

# Report opposes pesticide ban for Edmonton

BY GORDON KENT, EDMONTON JOURNAL FEBRUARY 19, 2011

Edmonton shouldn't join the swarm of Canadian cities banning pesticides because the move could drastically boost weed-control costs without proof of improved human or environmental health, a new report says.

While city staff suggest restrictions are feasible, such as last year's provincewide halt on selling combined fertilizer-herbicide products, they don't want to copy the bans that exist in 172 other Canadian centres.

"These types of pesticide bans are difficult to enforce, lead to considerably higher maintenance costs, lead to a decline in green infrastructure and have not demonstrated a measurable contribution to human or environmental health."

A complete prohibition would require almost doubling the city's \$7.2-million budget for fertilizing and mowing to control weeds.

Eliminating pesticides from water treatment would also make it impossible to hold the International Triathlon Union World Cup in Hawrelak Park's lake.

Without these chemicals, Edmonton would also be at greater risk from invasive weeds and insects, including the emerald ash borer that threatens the city's 81,500 ash trees, the report says.

"There is little evidence of objective measures of bylaw success, such as lowered pesticide use statistics, from questionnaires sent to municipal parks, environmental and bylaw staff with pesticide bans."

But Evie Rodway, a Canadian Cancer Society public policy specialist in Alberta, said her organization still wants Edmonton to act against nonessential pesticide use.

"There's significant and growing evidence linking pesticides to various types of cancer, as well as other health issues like learning disabilities and reproductive issues," she said.

"Non-essential use would be treating what we consider blemishes, or to enhance the cosmetic look of a lawn. . . . Weeds can be treated by hand. There are green options you can purchase in stores."

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