



## City's made a confusing shift on its pesticide policy

Jason Dodge, Guelph Mercury Community Editorial Board

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As I sat on my front porch enjoying what has become a rare rain-free evening, a headache suddenly hit me so hard I nearly fell out of my chair.

I put my newspaper on the table and rubbed my throbbing temple with the balls of my thumbs. I could suddenly feel the temperature of my cheeks increasing as my blood flow doubled its efforts to meet the demand of my surprisingly tense jaw. I think this sudden rush of adrenaline heightened my audio senses too. I swear that I could hear a thousand other newspapers dropping on to a thousand other tables all across Guelph.

Now I am the first to admit that Guelph is a pretty cool town. We have rivers and a lake, parks and preservation trails, and an abundance of trees that break up the sea of concrete and asphalt. We have beautiful buildings both old and new, shopping centres and businesses, and a top ranked university that draws people from all corners of the country. I am proud that our city has become a leading community. Many municipalities look to Guelph as a way of bettering themselves.

It's a shame that those other municipalities are going to be looking at one of our latest decisions.

You may remember not long ago, there was a rampage in Guelph that consumed countless tax dollars and hours for the city and its representatives. Guelph was fighting a battle against an alleged deadly villain known as "the cosmetic pesticide application." This evil but convenient monster had been running wild throughout Guelph, eliminating weeds and grubs and chinch bugs, making our parks and homes esthetically pleasing, and supposedly causing cancer in anyone that stood in or smelled its path.

Luckily, with help from the provincial government, our city representatives became heroes and banished this villain from our town forever.

Or so we thought.

Guelph has had a sudden change of heart when it came to the Eastview landfill site. Maybe this evil foe wasn't so bad after all? Maybe it was just a big misunderstanding? Maybe this is the city's way of saying we were misinformed and that pesticides are our allies (when used responsibly, of course.) The truth is, Guelph is leading the community with hypocrisy on this one.

Time and time again, the city explained to us how unnecessary pesticides are and how dangerous they can be. Guelph pushed to take these chemicals out of the hands of homeowners and licensed professionals claiming that natural remedies, aerating and mowing techniques, and pulling weeds by hand is the only way to go. One look at our city parks will tell you that Guelph is failing to practice what it preaches. Now we are told that the city has hired a contractor to apply at least three applications herbicides to land to eliminate "non native species" of weeds and grasses. They claim that non herbicide controls are "not practical on this scale of implementation" yet they also claim that when the pollinator park is complete, any new non native plants will be controlled with trimming and hand pulling. Since Guelph doesn't use these techniques on our sports fields and parks now, why should we believe this new park will be any different?

I believe pesticide applications are acceptable and often necessary. That may very well be the case in this situation. However, Guelph was adamantly supporting a ban on the use of pesticides a short time ago. An unnecessary health hazard they claimed. So what message are we sending to other communities now? It's not a health hazard if it's convenient?

Using the term "non-native species of weeds" does not make this herbicide application any less hypocritical. This phrase is used to make their decision to spray sound more justified and necessary. There are dozens of

plants around Guelph that fall under this category. What is one of the most common non-native species of weeds that the city will not apply pesticides to as it is an unnecessary health hazard?

The dandelion. Native to Asia, this weed is overtaking our parks and lawns here in Guelph. Residents are encouraged to reduce the spread of this invasive plant by hand picking them. Better yet, we should turn our lawns into natural pollinator areas with native plants to attract butterflies and birds and bees. Sounds wonderful doesn't it? The city of Guelph has now shown us that with these four simple steps it's a surprisingly easy project.

First, douse the area with repeated applications of herbicides.

Second, use creative terms such as "non-native," "invasive" and "aggressive" to justify your sudden change of perspective on the use of pesticides.

Third, install and grow native species plants.

Then revert back to your belief that pesticides are our enemy.

Repeat as necessary?

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