

To All Township and Lanark County Councillors,

I read with interest the 2020 Vegetation Management Plan Update prepared by Michelle Vala, a student intern working on her MA in Biology. I question why a strategic document that holds so much importance for so many constituents in Lanark would be produced by a student who is a part-time employee of the department that implemented the plan. Given the seriousness of spraying pesticides year after year against the wishes of a majority of voters in Lanark County, it would behoove this council to ask that a review of the Plan be conducted by one of our many local scientists for a true, educated perspective on the situation.

We have to stop taking this report at the word of its implementers and start to question the strength of its claims:

- Awards notwithstanding, it is simply scientifically impossible for our County to spray hundreds of miles of roadsides with pesticide, plant a few pollinators and come up with a positive number for pollinators. Who is conducting the studies proving that pollinators are increasing despite widespread pesticide spraying? It's just not believable.
- I reviewed the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign (NAPPC) that bestowed the award to our County and have to question its agenda, as should you. It is an American-led organization, heavily managed by American agriculture businesses, many of them with a vested interest in having taxpayers pay for pesticide spraying.
- Why are we bragging about spraying walking trails? Surely that's the last place we should be contaminating nature. Those certainly aren't organic farmers making those poor decisions.
- Why are we "spot spraying"? If you're going to send a truck out to spot-spray, you can just as easily send a truck out with a few trained, properly dressed workers and shovels and remove the offending weeds once and for all, end of story.
- History shows that there is no end to "noxious weeds" and "invasive species". Every year, the province adds another species and threatens consequences if counties don't handle it. I have investigated the "consequences" and realistically, there are none. The Province of Ontario has never followed up in any instance of inaction on the part of any county. It's a myth.
- Allowing this plan to proceed is encouragement for these sloppy, expensive eradication methods that ruin the environment, increase cancer rates and don't get rid of the *supposed* problem.
- Be aware: there is no organization in Canada that claims that pesticides are not harmful to humans or animals; that includes the Pesticide Management Regulatory Agency, Health Canada and Public Health Ontario. All the studies (conducted by those with a vested interest in selling pesticides) can conclude is that there is no proof to the contrary. Anyone saying otherwise is extrapolating from the studies dangerously.

Let's make 2020 the last year Lanark County wastes taxpayer money on pesticide and spraying. The County needs to be made aware of the fact that roadside spraying (and indeed, all pesticide spraying) is not compliant with any climate change action plan. The County needs to direct the Planning Department to go back to the drawing board, hire an educated scientist experienced in nature-based solutions and come up with a cost-effective plan for the removal of noxious weeds that is supportive of Lanark County's Climate Action Plan.