

Why This Matters to Municipalities

1. Public Health

Ontario banned the cosmetic use of glyphosate-based herbicides in 2009 to protect children and families. Yet these same chemicals continue to be sprayed over public forests under a forestry exemption. In December 2025, the Williams, Kroes & Munro (2000) glyphosate “safety” review was retracted. In March 2026, the Seattle Statement on Glyphosate and Public Health concluded that the evidence of harm from glyphosate and glyphosate-based herbicides is now so strong that no additional delay in regulation can be justified. The harms identified extend beyond cancer to endocrine, neurological, reproductive, kidney, liver, and metabolic harms, along with genetic damage, oxidative stress, and hormonal disruption. Forest spraying exposes communities through air, soil, drinking water, wild foods such as berries and mushrooms, medicinal plants, and wild game harvested from sprayed areas.

2. Drinking Water and Shared Watersheds

Ontario’s public forests lie upstream of major watersheds, including the Great Lakes, the Ottawa River, and northern watershed systems. Municipalities depend on healthy upstream ecosystems to protect drinking water sources. Forest herbicide spraying puts those shared watersheds at risk.

3. Environment and Biodiversity

Herbicide spraying reduces forest biodiversity by eliminating broadleaf and understory vegetation that supports pollinators, birds, fish, mammals, and other wildlife. In 1999, Canada’s own Senate said herbicide and chemical pesticide use in the boreal forest should be phased out as soon as possible.

4. Climate, Carbon Storage, and Wildfire Risk

Herbicide-based forest management promotes simplified, even-aged conifer plantations that dry out faster, burn more intensely, and store less carbon than diverse forests. Municipalities across Ontario are already facing wildfire smoke, air-quality alerts, and rising climate-related costs.

5. Indigenous Rights

Indigenous Nations have formally opposed forest herbicide spraying since the 1980s because of its impacts on Treaty-protected foods, medicines, waters, wildlife, and land use. Respecting Indigenous rights and Treaty obligations is essential to reconciliation and responsible land stewardship.

6. Proven Alternatives Exist

Québec ended chemical herbicide spraying in forestry in 2001 and shifted to non-chemical practices such as earlier planting, larger seedlings, and manual tending. This shows that chemical-free forestry is both viable and effective.

What Council Can Do

Municipal councils can help by passing or supporting resolutions calling on the Province to modernize forestry practices and end the non-essential use of chemical herbicides in public forests.

Municipal actions to date:

<https://stopthespraycanada.ca/municipalities>

Indigenous formal resolutions opposing forest herbicide spraying (1989–present):

<https://stopthespraycanada.ca/resolutions>