

# City of Regina to implement new pesticide policy

BY VANESSA BROWN, THE LEADER-POST MARCH 7, 2013 11:03 PM



The City of Regina is studying its pesticide policy amid calls from some groups and citizens for a ban on so-called cosmetic pesticides.

**Photograph by:** Peter Kuitenbrouwer, National Post files

REGINA — The City of Regina has adopted a new pesticide policy that could further reduce the use of herbicides in up to 80 parks this year.

The new plan, which was passed Thursday by the city's public works committee, will allow more parks to be designated herbicide-free if the number of weeds stay below a certain level.

But if too many weeds grow back in subsequent years, the park will lose its designation and herbicides will again be applied.

City administrators presented a second, more aggressive option against herbicides, but that comes at an annual cost of \$370,000. The committee voted to bring that plan up for consideration during next year's budget process.

Committee members aimed to strike a balance between further reducing the use of herbicides this year and fiscal responsibility.

"I understand we can go and do (the second option) right now, but we have budget considerations to think about," said Coun. John Findura.

The contentious issue has been debated at City Hall for years, as those for and against pesticide bans have spoken before councillors each time the issue comes back up for discussion. It was no different Thursday, when nine different residents and organizations delegated.

The city's environmental advisory committee previously recommended avoiding the use of pesticides. But on Thursday, Norm Henderson, who sits on that committee, said the new policy does not go far enough.

Completely eliminating the use of herbicides in all city parks would send a more consistent message, he argued.

"It doesn't seem to imply (the city is) moving toward a herbicide-free environment, which is what we're recommending," Henderson said. "If (this is) a step in the right direction, it's a subtle one ... It doesn't look like progress to us."

He pointed to Regina's public and separate school boards, which have both stopped using herbicides on school property.

"We stopped spraying for dandelions and other weeds when hazard information became more widely available and application procedures more restrictive," the Regina Separate School Board said in the city's report. "The school division decided to err on the side of safety given the number of children using the playgrounds daily."

Henderson and numerous other delegates said the City of Regina lags behind the school boards and more than 100 Canadian municipalities on its pesticide policy.

Almost equally vocal at Thursday's meeting, however, was the pro-pesticide lobby.

John Hopkins, CEO of the Regina & District Chamber of Commerce, argued lawn-care businesses and pesticide manufacturers use materials Health Canada has approved.

"We support the responsible use of pesticides by trained professionals," Hopkins said, adding the city's integrated pest management program that has seen the use of herbicides decrease "has served this community well."

Also there to support using pesticides was Janice Tranberg of CropLife Canada, an association representing pest-control producers.

Tranberg spoke to the benefits of reducing the amount of weeds in public parks, especially those that cause allergies.

"We support the city's approach to monitor weed counts and decide on the appropriate course of action," Tranberg told the committee.

The city's own report cautions that residents expect weed-free parks: "Reducing the use of herbicides is a worthwhile objective; however it must be balanced with the prevailing public expectation that weeds on city-owned property be controlled," it said.

Regina currently has three pesticide-free parks. Gordon Park, Al Pickard Park and Queen Elizabeth Court went natural in 2010 as part of a pilot project for residents who are sensitive to pesticides. For the past three years, weeds in those parks have been controlled by rototilling, hand hoeing and pulling.

For the past eight years, the report notes, the city has reduced the amount of herbicides used in park turf grass while the amount of park space has increased.

[vbrown@leaderpost.com](mailto:vbrown@leaderpost.com)

© Copyright (c) The Regina Leader-Post