

Lambton Shores leading the way in phragmite control

Sheila Pritchard

Although phragmites is a noxious weed, it may be too expensive an endeavour for Lambton Shores to officially label the nasty, invasive weed.

Wetland Ecologist Janice Gilbert, Ph.D., and Nancy Vidler, Chair of Lambton Shores Phragmites Community Group attended council last week to discuss the highlights of the Phragmites Control Strategy, as outlined in the Phragmites Management Plan. Council recommended the plan be received for a report outlining financial implications for next year's budget.

The presenters said Lambton Shores is leading the way in Phragmites control and they thanked council for all their efforts.

Phragmites australis has become pervasive throughout the Municipality of

Lambton Shores. The invasive reed is most often observed along roadside and agricultural ditches, although the main areas impacted extend along the Lake Huron coastline.

"Here," says the plan report prepared by Gilbert and Vidler, "well established, dense monoculture Phragmites cells have expanded across extensive sections of the shoreline negatively impacting recreational use, aesthetics and valuable coastal ecosystems."

The report says not all of the shoreline is affected since areas remain where Phragmites has not yet established, is in the initial stages of colonization, or is actively being managed. "However, unless a concerted effort is undertaken to control Phragmites throughout the entire region, and in a timely fashion, this aggressively spreading invader will continue to expand and

increasingly become an issue."

Gilbert explained, 11 key components are required for the Phragmites Control Program to be successful within the Municipality of Lambton Shores. These include an understanding of the scope of the problem, establishment of a program co-ordinator position, acquisition of sufficient funds, implementation of an education program, and engagement of the local community.

a full-time job," said Vidler.

Gilbert explained the other key components include appropriate initial control efforts and follow up control measures, a long term control program, tracking of activities, efficacy, success and challenges, listing Phragmites as a noxious weed, expansion of Control Program outside of Municipal jurisdiction, and availability of herbicides appropriate for overwater use.

"Additional funding will be pursued to support the required continued management of Phragmites in 2014 and subsequent years until the infestation is under control. Funding will also be pursued to support a long-term monitoring and rapid response program. The implementation of this program will ensure that Phragmites densities do not return to pre-control conditions thereby wasting effort, resources and money," says Gilbert.

"This is our goal for you. Your municipality is a model for the province," said Gilbert.

Vidler, who works with the Phragmites Community Group on a full-time basis, says volunteers and community participation are greatly needed for the Plan to be effective and she encourages people to get involved in any way they can. Vidler has taken this on as a full time project and says she is getting tired. One of the key points in this presentation was a need for a program coordinator. "I'm not giving up, I am getting tired. This is

Declaring Phragmites as a noxious weed could be an important step towards the solution, suggested Gilbert. However, it could be expensive, cautions Gilbert. In many cases, labeling invasive plant species' as noxious has helped significantly with eradication, but it could be too costly of a venture for what it's worth.

In a motion from councillor Lorie Scott to declare this a noxious weed, councillor Martin Underwood was quick to caution her. "My concern is for the citizens. If a bylaw is enforced, it could be neighbours against neighbours." Underwood asked about the farmer who has 26-acres and is told by their by-law he has to get rid of it. "What then? He asked. Councillor John Russell asked Gilbert about funding through the Drainage Act and if anyone has been given approval to spray over water. She said no but that they should pursue all avenues. Mayor Bill Weber suggested they send out a plea to all 144 municipalities asking for support.

Council has recommended that staff prepare a report outlining the implications, financial and otherwise, of declaring Phragmites a noxious weed in Lambton Shores and has asked the Lambton Shores Phragmites Community Group to further assist with how to get the plan implemented province-wide. As a preliminary effort, council is committed to writing letters to other municipalities in Ontario in an effort to show the government that the Lambton Shores is serious about solutions for this problem.



Nancy Vidler and Janice Gilbert

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