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# City sees bird control program as wild goose chase

By [Bruce Walkinshaw - Penticton Western News](#)

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Members of Penticton council showed their frustration with the seeming lack of success the three-year-old regional Canada goose management strategy has had impeding the birds' population growth in the city.

The issue came up last week when council was asked to endorse an application for a \$10,000 grant from the Okanagan Basin Water Board to support the Okanagan Region Goose Management Committee's proposed 2010 Okanagan goose management program. The money was to augment a verbal commitment of \$14,000 the city had apparently made to fund the 2010 ORGMC egg addling program, according to a city staff report.

"This grant represents an additional contribution of \$10,000 on behalf of communities representing the South Okanagan, to conduct program activities including a community partners outreach program and GPS survey and aerial population counts of Canada geese," said parks and facilities manager Ian Haras.

However, council voted 5-2 not to support the program.

"I do not envy the position the City of Penticton is in," said Mayor Ashton. "It is layer upon layer upon layer of BS, and I'm sorry to use that terminology but that is what it is ... Addling just hasn't worked."

Canada geese are a protected species under the Canadian Wildlife Act so there are limited actions that cities can use. The current ORGMC program includes activities like the egg addling (or shaking) program, habitat modification, anti-feeding bylaws and various scare tactics, with the aim of reducing their population.

But Ashton asserted that the addling program was insufficient because the geese were nesting, perhaps knowingly, in areas that are difficult for people to physically reach and survey.

"The ones here are not migratory birds anymore. They have become resident geese and they have become a big issue," said Ashton. "All you need to do is look at our parks and our schoolyards."

Ashton said he's worried that feces from the birds might pollute Penticton's beaches and waterways to the point that they might be shut down. He pointed out that last year in Summerland a young child required hospitalization when he became critically ill after falling into water contaminated by bird feces.

"And Kelowna came this close to having their beaches shut down last summer," said Ashton, squeezing his fingers together. "All it would take is for a Penticton beach to close down for one day because of a high coliform count and it would take years to shake that off ... It would be devastating.

"We need to address this situation because those beaches are our livelihoods and at some point in time somebody has to take some proactive action and say, 'Damn the torpedoes, let's look after this.'"

Only councillors Andrew Jakubeit and Garry Litke voted against not applying for the grant for the ORGMC program.

"I certainly hear your frustration and I share it. I am just not sure what doing nothing will do to address the problem," said Litke.

"It is clear that some of the current strategies are not as effective as we would like ... but we have to do something and if this is the strategy that is currently allowed legislatively, then we have to work it as hard as we can. I shudder to think what it would be like if we had no egg addling program at all."

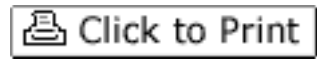
Ashton said that he would ask Okanagan Coquihalla MP Stockwell Day and Penticton MLA Bill Barisoff to help address the issue.

"We need to put our collective heads together and stop throwing money at a program that doesn't work," said Ashton. "If we can't address it with them maybe the city should be taking a look at our shooting bylaws and start moving our non-shooting areas and address this situation so there isn't problems in the future."

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