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NEWS LOCAL

Timber!...Oops



By Greg Peerenboom, Cornwall Standard Freeholder
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S,D and G - Hundreds of trees were felled - and then left to rot - by Hydro One workers without permission, counties council found out recently.

The news prompted council to ask forestry specialist Steven Hunter to speedily report any future incidents on county-owned woodlots, which are managed by Hunter's employer, South Nation Conservation.

Hydro One was given permission in 2010 to thin out trees as part of a 6-8 year maintenance schedule.

The maintenance identifies trees which may pose a hazard to hydro lines in a number of woodlots near Berwick in North Stormont.

But a followup inspection by South Nation discovered that Hydro One had far exceeded the cutting, resulting in "hundreds" of additional cuts, said Hunter on Monday.

Hydro One spokesperson Tiziana Baccega Rosa said the extra harvesting was necessary.

"The additional trees affected the safety and reliability of the hydro distribution system," Baccega Rosa said.

Hunter said South Nation and Hydro One then met at the scene to discuss a resolution.

Hydro One agreed to pay \$1,500 for South Nation costs to measure and de-limb the wood in order to sell it privately.

The inventory check, also based on the quantity, estimated the wood had a market value of almost \$1,800.

Hunter said the power company agreed to relocate the wood to the roadside for pick-up by sellers.

"Unfortunately, despite repeated reminders, Hydro One did not return to move the wood to roadside until July of 2011," he said.

As a result, the logs "spoiled."

South Nation recalculated the value, downgrading it to only \$300, which also took into account some timber which had been stolen.

South Nation ended up with a surplus of \$271 for the hundreds of trees.

The conservation authority does harvest a quantity of mature trees to help offset the costs of woodlot management.

Further discussions between South Nation and Hydro One has resulted in new measures to be included in future hydro line maintenance:

- allowing South Nation to inspect trees before issuing permission,
- only identified trees (marked with an orange-painted 'H') would be cut,
- a minimum of 24 hours notice be provided before cutting takes place,

- cutting will be accompanied by South Nation inspectors to ensure compliance.

