

Cottage-Closing Time Checklist from FOCA

Cottages and summer homes are **most vulnerable to thieves and subject to damage or vandalism in the off-season**—from the week following Thanksgiving to the weeks prior to Victoria Day—especially if the owners are not using them regularly in the fall, winter or spring.

With the Labour Day weekend finished, many cottage and seasonal property owners now begin to consider the closure and winterizing of their properties. **The Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations (FOCA)** wants to help you protect your investment, year-round.

Remember, the cost of owning a cottage or summer property could include the frustration and irritation of repairing damage and replacing stolen property, if no one is living there or checking it regularly.

If you own a cottage or other rural seasonal property, it's time to consider the following:

- Secure your windows and doors. Close window curtains or blinds, and put up shutters to protect the interior from marauders (animal or human).
- Leave no valuables at the cottage (electronics, personal items, tools) unless you're prepared to lose them. Lock up sporting goods that you decide must stay year-round (fishing rods & equipment, water skis, toys). Record the serial numbers of anything of value left behind. Marking your valuables with a drivers' license # can help deter a thief or aid in property recovery.
- Remove all food, and anything that may attract animals.
- Pack up and take home all alcohol.
- Don't leave firearms or weapons at the cottage.

ADDITIONAL END-OF-SEASON TIPS:

- If you are leaving vehicles, boats, ATVs or snow machines, make sure they're winterized and secure. Leave nothing on trailers unless it is locked or disabled.
- Designate a year-round contact or key-holder for: alarms, thefts, weather damage or animal problems.
- Make a list of where everything is and make copies. Store one copy on your home computer and put a copy with items that will go back up to the cottage on your next trip.
- If you have propane appliances make sure they are properly shut down.
- Drain all water pipes, water heaters and fixtures, to avoid freezing.
- Defrost and unplug the refrigerator.

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- Make sure your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are working properly (replace if necessary) and ensure they have fresh batteries. You should have detectors on all floors and outside all sleeping areas.
- Place an open box of baking soda inside the refrigerator to keep odours away.
- Scatter moth balls in the attic and anywhere small animals or bugs might gather.
- Cover windows with shades for storm protection and theft prevention.
- Check your property insurance to ensure the coverage you have in place is adequate and appropriate for your needs. Get a competitive quote from [Cade Associates Insurance Brokers Ltd.](#) by calling **1-416-234-9980**; remember that FOCA members get a discount!
- Organize snow removal if it will be required over the winter.
- Know which police force patrols your cottage area (which OPP Detachment and their phone number). Set up a network of neighbors to prevent and detect crime in your area, know your neighbours, their movements and vehicles, and connect with the local OPP detachment. Watching out for suspicious activity in and around your neighbours' property can go a long way to lowering the incidence of property crime. Visit www.foca.on.ca/Resource-Kit for more information.

REMEMBER THESE FINAL TIPS AT END-OF-SEASON:

- If you haven't yet, pay your annual cottage association dues now. Do it now before the year has passed. These local groups are the backbone of your lake community and your support is what helps keep them going!
- Sign up for free **FOCA Elerts** – these informative monthly email bulletins keep you abreast of important cottage issues year-round. FOCA believes every property owner has the right to be kept up to date about issues that could affect their investment. To get Elerts, go online to the FOCA website www.foca.on.ca and add your email address where you see the red "Sign Up" box.

The **Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations (FOCA)** is the province-wide voice for the cottager. FOCA is a not-for-profit, voluntary organization representing 500 waterfront property owners' associations with a combined **membership of 50,000 rural Ontario households**. Since 1963, FOCA has been a leader in advocating for environmental sustainability and stewardship, community leadership and public safety.

Find out more at www.foca.on.ca.