

Ban on clear-cutting not the answer

TO THE EDITOR:

After watching the spectacle surrounding tree cutting over the last few weeks and months, I was tempted to write a cutting (pun intended) letter but I shall refrain. The issues involved in this and a number of recent occurrences in our, and neighbouring, municipalities are too important.

As a first step, I wish to congratulate the Council of Champlain for not playing hero and trying to cure a complex ailment with a simple bylaw. There is more to it than trees and wildlife. What we are witnessing is the urban population, who as a group have made little investment in land or livestock, trying to exert effective control over behaviour of the rural population because they do not like what they see going on outside their kitchen window. What's more, they have been winning so far, mostly because they are becoming a majority of voters in our various municipalities and certainly

in our province. Witness the power of zoning of solar and wind farms which has been removed from our local Councils. Witness the emotional discussions of people who only selectively use facts available to them. Witness the attempt to violate and often remove whatever remaining property rights rural owner may have.

Let us start with the recent uproar about clear cutting. This has been brought on by some very obvious operations near busy thoroughfares. If the same had been going on some secluded lot of whatever remote concession, little would have been heard about it. This is your first clue that we are dealing with appearances and not necessarily complete facts. Exactly how do you think we got to have these wonderful prosperous farms in Eastern Ontario? Take a look as you travel through Nation Municipality and note how you can see assorted crops for miles and miles. The sky has not fallen on these people or their land. Do you think that maybe some clear cutting was taking place to make farmland at the time of our grand-parents? Now we have busybodies trying to shut down the whole operation by force of law. Have you ever thought what this means? That is akin to expropria-

tion without compensation because such land would now have little if any marketable value. You would not do that to your next door neighbour and think of getting away with it would you? One clear matter is that in a civilized society, if rights of land use are removed, there will need to be financial compensation to those affected. It will not be cheap and it will affect the price of your Corn Flakes, your Whole Wheat Bread and your pork chops and your taxes. This is not a local issue; it is a province-wide matter. At the present time Ontario is approximately 66 per cent forested in those areas that can grow trees. There is still some time to examine the consequences of our proposed actions but one thing is clear, eventually, we will need to choose between people and trees and not only in a few select people's backyards.

What we will need is a number of thoughtful elected officials, from a wide geographic area, who will examine the facts, the consequence and the basic fairness of the intended actions. As it stands now, a simple ban on clear cutting does not make the grade.

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