



This is an election publication of the Mississippi Mills Resident's Association, Fall 2006

Regulating pesticides

Mississippi Mills Council continues to ignore the danger posed by the cosmetic use of pesticides and refuses to pass a by-law to regulate non-essential pesticide use.

Since Health Canada has been slow to take unsafe pesticides off the market, it is up to each town and city to enact a by-law as a precautionary step. Many municipalities already have. Hudson, Quebec was the first. It was quickly followed by Ontario municipalities large and small, including Perth. About 38% of Canada's population is now protected by pesticide bylaws.

In ruling that municipalities have the right to regulate the use of pesticides, Canada's Supreme Court cited the precautionary principle: if the risks of a product outweigh the benefits then the product should not be used.

Health threats

Young children are particularly vulnerable to pesticides, according to Health Canada. Here in Mississippi Mills, families with very young children move into town and follow the example of their neighbours in hiring companies to spray their lawns. Passers-by, children on the way to school, and infants are being exposed to chemicals whose risks almost always outweigh any benefits of their use. Although instructions on the bottle/bin may state the pesticide should not be sprayed on a windy day or may offer other suggestions to offset danger, these cannot be enforced.

Particularly disturbing, but easily preventable with a cosmetic pesticide by-law, were cases

this summer of properties in town being sprayed with a pesticide mix by commercial sprayers containing a pesticide deemed by Health Canada to "pose an unacceptable risk". Still 'legal', it is only gradually being phased out.

Homeowner application of pesticides can pose an even greater hazard. No signs are posted. And the homeowner is likely less informed than the commercial applicator, and might inadvertently use products that were taken off the market, including those containing particularly toxic compounds, such as the insecticide *diazinon*. Though de-registered, such products may still be for sale or be included in many a well-meaning homeowner's arsenal of gardening chemicals.

We are responsible for the health too of our downstream neighbours. Every chemical that rolls off Almonte lawns can end up in the drinking water of Ottawa and beyond.

Council stalling

In 2004, after more than two years work conducted at Council's request, the Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) presented Council with a draft proposed pesticide by-law. Also included was supporting information to use as a starting point for passing a by-law here. The draft regulated non-essential pesticide use. Farms and commercial growers were not covered and there were special exemptions for golf courses.

On April 14, 2005 there was a 'public' meeting held on the pesticide by-law issue. The meeting was not properly promoted. There was no specific notification of stakeholders

pro or con, or of community groups such as MMRA. It was not part of a scheduled Council meeting and was poorly attended by the public, and only the mayor and three councillors showed up.

Subsequently, on August 2, 2005, after a brief debate in which no members of the public were permitted to speak, Council defeated a motion to adopt a pesticide by-law for Mississippi Mills. Council also ignored a petition signed by several hundred residents supporting the by-law. Five were in favour of a by-law: councillors Anderson, Edwards, Gillis, Wilkinson, and Wilson. Mayor Lunney and councillors Lowry, Ferguson, Levi, Torrance and Minnille defeated the motion.

Council later allocated \$10,000 for pesticide education, but one year later, there has been no education campaign. Note: Education can be a poor delaying tactic. Ottawa spent a large amount of money on a pesticide education campaign only to see pesticide use go up.

What can you do?

During the current municipal election, if you favour a by-law to control the cosmetic use of pesticides, ask your candidates why we don't have one yet.

Other bulletins in this series

- #1 Downtown Almonte
- #2 De-amalgamation
- #3 Sewage treatment options
- #4 Almonte's plan for growth
- #5 Sunday hunting

The MMRA Board has reviewed the election 2006 bulletin articles for factual accuracy. The bulletins, and the opinions represented within them, are meant to stimulate community discussion and awareness in the time period leading up to the 2006 municipal elections in Mississippi Mills. Your vote counts!

The MMRA is a non-profit residents' association. For more information on the MMRA or to join, visit our web site at www.mmra.ca.