

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Paul Conchatre - MLOA President

You will find a story in this magazine about the Manitoba Wildlife Federation's campaign against spotlighting, and as the MLOA president I would like to make it abundantly clear that the MLOA supports this campaign.

Operating in rural Manitoba, spotlighting is something that many of our members have unfortunately come across, and I'm sure many of them could tell you stories about personal

brushes with spotlighters or the marks they've left on their local landscapes and wildlife populations.

We acknowledge and fully respect that indigenous hunters have the right to hunt at night "where it's safe to do so," but where is that line? Not all night hunting is creating equal. There is a big difference between calling a moose by moonlight in the remote wilderness and driving around gravel roads at night shining a light into farm fields so you can get some meat to sell on the black market. I don't know anyone,

including most indigenous people, who would consider the second example safe or ethical. Spotlighters also have an impact on wildlife populations, leaving many animals to rot because they can't find them in the dark, or shooting them like fish in a barrel as they stand blinded by the spotlight. As operators who rely on healthy wildlife populations and a safe environment for our clients to hunt in, spotlighting is a one-two punch that we as business owners cannot accept.

The spotlighting question came up during our political debate at the MLOA convention in December, and we got a few different answers. We heard that the law already differentiates between safe and unsafe night hunting and it's therefore an enforcement issue, but we respectfully disagree as I don't think that line is clear to anyone in Manitoba. We also heard that the law won't change without working in consultation with indigenous hunters, and fair enough. That is apparently how Saskatchewan succeeded in banning spotlighting in much of their province. We support the idea of government asking the First Nations and Metis communities to help define what kinds of night hunting should and should not be allowed, but we urge them to get down to this task immediately. This needs to be addressed now.

Paul Conchatre
Owner, Birdtail Waterfowl
MLOA President

FROM THE STAND



Executive Director - Paul Turenne

There is a provincial election happening in Manitoba this spring. Of course we all know that, but what we don't know is who will come out on top and what that will mean for the province's future direction.

The pollsters, naturally, have a pretty good idea who might win, but as the most-used political soundbite of all time will tell you, "the only poll that matters is the one on election day."

We, as the MLOA, do not endorse any one particular party or candidate, and we're certainly not going to

suggest to our members whom they should vote for. Voting is a very personal experience and we trust that you're all well-informed enough to make your own decisions anyway.

That being said, we've done our best to make sure Manitoba's political parties are aware of the issues that affect the province's tourism industry, fish and wildlife populations, small business climate, and rural and northern land use planning, among other

issues. At our recent convention, for example, we hosted a political debate that featured candidates from all four recognized parties in Manitoba (NDP, Liberal, PC and Green), including a former Conservation Minister, the current Conservation critic, and one party leader.

The debate served a dual purpose. It allowed our members to hear responses from all four parties to questions that were hardly softballs, including on treaty land entitlement, anti-hunting activists, spotlighting, vendor commissions, and shared land access with indigenous hunters and anglers. But the secondary purpose of that debate was to get these issues on the radar of all the political parties in an election year. Of course we hold regular meetings with the governing ministers, opposition critics, and the less-public but equally important backroom policy staff throughout every year, but a little reminder during an election year that these issues are important to us is never a bad thing.

The reality is this election will be won and lost in Winnipeg – such are our province's demographics – so wildlife and northern policy issues are unlikely to be splashed across the headlines. But all the parties will have to address them at least somehow, so listen closely to what they have to say.

Paul Turenne
Executive Director
Manitoba Lodges and Outfitters Association