

To: Tricia Clarkson
Peterborough This Week
Opinion column "Trees for Life"
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From: Peter Cowan
996 Ivandale Rd
Douro Dummer cowanphc@gmail.com 705 761 3370

Hello Ms. Clarkson.

Your article, in the May 12th issue of Peterborough This Week on the great job that Peterborough is doing in tree planting, caught my attention.

I want to encourage you to look at two related issues in our locality, both of which are a spin-off from the positive vibes that planting new trees creates.

First is the flip side of that tree planting coin which is the relative benefits of planting a thousand new trees versus keeping a mature tree living over a 10-year span. I predict you could confirm my conviction that protecting existing trees is a higher priority than planting new ones and with immediate benefit.

I feel a reasonable analogy would be cutting down a fruit bearing tree in its prime, only to replace it with a sapling.

No matter what the ratio, I'm pretty sure you would agree that we all need to reconsider the ease with which we cut down mature trees. In this context I'd like to point out what's been happening in my township and suggest that if you looked at the rest of the county and further, you might see that the benefits associated with all the tree planting that Peterborough has done in the past year have been more than offset by all the mature trees that have been cut down in just "upgrading" a short length of rural road. Every Township needs to consider the downside of removing a mature tree. They need to know how many new seedlings it would take to give the same benefit over a 10-year period of JUST ONE mature tree. I would bet it's in the thousands.

Others have looked at this. Attached is a paragraph by William Moomaw published in Yale Environment 360 (link attached) where he points out that the benefit from planting seedlings comes many decades later compared to the IMMEDIATE benefit from mature trees .

With that in mind, I would also encourage you, then, to look at the policies and procedures in the various townships to determine just how much they understand this concept because, based on what my neighbours and I saw last year in Douro-dummer Township, this aspect of environmentalism is non-existent.

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If you or someone you know has the skills to do the calculation, I'm betting you would find that the dozens, if not hundreds of mature trees that the township ripped out on just a one and a half kilometre stretch of East White Lake and Ivandale roads in our community, MORE than offset ALL the benefit that the rest of Peterborough County contributed to the environment by tree planting in the last YEAR!

This Township has a standard for road Improvement that requires a huge right of way, even for little used roads, that does not take into account what the residents would prefer nor probably the immediate financial costs, nor, apparently, the impact on the environment.

The attached pictures illustrate the deforestation on east White Lake rd. and Ivandale in order to "enable proper snow removal, sight lines and a road allowance suitable for road bed improvements". But wait!. There are also pictures of White Lake rd west which services many more properties, has no cleared shoulders extremely poor sight lines, mature trees inches from the road bed and property owner mail boxes and structures just clear of the pavement yet is hard surfaced, seems to be plowed without problems, is quite functional without frequent collisions and looks like a cottage road should.

I'm a cynic and I believe that we will never fix the environmental problems. What happened on our street proves that individuals can never fix the problem when the next level up, their whole township, seems to ignore it.

I'm impressed with your dedication and I hope you can prove me wrong but at this point I think there are far bigger fish to fry than the little seedlings as well as low hanging fruit left to rot. The most frustrating aspect is that changing the current road specifications would make our community more beautiful, save us money AND help the environment TODAY, not just in 30 years.

Peter Cowan
Ivandale Rd
Douro Dummer

<https://grist.org/article/leaving-trees-standing-might-be-more-important-than-planting-new-ones/>

This is White Lake Road WEST, No cleared shoulder, mature trees and structures near pavement, wires not cleared, beautiful canopy, JUST LIKE Ivandale was before the slaughter. This road also services dozens more properties than does the East road.



This is what Ivandale and White Lake Rd E look like now





Notice the “so necessary “ sight lines” on this road that serves 12 properties and dead ends in ½ km. This doesn’t show the destroyed flower beds residents had at the shoulders Nor the piles of mature logs that lined the roads, Something like what this storm has accomplished!

Key message from Yale 360 article on next page.

