
September 22, 2005

His Worship Bob Chiarelli,
Mayor of the City of Ottawa
110 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa ON K1P 1J1

Dear Mayor Chiarelli,

Ottawa **RIVERKEEPER**[®] supports a bylaw for the City of Ottawa that would phase-out the non-essential use of lawn and garden chemicals including pesticides, herbicides, and insecticides.

As you are well aware, residents of Ottawa drink water from the Ottawa River or from wells accessing groundwater. Pesticides have been detected in the Ottawa River and our groundwater in preliminary monitoring studies. Degradation of water quality by pesticide runoff impacts human health in two significant ways. The first is the direct consumption of pesticide-contaminated water and the second is the consumption of fish and shellfish that are contaminated by pesticides.

Many people trust that the Municipality and the Government ensure the safety of our drinking water with strict criteria established at a Provincial and Federal level. However, there are 3 facts everyone should know:

1. Drinking water guidelines have not been established for all pesticides, nor do existing guidelines take into account the additive and synergistic effects that combination of pesticide compounds may exhibit.
2. Our water filtration plants are not designed to remove these chemical compounds from our drinking water.
3. For certain pesticides, analytical detection levels in routine monitoring may be too high to determine presence/absence for the protection of human health (i.e. just because we can't detect it at a certain concentration, it doesn't mean that the amount present does not pose a health risk).

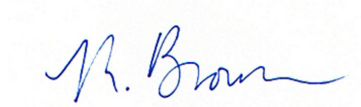
The ecological effects of pesticides and other organic contaminants are varied and are often inter-related. Effects at the organism or ecological level are usually considered to be an early warning indicator of potential human health impacts. Many pesticides, herbicides, and insecticides are classified as endocrine disrupting compounds (EDCs).

Throughout North America, we are finding low levels of chemicals in our rivers and streams and we are beginning to witness the effects these chemicals are having on different species. Literature reports that there are changes in sex steroids in fish, abnormal reproductive development in alligators, birth defects in Lake Michigan

cormorants (large sea birds), hormonal changes in frogs and crabs that create male-female hybrids, among other studies. Do we have to wait decades for research to confirm these findings in our river before we take action?

I urge you to take a leading role in addressing these important issues. We are foolish to try to control these chemicals with the end-of-the-pipe risk-assessment approach. Instead, we can use the precautionary principle and acknowledge that some chemicals don't belong in the environment and we should do everything in our power to reduce the use of these risky compounds. We cannot continue to jeopardize human health and biodiversity for the sake of green and sterile lawns. The City of Ottawa can send an important message to individuals and other municipalities by phasing-out the non-essential use of lawn and garden chemicals including pesticides, herbicides, and insecticides.

Sincerely,



Meredith Brown, *Riverkeeper and Executive Director*

Ottawa **RIVERKEEPER**® / **SENTINELLE** Outaouais