

# The ROCKWOOD Miller

## Roadside weed spraying revived in Guelph/Eramosa

By Frances Niblock

Rural roadsides adjacent to farmers' fields in Guelph/Eramosa Township will be sprayed for noxious weeds this spring, thanks to a decision by Township Council to rescind a ban on spraying, following a plea from local farmers and weed experts.

At last Monday's Council meeting, the farmers and experts argued that under the Weed Control Act (Ontario) municipalities have a legal responsibility to control designated noxious weeds on road allowances. The practice was stopped several years ago following municipal amalgamation, and the farmers appealed to the Township to reintroduce the spraying program, similar to one conducted by Wellington County.

Farmer spokesperson Terry Daynard said the Township's excellent farmland is some of the best in

the province, and the weeds and weed seeds are blowing onto farmland, hurting crops yields and some are poisonous to livestock. Top on the list of 25 noxious weeds is European buckhorn, which Daynard said would become a huge problem if they don't deal with it now. "This is not about cosmetics, it's about pest control..." he said.

John Benham, a County weed inspector, said several types of weeds are a "serious problem" in the Township and are "out of control" including thistle, colts foot, wild carrot and European buckhorn.

Mike Cowbrough, Chief Weed Inspector of Ontario, called the proposed spraying in Guelph/Eramosa a "refreshing approach" that would deal only with weeds in areas directly affecting farmers, and avoid spraying near homes on small severed lots, or where adjacent landowners ask that

herbicide spraying not be done.

Asked about the toxicity of the herbicides used to kill noxious weeds, Paul Johnson, Wellington County's Operations Manager, said it is less toxic than baking soda, does not accumulate in animals and does not migrate. He said it would cost the Township approximately \$10,000 a year to spray.

Councillor Doug Breen, who called the herbicides to be used safer than the road salt put on Township roads, said under Ontario law, spraying the roadsides for noxious weeds is the "responsible thing to do." He said the ultimate goal is to reduce the use of pesticides, and if they are acting like "negligent landowners" and not taking care of noxious weeds on Township land, then it would force farmers to use more pesticides.

Mayor Chris White said the Township must "step up to the plate" and develop a weed spraying program that can "piggy-back" with the County's program. Staff will work with County staff to develop a Township program to deal with noxious weeds on rural roadsides.



**SIGN OF THE TIMES:** This sign at Rockwood Centennial Public School – paid for by the school council – keeps Rockwood informed about school events, according to Principal Kate Creery. – Marie Shadbolt photo

## Township Digest

### Fire stats

Guelph/Eramosa firefighters answered 256 calls in 2010, down by four from the previous year. In the latest Fire and Emergency Services update to Guelph/Eramosa Township Council, Deputy-Chief Dan Hitchcock reported the majority of calls – 137 – were for medical reasons, a trend that continued from 2009.

The 39 false alarms last year were the second most prevalent type of call, followed by 26 smoke/carbon monoxide calls, compared with 20 the previous year. The department does not report on the dollar loss from fires.

### Building stats

The number of building permits and their con-

struction value last year in Guelph/Eramosa almost caught up to 2008 levels, according to the Township's Chief Building official.

During 2010, a total of 232 permits were issued with a construction value of \$13.2-million. In 2008, 250 permits with a construction value of \$14.8-million were issued. There were 304 permits issued in 2009, with a construction value of \$23.9-million.

In a report to Council last Monday, Michael Newark reported that 37 new houses were built in 2010 – 31 of them in Rockwood and the balance in the rural area.

### Farm/forest taxes

Guelph/Eramosa Town-

ship Council has joined a growing list of Ontario municipalities that want fairer rural funding from the province. Municipalities with limited provincial assessment due to significant amounts of farmland and managed forests receive grants from the province – transfer grants which are dwindling, leaving taxpayers to foot more of the bill.

Council recently endorsed a resolution from Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Counties asking Queen's Park to calculate the Farmland and Managed Forest components so municipalities receive full provincial reimbursement of their lost property tax revenue.

Prior to assessment reform in 1998, farmland property owners paid their taxes to the municipality and if they met eligibility requirements, could apply to the province to receive a rebate of 75 per cent. The funding responsibility was given to municipalities, and its taxpayers make up the lost tax revenue through higher tax rates.

The resolution passed by Guelph/Eramosa Council said because the income redistribution program results in lower-cost foods, the province should calculate the farmland and managed forest component so municipalities receive full provincial reimbursement of lost property tax revenue on farmland and managed forest properties.

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## Valentine's Day Dance

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with dinner, dancing, silent auction and prizes,  
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Saturday, February 12  
Rockmosa Centre, Rockwood.

Tickets: \$75 includes dinner.  
\$35 for entry after dinner

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