

Pesticide ban may not apply to Dogwood rose garden



A volunteer gardener attends to the Centennial Rose Garden, outside of Dogwood Pavilion in Coquitlam. City council is considering excluding Fraser Pacific Rose Society, which runs the garden with its 800 plants, from the city's proposed pesticide ban, allowing it to occasionally use chemicals.

TRI-CITY NEWS FILE PHOTO

By [Janis Warren - The Tri-City News](#)

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The roses at Coquitlam's Dogwood Pavilion should get a little help now and then with fungicides, the president for the [Fraser Pacific Rose Society](#) (FPRS) said this week.

On Monday, Bev Welsh asked Coquitlam's council-in-committee for an exemption to the city's proposed pesticide ban (council has yet to grant final reading to the bylaw).

Welsh said the ban would affect 21 years of volunteer work at the Centennial Rose Garden, a tourist attraction and wedding venue that boasts 800 plants and 60 varieties of roses. And she argued the society and city workers should be allowed to apply in-season chemicals — or at least until the garden has transitioned to hardier, disease-resistant plants.

"Members of our society labour to create healthy, aesthetically pleasing roses. I urge you to make a wise, balanced choice between science and nature," Welsh told the committee.

Her presentation came after council last month directed city staff to contact the society about the [planned cosmetic pesticide ban](#).

Coun. Linda Reimer moved a motion to have staff prepare a report on "grandfathering" FPRS prior to fourth reading of the bylaw. But Coun. Mae Reid said while the rose garden is extraordinary case, other people have contacted her since the draft ban was introduced and they, too, are seeking exemptions.

Reid suggested the city phase in the ban over the next year while Coun. Terry O'Neill countered the city should expand the bylaw to consider other possible exclusions.

His comments annoyed Coun. Selina Robinson, who has pushed for a pesticide ban — or discussion about one — since 2009 and has seen her request rejected and delayed for further discussion by city committees.

"I'm comfortable after hearing from the rose society to learn more about what we can do to assist them in making the transition [to hardier plants]," Robinson said. "But to go back to where we were around 'an exemption for this, an exemption for that,' we've been there."

Coun. Craig Hodge said he also wants the pesticide ban to proceed. "I'm new on council and I know this has been debated for quite a while," he said. "I don't want to see this going back around to areas that we've already covered. And I certainly don't want to create the expectation in the community that we're

reviewing the entire bylaw. I think what we're looking for is just a way to deal with a concern as an interim measure."

O'Neill's motion to broaden the bylaw was defeated; instead, council unanimously voted to direct staff to prepare a report on the FPRS' wish for a grandfathering clause.

Municipalities across the country have banned pesticide use, including nearly 40 in B.C. such as Port Moody (in 2003), Port Coquitlam (2011), Burnaby (2008), New Westminster (2009) and Pitt Meadows (2011). Cities do not have the power to prohibit the sale of pesticides in retail stores.

According to the Canadian Cancer Society, scientific research shows people exposed to pesticides are at greater risk for cancer, reproductive problems and neurological illness.

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