

# Pesticide protest misguided

BY NIGEL BOWLES, EDMONTON JOURNAL FEBRUARY 18, 2012



Re: "Council declines pesticide ban," The Journal, Feb. 7.

The decision by the city's Community Services Committee to review the use of lawn and garden pesticides in two years has generated a flurry of letters condemning councillors. However, a review of the letter writers' names reveals it's the same people who have lobbied council for years seeking a pesticide ban.

What they all failed to note was that banning lawn and garden pesticides (which include weed and insect control products) was not on the table in the first place. Council had simply asked administration to re-report on how the parks department could use fewer pest-control products through enhanced, integrated pest-management programs.

But what happened at this and countless council meetings that came before was that a small group of anti-pesticide zealots came forward with their scaremongering and obfuscation of a complex subject.

How else do you explain one letter writer saying on the one hand that pesticides are a health risk and should be banned, but on the other that they are OK if used for "health purposes?"

All pest-control products, regardless of what they are used for, are subjected to the most rigorous of scientific evaluations by Health Canada. The anti-pesticides lobby can't have it both ways.

Some councillors quite rightly stated they are not scientists and, in making their decision, deferred to experts in the discipline of toxicology. These experts are the scientists at Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency, whose mandate is to protect human health and the environment.

Homeowners, park users and sports teams alike should take comfort that our councillors have listened to scientists and federal regulators, not anti-pesticide lobbyists, and as a consequence came to the right conclusion: the pest-control products used by the city, landscape professionals and gardeners are no cause for concern.

It's time that the anti-pesticide advocates turned their attention to the known causes of poor health such as smoking, lack of exercise and diet.

Nigel Bowles, executive director, Landscape Alberta, Edmonton

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