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Advocates tout pesticide ban

Backers say Calgary lagging behind other cities when it comes to stopping use of chemically treated lawns

By RENATO GANDIA, SUN MEDIA

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Calgary is lagging behind other major Canadian cities in protecting residents from the cancer-causing toxic, cosmetic pesticides, say advocates.

Evie Rodway of the Canadian Cancer Society and Gideon Forman of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment say it's about time Calgary gets on board with other cities and bans the use of pesticide.

Forman said having beautiful, pesticide-treated lawns are not worth it if people's lives are put in danger.

"More than 150 Canadian municipalities and cities are already protecting their residents with pesticide-free lawns," said Forman.

Ontario and Quebec have already banned use of the toxic materials and four other provinces are in the process of doing the same.

Alberta has a ban on herbicide-fertilizer combination products.

People can be exposed to pesticides by absorption through the skin, inhalation or swallowing, she said.

"Swallowing pesticides or pesticide residue, especially by children, can be very dangerous," said Rodway.

"Children are more likely to crawl and play on grass, putting them at greater risk of exposure to toxic materials."

The health of pets and other animals can also be jeopardized by pesticide-treated lawns.

Forman said there are many safe alternatives to the toxic materials -- all people have to do is ask retailers, most of whom have stopped selling pesticides.

In 2008, city council asked administration to draft a pesticide-use bylaw.

City officials have been meeting with a variety of stakeholder groups, including industry representatives and public advocacy groups.

The city is hosting four public information sessions during September.

Log on to calgary.ca/pesticidebylaw for more information.

RENATO.GANDIA@SUNMEDIA.CA

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