

Push for pesticide law grows



Left to right: Rossland activists Diana Daghofer, Patti Moore, and Dr. Suzanne Belanger, with Dr. Carolyn Gotay after Gotay's presentation on the dangers of pesticides last Friday. Rossland News Reporter

Andrew Bennett photo

By [Andrew Bennett - Rossland News](#)

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More than 50 people attended last Friday's information session and film screening on pesticides, including Coun. Kathy Moore who later petitioned council to re-open the debate that could ban the use of the cosmetic chemicals in Rossland.

On Monday, Moore told council: "It's been over six months since we last considered [a bylaw restricting the use of cosmetic pesticides], so I have a notice of motion that we reconsider it, hopefully on the Nov. 8 agenda."

In British Columbia, 33 municipalities have passed bylaws that restrict pesticide use, including Nelson (2007), Invermere (2009), and most recently Kimberley, Fernie and Golden.

Diana Daghofer of Prevent Cancer Now said on Friday: "We did invite all of the councillors of Rossland, Trail, Warfield, and Castlegar to come this evening, and I believe that Kathy Moore is the only one here."

The last time Rossland considered a ban, the bylaw was defeated by a tied vote, 3-3, in council.

"That's because we were missing one councillor who would have supported the ban, but he wasn't there that night," Moore explained.

She added, however: "Rossland does not use pesticides in taking care of city property." Daghofer also noted that Rossland Pro Hardware has voluntarily removed these products from their shelves.

On Friday, guest speaker Dr. Carolyn Gotay surveyed the latest evidence that links pesticides to cancer.

She said seven per cent of cancers are directly linked to environmental or occupational factors, “all of which are potentially preventable.”

Her research did not cover ADHD, thyroid problems, Parkinson’s, and many other ailments that are likely linked to pesticides.

Gotay tempered her comments with caution following a review of the different types of scientific studies used to establish links, and the various pitfalls.

“To come up with a definitive answer that some people seem to need to make a policy decision is, to my mind, simply unrealistic.”

Most people concerned about the possibility of harm rely on the precautionary principle: namely, the burden of proof is not on citizens to show the products are dangerous but rather on manufacturers to prove that they are safe.

The film screened on Friday, *A Chemical Reaction*, made the difference between Canada and the U.S. starkly clear. Canada’s Supreme Court enshrined the precautionary principle when, in 2001, it upheld the right of the town of Hudson, Que., to ban pesticide. In the U.S., the opposite is true.

Referring to the sweep of municipal bans that followed Hudson’s 1991 bylaw and subsequent legal victories to protect it, “We can never let what is happening in Canada happen in the U.S.,” said Alan James, a representative for the Responsible Industry for Sound Environment (RISE) — a euphemistic name for what is actually a chemical industry lobby group.

Indeed, local pesticide bans are now banned in most U.S. States thanks to the efforts of RISE.

In Canada, activists are firmly focused on provincial legislation. Kathy Moore said: “The Union of British Columbia Municipalities has been advocating for the last two years for the province to ban the sale and use of cosmetic pesticides. So far the government has not taken any action, but they have started to listen. The more towns [who have bans], the more power we will have to get the provincial government to act.”

One audience member asked why wouldn’t a town ban pesticides? In response, Patti Moore of the Canadian Cancer Society cited literature from a chemical manufacturer that “pesticides should be used on school fields because children will trip on weeds.”

Other arguments range from control of poison ivy to allergies. In Kimberley and Fernie, before their bans were instituted, Patti Moore said people were concerned their property values would diminish.

For more information on community efforts to restrict pesticides in our region, visit:
www.pesticidefreecolumbiabasin.ca

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