

City's choice: To catch ban bug or kill it

Heather McIntyre

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An outright pesticide ban could turn out to be a pest itself, which is why city administration is seeking an alternative.

Council's transportation and public works committee will look next week at the feasibility of restricting or eliminating the use of pesticides on public and private lawns and gardens.

"We could afford to reduce or eliminate," said Coun. Linda Sloan, "although I know there have been some suggestions from certain (members of) the industry that don't want that to occur."

A city report says an overall ban would be difficult to enforce, result in higher maintenance costs and lead to a decline in green space.

The suggestion is therefore that commonly used pesticides be subject to a higher level of scientific scrutiny. Any products containing any carcinogens would be subject to restriction.

The first bylaw restricting pesticide use passed in Quebec in the early 1990s. The report does indicate there has been some opposition — especially in Calgary, where a fully developed bylaw was put on hold in December 2009.

"If Edmonton can't do it, can't meet that standard, then administration needs to tell us why," said Sloan.

A complete ban would nearly double the \$7.19-million turf-weed management budget, while the screening would cost between \$30,000 and \$100,000.

Metro Edmonton



heather mcintyre/metro

The city is considering a pesticide-restriction bylaw.