

Clear-cutting dominates annual GFA meeting in Alexandria

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ALEXANDRIA - A discussion of clear-cutting and its impact on farming drew more than 50 area farmers to attend the Glengarry Federation of Agriculture's (GFA) annual general meeting, which was held in Alexandria on September 30.

According to GFA president Paul Vogel, it was the largest turnout the meeting had ever had, due, he said, to a potential change in municipal by-laws which is expected to impact clear-cutting legislation.

"This is a huge issue for farmers in Eastern Ontario," said Vogel who operates a 2,200-pig swine operation near Strathmore.

"As farmers we understand the need for trees, but we also have to be able to put a crop in."

Vogel, GFA members and many farmers spoke-out at the meeting about their fear that public pressure may force Glengarry councilors to pass a clear-cutting by-law.

said Vogel, who has been president of the GFA for the past five years.

"We're all here to farm, we all need to eat, but some people feel that we need to be restricted," said Vogel, noting that as land prices in Glengarry and Prescott-Russell continue to soar, hitting as much as \$20,000 an acre in the Embarras area, many farmers believe they need to use every bit of land available to them in order to make ends meet.

On August 11, South Glengarry council met and discussed the possibility of implementing clear-cutting by-laws, causing concern that North Glengarry council would soon do the same.

Ottawa lawyer Don Good addressed farmers and suggested that a complete ban on tree cutting would not be implemented in Glengarry.

"We've not yet had a public meeting about the issue," said councillor Carma Williams, "but if the need arises, we'll make sure everyone is consulted."

to hear what farmers, forest owners, and the public have to say, so that an acceptable plan be put into place should the topic hit council's agenda.

"It has not been an issue... but we would like to hear from as many people as possible to make sure whatever happens is in everyone's best interest," said North Glengarry councillor Jacques Massie.

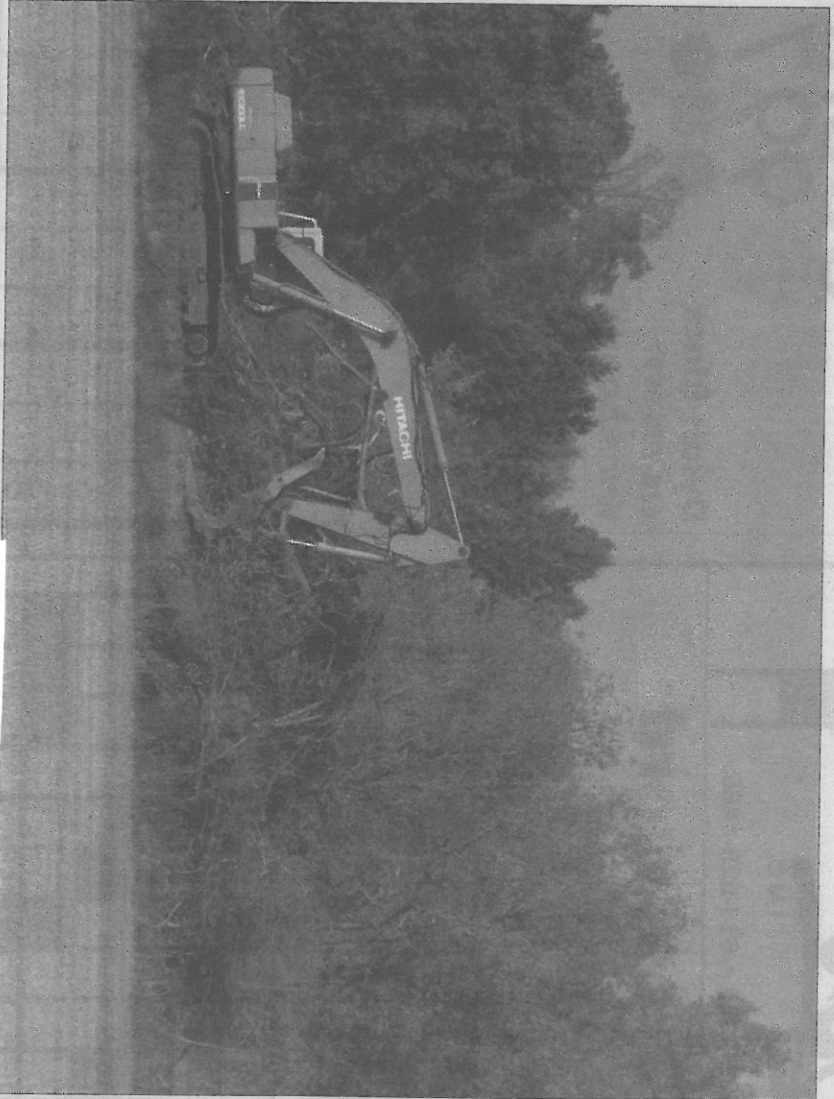
444 municipalities have recently passed by-laws that either restrict or control deforestation. Western and Central Ontario already have clear-cutting bans.

"If only people realized, that crops are good too," said Vogel, who explained that one acre of corn produces enough oxygen for 151 people for one year and that corn stocks should also be considered part of the forest cover.

"It's just not about the tree," he claims. "Crops are good for the environment too." Environmental specialist Michael Madden disagrees. Madden who holds a degree in environmental science also owns Alexandria's Lakeside Environmental consulting firm.

"Corn is one of the worst crops to put in. The production of corn makes it necessary to use huge amounts of chemicals that completely counteract any benefit corn may have had on the environment," said Madden, who suggested that the public might not completely understand what goes on, on the farm.

"People are getting upset because they see farmers clear-cutting land, leaving huge mounds of trees and brush in the middle of the field and figure they're doing nothing with the land. That they're cutting now to avoid future bans."



Madden explains why cleared land has not yet been put into crop. "Fire bans prevent anyone from burning green wood which means the piles remain there for at least two years until it's legally allowed to be burned," he explains. "Burning green wood is not good for the environment either," he states. "Unfortunately a lot of people see the piles and wonder what was the point in killing those trees if you went going to do anything with the land?"

Forest cover currently includes land under natural or planted stands of trees measuring at least five meters, whether financially productive or not and excludes tree stands in agricultural production systems (fruit plantations, gardens and trees in ur-

ban parks. Most include an process which can apply municipal an exempt proposed diversity. Oppon -cutting they are restriction posed on ers, while feel that it to act resp collectively sider the f next gener "There: en billion f world righ Vogel. "So be 9.5 billion to feed the PHOTOS: A cutting ne has rais concern. Below: Ott Don Good a full hou topic cle: by-laws. PHOTOS: LYNN