



Dave Roberts <djgr66@gmail.com>

Open Letter to Council on 2018 Budget – Bob Lake Association

1 message

Dave Roberts <djgr66@gmail.com>

Mon, Jan 22, 2018 at 12:36 AM

To: Brent Devolin <bdevolin@mindenhills.ca>, rnesbitt@mindenhills.ca, Ischell@mindenhills.ca, janthon@mindenhills.ca, psayne@mindenhills.ca, jneville@mindenhills.ca

Cc: editor@thehighlander.ca, jenn@haliburtonpress.com, Darren Lum <darren@haliburtonpress.com>, chad@haliburtonpress.com, Mark Coleman <mcoleman@mindenhills.ca>, Ian Clendening <iclendening@mindenhills.ca>, "BLA Chair (Laurent)" <bla.ca.chair@gmail.com>

Dear Council

After reading this week's Highlander I felt compelled to respond with respect to the current budget situation and references to the Bob Lake Association's (BLA) delegation for the restoration of a public boat launch on Bob Lake. I fully understand that investment in our critical infrastructure is absolutely necessary, and that the only real source of funding is through an increase in the municipal tax levy. I completely agree with the "*time to pay the piper*" comments made by Council and others – regardless of past decisions or how the township found itself in this situation. I also commend Council for taking this course of action in an election year – it's refreshing to see difficult yet responsible decisions that stray from the "avoidance strategy" playbook. You will not get any pushback from me over this tax increase. However, I feel that the Bob Lake public boat launch is being used as a distraction in the overall budget discussions – particularly when it represents a mere one-time 0.37% portion of the proposed 2018 levy, and nothing beyond that.

I want to remind council that the BLA is not asking for a \$30K handout, but rather a \$30k investment with a significant number of benefits, not the least of which is future revenues for a significant portion of your tax base. I would encourage council to refresh themselves with the details of all the benefits outlined in our proposal. With a focus strictly on tax revenues, I want to stress that a future drop in Bob Lake property assessments resulting from no public launch is very real. Avoiding this \$30K one-time investment could easily turn into a \$30K+ annual loss in municipal taxes down the road – the sound and responsible financial decision is clear.

Further to this, there have been several articles published over the past year describing Haliburton as the "new Muskoka" - poised to be the preferred destination for lake front properties. While Bob Lake is considered to be "at capacity", there has been significant investment in property redevelopment over the past several years, with many more potential properties as this next wave of investors look to Haliburton. Turning a cabin built in the 50's into a million dollar plus cottage can be a very good thing. It represents a significant spend on permits, contractors, and building materials from local providers. It can be a benefit to the environment through improved energy efficiencies and new septic systems. Most importantly it represents a significant increase to property assessment values and resulting tax dollars for the municipality. Bob Lake is extremely attractive destination – clean water, great fishing, and only minutes away from all the amenities within the town of Minden. However, that investment on Bob Lake will not happen if people can't get a boat in the water – they'll turn to other lakes that are likely outside of Minden Hills.

Perhaps Council can look for creative ways to finance this investment. For example, the [report](#) (17-100) and [policy](#) (#113) accepted at Council's December 14 meeting covering the use of proceeds from the sale of Shoreline Road Allowances (SRA). The Township of Minden Hills collects \$40k per year on average from the sale of SRAs and has developed a policy to guide the use of those funds, one of which is to: "*Purchase land which provides the general public with opportunities for the recreational enjoyment of lakes located within the Township together with the recreational opportunities at the nearshore area of such lake*". While the Bob Lake public boat launch isn't a perfect match, it is certainly in line with the spirit of the policy – *to provide the general public with better access to our lakes for their recreational enjoyment*. Normally that would involve the purchase of land, but if you can achieve the true objective without buying land, then one could argue that Council has an elegant solution before it. We only require a modest investment in infrastructure – something that would be required for the township to achieve its objective should it need to purchase land. Qualifying the Bob Lake public launch for this program not only delivers something tangible in line with its objectives

within its first year, it also delivers on all the other benefits the BLA presented in its proposal. It also removes the launch as a distraction from the budget discussions going forward.

Lastly, we have responded to all letters published in The Highlander and Minden Times since our delegation, and have been maintaining a growing list of Questions and Answers on our website - <https://boblakeassociation.ca/boat-ramp>. We encourage the Council to familiarize themselves with this post-delegation material.

Please feel free to reach out to me directly for questions, concerns, or further discussion.

Sincerely

Dave Roberts

Bob Lake Association