

DATE: November 18, 2024

REPORT NO: PW-27-2024

SUBJECT: **Designate Canada Fleabane (Conyza Canadensis) as a Local Noxious Weed**

CONTACT: Tray Benish, CRS-S, Manager of Operations
Mike DiPaola, P.Eng., Director of Public Works and Recreation

OVERVIEW:

- Township Administration has received correspondence from local farmers in regards to concerns with the Canada Fleabane (Conyza Canadensis) weed and the impacts it's having on crops throughout West Lincoln.
- Canada Fleabane is not currently listed as part of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness' (OMAFRA) noxious weed list under the Weed Control Act.
- Administration has received a recommendation from OMAFRA to designate Canada Fleabane as a Local Noxious Weed under the Weed Control Act, and instruction on how regulation should proceed.
- The Township has appointed weed inspectors, giving Council the ability to designate Canada Fleabane as a Local Noxious Weed.
- Administration is recommending that Council direct Administration to conduct public engagement in regards to the potential regulation of Fleabane, and return with a recommendation report to a future Committee meeting.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That, Recommendation Report PW-27-2024, titled "Designate Canada Fleabane (Conyza Canadensis) as a Local Noxious Weed", dated November 18th, 2024 be received; and,
2. That, Administration be directed to conduct public engagement in regards to designating "Fleabane" as a Noxious weed in West Lincoln; and,
3. That, Administration be directed to bring a recommendation report back to Committee once Public Engagement has concluded.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

Theme #

- **Enrich** our strong agricultural legacy

BACKGROUND:

The intent of the Weed Control Act, R.S.O 1990, is to reduce the infestation of noxious weeds that negatively impact agriculture and horticulture lands, reduce plant diseases by eliminating plant disease hosts, and reduce health hazards to livestock and agricultural workers caused by poisonous plants.

Noxious weeds are plants that have been listed in the Schedule of Noxious Weeds found in Regulation 1096 under the Weed Control Act. In general, a species designated as a noxious weed under the Weed Control Act is one that is difficult to manage on agricultural land once established and will reduce the yield and quality of the crop being grown, negatively affects the health and well-being of livestock, and poses a risk to the health and well-being of agricultural workers. There are currently 25 weeds designated as noxious under the Weed Control Act.

Council has appointed Weed Inspectors to enforce the control of noxious weeds under the Weed Control Act. The Act gives Council the ability to designate additional plants as Local Noxious Weeds, under Section 10 (1), (2), (3) of the Act. The intention of Section 10 (1), (2), (3) is to provide the control of potentially damaging weeds in local areas, before they become widespread, by using the Weed Control Act's mechanisms of enforcement.

CURRENT SITUATION:

Administration has received correspondence from local farmers in regards to concerns they have with a plant that is negatively affecting crops. The plant is Canada Fleabane (*Conyza Canadensis*) and is not currently part of the noxious weed list.

Canada Fleabane, also known as "Horseweed, Mare's-tail, Bitterweed, Fleabane", is an annual plant native throughout most of North America and Central America. The herbaceous plant typically grows to a height of 1.5 metres, and has sparsely hairy stems. The leaves are unstalked with a coarsely toothed margin. The flower heads are 1cm in diameter and each flower has a ring of white or pale purple florets, with a centre of yellow disc florets.



Photo 1: A bolted Canada Fleabane plant just prior to flowering (M. Cowbrough – OMAFA)

Photo 2: The fluffy mature seeds that are ready for wind dispersal (M. Cowbrough - OMAFA)

Most seedlings of this plant sprout from late August through November, and form rosettes that overwinter. Some seeds will germinate in spring, from March through early May. As with all annuals, this plant reproduces by seed. Seeds ripen from early August and continue into September, after which the plant dies. The seeds of this plant have an attached pappus, or parachute, which carries the seed for long distances much like a dandelion seed.

Canada Fleabane infestations have been shown to reduce soybean yields as much as 90%. In 2001 it was the first weed to develop glyphosate resistance, making it difficult to remove chemically.

There are two control methods for Canada Fleabane. They are:

Non-Chemical

- Rosettes are easily controlled by either fall or spring tilling.
- Mowing infested areas when the plants are in the bud stage will prevent seed production.
- A fall cover crop can reduce seedling germination.

Chemical

- Herbicides should be applied before the plant flowers. This plant has shown resistance to some herbicides (Group 2 and Group 9).

Administration have been in communication with OMAFA's Chief Weed Inspector about the raised concern from farmers. The Inspector explained that "Noxious Weeds are listed under Regulation 1096, and can only be added and removed on that list by the Lieutenant

Governor in Council. This usually requires considerable persuasion by constituents. As an example, the list has only been changed once in the last 34 years and that was because of significant public pressure to remove milkweed from the list for the protection of the Monarch Butterfly.”

The proposed direction received is to have Council pass a By-law designating Canada Fleabane as a Local Weed under section 10 (1), (2), (3) of the Weed Control Act. This will give Township appointed Weed Inspectors the ability to enforce the removal of the weed under the Act.

Once a By-law is passed by Council it will need to be approved by the Minister, as per the Weed Control Act section 10 (3), before it can come into effect.

The regulation of a Noxious Weed has various legal, enforcement, and policy implications that require further research before Administration recommends the designation of “Fleabane” as a Noxious weed. Administration is proposing a limited public consultation period for very early 2025 regarding the addition of fleabane to the local weed by-law and enforcing its removal. Engagement ought to be undertaken whenever a change is being made to a regulatory by-law or a new regulatory by-law is introduced.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

There are no financial implications resulting from this report.

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL COMMENTS:

This report has been reviewed by the CAO, the Director of Finance and the Clerk’s office.

CONCLUSION:

In summary, Administration recommends that Council direct staff to conduct a limited public consultation period regarding regulating “Fleabane”. Administration will then review public feedback return to Council with a report to consider revisions to the Bylaw.

Prepared & Submitted by:

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Approved by:

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