

RASC Position Statement on the International Dark-sky Association / Illuminating Engineering Society Model Lighting Ordinance

The negative effects of light pollution on the night sky, plant, animal and human health as well as nighttime visibility are well known. For two decades, the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC) has been an active advocate for light pollution abatement (LPA) and for the use of responsible nighttime lighting.

The International Dark-sky Association and Illuminating Engineering Society Model Lighting Ordinance (IDA/IES-MLO) has been under development for many years and we understand that the second draft of the MLO will be adopted by the IDA and promoted by the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America (IESNA). The RASC has submitted reviews on both the MLO draft documents but our concerns were not addressed nor were our recommendations included.

The RASC endorses the use of zones for assessing the current lighting strategies that are used in cities and rural areas. We acknowledge that the Backlight - Up-light - Glare (BUG) system in the MLO is an interesting new initiative with some merit. However, this system seems to be designed for fixture manufacturers rather than for cities as an instrument to reduce light pollution. The Light Pollution Abatement Policy of the RASC recommends the minimum light necessary for a purpose, for only the time required and without direct up-light, glare and light trespass. Merely quantifying these contributors to light pollution in the MLO through the BUG initiative does not address this goal. Instead, the RASC prefers concrete steps towards guiding the reduction in light pollution.

The format of the IDA/IES-MLO does not resemble Canadian Municipal bylaws, making it difficult to be interpreted and implemented by municipalities and integrated into their lighting policies. The Proposed MLO requires extensive changes for it to reflect the RASC LPA Policy.

The RASC "Sample Light Pollution Abatement Bylaw" is based on existing Canadian bylaws and has been in existence for almost a decade. With respect to light pollution control it is more comprehensive than the MLO. Rather than endorsing the IDA/IES-MLO, the RASC is revising its existing sample bylaw to lead the current trends in Canadian Cities.

Due to our significant concerns regarding the goals and methods in the IDA/IES-MLO, the RASC does not support nor encourage the use of the MLO in Canada. Furthermore, we will actively dispute attempts to adopt it in any form into municipal codes.

We feel that in its current draft of the MLO V2 is discordant with our Light Pollution Abatement policy and practise, and as such, reject it as a viable document.