

News

# One man's anti-clearcut protest falls on deaf ears

Local politicians and South Nation CA are trying to tackle the issue with education



BY TOM VAN DUSEN  
The writer lives in Russell County  
tomvandusen99@yahoo.com

Vankleek Hill – The blades are being sharpened as the clear-cutting controversy revs up across Eastern

Ontario, notably in Champlain Township in and around Vankleek Hill.

During a recent township council meeting, residents indicated their concern that widespread clearcutting – mostly for agricultural expansion – is impacting on water quality, soil erosion, and wildlife habitat.

Leading the charge was Andre Perreault who, for several weeks, has mounted a one-man highway protest south of Vankleek Hill, trying to persuade authorities to step

in and control clearcutting. Carrying a placard, Perreault tries to be at his post every week day between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. He feels he's making a difference by keeping the issue in the public eye. He says he gets support from many passing motorists, some of whom stop to chat.

"I don't get the finger from every passing pickup truck anymore," he observed. Not a farmer himself, he's trying to convince the agricultural community not to put all of its eggs in one basket, that prop-

erly managed trees can be a valuable crop.

"Look what happened in Alberta. There was no Plan B. The bottom fell out of oil and there's nothing else. What do we want to do here? Turn it into 100 per cent cash crops and if that goes, we're through? Meanwhile, the value of our forests is increasing."

Perreault is also concerned that the big cutters working in the area are from Quebec and all usable lumber goes back to that province.

One day while on demonstration duty, he counted 10 double trailer loads of wood cut from a 160-acre lot heading east towards Quebec.

"We're in a fragile state,"

Perreault told Mayor Gary Barton and members of council who, while they lent a sympathetic ear, declined to take bylaw action. Instead, Barton said council is looking at its options, including uploading the issue to the provincial government.

"The province really has to grasp hold of this," Barton stated. Council decided to pursue the matter with area MPP

Grant Crack, seeking a satisfactory solution.

But Crack has indicated publicly he won't advocate for provincial anti-clear cutting regulations. Instead, he has reiterated that, in his mind, landowners have the right to harvest wood on their properties, whether for financial gain or to expand farmland.

Telling ratepayers their concerns are legitimate, Barton underscored council's predicament: "The guy who owns the land next to you says... you want to tell me what to do with my land, then pay me for it."

Not even the regional conservation authority endorses banning clear cutting. Deforestation is indeed a concern, explained South Nation Conservation General Manager Dennis O'Grady.

Too much of it promotes soil erosion and can risk groundwater.

However, O'Grady said his organization isn't pushing for a bylaw. Instead, SNC is offering education on the merits of maintaining forests and runs a management program where landowners get advice from

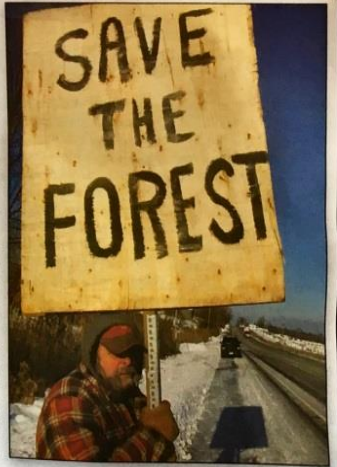
foresters and financial help in preserving and enhancing forest resources.

In addition, SNC is slowly acquiring bushland within the United Counties of Prescott and Russell – in which Champlain Township is located – and other parts of its jurisdiction, either through purchase or donation. Limited funds keep a lid on the number of annual acquisitions.

O'Grady said the biggest irritant in his mind is land that's cleared and left idle rather than turned into a productive use such as grain farming.

Farmer Kelly Allen told the Champlain council meeting the area agricultural community is divided on the issue: "There's some who are quite concerned and there are others looking for more profit from the land they've invested in."

Slowly but surely, observers say, increasing numbers of farmers are realizing the value of trees for maintaining groundwater, providing windbreaks and preventing soil



Andre Perreault at his post along the highway south of Vankleek Hill.

erosion. Council is in a difficult position because it has to find a balance. But sooner or later, Allen said, it's going to have to make a decision because by doing nothing, the situation will just get worse.

**McGrail FARM EQUIPMENT** JOHN DEERE

<p>CH '05 JD 8120 UX035442 247 hrs, MFWD, 3 Hyd. Outlets, 8 1/2 PTO, 1500 PTO, 480/80R46 Duals, Generator Ready</p> <p><b>\$139,500</b></p>	<p>CH '03 JD 8220 UA010844 10 Ft Wht, 487 hrs, 3 Hyd. Outlets, 480/80R46 Duals, Generator Ready</p> <p><b>\$125,000</b></p>	<p>CO '13 JD 8285R UA076799 Michelin Tires, Radar, Dlx Cab, PS, 809 hrs, MFWD, 8 1/2 PTO, 4 Hyd. Outlets, 1000 PTO</p> <p><b>\$209,500</b></p>	<p>CO '14 JD 8320R UA094662 MFWD w/Suspension, 718 hrs, PS, 5 Hyd. Outlets, 625/70R46 Duals, Front Fenders, Radar</p> <p><b>\$319,500</b></p>
<p>CH '14 JD 5075M UA612533 69 hrs, 16 1/2 PTO, Mesh Hitch, 2WD, 540 PTO, Dual Mid &amp; Rear 50X, 14.9-28</p> <p><b>\$36,000</b></p>	<p>CH '14 JD 6115R UA783396 PTO, 2WD, Beacon Lighting, Prem Cab, 194 hrs, Generator Ready, 540/1000 PTO, 460/85R38</p> <p><b>\$92,500</b></p>	<p>CH '14 JD 6115R UA782975 262 hrs, 16 PTO, 2WD, 540/1000 PTO, 420/85R38 Michelin, Beacon Lighting</p> <p><b>\$87,500</b></p>	<p>CH '14 JD 6125R UA804689 Autotrac, 3 SCV, H340SL, 800 hrs, AG, MFWD, 460/85R38 Michelin, 540/1000 PTO</p> <p><b>\$127,500</b></p>
<p>CO '14 JD 6125R UA804666 396 hrs, 540/1000 PTO, Autotrac, AG, MFWD, 460/85R38 Michelin, 540/1000 PTO</p> <p><b>\$127,500</b></p>			