

## **MUSKOKA GROUP ANNOUNCES RECORD SURVEY PARTICIPATION AND NEW FINDINGS ABOUT BOATERS**

*Results show direct link between enjoyment of the lakes and perceptions of noise and safety*

Toronto, Aug 26, 2017 – Community advocacy group Safe Quiet Lakes conducted one of the largest lake life and boating surveys in North America this summer in cooperation with more than twenty-five Muskoka region lake and resident associations. The report shows a direct correlation between enjoyment of cottage country and the perceptions of safety on the water and noise issues. The survey was conducted by ERIN Research during June and July 2017 and had more than three thousand respondents - a 44% increase over the original study that was conducted in 2013.

The survey found virtually all cottagers, residents and visitors love life on and near the water, including swimming and appreciating the sounds of nature. More than 93 per cent of respondents feel strongly that that all Muskoka residents and visitors have a responsibility to protect the natural beauty of the region for future generations. Approximately, 98% of respondents own one or more boat. Canoes are still the most common type of boat but kayaks, paddleboards and powerboats of many kinds and sizes are rapidly gaining in popularity.

More than half of respondents feel that the Muskoka lakes and waterways are busier and noisier than four years ago and that excessive wakes have become more of an issue. The three most frequently mentioned problems in 2017 are all associated with unsafe and inconsiderate boating:

- Boat noise, especially from personal watercraft
- Boat wakes
- Boats operated at high speeds, especially when close to shore

Although respondents feel that boat traffic has increased, their overall perceptions of safety have remained steady since 2013.

Dr. George Spears, one of the principals of ERIN Research said “Respondents told us about their love for the lakes in no uncertain terms and they also told us there are things that they believe need to improve. Most prominently, since 2013 there has been a 10 per cent increase in support for education and communication about responsible boating.”

The survey found that there are widely varying levels of support for solutions that have been commonly proposed.

- 72% support more education and communication
- 71% support no wake zones to protect people and wildlife in sensitive areas
- 67% support frequent and consistent enforcement of laws about illegal above water exhausts
- 62% support stronger enforcement of boating while under the influence, and establishing decibel limits on noise made by boats

“The survey was created to allow cottagers and residents to have their say on important lake issues,” said Frances Carmichael, chair of Safe Quiet Lakes. “The principal focus of our organization is to encourage and maintain a culture of respect on the lakes. The results show that we need more and better education and communication and probably some changes to enforcement and policies to get us there.”

### **About Safe Quiet Lakes**

Safe Quiet Lakes is a not-for-profit community group that brings together stakeholders who care about the lakes to identify and implement solutions. The group promotes;

- Safe, respectful boating and the adoption of the [Safe Quiet Lakes Boater's Code](#)
- The preservation of the positive lake community culture in the Muskoka region through respectful and safe shared use of our waterways

Each year Safe Quiet Lakes conducts a summer-long awareness and safety campaign in cooperation and with support from the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP).

Follow us @SafeQuietLakes on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter and read the full survey report on our website at <http://safequiet.ca/>

**For more information or to book an interview:**

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