

Council shelves pesticide restriction bylaw for now

By Melanie Hennessey
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

The debate on whether the Town should implement a bylaw to restrict the cosmetic use of pesticides has been exterminated — at least for now.

In a 7-2 vote Monday night, town council ruled that a public consultation process on the hot topic won't start until January 2007, meaning the council that's voted in this November will make the ultimate decision on the bylaw many residents are pushing for.

Citizens both for and against the pesticide restriction packed into Milton Council Chambers Monday night to voice their thoughts on the controversial issue — a crowd that was generous with applause and scorn.

Ontario College of Family Physicians CEO Jan Kasperski started the evening by telling councillors that her organization is very concerned about the effects of pesticide exposure on human health.

"Our research found alarming evidence that pesticide exposure is not safe at any level and that children and pregnant women are especially vulnerable to health effects," she said. "We owe it to our children to do everything in our power to protect them from harm. Pass a bylaw that protects Milton citizens from unnecessary exposure to pesticides."

The sentiment was shared by Dr. Jozef Krop, who emphasized that "pesticides are poisons designed to kill."

"There is no safe way to apply a substance that is inherently poisonous to our water, soil and air, to children, to adults, to pets, to all living organisms."

But his words didn't discourage those who are in favour of continuing with pesticide use, with many taking the time to share their side of the argument, like Oakville resident Douglas Hauser whose delegation drew mutters from the audience.

"It's easy to think when we see those lawn care trucks with their tanks that, 'Oh my, we are spraying awful stuff on everything.' But that's not true," he said, arguing, "The materials do not go beyond what they are applied to."

He went on to criticize those who are opposed to pesticides. "If we believed the sky-is-falling litany of the anti-pesticides groups we would think that people are sick and dying in the streets," he said, to which someone in the audience said, "They are."

Clive Whitlock of Guaranteed Green, a Milton lawn care business, presented a petition signed by 440 clients who are in opposition to a bylaw restricting cosmetic pesticide use.

In addition, council heard from local resident Philip Walker, who said he's been working with pesticides for the past 34 years and never witnessed anyone suffering from disease or illness from the products he has sprayed.

John Opsteen of the Halton Federation of Agriculture also spoke at the meeting and voiced farmers' concerns.

He said while the intention of the potential pesticide bylaw may be to ban cosmetic use, "You never know where that will lead," referring to farmers' worry that one day the restrictions could be put in place for agricultural land too.

Pesticides Alternatives for Milton (PAM) presented council with a petition containing 1,261 names urging the Town to create a bylaw restricting the cosmetic use of pesticides on private property. "We know that there are two sides of the coin," said PAM founder Erika Ristok. "But it's time to flip the coin and enact a pesticide bylaw for Milton. You are our leaders. Please protect us."

Council went on to debate the matter, with Ward 4 Councillor John Challinor saying that a timeframe is necessary for the pesticide public consultation.

He suggested starting it next January, pointing out that the required research and discussions could take several months and council will be a "lame duck" come October,

since the election is being held in November.

While Ward 4 Councillor Wendy Schau agreed with the timeline, she said it would be best to create the bylaw up front to have on the table for discussion during the consultation.

She said if the Town starts holding discussions with the public that don't have focus, there's a greater chance of them becoming acrimonious and emotional. Ward 2 Councillor Mark Curtis echoed Schau's thoughts.

Ward 3 Councillor Jan Mowbray questioned how the municipality would be able to ban the cosmetic use of pesticides, while the products would still be available for homeowners to purchase at the store.

"It doesn't make sense to me," she said.

She said she'd prefer the Town enforce its noxious weed bylaw instead.

When the vote was called, Challinor, Mowbray, Ward 3 Councillor Cindy Lunau, Wards 1 and 3 Councillor Barry Lee, Ward 1 Councillor Brian Penman, Ward 2 and 4 Councillor Ron Furik and Ward 2 Councillor Mike Boughton voted in favour of holding public consultation on the cosmetic pesticide issue next January. Schau and Curtis voted against the motion and Ward 1 Councillor Rick Day was absent.

Melanie Hennessey can be reached at mhennessey@milton-canadianchampion.com.

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HALTON - A new report has just been released which reveals 7 costly mistakes that most homeowners make when selling their home, and a 9 Step System that will help you sell your home fast and for the most amount of money.

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As this report uncovers, most homesellers make 7 deadly mistakes that cost them literally thousands of dollars. The good news is that each and every one of these mistakes is entirely preventable. In answer to this issue, industry insiders have prepared a free special report entitled "The 9 Step System to Get Your Home Sold Fast and For Top Dollar".

To hear a brief recorded message about how to order your FREE copy of this report, call 1-877-617-1275 and enter ID #3000. You can call any time, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or visit us online at www.haltoncostly-homesellers.com.

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