

Mayor Peabody, councillors,

This is a first for us. This is something we can honestly say we could never have foreseen us ever doing -- but we feel that it is something we need to do.

As you are aware, we had a visit from the fire department and OPP on Sat. Jan. 4, 2020 after a call was made to 911 from a passer-by with, as the OPP officer told me, a report of "a tree fire near fire no. 771".

Firstly, when I saw fire trucks arriving -- lights flashing -- I was terrified that my soon-to-be-65 year old husband must have been having a heart attack and was only able to dial 911. It damn near dropped me to my knees. I was so glad it wasn't and am so glad of the response if it truly had been an emergency. As farmers -- fire is our number one fear and a health emergency involving equipment or livestock is another. We are so glad to have emergency services available to help us.

Unfortunately, not every call is a real emergency and someone driving by sure misinterpreted this one. What they saw was a small pile of brush at the far end of the farm -- far away from any structures or nearby neighbours. Not near the road. A pile in a soggy, boggy field, covered in snow. It was not even seen by the fire department who answered the call.

Charles has farmed his whole life -- it's all he's ever done. Part of his pride of "taking care of the land" is dealing with deadfall trees and brush. It's what he's done in the winter for years. He was unaware that he needed a permit to do this. He now knows. We're not disputing that we should pay something for this. It's the amount.

We appreciate the fact that the \$200 fine for not having a permit was waived. Thank-you.

However, the bill from the fire department for \$2203.90 was a total shock. We're not disputing that there would be a bill. We fully understand that there's staff to pay and trucks are costly to upkeep. That being said....

If that \$2203.90 was "just money" to us -- or maybe a vacation we'd have to postpone (we haven't had a vacation in the 27 years we've been together, so

have no idea what that's like) -- that would be one thing. For us, it's a fertilizer bill, seed bill, equipment repair, livestock expense, a cow. And -- it was generated by someone with absolutely no accountability and all the power. The person who made that call. It wasn't a building on fire, it wasn't a runaway brush fire in a dry summer, it was a controlled fire in a pile of brush. They dialled 911 and drove on.

We know that it's important for people to use 911. We also know that that comes with responsibility too. To be wise.

This kind of event has repercussions. We are still shaken by it. Charles feels like a villain for just "doing what I've always done". It hurts to have to tell him that "times change". He's a farmer. He just wants to farm. Like his dad before him -- who died on his combine of a heart attack on this very land. The last time 911 was called for here.

We are just asking that you take a look at the cost again and decide if it was truly justified.

We thank you for your time,

Sincerely,

Nancy and Charles Osterndorff