

MNRF seeks public input regarding proposed Centre Lake development



By Nate Smelle

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry's Bancroft district office is calling on members of the community to comment on a proposed amendment to Crown land use policy direction of a 200-foot Crown Shoreline Reserve surrounding parts of Centre Lake in Cardiff.

The amendment, which is being sought by a group of investors identified as 9184384 Canada Inc., will allow the Crown land along the shoreline to be opened up to a development known as Granite Shores at Centre Lake. The development will consist of a total of 88 seasonal residential units.

As proposed, the Granite Shores development will include:

- ? 15 waterfront freehold lots;
- ? 13 interior freehold lots;
- ? One resort and wellness block, including one two-storey resort building with 60 suites, and one single storey spa/wellness centre;
- ? Three common element private open space blocks;
- ? One public hiking trail;
- ? One highway commercial block; and,
- ? One common element private condominium road running north-south connecting to County Road 118.

The total area of the subject lands is 431.5 hectares, however the developer has indicated that they only plan to use 115.6 hectares for the proposed seasonal cottage and commercial tourist resort development. Approximately 249.7 hectares of land will remain unchanged for now, however, the investors' long-term intent is to utilize it as a maple tree farm.

According to the MNRF, the 200-foot Crown shoreline reserve was originally established in front of lands sold under the Mining Act in the 1950s. Although the reserve overlaps a 66-foot municipal shore road allowance that starts at the high-water mark, the proposed land use amendment would not apply to this portion of the land because it is under the jurisdiction of the Municipality of Highlands East.

Steven Megannety is the public engagement manager for 9184384 Canada Inc. He said the project is currently in Stage-1 of "a long process to get approval for the development."

Megannety said the investors addressed concerns regarding the potential environmental impact of the Granite Shores development with a series of reports that can be found on their website at: <https://letstalkcentrelake.ca/granite-shores>.

In December of 2020, 9184384 Canada Inc., hired Palmer Environmental Consulting Group Inc. to complete an Environmental Impact Study. The study concluded that the proposed development is "environmentally feasible" as long as a series of mitigation measures are implemented. These measures include:

- ? The limits of tree and vegetation removal within the 30 metre buffer and across the wetland is to be clearly flagged and delineated to minimize removals.
- ? Sediment and erosion control fencing must be installed prior to any works.
- ? Vegetation clearing is to be completed between Oct. 1 and March 31 to avoid impacts to wildlife.
- ? Specific mitigation and protection measures for specific species should be followed.
- ? Vegetate any disturbed areas by planting and seeding preferably with native trees, shrubs or grasses and cover such areas with mulch to prevent erosion and to help seeds germinate. If there is insufficient time remaining in the growing season, the site should be stabilized (e.g., cover exposed areas with erosion control blankets to keep the soil in place and prevent erosion) and vegetated the following spring.
- ? Use untreated materials (e.g., cedar, tamarack, hemlock, rocks, plastic, etc.) as supports for dock and boardwalk structures that will be submerged in water (Treated lumber may contain compounds that can be released into the water and become toxic to the aquatic environment).

In addition, due to the deeper organic soils in this area and the sub-surface and surface water flows to the west, the study acknowledges that the developers must ensure that the driveway accessing the site is designed to maintain the hydrological function and conveyance of water through use of course, aggregate for the roadbed (to maintain sub-surface flows) and culverts (to maintain surface flows). Furthermore, it states that the culverts need to be oversized to allow for passage of smaller wildlife; and, that construction is to be completed during drier or frozen conditions to minimize disturbance

to flows and adjacent areas.

"All regulations, protective measures, mitigation strategies and restrictions both during the development stages and operations will be carefully woven into the planning and execution of those plans," Megannety said.

"We firmly believe that the plans for this development are public goods allowing more people to enjoy the lake and surrounding lands."

As part of the approval process, Megannety said Granite Shores at Centre Lake developers must also consult with local First Nations.

Noting how the investors began consultations with the Curve Lake First Nation nearly three years ago, he said have been discussing potential opportunities for their participation in the maple products aspect of the project.

Megannety said they are also discussing the possibility of widening the trail network to include access to teaching opportunities for traditional healing education. He said they have also offered them part of the proposed commercial block for their use.

"We have have sought input from 10 First Nations communities as part of the Crown reserve discussions as mandated by provincial legislation," said Megannety.

"We remain open for any and all questions, comments or suggestions on the proposed

development."

As a resident of the municipality and the president of the Paudash Lake Conservation Association, Mike Thomas has a vested interest in protecting the environment from developments that could pose a threat to people's quality of life. On June 20, he submitted a letter to Highlands East council voicing the

association's opposition to the Granite Shores development.

In the letter, Thomas told council that the PLCA is not against development, or activities that will improve the lives of both permanent and seasonal residents of Highlands East. Casting doubt on the municipality's need for such a development in such an ecologically significant and sensitive ecosystem, he said Centre Lake is a rare undisturbed treasure in Highlands East and Haliburton County that provides economic value, as well as mental and physical health activities for residents and visitors.

"We are recommending that a precautionary principled approach be taken to this issue," stated Thomas.

"Paudash Lake does not want to be the septic tank for what may get flushed down from Centre Lake via Deer Creek. Shoreline protection is already an important topic in Haliburton County as you well know?Highlands East council already supports a Shoreline Preservation Bylaw for the county, which is currently being reviewed."

Pointing out how the developers have stated that the development will go ahead regardless of whether or not the MNRF approves their application to remove the protective status of the Crown Shoreline

Reserve, Thomas said the municipality can "keep this public shoreline in public hands" while still acquiring the economic benefits the project could generate.

Information on the land use amendment is available on MNRF's Crown Land Use Policy Atlas at: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/crown-land-use-policy-atlas> under Amendment 2020-004. The MNRF invites the public to submit comments on the proposed amendment up until Friday, June 25. For more information on the proposed amendment, to submit comments, or to request further notice, contact MNRF regional planner Pauline Capelle at: Pauline.Capelle@Ontario.ca; 705-761-5633; or, 300

Water Street, 4th Floor South, Peterborough, ON, K9J 3C7.

Bancroft This Week contacted Highlands East Mayor Dave Burton regarding the proposed Granite Shores at Centre Lake development, however, did not receive a response as of press time on Tuesday.