

Student environmentalist calls for tighter pool bylaws

By Brock Weir

Before Council approved a new education plan providing information to pool owners on how to properly dispose of their pool water, student environmentalist Matthew Abbas encouraged Council to take things one step further.

Making a presentation before Council, the Grade 12 student from St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School said elected officials have a duty to protect source water here in Aurora and laws currently on the books need to be tightened up.

"Laws already exist at all levels of government," said Matthew. "It is a \$50,000 fine for dumping into storm sewer water at York Region. It is currently cheaper to dump pool water straight into our rivers and streams. Saltwater pools are more toxic than chlorine pools and dumping saltwater pools into stormwater drains is illegal in Toronto, Hamilton and Ottawa. Pool building permits do not consider unit discharge of water in Aurora."

Matthew proposed a number of measures Aurora could put in place to make a difference, emphasising filter options and more cost-prohibitive fines, extra fees for pools in areas that have heavy sewage discharges, an immediate ban on all backwash filters that empty off properties, and requiring pool owners use licensed companies for pool closing when water may not be disposed of on site.

His words received a warm reception from many members of Council. However, his criticism of the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA) when it comes to their own regulations on the subject rankled Mayor Geoff Dawe, who serves as Chair of the LSRCA. The bone of contention was Matthew's assertion that their view could be boiled down to it being "okay to dump water as long as you don't damage the land", caring less about the fish in local water courses.

"The LSRCA is definitely not okay with people doing things to impact the wildlife," said Mayor Dawe.