

July 2, 2021

TO: Mayor Sue Montgomery
Côte-des-Neiges–Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, Quebec

Copy: Councillors:
Christian Arseneault Marvin Rotrand
Lionel Perez Peter McQueen
Magda Popeanu

From: [Larry Will](#)



Reference:
[Côte-des-Neiges—Notre-Dame-de-Grâce](#)

Dear Mayor Montgomery:

From the referenced article, it appears that Cymry Gomery and her 800 supporters are in favor of banning the gasoline powered leaf blower. Eight hundred names on a petition sounds like a lot of signatures and warrants your attention, but 800 out of more than 166,000 population is only 0.48%. Perhaps that is not really a true indication of what the public wants in GDN/NDG.

I believe the bottom line in this issue was well stated by Councillor Marvin Rotrand, except for one word. *“If people don’t understand why you want something, they won’t understand the scope of the **problem.**”*

This statement, although very good advice, assumes from the start that leaf blowers are a “*problem*”, without knowing all the facts. The word “*problem*” should really be changed to “*issue*”. If you read on, you will learn why I feel that way.

I am personally not a stakeholder in this issue in GDN/NDG, nor am I trying to interfere with any regulatory decision you deem necessary to control leaf blowers. I live and work in the US. Nevertheless, I am a source of facts about the design and use of cordless and gasoline powered lawn care products that will be enlightening to you.

I would like to start by providing you with a link to my [qualifications and credentials](#). I am a retired Vice President of Engineering for Echo Inc., a leading manufacturer of powered handheld lawn care products, with a business presence in London, Ontario (<https://www.echo.ca/>). Since I personally am not a resident of your borough, you perhaps are asking yourself if it is worth reading on, but please look at me as simply a knowledgeable source of factual information, then you can do whatever is right for your constituents with this added knowledge.

Since I am an engineer, I tend to be quite technical in my writings, but I will try to avoid that as much as possible in this letter. I provide links to the technical justifications behind my statements, but I leave it up to you to follow-up if you do not trust what I am saying. I know the leaf blower has been a hot button for some people for a long time. But I must say that if you support a blower ban based on what these anti-leaf blower advocates tell you, you are inadvertently being misled. There is no legitimate reason for banning gasoline-powered leaf blowers, **except for noise**, because everything else you hear and see is either false, misrepresented, or unsubstantiated.

It is hard for me to get my point across because I can't dramatically compete with the passionate efforts of those working and living in your borough, trying to convince you to ban leaf blowers. You probably are reluctant to believe what I will be telling you here because you have heard otherwise, from all kinds of sources, for a long time. But I feel compelled to comment further on this, so you are not blindsided in the future as certain so-called facts professed to you are shown to be false.

Getting back to the referenced article, Ms. Gomery tells us that leaf blowers give off harmful CO₂ emissions. You know what, so does breathing. I don't want to sound facetious, but the fact is, it correlates well to the gasoline-powered leaf blower.

Have you ever given any thought to what happens to fuel (a hydrocarbon) that is burned in an automobile or a leaf blower? It oxidizes. That means oxygen combines with the two elements found in fuel, namely hydrogen and carbon. Every ounce of it turns into an airborne gas. Hydrogen combines with oxygen to form water vapor (H₂O) and carbon oxidizes to form carbon dioxide (CO₂), or greenhouse gas.

Those arguing that leaf blowers are bad for the environment because of [greenhouse gas \(CO₂\)](#), do not know how it is created. **It's all a function of how much fuel is burned.** The average automobile is 230 times worse than a leaf blower when it comes to the emission of greenhouse gasses. Ten ounces of fuel, which is the typical amount of fuel burned in a leaf blower over a week's time, is about the same amount of CO₂ as that found in a couple cases of beer.

Then Ms. Gomery would like you to believe that leaf blowers harm [insects](#). Realistically, insects are pests, and many people use pesticides to control them. Recent figures indicate that there are more than [200 million insects](#) for each human on the planet. An article in The [New York Times claims](#) that the world holds 300 pounds of insects for every pound of humans. Even if it were true that leaf blowers had some small impact on insects, which I doubt, perhaps we can afford to lose a few.

Ms. Gomery further states that, "... *the California Air Resources Board warned that by 2020, gas-powered leaf blowers, lawn mowers and similar equipment in the state could produce more ozone pollution than all the millions of cars in California combined.*" First of all, this statement doesn't come from CARB, rather it comes from radio station [KQED](#). They say their information comes from state air quality officials with no names or backup information provided. Sounds like opinions to me. Further, there is no indication that this prediction has become true.

Ozone comes from hydrocarbon exhaust emission, or gasoline that goes straight through the engine unburned. This environmental constituent was studied for years by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the California Air Resources Board (CARB) and Environment Canada. After much testing, evaluation and negotiation, it was determined that when these small off-road engines comply with the resultant revised emission limitations effective January 2005, there will be no significant or detrimental impact on the environment. Hydrocarbon exhaust emission has been reduced by 85 to 90%, depending on engine size. The impact calculation takes into consideration that these products are only used for a matter of minutes per week per household, which is not the case for electric power generation, jet airplanes, factories, trucks, cars and other major sources of air pollution.

I do not know all that you have been told about blowers to this point, but I can guess. I have heard it all before. Beside noise, health hazards are always brought up. Don't believe everything you have been told regarding this argument.

Here is something that I am reasonably sure you do not know. There is a group of people, from outside your community, working hard to have gasoline-powered leaf blowers banned throughout the East and West coasts of the US. Because of the media attention and via the Internet, their efforts have drifted into Canada, perhaps unintendedly. The initial reason for their banning effort was that some of them are noisy and therefore irritating. Their program now includes health hazard issues as support for a ban. The problem is that this claim is contrived. It was initiated by Peter and Susan Kendall of Orinda, California. You can read all about them in the [New Yorker, October 25, 2010 issue](#). Because sound was not a compelling enough reason for banning leaf blowers in their hometown, Ms. Kendall said, *"I would (in the future) try to get the law classified not under noise but under health and safety..."*

Many anti-leaf blower advocates have created websites that dedicate themselves to demeaning the leaf blower. So, the Kendall's and the people leading the movement to ban blowers in GDN/NDG, have searched the Internet for the names of dignitaries and organizations that provide statements supporting their mission, regardless of the truth. Proof of this can be found in the referenced Internet article. Local people that are strongly against the leaf blower are eager to believe what they read, using these falsehoods to justify their cause. I am sure you know from your experience with the media that if something is said often enough, by many different people, or put in print by many sources, regardless of the facts, people will tend to believe it as being true. They then will proceed to confidently restate these unproven hypotheses emphatically.

I know that Ms. Cymry Gomery, and those that support her views, are well meaning, conscientious, and dedicated to improving the environment, but they are not professionals. What I mean by not being professional is that, unlike me, none of them are in any way professionally involved in the use, development, or accreditation of the leaf blower. As a result, they really do not know or understand the value of this tool to those that use them or how they have been improved over the years. These people can only quote claims made by others. None of them want to quote me because I contradict most of what they have been led to believe. I maintain that the information they find on the Internet is based on improper testing and inuendo or opinion. Some of the background

material they show may be true in concept, but the impact on the environment, as it relates to the leaf blower is not true.

I told you above that the only true issue with the leaf blower is **noise**. So, how can you mitigate that without controversy? Obviously, **ban only the noisy blowers**.

The industry took notice of blower noise more than 20 years ago and deliberately addressed this issue in response to complaints. Much has been done to reduce the noise from all gasoline powered leaf blowers, spending millions of dollars to make an alternative to noisy blowers available to the consumer.

[To understand how sound reduction is quantified](#), note that for every six dB(A) reduction in sound magnitude (from any starting point on the measurement scale), the actual volume, or sound pressure, is reduced by 50%. This much sound reduction is hard to accept as being true for the average person because we cannot comprehend from experience what a 50% reduction sounds like. The best thing to do is to witness an actual leaf blower sound comparison, but I know that it is not easy to arrange this. An alternative is to check out the [video](#) of an actual demonstration developed for the comparison of leaf blowers on my website. Note that battery-powered blowers are not as quiet as one might think.

In the case of a gasoline-powered leaf blower, sound level is measured at 50 feet to replicate what a bystander will experience. The published values are obtained per the industry Standard ([ANSI B175.2](#)). A “Quiet” leaf blower is 65 dB(A) or less, measured per this Standard. This is at least a seventy-five percent reduction in sound.

Quiet leaf blowers have been available for a long time, however, not all leaf blowers are quiet, especially the older units. Therefore, I encourage you to learn more about these quiet blowers before summarily banning them along with the noisy ones.

Fortunately, because of the industry’s foresight, any city that wants to limit the sound emanating from a gas-powered leaf blower can easily determine sound magnitude in the field without testing. The consumer can also determine compliance with local sound limitations at the point of purchase via the attached [label](#). This decal has been on all quiet gasoline powered leaf blowers manufactured for at least the past fifteen years. If there is no label on a unit, it does not comply.

In time, a decision from you will likely be required. Something will have to be done about blowers, but you do have choices, choices other than banning all gasoline-powered leaf blowers. Limiting the time of use for leaf blowers is a good first step. This is being done by other cities with great success.

In the back of your mind, because this was suggested by Ms. Gomery, you may be thinking that because there are other cities that have banned blowers, you can't go too far wrong to follow their precedent. Before accepting their decision as your own, you should carefully check out the impact this has had on their city. You can talk to the council members involved, but don't overlook talking to the enforcers, professional lawn care providers, and homeowners to learn the true impact.

These are some of the questions for which you need answers:

- How is their ban being enforced?
- Did homeowners with leaf blowers get upset?
- How did this impact the elderly?
- What was the cost impact to the homeowner and landscape contractor?
- Are current users complying with the ordinance?
- Are people using time consuming tools, or are they just leaving the debris where it lies?

The key to any ordinance succeeding is that it should be reasonable, fair, justifiable and something that people will accept and are voluntarily willing to comply with. In other words, don't do something that will cost them money and don't take away their indispensable tools, tools that except for your ordinance, are perfectly legal and do not significantly impact the environment. Look, the overall goal of an ordinance regarding the gasoline leaf blower is, and should be, to eliminate the noise.

The leaf blower issue can become quite complex and as such, will require some detailed study to learn and comprehend the facts. It is my experience, however, that most of the time, people not interested in engineering or technical matters, are not so inclined to understand details presented by an engineer. But that is where you will find the facts about the issues:

- [Noise](#)
- [Time efficiency](#)
- [Impact on insects](#)
- [Hydrocarbon emission](#)
- [Carbon monoxide](#)

- [Particulate matter](#)
- [Electric power](#)

According to my wife, engineering stories can be quite boring. If engineering stories are boring to you, before you believe all the negative claims you hear about the leaf blower, ask an engineer friend, or better yet, ask the city's engineer to check out my [website](#), [links](#) to references, and the [appendix](#) to this letter. At these locations one can find the truth about noise, exhaust emission, dust, health hazards, and every other negative claim made against the leaf blower. Ask your engineer if what I am saying has merit. And then ask him what the facts are. Knowing the facts will help you arrive at the best decision in this matter.

If you have any "Ya, but what about (...)" questions that I have not touched on here, chances are you can find the answer at my website, if you only do a search for the keyword.

Best Regards,



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Click: [APPENDIX](#) for details and [links](#) to references.