

Please don't burn your garbage

To the Editor,

I have asked Hastings Highlands to create a bylaw against garbage burning in backyard incinerators and firepits. Since most residents of North Hastings wish to avoid getting cancer and other illnesses, it would be helpful if all townships would create such bylaws. Garbage and recyclables must be taken to the dump instead of being burned. This is an issue that fluctuates in other parts of the world, however in locations such as the UK or Australia, the disposing of rubbish and recycling is often a smooth process. Companies offer services to encourage a safe and efficient trade, such as cheap skip bins sydney, which ensure there are always options when it comes to appropriately disposing. Companies such as these are in great need here.

According to the Government of Canada website: "although people used to burn garbage, we now understand that open burning of garbage - even seemingly harmless materials like paper, cardboard, yard waste, and construction debris - releases a hazardous mixture of cancer-causing compounds and other toxic substances such as: dioxins, furans, arsenic, mercury, PCBs, lead, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, sulphur oxides, hydrochloric acid.

"Exposure to dioxins and furans has been linked to: certain types of cancers, liver problems, impairment of the immune system, the endocrine system, and reproductive functions.

"Effects on the developing nervous system and other developmental events (affecting children and pregnant mothers)."

We can lower our cancer risk if we can lower our contact with cancer-causing substances (carcinogens), however, if my neighbours are burning garbage, my house fills up with garbage-smoke. I am not able to do any outdoor work if people are burning garbage in burn-barrels, woodstoves or firepits.

My mother has COPD and has fought cancer several times. She often stays with me. She, and other elderly people, should not be exposed to garbage smoke. Other high risk groups include children, people with asthma or emphysema, those fighting cancer and cancer survivors. The alternative to burning those rubbish would have been to contact any service providers who could pick up the waste and, if possible, recycle it. It would simply be a matter of searching for keywords such as "Cheap rubbish removals Melbourne" or any location that they reside in to find companies that specialize in rubbish removal.

"In Canada, the open burning of garbage produces more dioxins and furans than all industrial activities combined".

According to the Ministry of Environment, it is illegal to burn garbage. Municipal incinerators, such as the one in Courtice (Clarington), are allowed to burn garbage because they are supposed to reach the high temperatures necessary (in 1,000's of degrees) to breakdown most toxins.

For the past 10 years, federal Conservatives have consistently reduced environmental laws to allow for more air pollution, but the Courtice incinerator still can't meet these lowered emission standards. Backyard incinerators and fire-pits never reach these high temperatures. Toxins and carcinogens are created. These are released directly into the air and breathed in, or deposited onto soil, water and vegetation-- directly into our bodies and food chains.

It is not acceptable for North Hastings Townships to specify that it's OK to burn "paper garbage" because almost all paper garbage has plastic parts and coatings, glues and highly-coloured, shiny cardboard packaging incorporated into the layers of paper. These all create carcinogens during burning.

You can read more about problems with garbage burning on the Government of Canada website under "open burning of garbage". This page also contains an excellent brochure on the issue.

It would be a progressive no-brainer for all North Hastings townships to create garbage burning bylaws so that recyclables and garbage will not be burned. Please raise this issue with your councillors. Anti- garbage-burning bylaws would be better for health, outdoor activities and tourism

Thanks in advance for creating these bylaws,

Jackie Lewis