

Live in a Muskoka Bay home, where the outdoors is always in view.



Fore the fun of it

In a recreational community, tee time is anytime — heads up!

By Jack Kohane

Allan Lever and his girlfriend, Sherry Hetteema, know a thing or two about beauty. He makes his living developing beauty products; she's a fashion retail buyer with an eye for what sells. And when they viewed the artist's renderings of the Muskoka Bay Club lofts, they were enthralled.

"We checked out condos in the city, but the moment we walked into the Muskoka Bay sales office, we were sold," says Mr. Lever, 56, over the phone from his Yorkville residence. Not planning to retire just yet, the big appeal for the couple is the new golf community's social scene. "Not being into the usual cottage stuff of mowing grass or working on a boat, I think owning property

with small-town Ontario charm and urban amenities is way cool," Mr. Lever says.

A massive development, eventually totalling about 1,000 homes built by Freed Development, Muskoka Bay Club (muskokabayclub.com) lies on 850 acres marked by steep cliffs and the primal woodlands around Gravenhurst. The allure here, Ms. Hetteema says, is all-seasons amenities: scenic trails for hiking and biking, tennis courts, an infinity-edge swimming pool, and in winter, skiing, skating and snowshoeing. "Autumn will be dazzling for a hike into the colourful foliage," she says.

The initial phase of Muskoka Bay, consisting of detached family homes and villas

located along a Doug Carrick-designed 18-hole golf course (or backing on to a forested ravine), range from approximately 1,350 square feet to more than 4,000 sq. ft., and priced from about \$470,000 to more than \$1-million. The two- and three-bedroom homes (with second-level loft option) feature nine-foot ceilings, oak stairs, kitchens with granite countertops and stainless steel appliances.

Sited within the golf course, and ranging from about \$460,000 to more than \$600,000 (1,350 sq. ft. to more than 2,200 sq. ft.), villas offer an open-concept layout, stone fireplaces and wood ceilings. Owners may also participate in Muskoka Bay Club's



Deerhurst's golf course offers quintessential cottage-country views.

Play and Stay rental reservation program.

The couple chose the development's largest loft, a 1,040-sq.-ft, two-bedroom unit with two-storey windows, nine-foot ceilings, stone fireplaces and glass railings. These Phase 2 lofts start at about 820 sq.ft. and are priced from \$320,000 to about \$400,000.

The championship Muskoka Bay Club golf course — one of Canada's top 10, and the 17,000-sq.-ft. clubhouse overlooking a 100-foot cliff — makes this one of the hottest recreational communities in the province. The club offers an indoor-outdoor bistro, wraparound terrace, pro shop, tennis courts, a fitness centre and spa.

"The clubhouse will be the hub of hospitality and the centre of our social life when we're here," Mr. Lever says.

"These homes may be in cottage country, but they offer features desired by downtown dwellers," remarks Peter Freed, sitting in his glassed office near the CN Tower. In fact, he notes most Muskoka Bay Club buyers are from the city. "Many don't know their city neighbours, but there's a great camaraderie in a golf community," Mr. Freed explains. "Maybe it's the air or

the breathtaking scenery, but a sense of relief sets in as soon as one arrives here."

Popping up across the province, golf communities are taking on the semblance of upscale resorts and five-star hotels. Among the magnets attracting buyers are on-site spas, proximity to beaches, marinas, shopping and nature preserves.

"The big plus of a golf community is stress-free living," Mr. Freed says. "Everything you could possibly need is right there, including fine dining." Muskoka Bay Club has two dining spots: The Clifftop Bar & Grill and the Muskoka Room at the clubhouse.

Harley Nakelsky, spokesman for the new Deerhurst Summit Lodges, three-storey condos just launched at Muskoka's famed Deerhurst Resort (deerhurstresort.com), agrees that golf communities are the "in" thing. "For young families, a country condo is an opportunity to have a getaway without the maintenance headaches," he says. "The over-60 Boomers can sell their city homes and invest in a cottage property for later retirement. These communities make sense for various demographics."

Deerhurst Summit Lodges (there are five, four-storey buildings, featuring 120 renovated units) are priced from \$150,000, and are all one-bedroom, one-bathroom units plus balcony with a kitchen. Each unit's TV, fireplace and appliance designs will be chosen by The Design Agency .

The site has two 18-hole courses, the Deerhurst Highlands (par 72) skirting near-by Peninsula Lake and Deerhurst Lakeside (par 64), plus a golf academy and programs including children's golf and Kids Play Free.

Toronto-based Skyline — the developer behind Le Meridian King Edward, the Cosmopolitan Hotel Toronto and The Pantages Hotel — which recently purchased Deerhurst Resort, offers Skyline (an umbrella for seven different clubs), allowing members access to skiing and golfing, among other perks. "First-time buyers of Summit Lodges will have a Skyline membership [cost is \$25,000] included with their purchase," Mr. Nakelsky says.

Cobble Beach Golf Links and Residences, a collection of Energy Star-certified bungalows with loft and single-detached homes by Reid's Heritage Homes, (priced from the

Ballantry's Lochness Links in the Niagara region; prime location for golf, theatre, wine tours and more.



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mid-\$300s), is a new 574-acre waterfront village just northwest of Owen Sound on Georgian Bay (cobblebeachgolflinks.com). In addition to its 18-hole golf course and geothermally heated and cooled 30,000-sq.-ft. clubhouse, the development affords four-seasons activities, such as hiking on the Bruce Trail and downhill skiing at nearby Blue Mountain and Beaver Valley.

Welland's Lochness Links is a Ballantry Homes-built adult lifestyle community in one of the Niagara region's premiere golf facilities (theresidencesatlochnesslinks.com), offering single detached 1,245-sq.-ft. to

more-than-2,700-sq.-ft. homes (starting at about \$315,000), and 1,120 to 1,555-sq.-ft. villa townhomes (from \$270,000).

"A low maintenance fee [means that] lawn cutting and snow shovelling are a thing of the past," says Mark Lawrence, Ballantry's director of sales and marketing. "We encourage our residents to relax and spend their free time pursuing hobbies and other leisurely pursuits." To do just that, he points to the area's non-golf activities: charming Niagara-on-the-Lake and the Shaw Festival Theatre, a myriad award-winning wineries and about 1,000 kilometres of bicycle

and walking trails. "Buyers from Toronto, Mississauga, Oakville and Burlington are attracted to Lochness Links Residences because they want to stay near those cities," he explains. "For the most part, they're buying a retirement property with a recreational component."

Though only an occasional golfer, Mr. Lever feels he has a winner in his Muskoka Bay dream home in the country. "I like that our loft is a chip shot away from the green," he says with a smile. "After a week of jangled city living, we'll enjoy this hassle-free lifestyle every weekend we can." **PH**