

DATE: April 14, 2025

REPORT NO: O-08-2025

SUBJECT: **Canada Fleabane Update and Draft By-Law**

CONTACT: Tray Benish, CRS-S, Manager, Operations
Mike DiPaola, P.Eng., Director, Infrastructure

OVERVIEW:

- Administration received correspondence from local farmers in the Fall of 2024, expressing their concerns with the Canada Fleabane (*Conyza Canadensis*) plant and the impacts on crops throughout West Lincoln.
- Administration were directed by Council, through recommendation report PW-27-2024, dated November 18, 2024, to conduct Public Engagement in regards to designating Canada Fleabane as a local noxious weed.
- Public Engagement was conducted through the Township's website over a three-week period in January 2025.
- Administration have looked into the potential operational and staffing resource impacts that may occur if Canada Fleabane is designated as a noxious weed.
- Administration is recommending that a draft by-law, and Council resolution showing support of this designation, be sent to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFRA) requesting that Canada Fleabane be designated as a local noxious weed in West Lincoln.
- Once the Township receives approval to designate Canada Fleabane as a local noxious weed the By-Law Enforcement Officer position will be trained and designated as a weed inspector to assist with enforcement on private property. A report will be presented to committee at a later date to designate the By-Law Enforcement Officer as such.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That, Recommendation Report O-08-2025, titled "Canada Fleabane Update and Draft By-Law", dated April 14th, 2025 be received; and,
2. That, a Draft By-Law such as the one attached to this report be approved by Council and sent to Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFRA) for approval to designate Canada Fleabane as a local noxious weed in West Lincoln.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

Theme #3

- **Enrich** our strong agricultural legacy

BACKGROUND:

In the Fall of 2024 Administration received concerns from local farmers in regards to a plant that is negatively affecting their crops throughout West Lincoln. The plant is named Canada Fleabane and is not currently part of the noxious weed list under O.Reg. 1096 of Ontario's Weed Control Act.

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.

In September 2024, Administration had communications with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFRA) to seek guidance on how to designate Canada Fleabane as a local noxious weed.

A report (PW-27-2024) was brought to committee on November 18, 2024 in regards to designating Canada Fleabane as a local noxious weed, and outlining the recommendations Administration received from the Ministry. Recommendations were passed by committee, and Administration conducted a public engagement program in regards to designating Canada Fleabane as a local noxious weed in West Lincoln. This recommendation report is to report back to committee now that the public engagement has concluded.

CURRENT SITUATION:

Public Consultation:

Administration conducted an online survey from January 8 to 29, 2025, to garner input from the public regarding the potential designation of Canada Fleabane as a Local Noxious Weed in West Lincoln. Public consultation was promoted on the Township website, social media channels, LED signs and digital screens. It was also advertised in the Niagara Farms free monthly community newspaper, to target the agricultural community.

The survey included a comprehensive education portion, equipping participants with impartial information to empower informed input. Education included background about Canada Fleabane, its infestations and impacts, the Weed Control Act, what can be done, what designation would mean for the public, and how the removal of local noxious weeds is enforced.

The survey attracted a total of 74 participants, 54 of whom stayed until the question of support. Of those 54, 31 participants (57.41%) said yes, they are in support of Council passing a By-law to designate Canada Fleabane as a Local Noxious Weed, while 23 participants (42.59%) said no. When filtered by those who identified themselves as farmers who are actively cultivating land in West Lincoln (15 participants), 8 participants (53.33%) said no, they do not support designation, while 7 participants (46.67%) said yes.

Full survey results, excluding any email addresses voluntarily provided by participants for follow-up, are included as Schedule A to this report.

Operational Impacts:

Administration have looked into the potential operational impacts that designating Canada Fleabane as a local noxious weed may cause. If Canada Fleabane is identified along roadside ditches within the Township right-of-way, an increase to mowing operations may be required in order to control the weed effectively.

Currently, Township mowing operations occur two to three times per calendar year, with the grass along the shoulder of the road and front side of the ditch being mowed. If Canada Fleabane is identified in areas throughout the Township, additional mowing may be needed, including the mowing of the backside of the ditch. This will increase staff and equipment resources in order to increase this level of service.

An increase to the quantity of noxious weed complaints may also occur, impacting Administration's ability to investigate each complaint in a timely manner. Currently, two Operations Department staff are certified and appointed as weed inspectors under By-Law 2023-20. Administration are planning to have the By-Law Enforcement Officer become certified as a weed inspector, and appointed by By-Law, bringing the total number of weed inspectors to three. This additional weed inspector will be able to help support the potential increase in noxious weed complaints the Township may receive in regards to private property.

Draft By-Law and Endorsement:

A draft By-law has been prepared and included as Schedule B to this report. It states that Canada Fleabane be designated as a local noxious weed as per Regulation 1096 under the Weed Control Act.

Once the draft By-Law is approved by Council, Administration will be sending it, along with the Council resolution, to OMAFA for approval. If OMAFA approves the draft By-Law, a follow up report will be brought to committee for final approval of the By-Law. Once that process has been completed Administration may start enforcing Canada Fleabane as a local noxious weed in West Lincoln.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The By-Law Enforcement Officer is being trained and certified as a weed inspector to help

with potential private property resident complaints the Township may receive once Canada Fleabane is classified as a local noxious weed. The cost of the training is \$60 (plus HST). There are sufficient funds in the approved operating budget to cover this expense.

There may be an increase to operational costs for additional roadside mowing depending on the volume of reports Administration receives about Canada Fleabane located on the Township right-of-way. Currently the annual cost for mowing operations included in the Township's operating budget is approximately \$30,000.

The table below is an analysis based on a potential level of service increase for roadside mowing, by percentage (%), to address the number of Canada Fleabane concerns that the Township may receive:

Scenario	Increase to Mowing Operations	Cost
Low Volume of Reports	25% increase	\$7,500
Medium Volume of Reports	50% increase	\$15,000
High Volume of Reports	100% increase	\$30,000

Administration believes the volume of reports will be low and any additional level of service and operational costs can be covered within the approved operating budget. Administration will monitor the potential level of service increase.

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL COMMENTS:

This report has been reviewed by the CAO, the Director of Corporate Services/CFO, and the Clerk's office.

CONCLUSION:

In summary, Administration recommends that Council approve the proposed draft By-Law designating Canada Fleabane as a local noxious weed, and that it be sent, along with Council resolution, to OMAFA for approval. Once approval is received from OMAFA, a follow up report will be presented to Council finalizing the By-Law, and designating the By-Law Officer as a weed inspector, at which point the enforcement of Canada Fleabane as a local noxious weed can commence.

SCHEDULE(S)

Schedule A – Fleabane Survey Results – Excluding Emails
Schedule B – Draft By-Law

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