It appears in the pro-growth attitude of the town and the pro-environmental attitude of most cottagers. An examination of the philosophy of Huntsville on both topics illustrates this.

<https://www.huntsville.ca/en/home-property-and-planning/building-and-planning.aspx>

<https://www.huntsville.ca/en/recreation-and-facilities/recreation-and-facilities.aspx>

The Town Planning

<https://www.huntsville.ca/en/home-property-and-planning/building-and-planning.aspx>

**Other land uses around the lake**

**Camps:**

Camps began in the 1930’s. Just as adults sought the clean air for health reasons, they also wanted the same for their children. It is probably for that reason that kids’ camps have never been seen as a competing land use.

**Golf Courses**

When the first golf course was established off Edgemere Road on the 1930’s, it was welcomed. It was a diversion for the cottagers. Although it folded because of the war, the establishment of other courses nearby was initially welcomed. Recently environmental concerns have caused them to be treated with suspicion, although nearby courses have been largely cleared of concern. (see our study of Deerhurst and Grandview Last Fall)

**Boating**

The proliferation of types of boats has caused concern even though this is not an urban influence, but one caused by cottagers themselves. What was a pleasurable use by fishermen and casual boaters has become an annoyance. To combat this cottagers have responded with an organization called ‘Safe Quiet Lakes’ and even have banned power boats on some small lakes.

**Other land uses that influence or threaten the lake**

**Lighting**

Lighting was part of the cost of doing business for a long time. Recently cottagers have objected strongly to the light pollution and the town has responded by initiating new lighting laws that will take effect by 2021.

**Pollution**

Water pollution has been a threat to the lake.

See Our Study of Golden Pheasant/ Mountview Plants last fall.

**Algae**

See Our Study that will accompany this document.

Aside from the individual conflicts of interest between Huntsville and Mary Lake Cottagers, the brief history above points out a basic conflict between Huntsville and the cottagers. In addressing the issues this should be kept in mind. **Most agree with Huntsville’s approach to growth because of its beneficial effects.**

**The issues**

**These are my opinions. I hope that they will be expanded at our meeting.**

**The lodges:**

**Issue #1** Traditional lodges..We should encourage their participation on our boards.

**Issue #2** Large lodges…will lake organizations have any influence on them?

**Cottages and Attitude**

We should choose our disagreements carefully so as to not diminish our credibility. We should also try to build bridges and educate those who have different views from us..

**Camps**

We should not take them for granted, but should build bridges with them.

**Golf courses**

This topic was examined at our fall meeting.

**Boating**

This topic is under review. It should not be forgotten.

**Lighting**

The town has responded to this topic. The timeline is lengthy and that should be kept in mind.

**Pollution**

This topic is being resolved. Again it should be carefully monitored.

**Algae**

This topic is being examined at this time under another heading.  
Submitted

Ryan Kidd