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Dear Mayor and Council,

York Region Environmental Alliance posed a question to all candidates during the last election campaign: 'if elected to the Council of the Town of Markham, will you vote in favour of a by-law to restrict the non-essential use of pesticides in Markham'? Councillors Heath, Scarpitti, Shapero and Webster answered 'yes'.

However, we are puzzled as to why Mayor Cousens answered 'no' and many Councillors declined to respond to this important question, given that; Environment Canada has concluded that lawn pesticides pollute our drinking water and our air and the Canadian Cancer Society & Ontario College of Family Physicians identify lawn pesticides as a danger to our health. York Region, in its 2005 State of the Environment report sites the reduction of non-essential pesticides, phosphorous loading of our lakes and rivers. the protection of the environment and healthy communities as areas of concern. Isn't it imperative that Markham passes a pesticide bylaw at this time?

Commendable though it is, it is not enough that the Town has reduced its own use of pesticides and embarked in partnership with YREA on pesticide education. Busy residents who do not do their own gardening will simply choose the status quo and continue the overuse of the same toxic weed and feed programs (usually four applications a year). A bylaw would not take work away from the weed and feed industry. A bylaw would simply ensure that these companies offered 100% organic only programs and residents would change from over fertilization and toxic pesticide use to organic means.

Markham can embark on this with confidence, knowing that very court challenge by the industry against municipalities who have implemented bylaws has been defeated.

You have taken the anti-idling challenge, passed an idling bylaw, and in so doing played a leadership role in contributing to the health of this great community. York Region Environmental Alliance asks you now to take the next step and issues you your next challenge – ***be the first in York Region with a pesticide bylaw.***

Sincerely,
Gloria Marsh,
Chair, York Region Environmental Alliance