

Summerside ought to stay the course on pesticide bylaw issue

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Letter to the Editor

Will Summerside ever complete its pesticide bylaw? It looked as though it was finally within reach when the bylaw passed its first reading at a January city council meeting. But now it's moved further away again.

*Council and staff have done their homework and laboured over this bylaw a long time. It's a decent bylaw that will offer some protection against the hazards that these pesticides pose to residents, wildlife and the environment. Watering down this bylaw will make it less effective.*Journal Pioneer editorial board

On Tuesday, when the proposed bylaw was back before council, the adoption process was halted when the document was sent back to the city's Governance, Policy and Strategy Committee for further review.

The reason? City staff had some suggested edits, and the owner of a Kensington lawn care company has concerns.

The company's owner, Dan Murphy, made presentations to council before, when councillors were going through the labourious process of drafting the bylaw.

After seeing the draft, he was back to tell council what he doesn't like about it. He doesn't think adding a new product to the city's "allowable" pesticides list should require an amendment to the bylaw. Considering how long it's taking to get the bylaw passed, his concerns that amending it would be long and involved, are valid.

He argued that other Island communities have simply tied their "allowable" lists to any product approved for use by Health Canada.

Trent Williams, the city's horticulturalist, shot back by pointing to products Health Canada previously deemed as safe but are now being reconsidered. He also suggested that some products approved by Health Canada might not be products the city wants used here.

Murphy also doesn't like the fact that he must be certified in integrated pest management (IPM) techniques in order for him to determine whether an infestation meets the threshold to allow some types of pesticide spraying.

IPM protocols force applicators to consider alternative methods of pest control before using pesticides.

The business owner says the cost of this accreditation and auditing is going to make it "unfeasible to engage in the application of insecticides under permit within the city of Summerside," at least for him.

That is unfortunate, but this is not the only company that has to operate under guidelines and regulations and protocols that can be costly.

Coun. Brian McFeely said, “We’ve been very, very, very inclusive.”

As the number of verys in his quote indicates, perhaps the council is going a little overboard in trying to please everyone and trying to include all perspectives.

There’s no pleasing everyone.

Council and staff have done their homework and laboured over this bylaw a long time. It’s a decent bylaw that will offer some protection against the hazards that these pesticides pose to residents, wildlife and the environment.

Watering down this bylaw will make it less effective.

If council keeps taking detours on this road to a pesticide bylaw, it might never reach the destination.