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Edmonton's pesticide report draws criticism

Patricia Kozicka, Global News: Saturday, February 19, 2011

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Critics are slamming the findings of a recent report, which encourages Edmonton not to follow in the footsteps of many other Canadian cities that have banned the use of pesticides.

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EDMONTON - With Edmonton still blanketed with mounds of snow, dandelion season may be last thing on people's minds. But a recent report is casting the city's plans for weed control into the spotlight.

The report states that while pesticide restrictions are feasible, banning the chemicals would be difficult to enforce and could lead to a decline in green infrastructure. And when it comes to cost, the city estimates a complete ban would nearly double its weed control budget, from \$7.2 million dollars to \$14.1 million dollars.

However, some experts argue that the decision to not ban pesticides

could end up costing much more in the long run, with humans and the environment paying the ultimate price.

"You need to look at some of the other costs as well," said Locky. "These pesticides and herbicides eventually end up in the water table and our lakes rivers and wetlands.

While the report claims that pesticides have not demonstrated a measurable contribution to human or environmental health, experts vehemently disagree.

"I know there's an overwhelming body of evidence that there are serious health concerns with pesticides," said Dr. Raquel Feroe, an Internal Medicine physician. "There's been a lot of epidemiology studies showing that there's increase associated with non-Hodgkins lymphoma, lymphoma brain cancer, prostate cancer, kidney cancer, childhood leukemias."

Feroe further criticizes the report, saying it didn't come from health professionals or environmentalists. Both she and Locky believe in healthier alternatives to pesticides - like mowing more and using more fertilizer - and would like to see a ban on non-essential use in Edmonton soon.

"I think a ban could do more for public health than I could ever do as a physician treating patients one by one," said Feroe. "I think Council will show the will and hopefully protect the City."

The City's Transportation and Public Works Committee is scheduled to discuss the report on Wednesday.

With files from Linda Nguyen.

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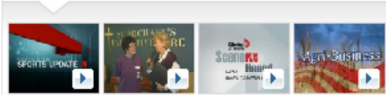
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