



Municipality of the District of Argyle

Item: Outdoor Illumination and
light pollution bylaw

Date: June 23, 2025

Vision statement

Argyle is the community of choice to invest, live and play.

Mission statement

Argyle invests time & talent in growth opportunities in fishing, tourism, and renewable energy sectors.

Argyle provides affordable taxation while providing safe and healthy communities and strives to engage and inform our residents on decisions that affect them most.

Argyle provides high class, accessible recreational and cultural facilities and helps celebrate its unique heritage and culture and welcomes new residents to our region.

Suggested motions:

Move that Council approve first reading of Bylaw 43 – Outdoor Illumination and Light Pollution Bylaw.

Background:

The Municipality of Argyle financially supported the certification of dark skies that impact our region, which is a designated dark sky reserve through the Starlight Foundation and endorsed by the UNESCO Southwest Nova Biosphere. Recently, the local Dark Sky Association presented to Council the importance of protecting the night sky and were supported by UNESCO and YASTA in their efforts. A copy of that presentation can be found on the previous council meeting agenda. The Municipality was developing bylaw to support this protection, and we enclose the result for first reading. The bylaw saw many amendments over the years, as the concept of light pollution and night sky protection is new, and the language can be difficult to understand.

The following is a summary of the Bylaw

Objective: To substantially reduce light pollution in our municipality using three main tactics:

1. Switch out existing lighting to LED amber or warm toned color, less than 2700 kelvin (which is the measure of light temperature).
2. Encourage and eventually enforce the installation of fully shielded fixtures, which will block the light from polluting the sky – aim the light down to what it is trying to light.
3. Encourage and eventually enforce the installation of light timers or movement sensors, so that lighting is only lit when needed.

These three objectives, if achieved, will significantly assist in the objective of preserving our night sky. There are other requirements listed in the bylaw.

You will find educational materials attached to this decision as well, which we will be developing and distributing. There are commercial businesses, wharf operators and residents that may not understand these objectives and fear additional costs or decreased safety. We anticipate neither of those to occur. The Bylaw doesn't ask for less lighting, it asks for lighting focused on its objective, that is to light the sight line, not the sky.

We are not the first municipality to pass such a bylaw, but we would be the first in Nova Scotia. This document is influenced by several other bylaws in other provinces and countries. These other bylaws received the endorsement of night sky preservation organizations.

You will note that there is no enforcement of lighting change until January 1, 2027. For now, this bylaw is focused on educating and encouraging our residents and commercial businesses to adopt better lighting practices voluntarily. Also, residents need time to make changes so quick enforcement is unfair and can place an undue burden financially on residents.

Why is this bylaw important to consider for Argyle?

There are already known advantages to having a dark sky. Tourism is high on the list. In many parts of the world, the illumination makes it impossible to see the stars. Tourists are amazed to see the celestial beauty that is present in our rural area. This is a determined selling feature for YASTA in attracting this region as a destination for incoming visitors. We have established tourism in Argyle. There are two consistent observatories in our region, one in East Kemptville and another in Quinan. Both are experiencing more and more light pollution, which places our certification as an official dark sky at risk. We are playing our part to protect that certification.

Other advantages are to protect people that can be harmed by artificial lighting. It can glare and strain on the human eye. Plants and animals rely on the natural cycle of light, and surround sleep, reproduction, growth and other factors based on this cycle. Artificial light can have deadly consequences on birds, mammals, insects and plants. Reducing light intensity, and when they are used is beneficial to plants, animals and people!

Argyle isn't the only answer in the preservation of the night sky. This Bylaw is to serve as a catalyst for our neighboring municipalities and town to adopt some of the preservation tactics we are proposing.

What can the municipality do in addition to this bylaw?

To support this bylaw, the municipality shall promote and educate the community in all sorts of venues over the course of 2025 and beyond. Online pamphlets and promotion, newsletter or paper advertising, and other forms of communication are required. **One on one** visits with major interested parties would be recommended. Interested parties are many, those that are potentially the largest 'offenders' would be the first stops, for example:

- Major commercial businesses such as fish processing and car dealerships.
- Wharfingers, responsible for safety and security at our wharves.
- Business and health institutions.
- Provincial buildings.
- Future discussions to be had with residential homeowners.

Again, our interest is for our community to embrace and make positive adjustments to reduce light pollution of our night sky. The switching to lower tones and shielding light downward may result in less lighting needs. The more lights, the more it costs. The more intense the light, the more it costs. These elements to increase education would be led by staff, and done over the course of time, likely to begin in late summer/early fall.

Other Options for Consideration - not yet recommended

Consideration for ACOA or the Province of NS to participate with Argyle in securing new lighting fixtures and options for our residents, possibly at a subsidized cost. A municipal inventory of proper bulbs and other fixtures would substantially aid our residents in navigating how to address light pollution. Finding the right light is not easy. This repository would facilitate this process. The program would be like our civic numbering policy, where residents order signs from us. It is a cost recovery program with the intention to ensure that signage meets the standard as set out by the municipality. Should this be in the interest of the Council, it should be done by policy later. Initial conversations will be had with potential funders.

MGA considerations:

MGA enabling legislation regarding outdoor illumination

172 (1) A council may make by-laws, for municipal purposes, respecting

(d) nuisances, activities and things that, in the opinion of the council, may be or may cause nuisances, including noise, weeds, burning, odours, fumes and vibrations...

181 (1) Without limiting the generality of Section 172, a council may make by-laws

(a) prescribing minimum standards of sanitation, plumbing, water supply, **lighting**, wiring, ventilation, heating, access, maintenance, construction and material for buildings, or parts thereof, **occupied for residential purposes**, whether the building, or part thereof, is erected, constructed or converted to residential purposes before or after the date of the making of the by-law.

(2) The council may make by-laws prescribing minimum standards of sanitation, plumbing, water supply, **lighting**, wiring, ventilation, heating, access, maintenance, appearance, construction and material for buildings, or parts thereof, occupied for **commercial purposes**.

Financial considerations:

Additional marketing and promotional costs may be incurred or may be a part of broader promotion. This additional cost is currently unknown. Time spent on the initiative would be internally driven, so no additional costs.

One-on-one conversations would be nominal cost, just time.