

City may ban bug killers

Langley City council is expected to approve a pesticide ban at an upcoming meeting

BY HEATHER COLPITTS, LANGLEY ADVANCE MARCH 8, 2012 2:06 AM

The Canadian Cancer Society has planted a seed with Langley City council which is now looking at banning cosmetic pesticides.

The cancer society's Christina Beck attended the March 5 council meeting to ask elected officials to ban the chemicals on private and public lands.

"It only makes sense for the City to practice what it's asking of its residents," she said.

The City would be joining about 39 other B.C. municipalities that have brought in bans. About one third of them include public lands.

"Seventy per cent of Canadians support cosmetic pesticide bans," she said.

Beck noted that the chemicals don't respect fences or property lines, and that the pesticides have significant health impacts for people. The cancer society is campaigning for pesticide bans as part of its efforts with preventable cancers.

"Children are at the greatest risk," Beck said. "They roll around on the ground. And they're often putting things in their mouths."

She presented research that showed that costs for pest control and property management without chemicals rise for the first two years after pesticides are used but after that, the costs are lower than using chemicals.

Some places, including Langley City, use integrated pest management (IPM) where biological methods are preferred and pesticides are used as a last resort.

Communities that have brought in the bylaw have seen what Beck considers a benefit to the local economy - an increase in the number of landscaping firms.

Beck said cosmetic pesticides often solve the problem but have broader impacts, killing beneficial bugs.

"They often hit a lot of other things as well," she said.

Beck noted that the society isn't asking for bans for public health or safety uses, but for cosmetic uses.

The society recommended that Langley City amend its draft bylaw to restrict the use and so people can't give permission for others to use cosmetic pesticides on private property.

Council has given preliminary approval to the bylaw and will make amendments before final reading.

Staff will come back with some estimates for what this will cost for City lands. Councillor Dave Hall said it defeats the point if the City is not covered by the same rules as homeowners and continues to use chemicals.

The banned chemicals and products would be based on lists created by the federal and provincial governments.

Staff estimate it will cost about \$3,000 to create educational material for residents and another \$60,000 to go without pesticides on City property.

Fines range from \$100-\$2,500 and/or jail time of up to six months if people refuse to follow the bylaw.

The bylaw was suggested by the City's Parks and Recreation Committee and would not apply to commercial sites which come under provincial law.

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