

DAVID T. HILLIARD
7582 BIDDULPH STREET,
PORT FRANKS ON NOM 2L0 CANADA
519-243-1198 mandarcyh@gmail.com

November 19, 2020
Mayor and Council,
Municipality of Lambton Shores

RE: Feedback on CAO Report 06-2020 and Gypsy Moth Control

Dear Mayor Weber and Members of Council,

I have lived in Port Franks since 1994. First as a cottage owner then moving here full time in 2011. I have never observed the severity of defoliation like we experienced in 2020.

With respect to CAO Report 06-2020:

- 1) No other land stewards named in report the indicated any specific 2021 plans for large scale gypsy moth control activity on their lands. This is the same as the municipality not treating their trees, any private effort will be futile. Lambton Shores needs to engage with these people and develop a solution to this problem. If the other land stewards are hell bent on refusing, spray a buffer zone. I will be contacting Mr. Monty McNaughton the M.P.P. for Lambton and request his assistance with Provincial stakeholders. Today I was advised that Lambton County is taking some action. Below is correspondence from Jason Cole to the gypsy moth research group. Reprinted with permission: *"The County of Lambton continues to monitor and assess options for control of Gypsy Moth on its properties, including both the Lambton County Heritage Forest and Lambton Heritage Museum. We are working with the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority, our managed lands partner, and the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks to conduct an egg mass assessment at these two locations in the next couple of weeks, once the foliage has fully dropped. We will review this information in conjunction with the province's Gypsy Moth impact reporting, once released, to consider an action plan and costing for these properties. It is our intention to report back to Lambton County Committee A.M. on January 20, 2021 and Council on February 3, 2021 with a recommendation for the County's participation in a BTK spray program on the identified properties. It is expected that the report will consider cost, potential woodlot impacts, visitor experience, neighbouring property impacts, and natural infestation cycle.*
- 2) The report acknowledges 'signs' of caterpillar damage on municipal holdings at the marina, Community Centre and Klondike Park. On November 6, 7, 8, I removed 3402 egg masses from trees in the Port Franks Marina. I focused on the maples and what I could reach with my 12 foot pole. Hundreds of masses were beyond my reach and remain. This indicates a severe level of infestation.
- 3) The Municipality indicates it will not object to application of BTK on lands adjacent to its property. While laudable, this infers it does not intend to treat these properties.
- 4) There are over three thousand trees on municipal road allowances in front of residential lots. These trees become infested and spread the caterpillars to trees on private property and vice versa. This report omits any action to address this. This leads me to surmise the Municipality has no plan to treat the infestation of these trees.
- 5) In terms of what causes outbreaks, the report refers to stressed trees. Once a caterpillar attaches itself to a tree, the tree has no means to protect itself. Whether the tree is stressed or not the caterpillar will feed on its leaves. A stressed tree may not have enough strength to regrow its destroyed leaves and die. But to indicate this as a cause for an outbreak is non-sense.
- 6) What collapses outbreaks? The trees develop tougher/less nutritious leaves. I do not believe the trees are capable of changing their genetic structure to do this, especially over a short period of time. With all due respect, this is non-sense too.

Here is a brief report of my findings: In an attempt to provide the municipality with accurate counts of egg masses I have removed over 4000 masses from about 40 trees. This gives you some idea of the level of potential infestation. When deposited on trees, masses have a winter survival rate of about 50%. Egg masses typically contain 100 to 600 eggs; one female has the potential to reproduce 600 replacements. The ratio of male / females in the population is nearly 50 / 50. A fully developed caterpillar will eat about one square foot of foliage every 24 hours. The key to the gypsy moth's ability to inflict such damage is two-fold. They are eating machines and they are reproduction machines. Based on the egg masses present and the survival rates of the eggs, I believe we are in for a major infestation in 2021. The writing is on the wall.

A healthy tree that is fully defoliated like many in Port Franks, can tolerate this once. It will regrow its leaves in late July. This will use much of its stored food reserves. The tree will not produce fruit, acorns or maple keys. A second consecutive defoliation will tax the tree to its limit. The strongest ones will once more regrow their leaves and the weaker ones will die. A third consecutive defoliation will kill the strongest tree. There are young maples at the marina (east side) that may not survive. There are no buds on them. In 2020 many trees were also defoliated in 2019 and are at great risk if hit in 2021. This has also impacted the wildlife; with no acorns squirrels that would normally be storing them as food for the winter have none. In mid-October I put our bird feeder out for the winter. This feeder is protected from squirrels. In past years I would need to fill the feeder with sunflower seeds every 10 to 14 days. Now I am refilling it every 3 to 5 days.

I have spent over forty hours fighting this insect but it is unlikely to make any difference. Given the reproductive power of the gypsy moth, the only way to have any success in controlling this dangerous pest is to collectively conduct a targeted spray of BTK on private and municipal property. A symbiotic relationship exists between the Municipality of Lambton Shores and its residents. We cannot be successful without each other. Treating my trees without the municipality treating its trees (or vice versa) will be a futile. Conducting private spraying will at best lead to a checker board type hodgepodge with some areas treated, some not. It will result in hard feelings between neighbours; those that paid to spray and those that did not. Port Franks is a mixture of seasonal and permanent residents. Some people will be impossible to contact even with the proposed mail out from Lambton Shores. Private spraying may provide some short term relief, but will ultimately fail because of the untreated areas - like spraying half a mattress for bedbugs.

On November 16 by telephone I spoke with Mayor Weber, Deputy Mayor Cook, C.A.O. Williams, Councilor Wilcox and Councilor Marsh. I would like to thank them for taking the time to discuss the gypsy moth issue with me. Everyone heard me out; no one rushed the call.

Personally, I prefer government to stay out of my life and let me take responsibility for myself. I also strongly respect the notion of privately property. I reluctantly conclude we need Council to develop an all-encompassing bylaw that permits the municipality to treat all the infested trees. Anything less will be unsatisfactory and waste of money. The cost should be applied to the residential tax bill; this is from a guy who hates tax increases and bylaws. Council could build on the existing documents from other regions. I would appoint a capable individual to lead this initiative and be accountable for the results.

During our telephone conversation Mayor Weber expressed concern regarding the municipality infringing on private property. I respect and generally agree with his view. There will probably be some pushback.

How do we deal with the party that says they don't want their property sprayed? Although I have not heard from anyone that is opposed to this, we as a community will have to do our best to convince them of the benefit. I will certainly do my part.

What about the person in a town that is unaffected (if there are any) that complains about their tax bill going up due to gypsy moth control costs? I would explain we are a community and have to support each other. I don't use the trails, the Legacy Centre or the new arena in Thedford, but recognize these facilities benefit others in the community and will accept (albeit grudgingly) the costs as part of my taxes.

I would be the first one to ask Lorie Scott (the Councilor in this area) to support a worthy initiative in another Councilors area. That's why I am asking all Councilors to support a bylaw to address this problem. The gypsy moth is not just a Port Franks problem; it is a Lambton Shores problem. Controlling these pests will reduce the spread to other areas. This pest will continue to spread; it will not be any cheaper to do this in the future.

We need to look at trees as 'assets'. Much like brick and mortar facilities they require maintenance and a portion of the budget should be set aside for this purpose. In years where gypsy moth treatment is not required, the funds could be banked for the time when it is. I recognize this is going to cost money; the alternative is dead trees. What is the cost of removal? What is the cost of replanting? What is the point in replanting if the new trees will suffer the same fate?

Before concluding I want to mention the human factor:

It is not something you can see on a spreadsheet, but the despair I have observed in folks facing these caterpillars is distressing. Several people I know have told me that during the caterpillar infestation the simple pleasures of life are gone; their kids / grandkids cannot play outside, they can't use their deck or even go for a walk without caterpillars falling or dropping liquid (you know what that is) on them. It's depressing seeing the trees consumed. Stand under a tree that is infested and listen. It is heart breaking. This too must be considered.

Mr. Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councilors, please do the right thing. Develop and pass the necessary tools or bylaw to deal with this pest. Do it once and do it correctly. If a tough sell like me can be convinced of the necessity you won't have much opposition from anyone else.

Thank you for your consideration.

Regards

David Hilliard