



Owners' and Residents' Association of Lake Bernard
L'Association des propriétaires et résidents du lac Bernard

May 5, 2020

The honourable Mathieu Lacombe
Minister responsible for the Outaouais Region
Ministre responsable de la région de l'Outaouais
564, avenue de Buckingham
Gatineau
(Quebec) J8L 2H1

Dear Minister Lacombe,

On behalf of the Owners' and Residents' Association of Lake Bernard, I would like to express our serious concerns about the continuing travel restrictions keeping non-residents from accessing their properties in Quebec.

We understand why your government had to take measures weeks ago, as the number of COVID-19 cases were rising in Ottawa and this was deemed necessary to prevent new cases from rising in the Gatineau area.

But now that the data has changed, we firmly believe a travel ban between Ottawa and the Gatineau areas is no longer warranted.

As of May 1, 2020, Ottawa's Medical Officer of Health Dr. Vera Etches declared the city as being officially in the "post-peak period" in terms of community transmission of COVID-19. She based her decision on the fact that less people are being hospitalized. Furthermore, as of May 2, no new cases had been reported since the end of April with the exception of outbreaks in retirement homes, long-term care and nursing homes.

Meanwhile, in Montreal it's a different story. The state of emergency was extended on May 2, as the city continues to be the epicentre of the COVID-19 outbreak in Quebec with nearly 15,000 cases. And yet, Montrealers will be allowed to visit their Laurentian properties when travel restrictions are lifted? We fail to understand why the travel ban remains for the Ottawa-Gatineau region when the data doesn't support this measure.

Most property owners at Lac Bernard live less than two hours from their property. A trip to our property by car need not involve any stops. A restriction on visiting stores might be justified but a restriction on a non-stop trip is not.

Each day, literally thousands of people cross the bridges separating Ottawa and Gatineau in both directions to go to work. These people mingle with coworkers and other residents.

There is therefore no effective protection being afforded by stopping the smaller number who wish to travel to their properties.

Why are we writing this letter to you? Because this is still a democracy. Even in an emergency, the rights of citizens and taxpayers must be respected and restrictions justified. Ultimately, elected officials must be held accountable and give oversight on emergency measures. But especially restrictive measures such as this must make sense. The continued closure of the Ontario/Quebec border cannot be justified based on the facts outlined earlier.

When the time comes to reopen, you can count on our support and cooperation. We offer to work with other lake associations in the Gatineau area to communicate key information and guidance to all members -- including travel restrictions and not shopping or stopping in Quebec on our way to our properties.

We would like to converse with you to explore ways in which we can regain access to our properties. Rick Soderstrom, Association Executive member, will follow up shortly to arrange a meeting with you. In the meantime, he can be reached at 613-230-5865.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Gaye Moffett', written in dark ink.

Gaye Moffett
President
C.P. 1262, Succursale C
Gatineau QC J8X 3X7
www.lacbernard.ca