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Coquitlam won't debate banning pesticides



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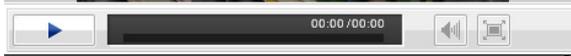
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The City of Coquitlam has bucked a green trend among B.C. cities by choosing not even to explore a ban or restriction on cosmetic pesticides.

Despite some 18 cities in the province restricting or banning the pesticides on health grounds, Coquitlam has no plans to reopen the debate after shooting down a city councillor's motion in early May.

"It got defeated -- I was completely shocked," said Councillor Selina Robinson, who proposed the motion in early May.

"Why would we even consider putting our children at risk when there are safer alternatives?" she asked.

The motion was to discuss the use of cosmetic pesticides. Mayor Richard Stewart, who must approve any motion before it's on the agenda, has told media he believes the provincial level of government must engage the issue.

Councillor Brent Asmundson, who voted against the motion, said that the federal government would be the better level to send any debate to.

Either way, the city doesn't have the resources to properly investigate the issue, said Asmundson.

"They're bans that can't be enforced -- the cities can't go out and write tickets for people that buy pesticides they can purchase legally," he said.

Burnaby, Port Moody, and Vancouver are among the cities who have enacted such a ban. The Supreme Court of Canada upheld a Quebec town's push to regulate pesticides as legal in 2001.

The provinces of Quebec and Ontario have both enacted similar controls on cosmetic pesticides.

Garden store owner Wim Vander Zalm says pesticides are necessary to keep some trees alive in Vancouver's climate.

"You need to spray once in a while, otherwise you're in a position where you could lose a tree," said Vander Zalm, who owns Art Knapp Plantland.

Robinson says she doesn't have the answers, which is why she says the issue should be studied and debated.

"We're not going to let our gardens go to hell in a handbasket," she said. "There are lots of alternatives."

With a report from CTV British Columbia's Jon Woodward

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