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Council was wise to avoid cat bylaw

Innisfil council made the right choice by turning down a cat bylaw, for now.

Last week, council rejected a request from several Cookstown residents to extend animal control bylaws to cats. If it was approved, the measure would have required felines within the municipality to be registered and properly tagged.

It's a measure that is already being taken with dogs, and was brought forward after Cookstown residents had difficulty with neighbourhood felines. Some have complained about the smell of the animals, who mark their territory on neighbouring properties. Others, like Gregory Cox, have more intimate reasons to ask for the bylaw.

Cox had his dog euthanized last year, after it was scratched on the face by a neighbouring cat. After hundreds of dollars in treatment, the infection spread, and Cox made the difficult decision. Since then, he's been asking for the town's enforcement of cats.

According to Cox, a cat registration program would be a boon to the town's coffers, generating money that could be used for a



Comment

by Chris Simon

variety of municipal projects.

Cox has every right to be upset. Any person who has made the tough decision to euthanize a pet knows how painful the choice can be. And the truth is, without the proper municipal enforcement of cats, similar incidents are bound to take place.

But the enforcement of a cat bylaw would be difficult at best. It would add to the work level of existing bylaw control officers and town staff.

Unless bylaw officers are able to visit each home throughout the town, before a complaint is issued, there's little incentive for cat owners to register.

Unlike dogs, who can be potentially seen and heard outside several times each day, cats are only really seen when they cause a nuisance. Although identification tags might be handy, is

there really a need to register indoor cats, whose risk of running loose is low?

While Barrie, Newmarket, Aurora, Richmond Hill, Toronto, Bradford and many other neighbouring towns and cities have adopted cat control bylaws, there are significant differences between Innisfil and those municipalities. Despite a growing population, much of Innisfil is still rural agricultural land.

Cats live on hundreds of those farms, keeping rodent populations low. They play a valuable role in the farm industry, but also breed frequently.

Registering those cats would be pricey for farmers, a cost they may not be willing to incur.

Essa Township, a municipality with several similar concerns, dumped plans to implement a cat control bylaw last year. Their politicians agree that a bylaw would be difficult to enforce.

A cat control bylaw could benefit Innisfil financially. But until more study is done to investigate the volume of complaints, the necessity of a bylaw, and the feasibility of its enforcement, council cannot be blamed for leaving its claws in on cat enforcement.

Smitherman troubled by wind farm opponents

Letters From Our Readers

The Scope's July 9 article headlined 'Wind farm neighbours air concerns' highlights an emerging trend in Ontario that, as the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, I find troubling.

It's clear that more Ontarians than ever know we must step up the fight against climate change. In the most basic terms, that means turning away from dirty coal-fired generation and toward a variety of energy sources that are kinder to our planet, including wind.

But some of the very people who insist we must

fight climate change seem to also be among those protesting plans to put wind projects in their communities.

Wind turbines are significantly cleaner than emissions-spewing coal plants. Building new sources of generation also makes the system more reliable overall, because it diversifies our supply mix.

In 2003, fewer than 15

megawatts of Ontario's electricity came from wind power. Today, we have more than 500 megawatts, enough to power 130,000 homes.

The Ontario government believes that wind power has an important role to play in our province's long-term energy supply mix. We plan to double the amount of renewable energy capacity by 2025. Together with

aggressive conservation, that makes renewable energy the main focus of our energy plan.

But we can't do it alone. We need every community – and every Ontarian – on board, as we head toward this greener energy future.

George Smitherman,
Deputy Premier and
Minister of Energy and
Infrastructure

Climate change could be curbed by wind power

Letters From Our Readers

I have been watching the progress of the wind farm development in Innisfil but was not surprised by your recent reporting that there are some opposed to it. We live in a free, democratic country where all can express their opinions.

Looking at the big picture, most Canadians recognize that the major environmental concern today is climate change and pollution caused by the human burning of fossil fuels in our transportation, industry, etcetera.

Scientists, including the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), are saying that we must soon

switch to clean energy or there could be irreversible heating of the earth, with disastrous consequences for many people and animals around the world. The time for action is now, and I wonder if we will be able to make the necessary changes fast enough. What will future generations think about our action (or lack of it) when we had the chance?

One part of the solution, as the provincial government has decided, is to replace the coal fired electricity plants with clean, alternative energy. So what could do the job? This is actually an activity in the high school science curriculum, which I enjoy teaching. My students found that, according to the World Energy Council, wind energy is the fastest growing electricity source in the

world, doubling every three years over the last decade. They agreed with Ontario, Canada and many countries in the world that are looking to wind energy to be one of the green solutions to our traditional use of fossil fuels.

So why not be part of the solution here in Innisfil? There must be sufficient wind on the site because Schneider Power would have verified this before being willing to make a multi-million dollar investment.

It's going to be a small wind farm – only five turbines. The turbines also need to be big to be efficient and economical. Princeton University shows that a minor soil drying affect could only be found with large wind farms. Ongoing bat and wind turbine

research in the United States showed that bats, like most birds, are able to avoid contact with the blades. They don't even compare to the problem with flying into lit buildings at night or our cars.

As for noise, I didn't find them that noisy, even standing under a turbine when I visited the much larger wind farm near Shelbourne.

Besides, after personally visiting the plan area around the 5th and 6th lines, how could there be a significant turbine noise problem compared to traffic noise that close to the 400 highway? The wind farm will obviously have to follow all provincial and federal guidelines for distances to neighbours and safety including aircraft. This is not new technology

and there's plenty of experience with Schneider and many others in the world to guide this development.

Frankly, my wife and I feel that we in Innisfil should do our part to reduce climate change by switching to clean, renewable electricity production like wind.

Seeing this small wind farm will remind everyone that we are taking action to help the earth. If common sense prevails and our town council approves Schneider's plan, we will be proud of Innisfil's progressive leadership. As an educator, I'll also look forward to taking my class to see a local solution to the biggest challenge of our generations.

Syd and Glenda Lucas,
Belle Ewart

High gas prices will lead to better consumer decisions

Letters From Our Readers

I'm writing to voice my happiness at high gas prices

that everyone is complaining about. Happy you say?

Yes, thrilled because only when it hurts wallets do they now begin to make sensible choices in regards to what kind of car they drive, instead

of the ridiculous gas guzzlers being driven which are totally unnecessary, even for families. Many of these huge vehicles are transporting only one person in the busy morning commutes. Driving

gas guzzlers shows a blatant disregard for Mother Earth and is irresponsible of us humans. We now know that greenhouse gas emissions are causing irreparable damage to the environment, impacting

our health as well as the health of future generations. All this for the selfish, egotistical, and materialistic desire to look driving.

Deborah Placidi,
Innisfil