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Surrey North Delta Leader

Pesticide ban on eight-month trial in Surrey



The City of Surrey has decided to ban pesticide use on all civic properties – such as parks – for the next eight months.

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The City of Surrey is planning an eight-month trial of banning pesticides on civic properties.

City staff presented a report to council Monday on "Pesticide Control and Use in the City of Surrey."

It recommends that staff undertake public consultation on a possible ban (which might include privately owned land), launch a public education program, and start a trial period where Surrey uses no pesticides to control invasive

pests on city property.

Surrey has been under increasing pressure from environmental groups, students and its own Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) to stop the cosmetic use of pesticides.

It was from that committee last month that Surrey took some of the harshest criticism for being the last major city not to ban the use of cosmetic chemicals.

Due to health concerns, 13 municipalities across B.C. and 150 across the country have enacted bylaws to ban the use of pesticides for environmental purposes.

“Surrey is one of the last municipalities in the Lower Mainland without such a regulation,” EAC chair Al Schultze told council last month. “I would say the city is a laggard, not a leader in this regard.”

After nearly a year discussing it, the EAC recently presented council with a draft bylaw that would see a ban on pesticides, herbicides and fungicides – except only in the most severe cases where damage to property is imminent.

“If Surrey prides itself in providing its citizens with a healthy environment to live in, a bylaw should be in place,” Schultze said. “Let’s adhere to our new civic motto and have the future live here.”

Mayor Dianne Watts said shortly after the presentation that her “preference would be not to use pesticides and herbicides at all.”

Learning that this city is behind others isn’t easy to hear, said Watts, who notes Surrey has had much bigger things to deal with – such as crime – in recent years.

“The focus has been on issues that took a higher priority,” Watts said. “We’re dealing with this now. And I would suggest that there’s a number of other policies we need to be dealing with, but we’re getting there.”

She said Tuesday she was pleased to see the eight-month trial getting underway.

“I think this is a good step forward,” Watts said.

"And we'll absolutely monitor it."

It's estimated it will cost the city about \$1 million annually to manage weeds without the use of chemicals.

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