

Flying lanterns pose fire hazard

By Tony Pearson

The Lake St. Peter Property Owners Association (LSPPOA) is concerned about fire risks associated with flying lanterns ? popular in the region around Canada Day.

LSPPOA member Bonny McCleery-Scanlan is working to reduce the dangers. She has found the remnants of flying lanterns on her beach, in the lake, and most disturbingly, in the woods. She said they are a distinct fire hazard.

The lanterns are traditionally constructed from oiled rice paper on a bamboo frame, and are propelled by the heat of a small candle or waxy fuel cell. When lit, the flame heats the air inside the lantern, lowering its density which in turn causes it to float, similar to a hot air balloon.

Many people think that the flame is only present while the lantern is airborne. However, sources report the lantern itself is flammable, increasing the potential risk of it starting a fire. Its fuel source may continue to burn after the lantern has landed.

Flying lanterns have been banned in a number of countries, including Great Britain, Brazil, and Australia, as well as a number of American states.

Nearby township Kawartha Lakes has also banned their use.

?Flying Lanterns may look pretty but there is an extreme fire risk associated with them,? explained Kawartha Lakes fire chief Mark Pankhurst. ?Kawartha Lakes covers more than 3,000 square kilometres and we have a lot of wooded and rural areas that could be adversely impacted if one of these flying lanterns landed in a hard-to-reach area.?

In addition to the fire hazard, McCleery-Scanlan notes, the lanterns become litter on the lake and on private properties. They are also a danger to fish and wildlife.

McCleery-Scanlan has sent information packages to resorts and stores on Lake St. Peter asking for their help in curbing lantern use. Although she hasn't yet had any feedback, LSPPOA is hoping for a positive response.

Scanlan has also been in correspondence with fire chief Pat Hoover.

Hoover believes that enforcement of a total ban on flying lanterns would be difficult. He suggested it is important that cottagers and visitors know about the risks.

McCleery-Scanlan agreed that education is important. She is putting up posters around her lake.