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Stratford on new frontier of banning cosmetic pesticides

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Published on January 14, 2015



© Guardian photo by Mitch MacDonald STRATFORD – Councillors here have found

Maureen Kerr and Roger Gordon, of Pesticide Free P.E.I., read a letter the group received from Municipal Affairs Minister Wes Sheridan detailing the new powers municipalities have in regulating the use of cosmetic pesticides. The two presented the letter and a formal request for Stratford to ban the use of cosmetic pesticides during the town's monthly meeting Wednesday.

themselves on a new frontier of regulating and possibly banning cosmetic pesticides within town boundaries.

A formal request to ban the use of cosmetic pesticides was presented to council by residents representing the group Pesticide Free P.E.I. during Wednesday's monthly meeting.

Spokesperson Roger Gordon read the request asking councillors to ban pesticides before the 2015 "lawn spraying season."

Gordon defined cosmetic pesticides as any which aren't needed to protect human health or grow food.

"A pesticide may have federal registration, but that does not mean it is safe," said Gordon, who also pointed to health concerns over pesticides.

The request came after provincial amendments to the Charlottetown Area Municipalities Act last month, which now places the responsibility of regulating pesticides on individual municipalities.

Mayor David Dunphy, who chairs the town's sustainability committee, said the topic has been an issue for a number of years and that committee would be discussing the request at its next meeting.

When asked, Dunphy didn't indicate whether he could see a complete ban on cosmetic pesticides and said he would leave that up to the committee process.

"I don't want to prejudice the discussions of the committee but there seems to be support out there for it (a ban)," he said. "It's hard to comment in terms of timelines or exactly what it's going to be but we're definitely going to have those discussions."

Dunphy said residents will have a say on those changes and that the committee will meet with Pesticide Free P.E.I. members.

Maureen Kerr, another spokesperson for the group, read a letter from Wes Sheridan during Wednesday's meeting.

The letter was in response to the group's request for clarification on the new municipal powers.

Sheridan described the new amendments as a "positive step forward" and confirmed that municipalities will now regulate "non-domestic" pesticides.

"We were quite encouraged to read that today because it was along the lines of what we were hoping for," said Kerr.

The letter also helped shed some light on how implementing those bylaws may work.

The potential does exist for a local government to prescribe what substances are prohibited, however, it may be more likely that the bylaw will identify what substances are acceptable for use," Sheridan stated in the letter.

That was also the model Gordon suggested, noting the approach is already used by Manitoba and Nova Scotia.

"It allows legislative bodies to create an established list of low risk pesticide products including bio-pesticides," said Gordon. "And (it) carries the advantage that they (council) would not have to keep reviewing new cosmetic pesticides brought onto the market by the ingenuity of manufacturers, anxious to work around a list of banned products."

Dunphy also said that any resolution initially brought forward by the committee may evolve over time.

"We'll deal with it as it is currently and hopefully come to some kind of solution," he said. "We'll work towards perfecting it as we would with any bylaw."