

## Report on Talpines FOCA membership 2020-1

I attended two virtual meetings of FOCA (Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations) on behalf of Talpines in the past year. These meetings bring together representatives from many of the 500+ lake associations who are members of the association, and though we are small, our voice counts! As I have said previously, the benefits we as a group and as individual members through Talpines receive from membership are many. Take a few minutes to look at their website ([foca.on.ca](http://foca.on.ca)) and see the range of topics they cover to advocate for good stewardship of water, land and natural resources. In addition, FOCA acts as a clearing-house for information on sensitive topics like short-term rentals, septic issues and cottage occupancy during levels of Covid sanctions.

From FOCA, we can learn about invasive species, water quality, phragmites control techniques, and especially the important efforts to address the Ontario Electricity Board on upcoming changes to rural or seasonal rates. A cap on electricity distribution charges expired in 2019, and faced with increases in infrastructure supply costs, OEB suggests there could be *significant* changes ahead in pricing for seasonal users. FOCA is committed to monitoring the situation (which could be an election issue) and attempting to encourage the Ontario government to re-evaluate these dramatic rises. You can monitor FOCA's work on this issue by signing up for their e-letters (through the website).

Through FOCA seminars, we learn that Ontario is committed to enhance broadband services across underserved areas of the province, and ensure that more Ontarians don't have to sit in a library or Tim Horton's parking lot to access good connectivity.

FOCA notes one noticeable trend in "cottage country" in the last few years is a shift from seasonal cottagers, to a more settled population as many people choose to leave city living and retire in semi-rural areas. This brings a building/renovation boom, higher prices and stresses on medical systems and local services, which local governments may not yet be equipped to address.

One notable result of Covid was a dramatic increase in the number of people buying pleasure boats; unfortunately the OPP saw many inexperienced/unlicensed folks being unable to operate a boat safely, or running a boat while intoxicated, without proper safety equipment, or endangering the safety of others and the environment with personal watercraft.

I encourage all members of Talpines to check out FOCA's website at [foca.on.ca](http://foca.on.ca) and have a look at the list of resources they offer, from insurance discounts to seminars on cottage succession planning and monitoring the impacts of the dramatic rise in cottage country property and pleasure boat sales. Also, as previously mentioned, do sign up for their eletters, which deliver timely and useful info to your computer/phone.

Christine Hurlbut-Carelse