

Green Column: Trees... An endangered species

By Cindy Saucier
Special to the Villager

A Planet Releaf Youth Action Workshop took place in Toronto on April 8. Participants spent the morning learning about critical forest issues in Canada such as logging, climate effects on forests and rapid biodiversity loss. With this knowledge, participants learned how to be better forest stewards in their communities and to speak out for forests.

We need to speak out about our local forests. They are rapidly disappearing in our Township at an alarming rate. We can't possibly replace the trees lost. We are presently sitting at about 24% tree coverage in our Township and a minimum of 30% is recommended to sustain wildlife. Speaking of wildlife, where are they to go? Deer that cross regularly into a woodlot on Eadie Rd. are being forced out. This is when problems with wildlife occur and more get hit by automobiles or end up in someone's back yard. I hate to think about all the spring babies that might have recently been displaced. This is when animals like coyotes, fox, etc. become a "nuisance".

The South Nation Conservation Authority issued a report in early spring stating their concerns about the forests in Prescott-Russell. Clarence-Rockland enacted a bylaw in 2005, prohibiting clear-cutting in parts of the municipality. We need to introduce something similar in our own Township.

Ottawa has a tree bylaw

where residential trees cannot be cut unless they are dead, damaged or diseased. A tree has to be causing a problem and cannot be cut just because we are tired of it, especially if they are over 50 centimetres.

Nation Mayor, Denis Pommanville, advocates regulations that would oblige developers to offset the effects of clear-cutting. Developers should be made to 're-green' an area and also keep a certain percentage of green space in a development. This is not happening here, but Mayor

Ken Hill indicated he has concerns. Parks should be a priority for developers, with natural vegetation, xeriscaping, shrubbery, and living fences such as hedges. If 50 acres is cleared, then 50 acres should be replanted. A stick tree on the front lawn just doesn't suffice.

Trees protect water quality and purify water, prevent erosion, offer shade that cools, protect us from UV rays, purify air by giving off oxygen and reduce carbon dioxide. One tree produces a day's oxygen for a family of

four. One hectare of trees removes up to 6.5 tonnes of carbon dioxide each year. Trees provide wind-breaks and prevent snow drifting. They increase property value and improve our sense of well-being and protect wildlife.

The City of Ottawa has

a division called, Ottawa Forests and Greenspace Advisory Committee; we need this here. We were all horrified during the ice storm every time we heard a tree crack and fall, but now we turn a blind eye when trees are falling every few seconds. It's like

a scene out of the movie Avatar. You've all heard that song lyric, "If a tree falls in the forest, does anybody hear?" by Bruce Cockburn - it is time we heard loud and clear.

If you too are concerned, contact me at: dandycin@hotmail.com