

Members of Lanark County Council,

I thank you for granting me the opportunity to appear as a delegation this evening. Since I moved to Blakeney, Mississippi Mills, 12 years ago, I have been impressed by the strong commitment of so many residents in our County to care for the people who live here, and to affirm the importance of the natural environment that surrounds and sustains us.

Like many others, I have been very concerned about the County's decision to use roadside spraying with ClearView this year to control wild parsnip, for environmental reasons, for human health reasons, and also for financial reasons. This evening, I'd like to focus on the financial aspect of roadside spraying.

As a taxpayer, I understand that the County has a legal obligation, mandated by the Province, to control identified invasive species, but I question whether spraying is really more cost-effective than strategically mowing the roadsides once, just before the wild parsnip flowers and sets seed, which is another accepted, effective means of control. Since mowing is already done annually to preserve sightlines for motorists, it would not be an additional cost.

A review of the 2015 Public Works budget proposal compared Option 1, spraying all permissible sections of the county road system (approximately 700 lane kms, or 75% of the total) in 2016 at an approximate cost of \$51,500, compared with Option 2, conducting 3 extra passes of roadside mowing, 2 swaths wide, at a cost of \$72,000. In this proposal, it was stated that mowing was only 30-40% effective in controlling wild parsnip, although no actual tests appear to have been conducted to see if STRATEGIC mowing once per year was at least as effective as spraying ClearView.

I see several red flags in this budget proposal. First, why was there such a high cost assigned to mowing? It has been pointed out to Council members that mowing is a very effective way of controlling the spread of wild parsnip if it is done ONCE, just before the plant flowers or sets seed. Second, since mowing the roadsides is already done by the County to preserve sightlines for motorists, it is not actually an additional cost. If one divides \$72,000 by three (the cost of 3 passes of roadside mowing), the end result is \$24,000, for one pass, the cost of which should already be covered under the line item for annual mowing.

Furthermore, roadside spraying would not be a one-time cost. The budget proposal states that the County is providing biannual spraying (50% of the road system at a time), and every year thereafter.

I also question whether the amount of \$51,500 included costs for the complete spraying process from beginning to end. As I understand it, there are many components to assessing the cost of roadside spraying, which I have listed here:

- costs for the operation of equipment, and the time of a qualified contractor to apply this herbicide to 700 kilometres of roadside
- the cost of the herbicide ClearView, as well as any additives
- notification to the general public, as well as individual notification to residents living on the roads that were to be sprayed, about when spraying would take place, and how to apply for No Spray signs if residents wished to use non-chemical strategies for their section of roadside

- administrative staff time involved replying to questions from residents and others regarding the spraying program
- processing of requests for No Spray signs and cost of the signs themselves
- subsequent mowing (I understand that the vegetation killed by the herbicide was then mowed – would this have cost an additional \$24,000 (see my comment above))?
- public education and advertisements about potential health and environmental risks from the herbicide ClearView
- implementation of road signage immediately before the spray trucks passed to warn that spraying was in progress, so as to prevent inadvertent contact with the chemicals? From what I understand, cyclists and schoolchildren taking the bus were at risk of exposure
- costs connected with best management practices, which I am not sure are being implemented (a concern in and of itself); namely, remediation of the sprayed roadsides by reseeded to restore native flowering plants for pollinators (best management practices for noxious weeds advocated by the Ontario Invasive Plant Council)

Given the potential expense of this spraying program, both environmental and monetary, it would be prudent to do a full cost analysis of the short- and long-term costs of engaging in this program another year. Other costs that would need to be considered are:

- long-term cost of inadvertently eradicating legumes and other plant species essential for the health of the soil and pollinators that are essential to food production
- long-term cost of health care for residents, especially those suffering from chemical sensitivities
- potential lawsuits from residents whose health or livelihood has been compromised by contamination with ClearView

We have many farmers and beekeepers in the County, as well as residents who want to protect their garden plots, roadside flowers, and natural areas. Some people can experience severe physical symptoms in reaction to chemicals. Even those without chemical sensitivities don't have access to the safety equipment mandated for those actually doing the spraying, such as chemical goggles, face shields, boots, full body suits, and chemically resistant gloves (information taken from the DOW safety sheet for ClearView). Incidentally, I don't believe anyone needs to take these extensive precautions to mow or dig up wild parsnip, which makes one wonder whether the chemical "cure" is, in fact, far worse than the "disease".

And finally, as you no doubt observed when driving along our county roads during this past summer, much of the wild parsnip was not reachable by spray truck. That being the case, wouldn't you agree that it is not possible to eradicate wild parsnip by spraying the plants growing by the roads, and leaving the others intact? Therefore, regardless of how much wild parsnip was killed during the summer of 2016 as a result of the \$51,500 spray program, the untouched plants could very well make this amount an ongoing expense, year after year after year. In fact, Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry

have been spraying their roadsides for at least 9 years, with no apparent end in sight. They are apparently resorting to increasingly toxic chemicals in an effort to win what appears to be a losing battle.

I am therefore requesting a response from Lanark County Council and the Department of Public Works, within the next three weeks, to the following:

1. I would like to know how much exactly was spent on the wild parsnip issue this past summer.
2. I would like to have a full cost analysis done of the short- and long-term costs of engaging in this program another year.
3. I would request that Council allocate an adequate portion of this year's budget to educating residents about how to identify wild parsnip and treat skin contact with this plant, as is currently done with other plants such as poison ivy.
4. I would like assurances that, if Council do decide to proceed, despite the questionable cost effectiveness of spraying, that they will undertake:
  - individual notification to residents on roads to be sprayed, as well as information about obtaining No Spray signs
  - the implementation of best management practices as part of their protocol
  - warning signage immediately before, during and after spraying a particular section of road to notify people using the road that spraying is in progress.

In conclusion, I thank you for your time this evening, and trust that you will carefully examine whether there are safer and more useful ways to spend considerably more than \$51,500 of our tax money on an annual basis. Perhaps you will keep in mind that the wild parsnip is basically an escapee from the vegetable gardens of European settlers, just like the dandelion and Queen Anne's lace. By not spraying our roadsides, you will also show support for those of us who care about the health and well-being of our community, and about nature too.