

Proposed idling bylaw should go to council soon

By Bill Rea

Reaction seems to be positive to the Town of Caledon's latest efforts to get an idling control bylaw in place.

A draft bylaw had been prepared about a year ago, and it was the subject of a public information meeting in May 2013. There was also a public open house recently outlining the latest proposals.

Sara Peckford, manager of energy and environment for the Town, said there were public comments dealing with the proposed exemptions to the bylaw, as well as the rationale behind it.

"I think it's been mainly positive," she remarked about the public reaction. She added a report will be going to council, likely in the next couple of weeks.

The current proposal calls for a general prohibition on idling a vehicle for more than two out of 60 minutes, with a set fine of \$100 for violators.

The Town is also proposing a series of exemptions. Those exemptions would cover emergency vehicles, vehicles that have to keep running to perform a work function (like cement trucks, garbage trucks, etc.), armoured vehicles, agricultural equipment, transit vehicles (while passengers are getting on or off) and vehicles that don't use fossil fuels while idling. As well, there are some idling activities that would be permitted under the proposed exemptions, including undergoing diagnostic repair, taking part in a municipally authorized parade, transporting a person for medical reasons, transporting cargo that depends on heating or refrigeration, vehicle that aren't moving because of traffic conditions (that includes congestion or drive-thrus), etc.

The examples of several municipalities were cited by staff, with idling prohibitions kicking in a range from one to three minutes (Own Sound also has a five-minute prohibition on diesel idling). The enforcement approach in these places was based on complaints, with fines ranging from \$30 in Peterborough to up to \$250 in Newmarket.

The idea behind having such a bylaw is basically one of safety, according to material on display at the open house. It was stated that improved air quality, achieved through the reduction on unnecessary vehicle idling, will contribute to the Town's climate change commitments. It's also hoped it will reduce the risk of respiratory health problems. As well, it's hoped that the bylaw will create greater awareness, as well as provide enforceable means of increasing protection.

Town staff argued that many Canadian motorists idle their vehicles for about eight minutes per day. Country-wide, staff reported that uses up more than two million litres of fuel per day, and creates in excess of five million kilograms of greenhouse gases. They also stated that a car idling for 10 seconds uses more fuel than would be the case if the engine was turned off and then started again.

"Curbing idling is an easy step that can have a large impact on the quality of our air," staff reported, adding that an idling vehicle emits close to 20 times the amount of air pollution as a moving one.

They also stated that idling a car for more than 30 seconds is not needed, and that the best way to warm up the engine is by driving. Staff also cited figures from the Caledon Countryside Alliance that stated that more than 62 per cent of residents supported a bylaw that would prevent idling for more than two minutes. This was according to a survey conducted last year, and similar numbers were reported from previous surveys.

There are more than 20 municipalities in Ontario with idling bylaws in place. Staff said the one proposed for Caledon aims at employing the best practices in place in other locations.