

## Council declines pesticide ban

BY GORDON KENT, EDMONTON JOURNAL FEBRUARY 7, 2012 12:19 PM



City staff say their pest-management program has reduced the need for herbicide treatment in recent years.  
**Photograph by:** Rick MacWilliam, The Journal, File, Edmonton Journal

Councillors turned down calls Monday to ban cosmetic pesticides, opting instead for a report in two years outlining any progress in reducing city use of the chemicals.

"I'm not at this moment convinced on an all-out ban on cosmetic pesticides. I think we need more research," Coun. Kim Krushell said during a community services committee meeting. "We need to continue monitoring and see where we have (reduction) opportunities."

More than a dozen speakers warned of the dangers pesticides can pose to health, animals and the environment, including cancer, genetic mutation and respiratory ailments. They urged city council to follow the steps taken in at least 170 other Canadian municipalities by outlawing the chemicals unless they're needed for health or safety reasons.

"Our argument is, why take the risk when we can have beautiful properties without using these chemicals?" said Gideon Forman, executive director of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment.

"Oftentimes, just soap is very effective in killing insects."

But city staff have said their pest-management program, including mechanical and biological weed control, has cut herbicide treatment to less than 10 per cent of the city's 4,400 hectares of mowed land from roughly half.

A ban could make it hard to control invasive species and boost the budget for annual turf maintenance, without a measurable contribution to environmental or human health, according to an earlier report.

Speakers from the lawn-care industry said the issue has been raised repeatedly in Edmonton, most recently last summer, without much public support.

"Enough is enough. As a taxpayer, a businessman and a longtime resident, it's time to put this issue to bed," Travis Pulfer of Green Oasis said.

Although Coun. Linda Sloan said the issue has been "punted" to the council elected in 2013, Coun. Ama-rjeet Sohi said more time is needed to see the impact of improved practices and possibly more money for park maintenance.

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