

Eleven permits issued so far under Summerside's new pesticide bylaw

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Published on August 14, 2017



Trent Williams, horticulturalist with the City of Summerside, looks out over the lawn at Credit Union Place. It has now been several months since the city enacted its Cosmetic Pesticide and Integrated Pest Management Bylaw.
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It has been five months since Summerside enacted its Cosmetic Pesticide and Integrated Pest Management Bylaw, but whether it's reduced the amount of lawns sprayed with insecticide is unclear.

The bylaw allows certain chemicals to be used by certified professionals if a damaging insect population has reached certain infestation levels.

The city has issued 11 such permits so far. However, because it didn't previously track how many lawns were using cosmetic pesticide services, it can't say for sure if the numbers are up or down.

Almost all of those permits have been issued to Weed Man P.E.I., a lawn-care company based in Charlottetown.

Dave Thompson, owner of the company, said Friday that he too was unsure if he was doing more or less business in Summerside since the bylaw came into effect.

Overall on P.E.I., he said he has been getting more calls than last year, but wasn't sure if that had translated to more work in Summerside specifically.

He attributed overall increase in calls to this year's dry and hot weather, which is prime condition for chinch bugs, an insect that spreads and destroys lawns quickly.

Despite the lack of empirical data on the subject, Trent Williams, Summerside's horticulturalist, said his observation from interacting with both residents and the lawn care companies is that the bylaw has helped reduce commercial pesticide applications in the city.

It has certainly helped raise the profile of Integrated Pest Management, which is a system of preventative lawn care measures anyone wanting to get a pesticide permit in the city must now be accredited in.

The number of people calling his office looking for alternatives to pesticides has tripled from this time last year. He has nothing else to attribute to that increase.

"I could understand a few more – but it's been a lot."

"I suspect people are still wanting the same result, (but) they just want to be better informed."

From his perspective, Thompson said his company is adjusting to Summerside's new bylaw, though it is costing them more to do business here.

Summerside now charges a \$50 fee to apply for a commercial pesticide permit and there are other associated costs as well, he said.

His company decided not to increase prices for providing service in Summerside for this year, but is going to reevaluate for next summer.

Thompson also said that Summerside's method of granting permits also makes more sense than other communities.

Here his company is trusted to determine when a homeowner has a true infestation, while Charlottetown, for example, sends out a staffer to confirm. He now has to wait, on average, several days before getting a Charlottetown permit, while one in Summerside takes at most two days.

The company is still subject to random inspections in Summerside, he added, so he's still accountable to the city.

"It's a more streamlined process than what other municipalities are following, so it's actually worked quite well," he said.

Williams added that it is still early days for the bylaw and city staff, community members and lawn care companies are still adjusting.

To learn more about Summerside's Cosmetic Pesticide and Integrated Pest Management Bylaw visit: www.summerside.ca/cms/one.aspx?portalId=4499374&pageId=8836666.

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