

CEAC REPORT 2004 - 03

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Debbe Crandall, Chair, Caledon Environmental Advisory Committee (CEAC)

Date: April 6, 2004

Subject: Healthy Horticultural Landscapes By-law Public Education Program

Recommendations:

1. That Council receive CEAC Report 2004-03;
2. That Council consider the essential nature of public education regarding the regulation of pesticide use in the context of enforcing the Healthy Horticultural Landscapes (HHL) By-law 2003-81; and,
3. That Council encourage Town staff to proceed with the timely implementation of the essential components of a public education program within Caledon during the current year 2004 – the first year of the enforcement of the HHL By-law.

Background:

After a year's deliberations involving consultation with affected stakeholders through the Pesticide Advisory Group (PAG) and the public at large through three public meetings, Council enacted the Healthy Horticultural Landscapes By-law in April, 2003. That by-law dealt with specific regulations regarding the use of pesticides for cosmetic purposes as well as the need "to undertake public education programs on the safe use of pesticides and alternative methods to control pests and to reduce pesticide use ----".

Discussion:

While there existed disparate views regarding how pesticide use for cosmetic purposes should be regulated and reduced, the one constant throughout the discussion leading up to the drafting and adoption of the by-law was the need for an effective public education program regarding the risks to human health and the environment from the use of pesticides.

Council's insistence on the need for an effective public education program regarding the safe use of pesticides and alternative pest control methods, in conjunction with the enforcement of the by-law, has been validated through a recent report¹ jointly prepared by the Canadian Centre for Pollution Prevention and Cullbridge Marketing and Communications. The report presents the

¹ The Impact of By-Laws and Public Education Programs on Reducing the Cosmetic/Non-Essential , Residential Use of Pesticides: A Best Practices Review, February 26, 2004

results of an in-depth study of nine communities in Canada, the United States and Europe that were leaders in reducing pesticide use. Criteria for determining leadership included the reduction in pesticide use achieved, how easily their approaches could be replicated, and the reliability of their results. In addition, another eight communities with innovative approaches and activities were identified. Essentially, the study found that only those communities that had passed a by-law and had supported it with education were successful in reducing the use of pesticides by a high degree (51 – 90%). Education and outreach programs alone were found to be “far less effective” and resulted in much lower levels of pesticide reduction (10 –24%).

In that context, the Town’s Planning and Development Department, Property Standards Division, submitted Report 2003-23, dated April 28, 2003, which recommended the adoption of the HHL By-law including a Public Education Strategy. As part of the education strategy, a number of initiatives were proposed for both 2003 and 2004. While funding was already in place for the 2003 program, Town staff recommended that additional funds of approximately \$20,000 be allocated in the 2004 budget to support those activities outlined for the 2004 public education program.

Two of seven components of the 2003 program were carried out; the publication of an information brochure in the fall, and funding for the Weedgee Kidz program which encourages and instructs residents on the use of alternative methods for weed and pest control.

The 2004 public education program proposed in Report 2003-23 was much more ambitious and included the following items (verbatim):

- Information and education should be made available prior to the first application of pesticides in the spring;
- Provide summer student to co-ordinate education campaign;
- Enhanced poster and brochure campaign outlining updated information and distributed to community centres, libraries and other public areas;
- Public information booths at trade shows and community events;
- Education seminars will be held in strategically located communities;
- Implement awards program;
- Co-ordinate media releases in all community newspapers.

To date, in 2004, one information session has been held for pesticide applicators to review and discuss the implications of the by-law, which will be enforced effective May 1, 2004. No other activities are being contemplated by Town staff pending Council’s decision regarding funding for the public education program.

In recognition that budget priorities may, to some extent, limit the public education program regardless of its importance, CEAC has developed what it believes are the essential elements of a program that should be implemented without delay. These are outlined briefly below:

1. Reconfirm and Inform the Public – the By-law Becomes Effective May 1, 2004

- Redistribute the brochure distributed in 2003, modified if necessary, to the general public and to all retailers (including grocery chains, hardware stores and garden centres) in the region;
- Co-ordinate media releases in all community newspapers and magazines;
- Create and display posters in schools, libraries and community centres advising the community about the effective date of the by-law, key elements of the by-law and where additional information regarding it may be obtained;
- Post the by-law on the Town’s website, accompanied by tips on the use of alternative methods for lawn care; and
- Post signs at strategic locations in the Town referring to the effective date of the by-law and referring to the website for additional information.

2. Develop and Distribute Alternative Kits (with the assistance of Weedgee Kidz)

- Develop a guide to non-toxic solutions to problems in the lawn or garden; similar to the “Gardening Naturally” booklet from Waterloo, or the “Green Guide to a Healthy Lawn” from Toronto.
- List the location of suppliers of alternative products;
- Identify helpful websites;
- Distribute information and alternative kits to garden centres, hazardous drop-off sites, and retailers selling pesticides.

3. Hold Public Information Sessions (with the assistance of Weedgee Kidz)

- Present small to medium sized group public education sessions, e.g. Bolton, Caledon East, Inglewood, Alton, etc. to explain how the by-law will be enforced and what alternative methods are available to control weeds and pests in lawns and gardens.

4. Work with Local Retailers as a Means of Public Communication

- Work with pesticide product retailers to solicit their cooperation in training their staff in the hazardous characteristics of the products they sell , in the safe use of such products, and in the promotion of alternative products for lawn and garden care.

Conclusion

The Town of Caledon has shown leadership in joining a rapidly growing number of municipalities in enacting a by-law that regulates the use of pesticides for cosmetic purposes (lawns and gardens) with a view to reducing pesticide use and reducing the risk to human health and the environment. It has been shown that enforcement of the by-law coupled with an effective public education program will achieve the objective of the by-law. The public education component is an essential element of the enforcement and support of the by-law. If carried out effectively and in a timely manner, it should ultimately result in reducing both the cost of enforcement and the use of pesticides in Caledon. CEAC encourages Council to stay the course and to move forward expeditiously with the essential public education program elements outlined within this report.