


Questions arise on municipal power over pesticides



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STRATFORD - It's unclear whether a change in the provincial municipalities act would be required for town council to ban the use of cosmetic pesticides here.

Approximately 80 individuals from across the province voiced their support for a pesticides ban during a panel at town hall Thursday night.

The four person panel was hosted by Stratford-Kinlock MLA James Aylward and included Erin Taylor, manager of climate change and air management for the province, Roger Gordon, a former dean of science at UPEI, Sharon Labchuk and Stratford resident Maureen Kerr.

The overwhelming message from the crowd was for Stratford to become the first municipality on P.E.I. to enact a ban on the use of cosmetic pesticides, with hopes that other municipalities would follow suit.

However, Erin Taylor, manager of climate change and air management for the province, said Island municipalities currently don't have the authority to create their own pesticide bylaws.

Taylor noted that municipalities in other provinces do have that power.

"If this is something Stratford wants to consider or other residents want to consider, the course of action I would suggest is to talk to your members of legislation," she said. "If, within the Town of Stratford, they want their own bylaw... that requires a change to the municipalities legislation."

That was something that Roger Gordon, a former dean of science at UPEI, didn't agree with.

Gordon cited an article from the David Suzuki Foundation, which referred to a Supreme Court ruling made in 2001.

Gordon said the court ruled any town in Canada can bring in more restrictive regulations to prevent pesticide use in order to protect the interest of its citizens.

"If there is any doubt about this, I would suggest the town take legal advice," he said. "But my reading of this is we do have the ability to be able to do this."

During the meeting, Stratford mayor David Dunphy and Coun. Emile Gallant both said they had previously been told the town doesn't have the power to create its own pesticide bylaws.

However, both said they personally support banning pesticides and would continue to explore the issue.

"As far as I'm aware the province has jurisdiction over pesticides on Prince Edward Island," said Dunphy, adding that the town and Federation of Municipalities have both previously raised the issue to the province. "It is my hope the next municipalities act, which is being drawn up for this fall or next spring, will have something in it that will let municipalities have jurisdiction over cosmetic pesticides."

Many who attended the panel said they would be continuing to organize themselves in an effort to get a ban enacted.