



Illustration by Connor Saucier

# The GREEN Column

## School board selling property with 50 trees

A double lot on Craig Street with approximately 50 trees is for sale by the Upper Canada District School Board.

It is considered surplus property. The permit is to sever the land into two properties.

From a monetary resource, I understand this, but from an environmental perspective and the fact that this township is sitting well below the recommended rate of 30 per cent tree coverage just to sustain wildlife, I am very concerned. I am also concerned because this would be an excellent outdoor educational facility for the school children. Many children have special needs, and a tranquil place such as this would be beneficial. Riviere de Castor School in Embrun just won an award at the Tri-Valley Conservation Awards Gala held in April. Teacher Joyce Chartrand helped build a treed area behind the school with a pathway and benches and the property in question would be very similar.

Does it not make sense to educate children about the value of trees instead of having these mature trees all come down without any remorse or concern about their value?

Russell Township has seen the devastation of loss of tree cover, particularly over the last 10 years. More and more development, and even hedge rows on farm



This parcel of land on Craig St., is for sale by the Upper Canada District School Board, being named as surplus. The tract also backs onto the soccer field of Russell Public School and sees a high rate of pedestrian traffic.

fields have been disappearing. Trees combat global warming, protect the soil, are water and air purifiers, provide oxygen, offer shade, are homes to wildlife, act as buffers, stop soil erosion, are wind breaks, help pollination and actually can increase crop yields. Trees offer privacy and actually increase property value. If you drive through a tree-lined neighbourhood it is appealing to the eye and soothing to the soul. There are very few tree lined streets in our Township where you get shade as you walk and any mature trees need to be protected. Some people will cut a tree just because they are tired of it or they do not want to rake leaves. Some tree cutting businesses will convince a homeowner that the tree COULD cause property damage and down it comes.

Cutting trees in the spring is not a good idea as birds are nesting.

South Nation Conservation gave this Township a D rating on tree coverage and water quality due to the loss of trees near our waterway (riparian cover). We are sitting around 12 per cent tree coverage and we are heading to desert-like conditions. Properties in some sub-divisions do not allow for trees to be planted because they are so close together or do not have deep frontage. South Nation Conservation also offers woodlot advisory experts to help maintain and manage woodlots. This does not mean some trees can't be harvested but it is managing woodlots in a sustainable manner. Clarence-Rockland has a clear-cutting by-law and Nation is considering the same. Perhaps,

we need to look at some conservation methods here. Ottawa has an urban tree by-law where a tree cannot be cut unless it is diseased, dying, dead or dangerous. Trees over 10 cms. (on properties greater than one hectare) require a permit. On properties one hectare or less, it requires a tree permit to removed distinctive trees which are 50 cms. in diameter or greater.

Many of the trees on the school property are over 10 cms. in diameter and some over 50 cms. The city of Ottawa passed their by-law in 2009.

There have been many songs and movies about trees. Bruce Cockburn (If a tree falls in the forest, does anybody hear?), Joni Mitchell (they put all the trees in a tree museum and charged the people a dollar and a half just to see them; they paved paradise and put up a parking lot), Avatar, Lord of the Rings, Fern Gully, to name a few. A community is only as strong as its roots. We need to start valuing and respecting our trees.