

Concerns over fireworks mount

By Sarah Sobanski

Many lake associations around Hastings Highlands are tired of fireworks, says Hastings Highlands Mayor Vivian Bloom. That could mean firework restrictions for the municipality in the future.

The mayor has been researching how municipalities restrict fireworks following requests for bylaws from area lake associations such as the Lake St. Peter Property Owners Association and the Baptiste Lake Association.

‘They’re not looking to ban fireworks but they don’t want them being shot off into the water,’ says Bloom, also naming the Kamanisseg Area Property Owners Association, the Papineau Lake Community Association and Mink Lake Property Owners Association.

Baptiste Lake Association president Marlin Horst says the association has been receiving complaints of fireworks being shot off over the lake. They’re going off as often as every weekend starting in May through to October. They start Thursday and run every night to Saturday.

‘They’re going on all the time,’ said Horst. ‘Apart from the noise and everything, it’s putting garbage into the lakes because there’s lots of heavy metals in fireworks.’

Damage to the environment is a major concern for the mayor and the lake associations. The Lake St. Peter association’s website links to two articles that are highly critical of fireworks. The articles suggest fireworks cause air, water and noise pollution and are harmful to the environment.

‘There’s always chunks of wire from the detonators and whatnot. There’s shredded paper that has come off the fireworks when they blow up ? some of it burns up, some of it doesn’t. There’s always garbage that needs to be cleaned up afterwards. Some of it lands in the lake, some of it on the beach,’ says Bloom.

Local wildlife and water species within the lake could also be impacted.

‘When you have fireworks look what’s happening to your dog,’ said Horst who’s a cottager and dog owner. ‘Most dogs are hiding somewhere in the cottage or house ? that’s wildlife that is doing that as well. It’s disturbing the wildlife in the area. That is one of the great things about being able to come here to the north.’

Bloom suggests creating permits for fireworks might be the best route for the municipality. It could limit the fireworks to holiday weekends. It could limit fireworks until a certain time ? benefiting families with young children who might be woken up by a late night display. A buffer could also be set to keep fireworks away from the lake.

The lake associations, however, might have a different idea.

‘A ban would be best but it’s hard to do unless it’s done province wide? That would be acceptable to me, obviously that’s a hard push,’ says Horst.

Bloom doesn’t want to stop people from celebrating with fireworks, she wants to see them set off conscientiously.

‘These lakes have to be forever. Generations have grown up enjoying the lakes. We want the next five generations to still be enjoying the same clean lakes ? If we don’t protect the lakes there’s going to be no lakes for the future generations,’ she said.