

Weeds make a stand on Brimley Rd. in Toronto

By Jack Lakey/The Fixer

Weeds are an annoying fact of life in a city and province where pesticides are banned, but there's a limit to what we'll put up with.

It's been nearly 10 years since the province [banned most cosmetic weed killers](#) — like the ultra-effective Roundup or Killex, and even 2,4 D, which was approved by Health Canada — for use on lawns and gardens.



Bushy weeds next to utility boxes on the west side of Brimley Rd., north of St. Clair Ave., are so tall that a reader says her young sons are able to hide in them. (Toronto Star / Jack Lakey)

[The ban](#) was enacted in 2009 due to well-documented health concerns about toxicity. Long-term exposure, particularly for children and pregnant women, is believed to cause chronic health issues.

[One website we found](#) notes “the more subtle long-term chronic effects (disruption of endocrine

system, cancer, sterility and mutagenic effects) often go unnoticed and are not yet fully understood.”

There was lot of pushback at first from the lawn care industry, but it’s safe to say we are all better off without toxic pesticides, even if it means more weeds.

And that is certainly the case in Toronto. After the city stopped spraying, it continued with efforts to chop them down but it has not been nearly as effective as pesticides.

So we are now accustomed to weed-covered boulevards and concrete medians, but when they grow so large that kids can hide behind them, some people can’t be blamed for having fond memories of Roundup.

Jessica Bergeron emailed us a photo of weeds surrounding utility boxes on a boulevard on the west side of Brimley Rd., just south of Anson Ave., near St. Clair Ave.

The photo shows one of her young sons standing on the sidewalk, next to weeds that are at least as tall as he is. Another of her boys is standing behind the weeds, with just the top of his baseball cap poking up above them.

“If you look closely, you can almost see my 9-year-old standing behind the weeds,” she said, adding she first called 311 about them in June and more recently sent an email to her city councillor.

“As you can probably guess, they were never taken care,” said Bergeron. “I have watched landscapers take care of the rest of the boulevard on Brimley, but somehow they always seem to miss these utility boxes.”

STATUS: We often take utilities to task for various shortcomings, but they aren’t responsible for maintaining boulevards on which their equipment is located. That’s the city’s job, so we got in touch with Edison Alexander, the local road operations manager. He said he’d send someone this week to get rid of the weeds.

What’s broken in your neighbourhood? Wherever you are in Greater Toronto, we want to know. Email jlakey@thestar.ca or follow @TOStarFixer on Twitter.

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