

Know the rules about burn permits

I learned recently that residents of Mono Road, where I live, as well as residents in Cheltenham, Mono Mills, Campbell's Cross, Victoria, Caledon village, Belfountain, Cartaract and other villages and hamlets in Caledon, will not be able to renew their burn permits in 2015.

I inquired at the Caledon Fire and Emergency Services and spoke to the very helpful and professional Chief Fire Prevention Officer. He explained that when the burn permit system went into effect about nine years ago, a number of settlements in Caledon were prohibited from burning. However, because residents had been allowed to burn on their property for many years, staff discretion was used in issuing permits and individuals were advised that their permit could be revoked due to non-compliance. In Mono Road, at the corner of Airport and Olde Base Line Roads, the practice of burning goes back to the 1850s, when the corner was first ceded from Queen Victoria.

The officer went on to say that recently, the online burn permit system was created to allow residents a more convenient way of purchasing a residential burn permit. The computer was programmed to reject applications from addresses in some communities that had been granted permits manually by fire staff, during the previous nine years. So when these residents now try to purchase burning permits on line, their applications are rejected.

The privilege of an occasional fire has been a convenience and a pleasure for the 40 years that I have lived in Mono Road. It was particularly helpful during the months that were spent cleaning up after last year's ice storm. Many of my neighbours have larger properties with mature trees and were appreciative of being able to tidy up using a fire and would like to continue to do so.

The fire officer explained that the responsibility for determining non-burnable area is that of council. The point of my letter is to suggest that if you find yourself unable to burn because the new computer permit system has replaced the discretion of staff, and would like to do so, you might notify your area or regional councillor of your thoughts.

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