


[Autos](#) | [Careers](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Homes](#)
[SUBSCRIBE](#)


## City pesticide ban would be good for business

By GIDEON FORMAN

Last Updated: 1st November 2009, 2:59am

One of the biggest issues before city council this fall is a proposed bylaw to phase-out lawn and garden pesticides.

Calgarians know some herbicides and insecticides are linked to cancer and birth defects and that Calgary is the largest city in Canada with no bylaw protecting its citizens from these poisons.

But there are a number of other, less familiar, reasons why phasing-out toxic lawn chemicals makes sense.

A Calgary pesticide bylaw will be good for business and employment.

Cities with pesticide bylaws have seen their lawn care industry prosper. In the five years following passage of a pesticide bylaw in Halifax, the number of landscaping and lawn care firms in the city grew 53%, according to Statistics Canada. The number of landscaping and lawn care businesses grew each year in Toronto.

In places like Ontario -- which has comprehensive pesticide restrictions -- reports of business growth come from the industry itself.

Following passage of the province's Cosmetic Pesticide Ban Act in April, one major lawn company said it viewed the ban as an opportunity to expand its base of service.

Another firm said it is gaining new customers from among people who object to pesticides and it expects to hire more staff because non-toxic lawn maintenance is more labour-intensive.

One Toronto-area lawn company offers only pesticide-free programs and has enjoyed a 400% increase in business in the last six months.

Why have lawn firms done well in the new non-toxic climate? Pesticide-free maintenance requires more knowledge of plant and soil ecology, which homeowners sometimes lack -- hence an increased reliance on professionals.

With a pesticide bylaw, Calgary properties will look great.

If the legislation goes ahead, Calgarians will keep their lawns and gardens beautiful the way homeowners do in other cities with pesticide prohibitions.

They'll use effective non-toxic product now available at major retailers. It's never been more convenient.

Top health organizations -- along with Calgarians -- support a pesticide bylaw.

A Calgary pesticide ban is now supported by Canada's most respected health organizations including the Canadian Cancer Society, the Lung Association, the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society of Canada, the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta, the Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta, and the Canadian Pediatric Society (Section on Environmental Health).

As well, polling released by the Cancer Society shows nearly nine of 10 Albertans support pesticide restrictions on private and public land.

If our medical authorities -- along with the vast majority of local citizens -- want a pesticide ban, shouldn't we be listening?

Under a pesticide bylaw, Calgarians are protected from any health threat.

The bylaw would only prohibit non-essential pesticides, i.e., chemicals used to change a property's appearance.

Any time pests (mice, termites, poison ivy, mosquitoes) presented a health threat, pesticides could be employed.

As well, these chemicals could be used on any commercial farming operation. (Protecting commercial agriculture is a health imperative.)

The bylaw will give Calgarians time to adjust.

Every pesticide bylaw in Canada has a phase-in period, allowing citizens and industry to adjust to non-toxic methods. It wouldn't be fair to ask people to make the change overnight.

A reasonable phase-in would be a year -- during which time Calgarians would learn about pesticide-free techniques and products.

Health professionals say phasing-out non-essential pesticides is common sense.

Calgary aldermen should pass a strong bylaw at the earliest opportunity. If we can grow local businesses, protect our rivers and drinking water, and safeguard our children, why would we hesitate?

GIDEON FORMAN IS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF PHYSICIANS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT [WWW.CAPE.CA](http://WWW.CAPE.CA)

Copyright © 2009 Calgary Sun All Rights Reserved