

Subject: FW: Ottawa - Mayor backs urban ban on pesticide use

Date: Tue, 18 Oct 2005 04:20:48 -0700

From: "Ernie Crist" <ernie_crist@dnv.org>

To: <fonvca@fonvca.org>, "Mayor and Council - DNV" <Council@dnv.org>, "Senior Management Committee" <managecomm@dnv.org>, "James Ridge" <James_Ridge@dnv.org>

Passed on to you - courtesy - Ernie Crist

-----Original Message-----

From: Mike Christie [<mailto:mikechristie@rogers.com>]

Sent: Tuesday, October 18, 2005 3:04 AM

To: Recipient List Suppressed

Subject: Ottawa - Mayor backs urban ban on pesticide use

Tue 18 Oct 2005

The Ottawa Citizen

Mayor backs urban ban on pesticide use: Despite lack of 'hard proof' chemicals pose health risk, Chiarelli favours MDs' stand

by Zev Singer

Ottawa Mayor Bob Chiarelli says he will support a ban on the cosmetic use of pesticides.

After a meeting yesterday with Dr. Jack Kitts, president and chief executive officer of the Ottawa Hospital, and two other doctors, the mayor said he will put his political weight behind such a ban because he believes the city's medical community has arrived at a consensus that chemical pesticides pose too much of a health risk.

"These are people who live in our community, who are leaders of our medical institutions and who believe this is the right thing to do," said Mr. Chiarelli, explaining that as he is not a technical expert in chemistry, biology or medicine he has to take his cue from those who "are leading this community in the medical area."

Dr. Kitts, however, conceded that "hard proof" about the dangers of pesticides does not exist, but said leadership in medicine is about weighing potential risks. There is no hard proof one way or the other," he said.

"We do have studies that suggest that there is significant potential harm, like leukemia and other cancers in children. So I think the onus is on us now to prove it safe as opposed to trying to prove it harmful."

Nevertheless, the mayor said that he has seen support "across the board" in Ottawa's medical community.

Among the other medical experts the mayor cited were Dr. Hartley Stern, vice-president of the Ottawa Hospital Regional Cancer Centre, and Dr. Robin Walker, medical director of critical care at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario.

"For me, that's good enough. I think this is an issue of health. It's an issue of health for pregnant women and young children, and I'm going to take the advice of the leaders of our community."

The mayor also noted the support of both the city and provincial medical officers of health.

As well, Dr. Kitts said that while consensus is not absolute among doctors, it is strong.

"I would argue that if you gathered a group of physicians in any city or anywhere, they would agree that there is a potential risk from the use

of pesticides and if you have alternatives and the use is only for cosmetic purposes then you should consider using the alternatives and phase out the pesticide use."

However, in a foretaste of the debate that can be expected at Thursday's health committee meeting, Thom Bourne, president and general manager of Nutri-Lawn Ottawa, said scientists have not found proof that the chemicals are harmful.

"How dare they hijack you and council, and force you to make policy with anecdotal thoughts," Mr. Bourne said in an open letter to the mayor in reference to the anti-pesticide medical advocates.

"How dare they use their position in the city that my family lives in to perpetuate their unproven fears. This is a misuse of their position, and shows contempt for their fellow doctors, including my family doctor, and the many doctors that are our customers and who do not agree with their position."

The potential ban on cosmetic use of pesticides comes after a three-year education campaign failed to sway enough homeowners to voluntarily stop using pesticides.

If the ban is approved, it will likely carry a number of exemptions that will make it politically workable. They include exceptions for infestations and, most significantly, rural homeowners will not have to comply with the ban at all.

"The reason for that," the mayor said, "is that we believe that without that exemption we will have no bylaw at all."

He said he suspected that an amendment will be made that will set a time period for reconsidering a ban in rural areas, but allow sufficient time for a debate on the issue.

"It's simply a political reality that we're moving forward at this particular time."

The bylaw could come into effect at the beginning of next year, the beginning of 2007 or July of 2007.

The mayor said all three options are on the table.

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Tue 18 Oct 2005

The Ottawa Citizen

Shield children from toxins

Kudos to Mayor Bob Chiarelli for taking a firm stand on the unnecessary use of ornamental pesticides. Mr. Chiarelli was quoted last week as saying "I'm voting for the kids" in support of the staff report and CHEO's call for a pesticide-control bylaw in Ottawa.

It is my hope and expectation that most Ottawa city councillors truly believe that protecting children from these unwanted toxins should supercede the demands of any economic, industry or private interest group. This is true in Halifax, Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver and with the latter two, city council support for a pesticide bylaw was unanimous. The rest of Canada will be watching to see if Ottawa can achieve this gold standard as well.

Mike Christie,
Nepean

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Oct 15, 2005

York Region.com

Pesticide lobby may influence government regulators

Re: Banning pesticides to pacify Fluffy's mom, opinion by Bruce Annan,
Oct. 6.

I have two major complaints about this opinion piece.

The first is, of course, inaccuracy.

Pesticides have been proclaimed harmful not just in our area, but across
Canada, the United States, Europe and elsewhere around the world.

Physicians and, specifically, children's physicians, agree these
chemicals are dangerous and clearly related to respiratory and
neurological conditions.

Veterinarians warn of dangers to pets.

Biologists note negative effects on water, fish and wildlife.

And that old argument about "government approved and properly applied"?
Is it possible the pesticide lobby has influence over government
regulators who often come from that business sector?

Does it often happen that pesticides are not properly applied?

The other complaint is all about bad journalism. The author of this
opinion column covers his bias and lack of accurate information with a
petty, trivializing attitude that argues to a false image of
environmentally responsible people, including moms and pet owners.

Invoking an image of an hysterical female is insulting and misleading.
The name-calling in the column, "pro-weeders, enviro-paranoids" is
inexcusable and offensive.

Mr. Annan might find a better market at a supermarket tabloid or
American right-wing rag.

His style has no place in your community newspaper or, indeed, in our
community at large.

Tom Warney
Aurora

[http://www.yorkregion.com/yr/yr4/YR_News/Letters_To_Editor/story/3098653
p-3593866c.html](http://www.yorkregion.com/yr/yr4/YR_News/Letters_To_Editor/story/3098653p-3593866c.html)

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Oct 15, 2005

York Region.com

Councils should enact pesticide ban

Re: Banning pesticides to pacify Fluffy's mom, column by Bruce Annan,
Oct. 9.

I was very dismayed by Mr. Annan's column.

He uses his forum to criticize and berate everyone in favour of banning

pesticides for cosmetic purposes.

He goes as far as criticizing the Ontario College of Family Physicians and Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment.

He accuses the OCFP of not doing its own research but instead using "other people's research". This is true, it deliberated over many peer reviewed tests to come to its conclusions.

Mr. Annan failed to inform that Health Canada does not do its own original research. It only gathers up the empirical evidence. It gathers up studies done by others, often by the manufacturer of the very product it is studying.

Health Canada also approves cigarettes and makes a lot of revenue off this proven carcinogenic product. Health Canada also makes a lot of money from the pesticide/chemical industry.

Many Canadians are doubtful our national pesticide regulatory system adequately protects Canadians, in particular, our children and the special risks pesticides pose to them. The precautionary principle dictates we insist on proof of safety, rather than waiting for proof of harm.

Who should we trust? Mr. Annan, a willing mouthpiece for the industry; a government concerned with revenue; the lawn care and pesticide industry itself, profiting by the use of these chemicals when there are many safe alternatives; or the groups that don't make money from these products, such as the many health care professionals and Canadian Cancer Society that are all calling for a ban on cosmetic pesticides?

Why shouldn't "Fluffy's mom" have the right to go outside with her pet and her children without fear of being exposed to these toxic chemicals?

Pesticides are toxic -- they are meant to kill or they wouldn't be doing their job. They are not allowed to be advertised as safe because they are definitely not safe.

Why should those that choose to have the "perfect" lawn have the right to expose all of us and our pets to more toxins than we are already exposed to in our daily lives?

We need more politicians such as Joe Sponga who truly care about the well-being of their constituents and not the powerful lawn care industry. Municipalities have been given the right by the Supreme Court of Canada to enact pesticide bylaws for reasons of health.

They not only have the right, they have the responsibility.

SARI MERSON
THORNHILL

http://www.yorkregion.com/yr/yr4/YR_News/Letters_To_Editor/story/3098646p-3593859c.html

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Oct 15, 2005

York Region.com

Bedtime story for Bruce Annan

Re: Banning pesticides to pacify Fluffy's mom, opinion by Bruce Annan, Oct. 6.

Here is a bedtime story for Mr. Annan.

Once upon a time, there were chemical companies not happy with the piles of money they were making from farmers through the sale of fertilizers and pesticides.

So, they had this idea of marketing their fertilizer to homeowners to use on their lawns.

Except homeowners really didn't need fertilizer because they had clover and other forms growing happily among the grass blades. These forms ensured a rich green lawn even in July and August and provided all the fertilizer the grass needed.

The clever and devious chemical companies realized they could sell the lowly homeowner some pesticides to kill clover, their grass would become weak and unhealthy (monocultures always become weak and unhealthy).

They would then be able to sell homeowners fertilizer to get the grass as green as it was before they used pesticides to kill all the clover.

They knew they were creating a vicious cycle that would go on and on forever and make them very rich.

Their marketing teams assured them it wouldn't be long before everyone used their products because of their excellent advertising and the natural "herd mentality" of humans.

They clapped their hands with joy, just thinking about all the money they would make.

This went on for a very long time until people started noticing how much more sickness there was among them, their children, their pets and even the birds and wild creatures that came to visit.

Of course, the marketing teams weren't exactly right because not all humans have a herd mentality.

There are many who stood out from the crowd. With their astute powers of deduction, they could add two and two together and come up with answers they did not like.

Most of these people didn't even have a pet named Fluffy and because they weren't making money from these chemicals, their vision was not distorted by dollar signs.

So, David, on behalf of all the Fluffys and other creatures of the world, went up against the Goliath of the multinational chemical companies and their supporters and won the battle of the day.

Of course, there will be many more battles, because the Goliaths are very greedy and strong, but there are more Davids coming out to win the day.

Many of them aren't even called David. They have names such as Joe Sponga and Erin Shapero and they are magical beings.

GLORIA MARSH
RICHMOND HILL

http://www.yorkregion.com/yr/yr4/YR_News/Letters_To_Editor/story/3098652p-3593773c.html

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Sat 15 Oct 2005

The Ottawa Citizen

Cushman urges pesticide ban from rural lawns too: Outgoing medical

officer wants council to look beyond urban plan

by Patrick Dare

Ottawa's outgoing medical officer of health says he supports a ban on pesticides for lawns in the rural parts of the city because the city shouldn't have second-class citizens when it comes to health.

Dr. Robert Cushman said yesterday that among certain people, there are links between use of pesticides and an array of maladies, including heart defects, prostate cancer, leukemia, miscarriages, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease and infertility.

Children, pregnant women and seniors are especially vulnerable to the effect of pesticides, he said, and it's time to protect their health by halting the use of poisons for the purely cosmetic reason of keeping weeds out of lawns.

Dr. Cushman said pesticides rightly get credit for a green revolution that increased the productivity of Canadian farms, but their industrial use on those farms crossed over to cosmetic use in densely populated residential neighbourhoods, without suitable controls.

His strong support for a ban on lawn pesticides right across the city creates a bit of a dilemma for city council, which is ready to ban pesticides for cosmetic purposes in urban areas, but allow the rural parts of the city, and golf courses, to be untouched by the law.

Council votes on a pesticide ban on Oct. 26. Farm operations will not be affected by any bylaw.

Councillor Diane Holmes, who wants a pesticide ban, said council isn't looking at a rural ban on cosmetic use because there's been such a strong backlash from rural neighbourhoods that council felt the matter should be left to citizens in those areas.

Asked about a pesticide bylaw that divides the city in such a way, Dr. Cushman said: "You might have second-class children. I think there should be equal protection."

Councillor Alex Cullen, another cosmetic pesticide ban advocate, said council must start in the urban area, where it knows it has public support for a ban. A ban in the rural areas could follow, he said. "My heart says we ought to (ban pesticides in the rural area) but there's a political reality here. We face resistance."

Three years ago, when a pesticide ban was first discussed, Dr. Cushman said the scientific case was not convincing enough to support an outright ban. He supported the idea of educating the public about what pesticides and their potential health threats.

But Dr. Cushman -- who has taken on a new job as head of the agency that will plan health services and approve health spending in Eastern Ontario -- said his mind has been changed by a growing body of medical opinion that points to health problems caused by pesticides.

In Canada, the federal Pest Management Regulatory Agency, which evaluates pesticides, has maintained that pesticides are safe to use according to manufacturers' directions.

But Dr. Cushman said yesterday that the agency is "on thin ice in terms of competence," because it is understaffed, underfunded, reliant on industry information and slow to respond to concerns about certain products. He said people often don't follow instructions for pesticides, and homeowners often use a greater quantity of pesticides per acre than farmers use on their land to grow crops.

Dr. Cushman said epidemiology -- the study of disease -- is a

notoriously conservative science and there aren't long-term studies to conclusively show a cause-and-effect relationship between pesticide use and health problems. He said it's hard to find people who aren't exposed to pesticides to do studies. But he said history has shown that taking the precautionary approach is wise for those who wish to protect public health.

"Better to be safe than sorry. We don't want to learn the hard way," said Dr. Cushman. "These are health risks that we can't turn a blind eye to."

In response to Dr. Cushman's criticism, the Pest Management Regulatory Agency said yesterday the federal government is increasing its budget by \$19.6 million after an audit was critical of its performance. The agency has 500 employees, including 330 scientists.

Trish Macquarrie, a director with the agency, said the agency -- with an annual budget of about \$50 million -- has strict requirements for studies before companies are allowed to sell pesticides in Canada. And she said the agency is re-evaluating about 400 pesticides that were introduced in Canada before 1995. That re-evaluation has resulted in the recent phasing out of commonly used home pesticides such as Malathion and Diazinon.

Dr. Cushman said three years ago, when the issue first surfaced at city council, he knew there was only the political will to push through one big public health issue -- the ban on smoking in bars, restaurants and bingo halls.

He said that in restricting pesticide use, Ottawa will simply be following the lead of other Canadian cities such as Toronto. He said in the same way that public health officials made child car seats mandatory, pesticides will be reduced, but not eliminated, through education coupled with enforcement based on complaints.

"We're not going to have bylaw officers out there at three in the morning looking for someone spraying something under their oak tree," said Dr. Cushman.

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October 15, 2005

Ottawa Sun

Weed out the truth

Susan Sherring says excluding rural areas to get a pesticide ban passed puts the health of the city's outlying residents at undue risk

By SUSAN SHERRING,

Are rural residents being treated with political kid gloves or as second-class citizens?

A staff report on pesticides recommends a ban on their cosmetic use be applied only in urban areas, meaning rural residents would be allowed to use pesticides -- not just on their farms, but also on their lawns.

Ottawa's former medical officer of health, Dr. Robert Cushman, who wrote the report from which the staff recommendations stem, says from his point of view, that means rural residents are being treated as second-class citizens.

Absolutely. He's right.

And that's how the rural councillors should see it.

Why on earth would you argue for the right to put rural kids at risk?

Unfortunately, some won't see it that way.

At a news conference yesterday, Cushman went over some of the medical opinions on the potential health risks of pesticide use.

Leukemia, prostate cancer.

Birth defects.

Infertility.

Neurological problems.

And while the medical evidence may not be as conclusive as some would like, why would you be willing to risk your child's health for a green, weed-free lawn?

Dandelions or the risk of cancer?

You decide.

'VOTING FOR THE KIDS'

At a late-day news conference yesterday, Mayor Bob Chiarelli, flanked by several high-ranking doctors, said that after hearing local expert medical opinions on the pesticide use, he was now willing to support the staff report.

"For me, it's a matter of protecting the health of our children and our children's children," Chiarelli said. "I'm voting for the kids."

Unfortunately, it's not a vote for rural kids.

Politicians like Chiarelli understand that the only way to get this report through city council is to leave restrictions on the rurals out of it.

And that's just what happened.

The rurals have been assured the ban on pesticides won't affect them for now, and that any thoughts on banning pesticides could be dealt with at the upcoming Rural Summit.

To his credit, Chiarelli doesn't beat around the bush. He's upfront about what needs to be done to get the report through council.

"This is a the political reality," he said.

That's also the astute assessment of Dr. Robin Walker, who's with the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario.

In a perfect world, yes, Dr. Robin Walker would prefer to see pesticides for cosmetic use banned everywhere.

"This is about harm reduction. I've been waiting for several years for this, and this is something that will protect the largest group of people," Walker said, proving that if he chooses to get out of medicine, he likely has a career in politics.

Somerset Coun. Diane Holmes, the chairwoman of the city's health committee, which will debate the policy next week, is also willing to leave out the rurals to get the report through council.

"I always try to follow the wishes of the ward councillors," Holmes said yesterday.

Well, Coun. Holmes, this might well be the very first time I've ever seen you do that. You normally vote strictly on principle.

CITY POLL

Holmes then suggested -- just as unconvincingly -- that if residents in Ottawa's rural wards themselves don't want it, that's good enough for her.

Could it be that Holmes is guided by a city poll which suggests almost 100% of central area residents who consider pesticides to be a health hazard support a bylaw?

Well, what about the 30% of Ottawa residents who said they didn't want a pesticide ban?

Seems about 70% of residents believe pesticides pose a health hazard, and yet more than 50% of citizens use them.

You do the math. Someone is lying.

Mayor Bob Chiarelli and Dr. Robin Walker of CHEO talk to the media after their meeting on the proposed pesticide ban. (Geoff Robins, SUN)

susan.sherring@ott.sunpub.com

<http://ottsun.canoe.ca/News/OttawaAndRegion/2005/10/15/1263057-sun.html>

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OTTAWA.CBC.CA News - Full Story :

City moving toward ban on pesticides
Last Updated: Oct 14 2005 02:02 PM EDT

The City of Ottawa is taking the first steps toward banning the use of pesticides for cosmetic purposes. City staff have prepared a draft bylaw, and the health and social services committee will start looking at it next week. This follows an unsuccessful effort to get people in the city to voluntarily stop using pesticides. Two years ago, according to a city report, about 54 per cent of households with lawns and gardens used pesticides. This year, that number went down by only one per cent.

Coun. Diane Holmes says a bylaw seems to be the best solution to stop people from using harmful chemicals.

"I've had friends who think that their dogs were killed because of pesticide usage on lawns. I've had people who think their children, with ... asma increasing consistently, think that this could be a factor."

Across Canada, 70 cities already have a bylaw in place.

Ottawa's proposed bylaw would take effect at the beginning of January.

But, during the first year, the city would continue to educate people. During the first half of the next year, it would be giving people warnings.

Some members of the city's environmental advisory committee say residents have had enough time to learn about the dangers of pesticides. Charles Caccia says, "If Ottawa council found the courage to ban smoking in public places, surely the issue of cosmetic use of pesticides ranks with the same degree of urgency."

But Coun. Holmes believes it will take time for residents to get used to the bylaw.

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Mike Christie
(613) 228-7499 / bus.
(613) 228-7487 / fax.
mikechristie@rogers.com / e-mail

The Laws of Ecology: "All things are interconnected. Everything goes somewhere. There's no such thing as a free lunch. Nature bats last."

by Ernest Callenbach

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