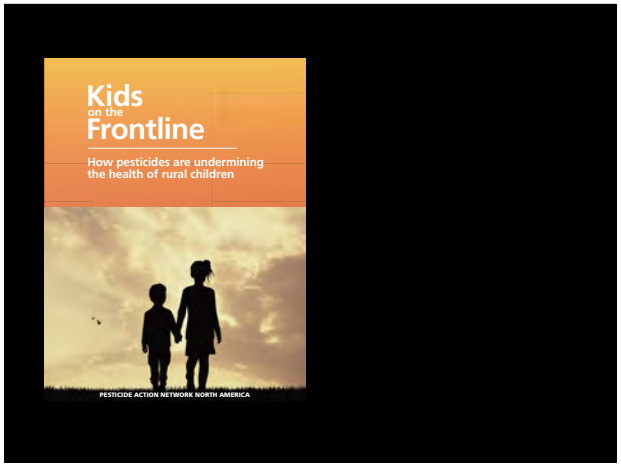
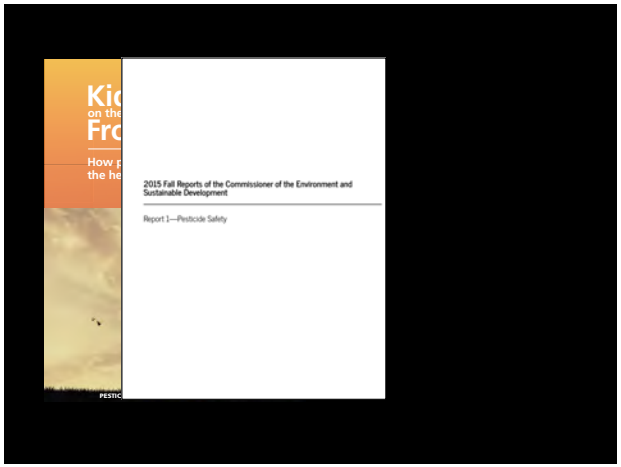
Good evening, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you tonight. There's been a lot of varied information presented about wild parsnip. I'd like to present what I believe to be a rational and dispassionate perspective based on my real, literally hands-on experience managing this plant.

We live in a very special and fragile place. As Councillors you make decisions with our best interests at heart. In the case of wild parsnip, you need a range of tactics to control the plant on Township roadsides, and you need a strategy that provides protection without doing harm. There are several organizations telling you what methods you can use, but it's up to you to choose what's best for Lanark Highlands. Your strategy is key to protecting our fragile environment.

Without a clear Strategy you get this. Spraying just upstream of the Perth Drinking Water Protection Zone is entirely legal but not in residents' best interests. A more strategic approach would have instructed the technician to dig up a plant so close to water and eliminate any risk of contamination. Resolving the problem without adding more contaminants to our environment is the better, safer, smarter plan.



And if you've read any of these reports you know that what I'm saying is true. Pesticide use is increasing in Ontario at an alarming rate and the health consequences are becoming apparent. The days of simply pouring chemicals on anything we don't like are gone, and if you choose to spray you need to accept responsibility for spraying outcomes.



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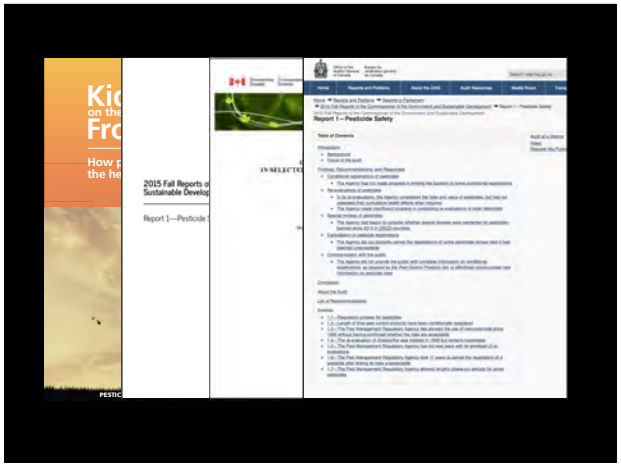

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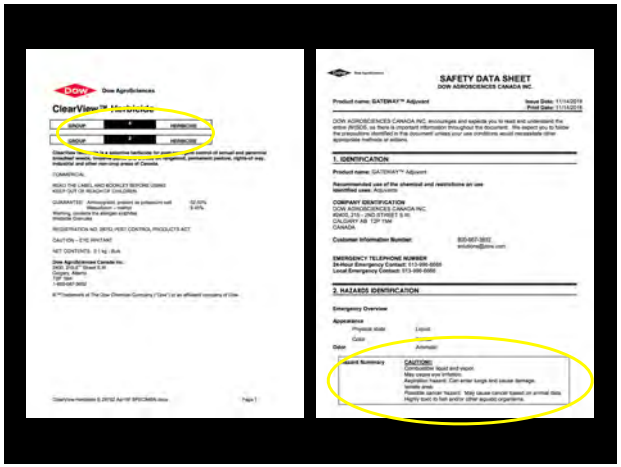


So let's take a closer look at these chemicals. Clearview is a Class 4 herbicide similar in action to 2,4-D which made up 50% of the infamous Agent Orange. Clearview is a mixture of two active ingredients, Aminopyralid and Metsulfuron-Methyl. Aminopyralid has been tested by Dow, but not by the PMRA or by Health Canada, who rely on Dow to give them the straight goods. The EPA has requested more complete data on Metsulfuron toxicity to bees, and European studies have found Metsulfuron "Very Toxic to aquatic life with long lasting effects". Curiously, Dow has not tested Aminopyralid mixed with Metsulfuron-Methyl, or this mixture combined with the adjuvant Gateway, which gets added to Clearview prior to spraying to make it a more

EXPERT CONCERNS WITH CLEAR VIEW:

"Aminopyralid is not very effective on parsnip."

- Prof. Bob Hartzler, Weed Science, Iowa State University

This expert has advised against Clearview because one of its main active ingredients isn't even very effective on parsnip, and the part that is comprises less than 10% of the product. In his opinion this is money down the drain.

EXPERT CONCERNS WITH CLEAR VIEW:

"The risk of resistance development is less on rights-of-way, natural areas and other noncropland sites because herbicide applications are not typically made every year, thus slowing the increase of resistant genotypes in weed populations. "

- Dow Chemical

Even Dow cautions against repeated spraying - in a kind of back-handed way - as this may result in increasing parsnip's resistance to the chemical, just as the related wild Carrot - otherwise known as Queen Anne's Lace - has become resistant in Ontario. So, if parsnip isn't affected, who is?

HEALTH CANADA ONLINE INCIDENCE REPORTS / CLEARVIEW:

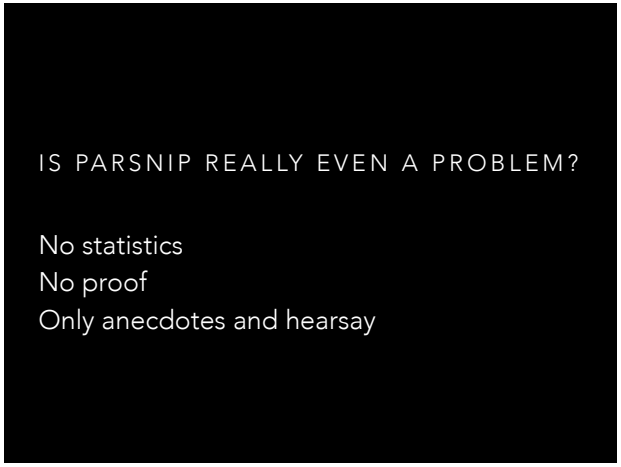
- Weakness and pain
- Headache, dizziness, difficulty concentrating and speaking
- Nausea and vomiting
- Imbalance, muscle spasms and ataxia
- Incontinence, diarrhea
- Death of a cat
- Damage to desirable plants

Well, according to Health Canada's online incident reporting system, some people are. It's worth noting that Clearview is not approved for use on lawns, parks or school grounds, so safety is clearly an issue. I appreciate that you're being told you need this weapon in your arsenal, but shouldn't it be the weapon of last resort?

Unfortunately, it's often not the last resort. Rather, it's the go-to solution because it's fast and easy and it kills most plants most of the time. But it's not risk free. I need you to understand the risks and I want you to consider alternatives that I believe are better for us.

Why? Because my family matters to me and I want you to keep them safe, and I'm not alone. That's why many residents felt forced to adopt their roads last summer and work for hours in the ditches clearing parsnip by hand so as to avoid pesticide application on the roadsides near our homes. And for what?

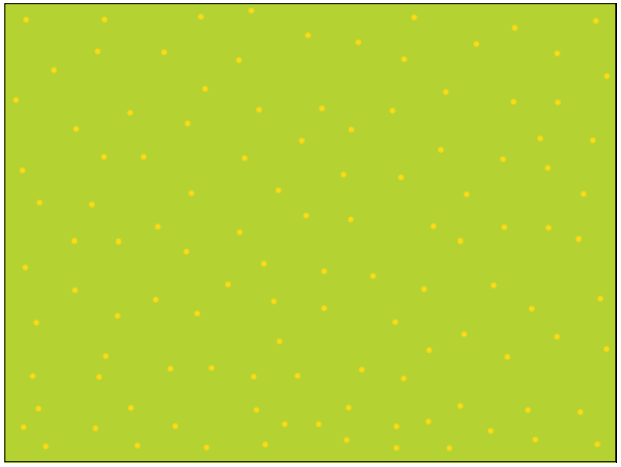
Is Parsnip even a problem? We're told it is but where's the evidence? Where is the justification for pouring tens of thousands of dollars and tank loads of chemicals onto our roadsides?



It's all hearsay and anecdotes until the Medical Officer of Health starts keeping medical records and documenting evidence of real harm - which no hospital or clinic currently does. I'm sure we can all understand what motivates Dow and the agencies it funds to have you to believe parsnip needs to be controlled. But not everyone sees it that way. Vermont and Iowa don't bother fighting parsnip, and New York and Norway won't approve the poisons we allow. Our Adopt-A-Road experiences of last summer can serve as a proxy for how to manage parsnip in the Township, if we must manage it. We've had direct, hands-on experience, which I'm going to relay to you in a moment, but first I'd like to present a 10,000-foot perspective of the situation

This is the Township of Lanark Highlands, all 1000 square kilometers of it. Let's reshape that pink area to fit neatly in my screen. And we'll make it nice and green.

So this screen represents the area of the Township.

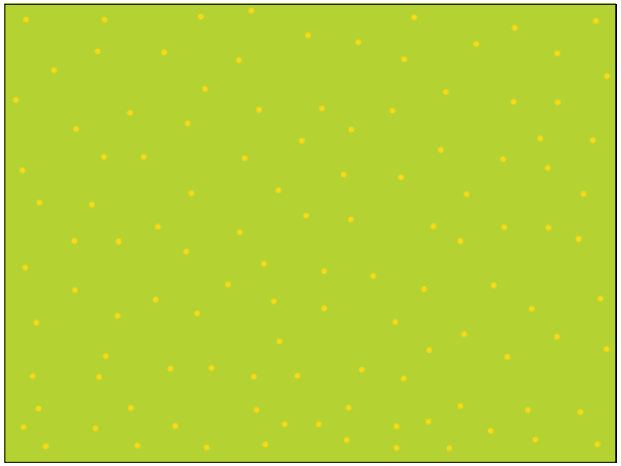


And these yellow dots represent parsnip. The seed bank for parsnip in the Township is huge and likely increasing because we're at the stage where this opportunistic plant is thriving and natural controls haven't caught up with it yet.

We saw a similar situation twenty years ago with Purple Loosestrife. We don't talk about Loosestrife anymore because it's biologically controlled naturally by two beetles, and Dr. James Coupland, a local consultant and agricultural expert expects we won't be talking much about parsnip in twenty years either, unless there are lasting consequences from our present-day control efforts.

The Parsnip Webworm offers hope for a similar natural solution to parsnip infestations, but if we poison its food - the parsnip - it's not likely to proliferate and achieve a comparable natural biological solution.

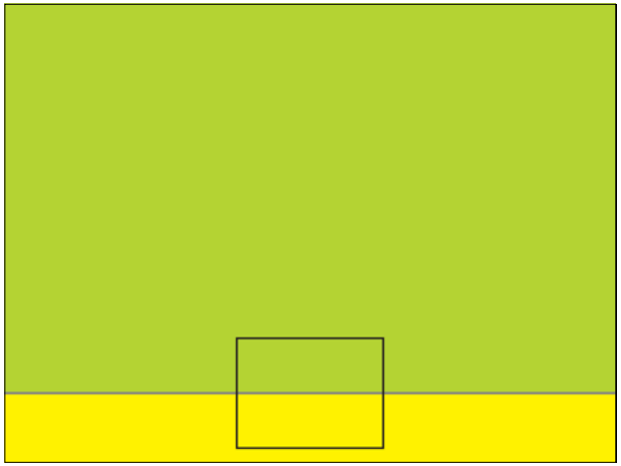
By the way, we found webworms along our Adopt-A-Road route. So they're out there, eating the umbels and developing seeds and doing their part.



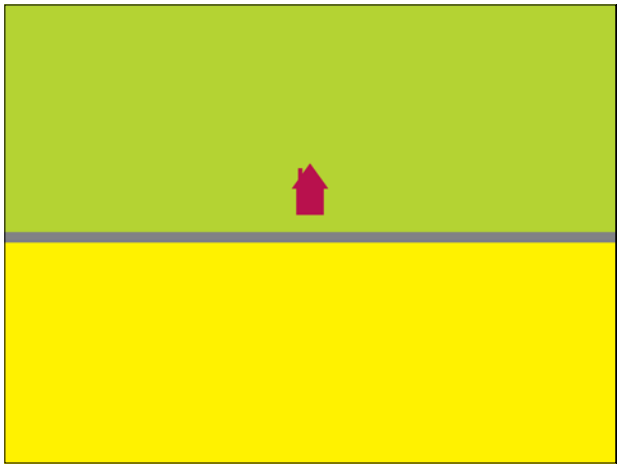
So back to our map. So this is the total area of the Township.

Some portion of the Township is agricultural land. This strip at the bottom is about 15%, which may be high, and Parsnip growing on these lands is the responsibility of landowners, not Council or Public Works. I certainly understand that Farmers don't want parsnip spreading to their fields from the roadsides, so they want the roadsides sprayed. But will that work? Is it an effective solution? And are there consequences we need to consider? Let's dig a little deeper. Watch closely.

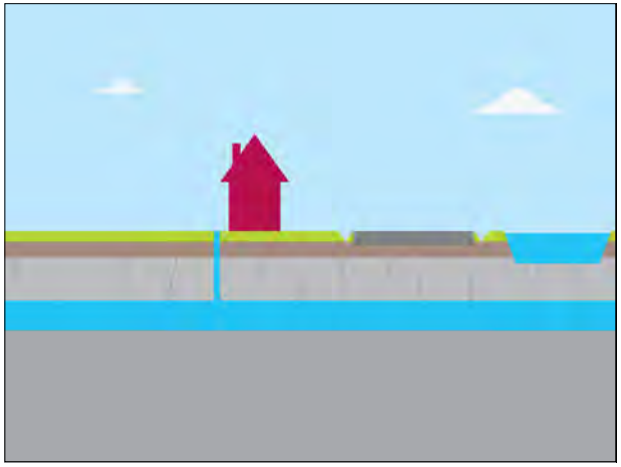
This tiny grey strip is roughly the total area of Township road allowances, maybe one percent of the Township's total area. Weed control in this area is the Township's responsibility, but will spraying here will eradicate parsnip there, let alone there? Maybe we won't see it on the shoulder when we drive by, but it's still there, just over the fence line, completely unaffected and just waiting to leap the fence again. So who is affected?



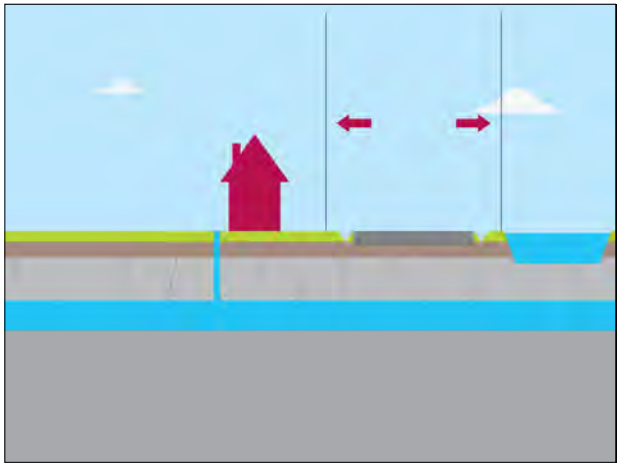
Let’s zoom in to look at how we live.



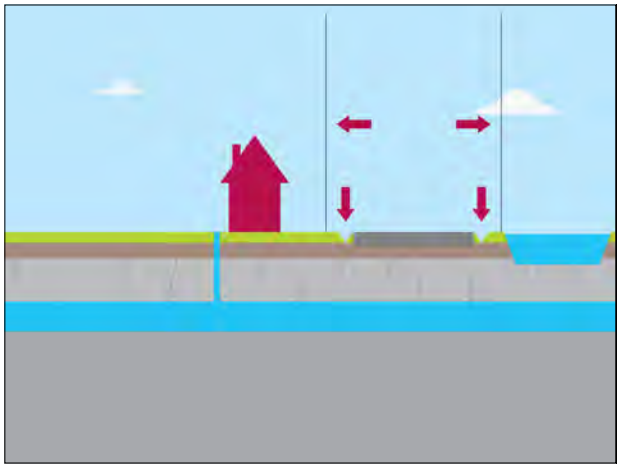
If you don’t live in town, you live on a County or Township Road…



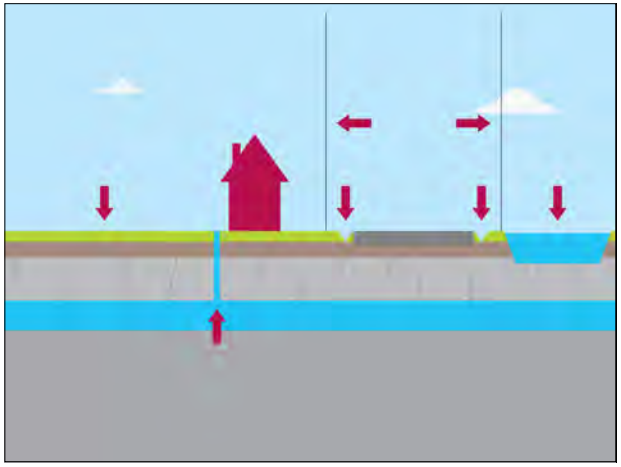
…with typical Lanark conditions described by Dr. Paula Stewart, our Medical Officer of Health, as “…an area with fractured rock and little ground cover which can easily lead to contamination of the aquifer at varying depths.” And as the township’s official plan correctly notes: “The ground water resource is crucial in Lanark Highlands as it is the source of drinking water for our communities and our rural population.”



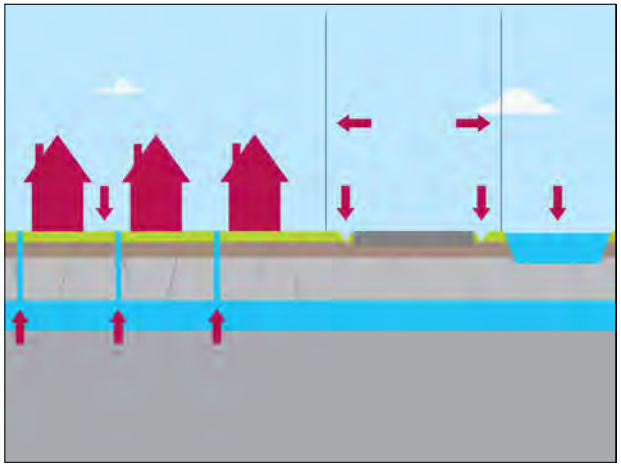
The thin grey strip on my previous slide was the entire road allowance, but we're not dealing with all of that,



We're talking about the skinny strip of ditch on either side, so the area Public Works can actually affect is less than half the area I've shown. The objective of spraying is to kill parsnip in the ditch without affecting waterways…



…which is tough to do considering the purpose of a ditch is specifically to move water from the road to the river. We also don't want spraying to compromise our land or our wells. I'm not alone when I say I'm really not comfortable with this risk.



…and my neighbours aren't comfortable with this risk. Are you comfortable with this risk?

So when Lanark County offered their Adopt-A-Road option, many of us felt forced to sign on, not because of the risk of parsnip but because of the risk of spraying. We really had no choice.

Long stretches of County Roads 12, 7 and 36 were adopted to keep them poison-free.

We dug, we pulled, we snipped flowers before they could develop seeds. The County gave us just three weeks to prove ourselves by removing 75% of the plant stock. If we failed to do that they said they would refuse to approve our contracts and spray. So, without any guarantees we forged ahead, and fortunately, we prevailed.

And after approval of our contract we went back, again and again, all summer long, identifying our targets and eliminating them.

After digging out the parsnip we planted five demonstration sites showing how planting could improve roadside aesthetics, provide ongoing competition for parsnip and support pollinators by protecting food sources for these essential and endangered creatures.

Remember that this was only possible because our roadsides had not been sprayed. If you spray the road allowance you'll never get pollinator-friendly plants like this, or the pollinators that feed on them and provide critical agricultural benefits.

You'll get Grasses. That's the only plant type Clearview doesn't kill.

Clearview kills broadleaf plants, especially legumes like the soy on the right. This warning comes from Dow. So you can't spray right up to the fence line without potentially damaging a crop.

And that, of course, is why you leave a buffer, just like here. This stretch is in another county that has been sprayed for seven years, and the parsnip is still going strong. Maybe it's time for them to consider another approach.

And that brings me back to our Adopt-A-Road experience. We used non-chemical methods exclusively. What outcomes have we seen?

Firstly, except for us, there are no people in the ditches, so the actual risk of injury from roadside parsnip is small. We did encounter two groups of people regularly: Drivers who stopped and asked what we were doing, and who then told us parsnip stories which were largely exaggerated or completely implausible, and residents such as this one whose adjacent fields were filled with parsnip and who hoped that spraying the ditch would clear their fields.

Secondly, we can confirm that the risk to human health presented by Parsnip is minimal and completely avoidable, if you know what to look for and are aware of Dr. Stewart's recommendation to wash after contact with the sap. Unfortunately most public service campaigns focus on making people afraid of parsnip rather than teaching them how to cope. People who don't realize how easy it is to avoid burns.

Thirdly, we believe the benefits of not spraying far outweigh the risks. On the left is a bouquet of beautiful, pollinator-friendly flowers taken from our un-sprayed roadsides. The right image is all we were able to harvest from roadsides sprayed over the last two years. Don't forget that Clearview is chosen in part because it remains active in the soil for a long time, so if the plan is to create beautiful, pollinator-friendly roadsides while spraying, we'll be waiting a long time.

JOBS

Finally, we believe this is an opportunity for local employment.

ADOPT-A-ROAD GROUP EXPERIENCE:

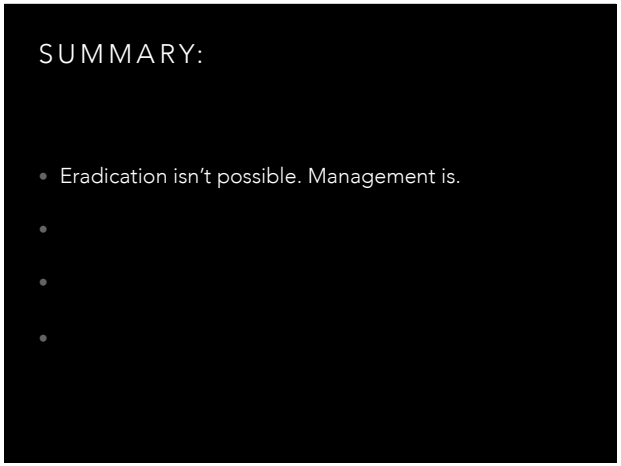
• 7 DAYS INTENSIVE DIGGING, PULLING & CLIPPING (CREW OF ~SIX, 4HRS./DAY)

• WEEKLY MAINTENANCE SWEEP, (CREW OF TWO, 33KM SWEEP, 3HRS./DAY)

$80,000 BUDGET @ $14/HR. = 16 X $5,000 SUMMER JOBS

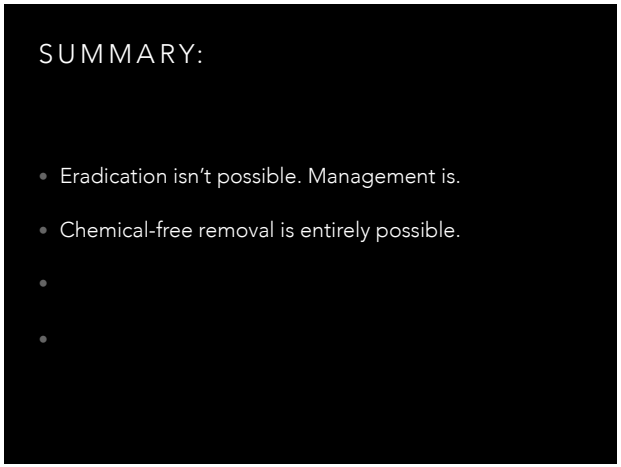
Our Adopt-A-Road crew spent 7 days intensively digging and pulling our 33 kms of roadside, and then we did a weekly maintenance sweep which took fewer people and only a few hours a week.

It follows that last year's County budget could have been used to provide sixteen local summer jobs covering all 561 kilometers of County roads, rather than hiring external corporations to come in and spray.



In Summary: There are four things I'd like you to take away with you tonight:

1. Eradication of wild parsnip simply isn't possible, but living with it is. You'll need a long-term strategy with a range of tactical responses, but spraying doesn't need to be one of them. You've sprayed for two years. A third year won't be any more effective, but it will put our environment, and potentially our health, at greater risk.



2. Removal of parsnip is entirely possible without resorting to poison. We have proved that and will continue to do so over the course of our Adopt-A-Road contract. I'd be happy to report back at the end of this year to offer any new insights into best practices as we refine our techniques.

3. Education = Protection. Knowledge really is power but Township residents generally don't know how to recognize and avoid the plant, or to use simple treatment methods such as washing when they do come in contact with the sap. This is less likely to happen on roadsides as most contact happens on resident's own properties, so please work with the Medical Officer of Health to inform residents about parsnip and make sure they know how to protect themselves from those small risks.

4. Finally I hope you'll agree that money would be better spent developing long-term management strategies rather than endlessly hiring contractors to spray chemicals that put us at risk. If you're looking for a better way to spend it, please consider hiring and training some residents to use non-chemical control methods. Keep the money in the community and provide needed employment without further risking our environment.

If you have any questions I'm happy to try to answer them, but I may have to rely on the knowledge of my fellow group members and get back to you. We think it's important that you get the answers and information you need to make truly well-informed decisions. Thank you for your time and attention.

Tim Poupore