

Surrey takes steps to ban pesticides

City playing 'catch-up' with other major cities, official says

BY AMY O'BRIAN, VANCOUVER SUN JULY 17, 2009

SURREY - The City of Surrey is taking steps toward banning cosmetic pesticide use, starting with an eight-month trial ban of the chemicals on city property.

Surrey's move comes years after many other major Canadian municipalities banned pesticide use due to public health concerns, including Toronto, Vancouver and the entire province of Quebec.

"We're playing catch-up with other major cities," said Bob Campbell, vice-chairman of Surrey's environmental advisory committee.

Other B.C. municipalities with pesticide bylaws already in place include Maple Ridge, Port Moody, Burnaby, Victoria, Whistler and Comox, among others.

But while Surrey does not yet have a bylaw on the books, Mayor Dianne Watts said Friday in an interview that the city has gradually been moving away from using pesticides in parks and on city property for some time.

"We have cut back on our own without going to an all-out ban," Watts said. "We've pulled back a lot, so our use is very minimal."

The eight-month trial does not include a ban on pesticide use on privately owned land, but the city will begin a consultation process to hear feedback on various pesticide-control options, including a possible ban on residential use.

The trial ban specifically targets pesticide use on the city's boulevards and medians, mainly because the city is already using alternative methods of weed and pest control in other parts of the city, Watts said. She expects the bylaw will be passed in the fall.

A corporate report written by the city's parks, recreation and culture department says the bylaw could potentially affect homeowners and the image of the city.

"Residential properties would likely see an increase in lawn and garden weeds and the proliferation of some common diseases such as powdery mildew and leaf spots," the report says.

"There would also be an increase in damage from insects such as aphids, shield bugs, loopers and scale. The image of the city could be negatively affected."

The bylaw would still allow pesticide use in certain circumstances, including the control of noxious weeds, destroying pests that are in or on buildings, maintaining the safety of pedestrian surfaces or sport surfaces, and managing pests that threaten sensitive ecosystems.

aobrian@vancouversun.com

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