

Dorset Park shaken up in starling problem

By MELANIE HENNESSEY
The Champion

There'll be a whole lot of shakin' going on in a Dorset Park neighbourhood soon — tree shaking that is, in a group of residents' effort to deter the thousands of starlings they say converge on their trees every year.

These birds were the main topic of the night at Ward 4 Councillor Wendy Schau's information meeting she held April 21 in Hugh Foster Hall.

The residents at the meeting said once leaves are on their trees, flocks of starlings descend on them every night around dusk in Lord Simcoe Court and surrounding area, creating lots of noise and leaving behind a mess of droppings.

Lord Simcoe Court resident Al Arsenault said the infestation in his tree is so bad, his neighbour came over and asked about cutting it down because the large amount of bird droppings from the starlings is preventing him from using his pool.

"It's pretty hard to use your pool when it's full of droppings," he said.

Randy and Sylvie Sharpe, also Lord Simcoe Court residents, said they've already cut one of their trees down and trimmed others on their property to try and mitigate the problem.

"I've got a beautiful red maple and it's white from droppings," Mr. Sharpe said.

While he said the starling problem got a bit better after they cut one of their trees down, it's still an issue. He said they can't let their two-and-a-half-year-old son play in the yard because it's always covered in bird droppings.

"We have to wash the patio down daily," Ms Sharpe noted.

Ms Schau told the residents at the meeting that once she heard about the problem, she researched infestations on the Internet and found someone who specialized in that area.

So, she contacted him and he came to Milton to investigate the problem. But Ms Schau said he concluded "It's a problem, but not big enough for him to get involved."

While the heavy flock of birds wasn't there at the time of the investigation, Ms Schau said the expert determined the size of the problem from the amount of bird droppings and feathers he saw.

She said he then suggested the affected residents organize themselves "to make the environment really unpleasant for starlings for several days in a row." This would be accomplished by shaking the trees at 15-minute intervals when the birds are in them, which Ms Schau said seems like a reasonable request.

If the Town or the residents were to hire Ms Schau's bird expert, she said he and his crew would come into the neighbourhood and shake the trees, set off pyrotechnic cannons and fly predator birds to scare the starlings off.

But she said until residents have tried the shaking solution, she'd have great difficulty asking the Town to do anything to solve the problem.

"There's no way other members of council would approve," she said.

She told the group she's sympathetic to their situation and thinks it's definitely a problem that needs to be addressed.

Now, these residents are taking matters into their own hands. Ms Sharpe told The

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