

Jan 13, 2022

Dear Warden, Members of County Council and Planning Staff of Grey County;

We, the Bluewater Astronomical Society (BAS), are writing to express our concern that the current official plan is lacking in any meaningful language regarding light pollution prevention. In fact, there is only a vague mention in Section 9.13 Plans of Subdivision and Condominium, h) Consideration of the design of street lighting to minimize impact on dark skies. We request that in this amendment cycle, Grey County recognises the importance of protecting our dark skies and the environment from light pollution in statements and articles relating to development, planning, nuisance, the environment and natural heritage. There need to be improvements to guiding language that provide better direction to address colour, intensity, trespass, shielding and times of operation. Policy coverage should also be increased to include building design, commercial and industrial premises, parking lots, county roads, LED messaging signs and billboards. Optimally the requirements would meet International Dark Sky Association standards.

Seeing the Milky Way, auroras and other astronomical wonders are a valuable part of our natural heritage. Our beautiful dark skies bring many educational and economic benefits. For example, the BAS hosts private and public stargazing events around Grey-Bruce; the North York Astronomical Society hosts Starfest in West Grey; and the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, Toronto Centre owns the E.C. Carr Astronomical Observatory near Thornbury. People come to Grey County to enjoy the natural environment as both permanent residents and tourists.

Light pollution has been rapidly increasing over the last 60 years. Light travels great distances, so we need to consider our neighbours, both near and far away. The glow domes over brightly lit areas can be seen at great distances even when the source is below the horizon. LED lights, while certainly decreasing energy usage and the resulting greenhouse gases, have worsened the problem with the use of overly bright and blue-rich white lighting sources. Light pollution has a negative impact on the natural rhythms, health and welfare of wildlife. For humans, light pollution has adverse effects on health, economics (wasted energy/money), tourism and cultural and scientific development. Over-illumination can be a waste of energy producing unnecessary greenhouse gases, thereby contributing further to climate change. Preventing an increase in the level of light pollution and where possible reducing it is critical because light pollution puts additional strain on an ecosystem already suffering in our current climate crisis.

If there is any way that the BAS can provide guidance, resources, contact information or help in any other way, please do not hesitate to reach out to us. We are very passionate about the above, and are more than willing to assist in any way we can.

Sincerely,

The Bluewater Astronomical Society
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