



POSITION STATEMENT

DATE: September 23, 2016
SUBJECT: Public Access
STATUS: PUBLIC

BACKGROUND

early 2015, the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg Council (MODL) made public their decision to explore options for making Sherbrooke Lake accessible to the public. Sherbrooke Lake is located between both municipalities with shoreline in the Forties on the Municipality of the District of Chester (MODC) side.

MODL appointed a Committee to investigate options and engage the public. Monthly meetings began in May 2015 with representation from surrounding property owners from both sides as well as MODL staff and a councillor from each municipality. Tina Connors, District 6, represented MODC. Only community members on the Committee had the ability to vote.

After a process that included public meetings, a series of open houses, focus groups on both sides of the border, surveys and property research, the Committee submitted a report and recommendation to MODL Council which included both the type of access and public use that should be considered by MODL as well as a recommendation on site selection. A decision was made by MODL to acquire land on Sherbrooke Lake to provide for public access/use. The location was kept in camera at the MODL Council table because of land purchase negotiations, and MODC was only later informed that the property acquired is within our municipality and was purchased through private sale.

CURRENT SITUATION

MODC is both surprised and discouraged that MODL purchased land in our municipality to provide public access to Sherbrooke Lake without discussing the same with us first. We have expressed our disappointment in MODL's decision-making process that deliberately excluded collaboration or consultation with MODC in the selection of this site. While the details of the other options were not made known to MODC, it is understood the site chosen by MODL was not the only option available: there were other possible options within MODL.

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MODL has made lake access a focus because their residents have indicated that it is a priority. However, the issue of access has not been brought forth to our Council by our residents. Unfortunately, this is a MODL priority being solved in MODC, where such a park does not align with our residents' wishes nor our priorities for public lands. Clearly from MODC's perspective, MODC should have been consulted prior to any decision to acquire this land as it has implications for MODC.

POSITION

MODC Council understands the value and importance of public lands and access to our waterways. We are responsive to our communities when such issues come forth to our Council. While it is unfortunate that MODC was not asked to participate in the process of site selection, our efforts will now focus on representing our residents in any decisions that occur respecting public access and use of this site, and to put mechanisms in place to mitigate any impacts to our residents. It's unknown at this time how MODL will proceed with development of the park, but we will endeavour to alleviate any negative effects.