

October 12, 2020

TO: Mayor John Tory
City of Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Copy: Toronto City Councillors

From: [Larry Will](#)



Reference:

https://torontosun.com/news/local-news/toronto-one-step-closer-to-banning-two-stroke-lawn-equipment?utm_term=Autofeed&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1601683183

Dear Mayor Tory:

Isn't it great living in the 21st century. Just think about all the laborsaving aids we now have, most of which were invented in the last century and perfected in the next. We have cars, trucks, planes, cellphones, clothes and dish washing machines, microwave ovens, toasters, electric toothbrushes, power screwdrivers and drills, sanders, mixers of all kinds, computers, electric clothes irons, and on and on. Among the labor-saving items used to care for our yards are lawnmowers, edgers, string trimmers, hedge clippers and **leaf blowers**. But wait, for some reason the leaf blower is the one product that we don't need. At least according to some individuals.

Calling your attention to the referenced article on the web, I see that Toronto is once again being asked to address leaf blower complaints, primarily because of the sound they make and now, their impact on insects and the Coronavirus. I have heard a lot of reasons why the leaf blower should be banned, but these last two are a bit of a stretch. I have information regarding leaf blowers that you should check out in order to make an informed decision regarding these blowers.

I am a former Vice President of Engineering for Echo Inc., a leading manufacturer of powered handheld lawn care products. I am not a stakeholder in your community's leaf blower issue, nor am I trying to interfere with any decision you deem necessary. But I am a source of facts that will be helpful to you. I would like to start by providing you with my [qualifications and credentials](#).

You may not know this, but there is a group of people, from outside your community, primarily from the United States, working hard to have gasoline-powered leaf blowers banned throughout the US and apparently Canada as well. The concept of citing health and environmental hazards as the reason for a ban 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, Ms. Kendall said, "I would (in the future) try to get the law classified not under noise but under health and safety..." So, the Kendall's and many others have searched the Internet for statements and dignitaries that would support their mission, regardless of the truth. I'm 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, to people like yourself.

Well intended though they may be, keep in mind that those arguing for a leaf blower ban are not professionals, that is, none of them are in any way professionally involved in the use, development, or accreditation of the leaf blower. They can only quote information presented by others with no way of knowing if what they present is based on facts, qualified tests or is simply inuendo and opinion.

As for the impact leaf blowers are having on insects, I don't see the correlation. What does something happening in Germany have to do with Toronto? Where is the confirmation that leaf blowers have anything to do with the alleged demise of an insect population? Recent figures indicate that there are more than [200 million insects](#) for each human on the planet! A recent article in The New York Times claimed 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.

The Coronavirus? This has got to be the first time any inert mechanical device has ever been blamed for causing an infectious disease. It is impossible to say this with any correlation to reality. The best doctors in the land would not be able to substantiate this claim. If the simple circulation of air outdoors, within a fifteen-foot radius, had any negative impact on the propagation of the Coronavirus, we are in big trouble until we can stop the environmental wind. Any remnants of a Coronavirus found outside, on the ground, having been there for any appreciable amount of time, will likely be killed by the sun.

Although not yet proven to be fact concerning the Coronavirus, a study, done by [ecological modelers at the University of Connecticut](#), states that the main natural weapon against the novel germ is ultraviolet light. It's an invisible but energetic part of the sun's electromagnetic spectrum that's well-known for damaging DNA and killing viruses.

Before this attack on the leaf blower is over, you will likely hear all kinds of reasons why they should be banned. Nearly everything that will be presented can be exposed as a falsehood, except for noise, if you take the time to read the articles at the following links:

[Can leaf blowers be regulated locally to reduce emissions?](#)

[Are automobiles cleaner?](#)

[What about global warming?](#)

[Are leaf blowers hazardous to your health?](#)

[Greenwich Department of Health](#)

[Dr. Steel's Report to California Legislature](#)

[Excessive Dust](#)

[Dust study and comparison.](#)

[What do Doctors say?](#)

[Education](#)

[Will a ban work?](#)

[Leaf Blower vs. Broom](#)

If gasoline-powered leaf blowers are banned, what is the alternative? Obviously, there is the rake and broom. These are fine if you are into sweating, hard work and have a lot of time on your hands. Perhaps some homeowners would prefer this over an exercise bike or a treadmill. It will take them at least [eight times longer using a broom](#) or a rake than it would with a leaf blower. But for the rest of us and for the contractor, this is an archaic and unacceptable approach.

A more likely alternative is battery-powered blowers. Battery-powered leaf blowers are becoming very popular among homeowners. It does an adequate job clearing debris from paved surfaces and therefore may be viable for the homeowner. It is faster than a broom or rake and does a much better job.

However, battery powered blowers have lower performance than that of a gasoline powered unit, because of their limited available propulsion energy from a battery. This means it takes more time to get the job done. But most homeowners do not mind having to spend a little extra time working in their yard, as long as it doesn't take too much time. To many, their yard is a source of pride and pleasure, requiring a great deal of care, with a personal touch.

To others, yardwork is a pain. It is just a yard always in need of grooming. These people turn to the yard care professional for this task. Most landscapers consider the battery powered blower inadequate. To make money, they must get the job done fast. This can only be done with a gasoline powered blower.

Since the only true issue with the leaf blower is sound. Almost always, when the opposition to leaf blowers is great enough, some sort of legislation will be passed. I try to tell city managers and representatives to "ban the noise, not the blower".

I'm sure there are already many quiet gasoline-powered leaf blowers in Toronto, but the problem is, **if there is only one noisy leaf blower being used in the neighborhood, all leaf**

blowers are reviled. No, not all present-day leaf blowers are quiet, but all are quieter than they once were for a given size. But even though these large blowers are not considered “Quiet” their sound level has been reduced by 50%.

This paragraph may sound like a commercial, but that is not my intention. In response to noise complaints, a number of years ago my engineering department developed the first “Quiet” gasoline powered leaf blower at ECHO Inc. This was done in direct response to the claims made in the field regarding leaf blower noise. Today, several other manufacturers have joined in, investing millions of dollars in tooling, testing and new assembly lines to provide this important alternative to a blower ban. It is important because this is the solution to the leaf blower noise issue.

The industry attaches a [label](#) to the blower that indicates sound level, which is measured according to a highly detailed ANSI Standard that controls all the measurement variables. This makes it easy to determine sound magnitude at the point of purchase and in the field by the enforcement officer. The number to look for is 65 dB(A), measured at 50 feet. This represents a 75% reduction in sound from a typical noisy leaf blower at 77 dB(A).

You may be thinking that the concept of “Quiet” is subjective, and it is to some extent. But if you view the [video](#) found on my website, you will see that a 75% reduction in sound is in fact “Quiet” by comparison. Is it silent? Well, no! But it is quiet enough to not be an irritation.

These blowers have been available for more than 20 years and still both sides of the leaf blower issue have been slow to embrace these products. Some users do not see blower noise as an issue since all their power equipment makes noise. If they have an older blower that is still working, they are reluctant to scrap it. And when they do, they don’t want to spend \$30 more for a quiet blower they think is unnecessary. Some even think that quiet blowers have less power, which of course is not true.

Anti-leaf blower advocates will not acknowledge this design either. They just can’t seem to accept that this option is viable and just might solve their problem. To them, it is not quiet enough. They want silence, but this is not reasonable. Even battery-powered leaf blowers have a noise component. Some are even noisier than a “loud” gasoline-powered blower.

Often those that do not like leaf blowers blame the professional user for the sound issue. Keep in mind that people get upset when they must listen to blowers in the evening or early in the morning, and on Sundays or holidays. Sometimes blowers run for what seems like hours at a time. Well, homeowners are the ones that work in their yards well into the evening or very early in the morning when people may still be sleeping. They are the ones that use their blowers on Sundays and holidays. Because they buy inexpensive and therefore underpowered units, they must run them longer than they should to get the job done, another big irritation. Education is the answer to this issue. There are [pamphlets](#) available to help you with this.

Most professionals limit their workday to normal business hours. They are interested in getting the job done as quickly as possible, usually less than ten minutes per residence. As with any professional, time is money.

When you solicit comments from the public, be sure to include the professional yard care provider, by invitation if you can, because you will learn how a blower ban will impact their business, their income and how their customers will react to the resultant cost increase.

Finally, keep in mind that a complete [leaf blower ban does not work](#). You probably have heard that there is a [court case in Maplewood](#), New Jersey, contesting a recent blower ban. Like an iceberg, this issue is deeper than it appears to be on the surface. Many problems can arise from a blower ban; for the city, for homeowners and for landscape contractors that depend on the leaf blower.

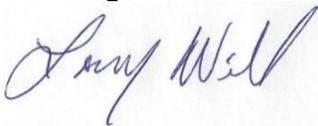
If the Council is seriously considering the banning of all lawn care equipment powered by two-stroke gasoline engines, it is 10 to 15 years premature. The only halfway viable alternative to gasoline-power is to use battery-powered equipment. Lithium ion has reached it's full potential, which is inadequate for the professional leaf blower. The only new battery concept being studied is [sodium based batteries](#). Although these will be less expensive, they are heavier in weight, with lower cycle numbers and less electrical density, which means poorer performance than lithium ion. It will take time to find a superior replacement.

Leaf blowers are firmly entrenched as indispensable tools, to anyone that has ever used them over the alternative. The best thing to do is find a solution that everyone can support, especially the professionals. Let me say this one more time, "Ban the noise, not the blower"!

How can you do that? I have a [model ordinance](#) that will give you some ideas.

I could go into much more detail in this document, pointing out all the inaccuracies you will be expected to believe, but for the facts and to save time here, you can find more information about the leaf blower at my [website](#). Should you have any specific questions that are not adequately answered, please respond to this email or call with your inquiry.

Best regards,



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