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Surrey North Delta Leader

## Pesticide rules for Surrey are on the way



Bob Campbell, vice-chair of Surrey's Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC), with his dog Marika and a manual weed puller. Campbell says the EAC has drafted a comprehensive bylaw for restricting pesticide and herbicide use, even though it falls short of a complete ban.

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By [Kevin Diakiw - Surrey North Delta Leader](#)

Published: June 04, 2009 10:00 AM  
Updated: June 04, 2009 2:15 PM

The days of homeowners spraying their lawns and gardens with pesticides may be coming to an end as a bylaw restricting their use is being prepared for Surrey council.

Two municipal committees met last month to hammer out new pesticide and herbicide rules. But the recommendations have at least one member of the city's Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) upset at what he believes is a double standard.

Over the last several months, EAC members spent 16 hours debating a pesticide ban, which they think should restrict the use of chemicals on both private and city-owned land, such as parks.

However, the city's parks committee argued a ban in public green spaces would mean a cost of \$800,000 annually to manually remove weeds and control noxious plants.

"That work would come at the expense of other maintenance at our parks, such as washroom maintenance," the parks committee minutes state. "City staff are concerned... the version of the bylaw being recommended by the EAC would not permit controlling non-invasive pests that can cause an infestation... this bylaw will be tying the hands of the city."

A full ban in parks was not recommended, as the EAC acknowledged the need for the use of pest control chemicals on playing fields.

That infuriated EAC committee member Martin Harcourt, who voted against the recommendations of the bylaw.

"I don't think the public should not be allowed to use pesticides and the city should," Harcourt said Wednesday. "We're way behind, and there's still a huge reluctance on parks to get with it."

Surrey will be one of the last major cities in the Lower Mainland to implement a pesticide bylaw.

Burnaby and Vancouver are described on [www.pesticidefreebc.org](http://www.pesticidefreebc.org) as having "Gold Medal Bylaws."

To earn that award, cities must have pesticide bans on both city-owned property and privately owned lands. Several chemicals considered less toxic are excluded from the ban.

Last year, the Surrey School District discontinued the use of pesticides on any of its properties.

Bob Campbell, vice-chair of Surrey's EAC, said the committee carefully combed over the draft bylaw and closed some sizable loopholes.

Even so, he acknowledges it falls short of a complete ban.

"There are some exceptions to allow people to use certain products in certain dire circumstances. If your house is infested with carpenter ants, you get to use something to kill the carpenter ants," Campbell said.

Aerosol can sprays will be allowed because they are normally used for spot application only.

Also allowed are several natural products sanctioned by the provincial and federal governments, Campbell said.

“What you just can’t do is just blanket your lawn with pesticides,” he said.

Campbell said there could be enforcement problems, but said that’s no reason for inaction.

“We talked about that a lot,” Campbell said.

“It was my opinion that a problem with enforcement does not mean you don’t put a bylaw in place.”

It was felt that once legislation is passed, there will be a good number of people who will want to comply.

“We stuck to our guns, we said this is the bylaw we want to put forward as the environmental committee, and we did,” Campbell said.

“We’re going to defend that at council too.”

Surrey council decided on Monday to have a meeting with parks representatives and the environment committee to find some amicable middle ground.

Coun. Bob Bose, who sits on the EAC, told his council colleagues the committee has arrived at its decision.

“The EAC is not of a mind to compromise,” Bose said. “They want a ban on (the use of) cosmetic pesticides.”

Some businesses are also getting on board. Certain pesticides and herbicides will not be available from Rona after July 1 this year. Home Depot stopped selling them last year.

kdiakiw@surreyleader.com

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