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Richmond Review

Richmond makes pesticides illegal

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Using pesticides to spruce up lawns and gardens on all residential property and most city property is now illegal in Richmond.

In a final vote this week, city council enacted the Pesticide Use Control Bylaw, giving bylaw enforcement officers power to fine homeowners up to \$1,000 for using products like Roundup, Killex and Weed 'N' Feed.

"It's long overdue," said Coun. Bill McNulty. "You'll see most municipalities doing the same thing. I'm glad that we're leading, but I think you'll see a lot of people following as well."

The bylaw prohibits the use of pesticides to maintain outdoor grass, trees, shrubs, flowers and other plants on private residential land and land owned by the city, except the pitch-and-putt at Hugh Boyd Park and the Minoru Park lawn bowling greens.

Pesticides are defined as any chemical or biological control or other material intended to "prevent, destroy, repel or mitigate a pest." Commonly used products used to kill weeds and insects that are now banned from use also include Killex, Casoron, Mecoprop and Methoxychlor.

Bylaw officers can write tickets to those who break the rules—\$100 for first offence, \$500 for second and \$1,000 for third.

Tuesday's council vote thrilled members of the Richmond Pesticide Awareness Coalition, which has long lobbied for a bylaw.

The coalition's Michelle Li said she hopes the city will now work to educate homeowners and lawn care companies of alternatives.

"We really want to see widespread change in the way people approach their lawns and gardens. Now that these bylaws are coming into effect around B.C., neon green lawn carpets will be a dinosaur of the past. People will appreciate the natural beauty that can be attained from organic methods. "

The bylaw doesn't apply to commercial properties, golf courses or inside buildings. The city is also mulling exemptions for pest control companies to manage infestations, a pest that threatens a sensitive ecosystem and an invasive species.

Other B.C. municipalities have passed similar bylaws. Richmond is now urging the province to create B.C.-wide legislation prohibiting the use and sale of pesticides for cosmetic purposes. Under the Community Charter, municipalities can regulate the application of pesticides for residential purposes and on municipally owned land, but senior governments manage all other aspects of pesticide regulation, including their sale.

The Richmond Pesticide Awareness Coalition is hopeful for a ban.

"Already Ontario and Quebec have provincial legislation that restricts the sale and B.C. needs to catch up," said Li.

She noted many big-box retailers have already pulled pesticides from their shelves, but said the products are still readily available.

The bylaw comes with an annual cost of \$210,000 for additional parks labour, education, advocacy and bylaw enforcement, according to a staff report.

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