

MRC creates light pollution committee

by Elyse Amend

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VAUDREUIL-SOULANGES The MRC Vaudreuil-Soulanges has taken the first step in reducing light pollution across the region in the wake of an April 25 question period presentation by Hudson resident and astronomy enthusiast Pierre Tournay.

Vaudreuil-sur-le-Lac Mayor Claude Pilon, Rigaud Mayor Réal Brazeau, Très-Saint-Rédempteur Mayor Jean Lalonde, Les Cèdres Mayor Géraldine Quesnel, and l'Île-Cadieux Mayor Marc-André Léger will form a committee to study all of the documents, statistics, and existing bylaws from the Granit and Haut St-Francois MRCs, both of which have bylaws concerning light pollution. Tournay presented them with the documentation at the April meeting as he urged them to come up with a MRC policy on light pollution and prevention methods.

An MRC-wide light-containment policy would make it easier for the MRC's 23 municipalities to pass their own light-pollution bylaws similar to the regulations contained in St. Lazare's proposed master plan. It says garden lights cannot shine onto the street or neighbouring property, and they must have a shield to deflect light downward.

As announced at Monday night's council meeting, Hudson's environment committee began a project last week, investigating different sources of and solutions to light pollution in the town. Tournay's main point in his presentation was that so much energy could be saved, and so many light pollution nuisances avoided, if municipalities would require that all lights be shaded and pointed downward.

"This effectively eliminates glare into people's houses and drivers' faces. And the best is that this can be done with lower wattage bulbs and full cut-off fixtures that will save money up-front as well as during usage since higher wattage bulbs cost and consume more than lower wattage bulbs," Tournay said. "Everybody wins!"

According to Tournay's research, Quebec alone wastes about 760 billion watts that are shot into the sky every year, which could be avoided by simply directing the lights downward.

"This is a wonderful first step and I am impressed at the speed at which our MRC created this resolution," Tournay said. "I do look forward to the day this becomes a law so that new residential constructions, new roads, highways, new factory sites, malls, car dealers, soccer fields....all will use proper and efficient lighting that will eliminate glare, save money and embellish the view, all the while providing the adequate lighting we need."

And Tournay does not want to stop there: he plans to visit more MRCs and suggest the same light pollution reduction measures that lead to the committee's creation in Vaudreuil-Soulanges.

"Give it time, and a growing momentum, and our children's children will be able to look up and see the Milky Way galaxy splitting the night sky in two as it once did before," Tournay said. "Using their eyes only!"