

Dear Riverview Town Council,

I write to you today in opposition to a proposed amendment to By-Law 700-10-3 currently under consideration by Riverview Town Council. The proposed amendment reads as follows:

By-Law 700-10-3, Section II-General is amended by adding:

9. With the exception of a vacant lot, any person who owns or leases a property shall ensure that the lawn or grass growing on that property, including on that portion of the street immediately in front of or adjacent to such property, does not measure more than 20 centimeters.

There are multiple troubling things regarding the proposed amendment. The proposed amendment appears to be designed to appease a very few number of citizens with arguments of very poor quality, and would open the door to a world of cosmetic property regulations. Such an amendment is wholeheartedly unnecessary.

Riverview Town Council appears to have been persuaded by rather poor arguments from one disgruntled citizen. In a June 30<sup>th</sup> CBC article, Kevin O'Brien stated, "Everybody has to blow their driveway or shovel their driveway and everybody has to mow their lawn...It's all part of the deal." Mr. O'Brien further stated that he is concerned about his home's resale value.

There are several flaws to Mr. O'Brien's argument. First, excluding reasons pertaining strictly to safety, there is no law or by-law of any kind that requires citizens to blow or shovel their driveway. Second, the deal that Mr. O'Brien speaks of is non-existent; this sort of deal is not found in any municipal, provincial, or federal legislation, nor is it found in any readings pertaining to natural law (Aquinas, Hobbes, Locke, Mill, etc.). To my understanding, there is no Town of Riverview covenant of any kind either. It appears that Mr. O'Brien's argument is exclusively personal opinion and is not supported by empirical evidence.

For arguments sake, let us ignore Mr. O'Brien's evidence and discuss his conclusion. Mr. O'Brien's conclusion appears to be that the Town's practice of sending a letter to residents requesting that they mow their lawn, is insufficient. Mr. O'Brien stated that he has been "...complaining to the town for a number of years about the neighbours' backyard," yet the neighbours claim to have only once received a letter from the Town of Riverview in their ten years of residing on the property. Presuming that these statements are both true, it seems that Mr. O'Brien's frustration should be directed at the Town of Riverview for not sending a proper number of letters to the neighbours. One must question if the Town's current practice is itself insufficient, or if it is insufficient for the reason that the Town is not actually following the practice.

Two comments from Riverview's Communications Co-ordinator Meghan Walsh clearly indicate that the issue is affecting a miniscule number of residents. In an August 16<sup>th</sup> CBC article, Walsh stated that "...we only receive on average about 15 complaints a year." In a June 30<sup>th</sup> CBC article, Walsh stated that "more often than not [the resident] is happy to comply once the issue has

been raised.” If, on average, there are only fifteen complaints made each year, and the majority of them are sufficiently resolved by the Town’s current policy, than there are, at most, just seven residents each year who do not comply with the Town’s requests. According to the Town of Riverview’s 2016 Census Profile, there are a total of 8,537 private dwellings, and thus it seems that this By-Law would, on average, remedy an issue experienced by just 1 in 1,220 households. Supposing that this figure is worthy of the Town’s attention, one must recognize the fact that such a by-law would not address a safety concern, but a cosmetic concern.

In a June 30<sup>th</sup> CBC article, Meghan Walsh, speaking in regards to a maintenance and occupancy bylaw, stated, “It allows the town to intervene when a safety concern is presented on private property resulting from untidy yards and debris and other objects left outside the home...anything that is creating a condition for unsafe neighbourhoods.” In the event of a safety concern, the Town of Riverview already has the ability to intervene with tall grass on private property, and thus it appears that the proposed by-law is about nothing more than visuals.

By accepting the amendment to By-Law 700-10-3, Riverview Town Council will be opening the door to a world of cosmetic property regulations. If the amendment is truly about visuals and protecting home resale value, this decision could set a precedent. The following are examples of various visual factors that could also affect neighbouring property resale value.

- Fence types
- Missing shingles
- Broken windows
- Cars parked on roadsides
- Uncommon colour schemes
- Location, number, and species of trees

By approving the amendment to By-Law 700-10-3, the Town of Riverview will be setting the precedent that the Town should intervene in the visual aspects of private property. This could be the first of many by-law amendments designed to infringe on the liberty of citizens and private property.

The amendment to By-Law 700-10-3 seeks to address what a very few number of citizens call a problem. A democratic society moves in the direction of the majority, yet Riverview Town Council is considering enacting a by-law to satisfy an incredibly small number of citizens. Regulating the length of grass on private property should not be a concern for the Town of Riverview, there are much more pressing and substantial concerns. The issue presented is one of little importance and should be treated as such. For these reasons, I urge the Riverview Town Council to reject the amendment to By-Law 700-10-3. In the case that I have failed to persuade you, I would at least encourage you to change the town motto to “A Great Place to Grow...Up to Twenty Centimeters.”

Respectfully,

Brandon Scott LeBlanc  
Riverview Resident