

Coquitlam abuzz with pending pesticide bylaw

BY JOHN KURUCZ, COQUITLAM NOW JULY 6, 2011



Coquitlam council unanimously endorsed drafting a bylaw to ban pesticide use in the city Monday night.

Photograph by: Coquitlam NOW, file photo

Coquitlam council unanimously endorsed moving ahead with drafting a bylaw to ban the use of pesticides in the city on Monday night.

The ban will only apply to residential lands, and it's expected that staff will bring a report and the bylaw itself back to council at some point in the fall.

"It took us two years to get here and I'm thrilled that we are here," said Coun. Selina Robinson, who has been lobbying for a ban for two years. "It's a far cry from where we came from, where you couldn't even get a community dialogue going. I'm pleased that persistence does pay off."

Monday's decision came out of roughly three months worth of work by the city's new sustainability and environmental advisory committee, which recommended the use of pesticides be banned for the purpose of "maintaining outdoor trees, shrubs, flowers, other ornamental plants, turf or hardscapes on private residential lands and public lands vested to the City of Coquitlam."

"We didn't reinvent the wheel, but we made the wheel better and I think if there's any other municipalities out there that are going down this route, I think our bylaw will be one that shows a really

good example," said Coun. Linda Reimer, chair of the sustainability and environmental advisory committee.

The ban includes a list of seven different types of exemptions: pesticides used in response to a threat to human or animal health, or public safety; pest management in the agricultural or forestry sectors; and pesticides used in residential areas of farms and land used for forestry, transportation, public utilities or pipelines unless the public utility or pipeline is owned by the city.

The exemption list also includes 46 different materials included in the province's Integrated Pest Management Act. Some of those substances include acetic acid, boron compounds, rotenone and pesticides in aerosol containers, among other substances.

Coquitlam's director of engineering, Bill Susak, explained that the exemption list is consistent with provincial regulations within the Community Charter.

A handful of questions was directed staff's way regarding how to enforce the ban as well as when, and if, the province will step in and ban the sale of pesticides - effectively nullifying the need for individual municipalities to enact differing regulations of their own.

While Susak couldn't speak to the province's role in the debate, he did note that issuing bylaw tickets would be seen as a last resort in policing the ban and that education would be the city's primary enforcement focal point.

He added that other Metro Vancouver municipalities have found that education - for both residents and businesses - has been the most successful tool in getting people to buy in to the regulations.

Coun. Lou Sekora, the most outspoken critic of the ban, offered up his temporary support for the policy, but said his vote at the bylaw stage will be based on how the city enforces the bylaws, the associated penalties and what kind of role the province will play moving forward.

It was much of the same for Mayor Richard Stewart, who has continually said that banning the sale of the products - something only the province can do - is much more effective than banning the use at the municipal level.

"Until the province actually bans the product, there isn't a way to enforce this legitimately or efficiently," he said.

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