

Residents push for clear-cutting bylaw at meeting

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VANKLEEK HILL – The Mayor of Champlain Township says council is concerned about clear-cutting in the municipality, but won't rush to pass any bylaws. "We've looking at our options," said Mayor Gary Barton at a regular council meeting on Wednesday. "That's all I can tell you."

Council decided it will send a letter to Glengarry-Prescott-Russell MPP Grant Crack, asking for a provincial solution, and Barton encouraged concerned individuals to do the same.

"The province really has to grasp hold of this," he said. "The province of Quebec was able to do it, surely we can do it here too."

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GPR MPP Grant Crack

But MPP Grant Crack says he will not advocate for provincial regulation of clear-cutting. "My personal opinion is I believe landowners have the right to harvest the wood that's on their property, for whatever reason, whether it's for financial gain, or as I said to transform into agricultural land," he told The Review on Monday. Crack said he faced a similar issue when he was a mayor in North Glengarry, and his opinion hasn't changed since. "I believe that private property landowners, if they are fortunate enough to have a woodlot, and they are considering transforming that into agricultural land, I think that is their privilege, that's their right to be able to do so."

"I'm scared we'll have no water": council hears from residents

Andy Perreault, who has been protesting clear-cutting by standing with a sign by the side of Highway 34 south of Vankleek Hill, made a presentation at Champlain Township's meeting on Wednesday. While he's attracted a lot of attention to recently-cleared land south of Vankleek Hill, Perreault says he's standing at that spot in particular because it's on a busy road. I go there to be visible," he said, and added clear-cutting is going on everywhere. "I have people stop and say, I live here and there, and it's gone."

Perreault said he's worried about wildlife and groundwater. "If our wells go dry, you can't sell a house without water. We're in a fragile state right now."

Marsha Howes, a resident of Vankleek Hill whose farm is beside a gravel-pit which was recently cleared, also spoke at the meeting. "Next spring, I'm scared we'll have no water," she said. Howes asked why, since people in Champlain need permits for other activities, it couldn't be the same for land clearing.

The municipality is in a difficult situation, replied Barton. "I sit here, and listen to you, and I understand your situation, and I'm very concerned," he