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# Pesticide ban a reality for Coquitlam



Coun. Selina Robinson listens to colleague Coun. Terry O'Neill as he speaks against her proposal for a pesticide ban in the city. *JANIS WARREN/THE TRI-CITY NEWS*

By [Janis Warren - The Tri-City News](#)  
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Coquitlam is one step away from adopting a pesticide ban, bringing the city in line with many Metro Vancouver municipalities — including all its closest neighbours — that have already outlawed the chemicals.

This week, city council voted 7-2 to give three readings to the Pesticide Use Control Bylaw, a policy that council has debated for more than three years since Coun. Selina Robinson first brought it forward for public input.

At that time, council voted against her motion, saying enforcement would be difficult and the matter was outside municipal jurisdiction. The topic later returned to the council table and, last year, it was pushed to the newly created environmental advisory committee for consideration.

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On Monday, Coun. Lou Sekora reiterated his opposition while Coun. Terry O'Neill gave a passionate speech, arguing that Health Canada continues to support cosmetic pesticides.

O'Neill cited the "precautionary principle," saying that's when people overreact to unscientifically based health and safety issues. He quoted a Vancouver Coastal Health doctor who O'Neill said wrote a letter to Richmond city council saying the "aesthetics of urban landscapes has public health value."

"So we have health benefits associated with the use of cosmetic pesticides," O'Neill said, adding that since Ontario has banned the chemicals, there have been reports of an increase in allergic reactions due to an increase in weeds and pollen.

A flabbergasted Robinson, who said O'Neill's speech of "theatrical histrionics" left her speechless, noted her distrust of Health Canada, which in the past encouraged pregnant women to smoke in their first trimester and to take thalidomide.

She said senior governments have been stalling on the topic of cosmetic pesticide use even though many municipalities across the country have banned them, including nearly 40 in B.C. such as Port Moody (2003), Port Coquitlam (2011), Burnaby (2008), New Westminster (2009) and Pitt Meadows (2011).

The province, which has the power to prohibit the sale of pesticides in retail stores, "has been striking one committee after another committee after another committee," Robinson said, "and at some point they really have to get the message from the ground up."

"We're not going to be able to ban the sale," Coun. Craig Hodge said, "but, if nothing else has come from the work that Coun. Robinson has done over the last years, I think we have raised awareness... I think we're setting an example. We're showing some leadership. I think at the end of the day, citizens are going to make a conscious decision whether they're going to follow the bylaw."

Final adoption of the pesticide use bylaw is expected next month.

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**PESTICIDE BYLAW POINTS**

- Bans the use of non-excluded pesticides to maintain outdoor trees, shrubs, flowers, other ornamental plants or turf on private residential and city land
- Stores that sell pesticides must post information about the bylaw at the point of sale
- The bylaw does not apply to excluded pesticides in the B.C. Integrated Pest Management Regulation; management of a pest that transmits a human or animal disease or affects farming or forestry; buildings or inside buildings; and the use of a biological control to eradicate a pest
- Repeat violators will be fined \$300.

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12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
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