

CSL passes potable water restriction bylaw

December 19, 2012

By Joel Goldenberg, The Suburban

Côte St. Luc council passed a bylaw last week restricting the use of potable -fit for human consumption- water in the city.

Mayor Anthony Housefather explained that the Quebec municipal affairs ministry suggested that all municipalities pass such a bylaw.

“We’ve reviewed this with all of our departments and we made many changes to the proposed draft bylaw,” he added.

Councillor Steven Erdelyi voted against the bylaw, saying it does not go far enough.

“It is a step in the right direction,” he said, pointing out that snowfall rates are dropping and McGill environmental professor George McCourt told a lecture in Côte St. Luc that only one percent of the Great Lakes system is accessible for residential and institutional use. “This is an opportunity for us to take a preemptive measure to further restrict the use of potable water, as many other cities have done. It’s a good start, but we could have gone further, so we won’t end up dealing with the problem further down the road.”

Councillor Glenn Nashen, who voted for the bylaw, said important steps are being taken towards water conservation.

“There are some new restrictions we didn’t have before – the watering of lawns, hedges, trees and other vegetable plants by portable sprinklers or porous hose is permitted only between 6 p.m. and 11 p.m.. The notion is that a significant percentage of the water [generated] when one turns on a sprinkler during the day is evaporated and doesn’t actually serve the purpose it was intended for. Watering by in-ground automatic sprinkler systems is only permitted between 1 a.m. and 7 a.m.... during the least usage period. And most importantly, any of these systems may not exceed 45 minutes within these time frames.” Thus, a sprinkler timer would have to be used, at least overnight.

“This is quite significant, and I think this will cut down on those residents who leave at 7 or 8 a.m., turn on their sprinklers and it runs the entire day, perhaps watering half of the street. This will now be deemed in contravention of the bylaw.”

As well, water can be used to wash cars, driveways and exterior patios for no more than a 30-minute period.

Housefather added that landscape ponds will have to have a recirculation system.

“After Jan. 1, 2013, you cannot install a landscape pond that uses drinking water,” the mayor said. “There’s a number of places here where we’re really changing what we’re allowed to do in the municipality to preserve water. We try to find a reasonable balance between restrictions residents can live with without interfering with their quality of life and the important notion of preserving water as much as possible.”

Councillor Dida Berku agreed that the bylaw is a “good start,” and pointed out it can always be amended and perhaps strengthened. She added that information will be sent out to the public on the new restrictions.