

Tree plan: Use it or reforest it

The Editor,

I am pleased to finally see some discussion (and on the front page even) of what I think is the growing problem of the clear-cutting of large sections of our countryside.

On my short, two-kilometre road there have been six large areas clear cut in the past five years. One 200-acre clearing has sat idle for two years now, with no effort to do any basic clearing once the land was harvested of its prime lumber. This has angered us as well as some of our farming neighbours.

Any brief tour of North Glengarry will reveal land that has been cleared of trees suitable for chips or lumber and then left in all its ugliness. As an example, take a look at the decimated 200 acres on the corner of County Road 24 and Concession 8, and then talk to those who live nearby. Council (so far treading very lightly on this issue for fear of the Landowners Association) could begin to exercise some control over this expanding process.

One of our neighbours, a successful farmer, has made the following suggestion: If someone clear cuts a piece of land and does not prepare it for agricultural use within two years, then they should be obligated to replant the area, much the same as the forest industry in British Columbia is required to do. Similarly, if land unsuitable for agricultural purposes is clear-cut, that owner should be required to replant with new trees. I would think that all farmers would embrace this modest proposal.

As a former urbanite and non-farmer, it is difficult to enter into this discussion without being dismissed (as in the tone of the recent *News* article) as a tree-hugging, city boy who knows nothing about what difficulties farmers face in their efforts to make a decent living.

Well, I have lived here for 25 years and made what I consider to be a substantial effort to contribute to this community. I grew up in a small farming community much like North Glengarry. I value enormously the work of our farmers, many of whom are my friends and neighbours, and who are, after all, the primary economic generators of this community.

I do feel that I, and other non-farmers, have the right to enter into this discussion without being dismissed as being unsympathetic to the rights of farmers to control their own land.

I know that this is a controversial and complicated issue. I also

know that this is an election year. This should be a subject for open discussion by Council and those running for Council.

This should be a subject where all are welcome to the exchange of opinion, whether recent "city folk from away" or lifetime resi-

dents, farmers and non-farmers alike. After all, as Rob MacDonald was quoted in the *News* article, "We are just renting this land from our kids."

My farming neighbour, angry about the clearcutting, expressed a similar sentiment when he

declared, "We have a responsibility to the land and the environment that goes beyond our own small patch of land."

Let's keep the discussion going. Make it public and open to all.

**Bill Gilsdorf, Bush Road,
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