



August 15, 2007

Mr. Allister MacDonald, Warden
Municipality of the County of Pictou
P.O. Box 910, Pictou
NS B0K 1H0

Dear Warden MacDonald:

Thank you for your letter of Aug. 8 and the attached resolution of Pictou County Municipal Council concerning the use of the forestry herbicide Vision.

Council's resolution refers to health concerns and I want to be clear that the system of approvals and oversight in place ensures there are no health concerns.

Our staff would have gladly spoken to the meeting where the resolution was passed, and remain available if Council would like a briefing on our role in forestry herbicide pesticide regulation. I believe Council and residents of Pictou County would be greatly re-assured by what they would have to say. Briefly:

- Two levels of government, federal and provincial, work to ensure forestry herbicide spraying in Canada is safe.
- Vision is one of a number of glyphosate-based products used around the world – and in Nova Scotia for close to 25 years.
- Vision and its inactive ingredients – such as surfactants – have all been approved for use in this country by Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA).
- Like all pesticides, before glyphosate could be approved for use in Canada, it underwent a thorough scientific evaluation to ensure it meets strict health and environmental standards. Health Canada also evaluates any new scientific information and would take appropriate action if required. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the World Health Organization do the same
- The PMRA states that when used according to label directions, glyphosate is not expected to pose a risk to human or animal health.

- The PMRA says the product degrades readily in soil, and states that specific assessments show no expected risk for birds, mammals, soil and aquatic microorganisms, earthworms, bees, fungi or beneficial insects.

The Government of Nova Scotia, like other provinces, relies on this assurance – we do not have the resources to duplicate the federal effort.

My Department's role in the system is to ensure the product is used properly. In addition, we enforce stringent rules of our own, because strong controls are good environmental management.

- Employers and employees applying herbicides must be certified by this Department.
- We set rules for wind conditions, and buffer zones around adjoining properties, watercourses, and wells.
- Applicators know they will be held accountable should they overshoot a buffer zone for any reason.
- Department staff conduct inspections and monitor spray programs to ensure compliance with approvals. In addition, we conduct follow-up inspections at selected spray areas.
- Misapplications are easily detected and the consequences for the applicator can be severe.
- Access roads to spray zones must be posted.
- Building owners within 500 metres must be notified. This is not a danger zone, but rather due respect for people's right to know.
- Aerial spraying is done by helicopter – at heights typically less than 10 metres – using very accurate GPS systems.
- Our Department has access to the GPS record of every aerial application.

The cycle for spraying a particular area is once every 40 to 60 years, which may explain why many people are unfamiliar with it.

It is true that science is not 100 per cent right, 100 per cent of the time, but science nonetheless serves us extremely well. It is true that human error cannot be eliminated, but we have regulations in place to ensure the consequences of human error are minimal, if not zero.

As Minister I have the power to revoke existing permits for forestry herbicide spraying and reject all outstanding applications, but I cannot do so without a proper reason.

Council's resolution opposes forestry herbicide spraying "due to health concerns."

There is an ongoing process in place at Health Canada – including PMRA's incident reporting system -- for identifying health concerns, and this forestry herbicide has been approved since 1976.

This product, used as directed and under this Department's regulation, does not present health concerns.

I am therefore unable to accept your request.

If you have new information regarding the safety of glyphosate-based products, I urge you to bring it to the attention of the PMRA.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Parent". The signature is written in a cursive style and is set against a light blue rectangular background.

Mark Parent
Minister