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# Edmonton Public Schools weed out herbicide use for lawns



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Metro Edmonton



Ornamental lawns in front of and next to Edmonton Public Schools will no longer have herbicides applied in order to control weeds, such as dandelions.

Heather McIntyre/Metro

The lawns at Edmonton Public Schools are now herbicide-free.

Effective this month, the school board will not be applying herbicides to limit weed growth.

“It’s been discussed at board (meetings), and we’ve received comments from parents and from interested citizens encouraging us to ban the application of herbicides and pesticides that, in their mind, were unnecessary,” John Nicoll, EPSB’s managing director of facilities, said Wednesday.

“We’ve looked at that and decided that ... the application of poisons to control weeds for aesthetic purposes wasn’t appropriate,” he continued. “So we’ve moved to stop using them and to essentially ban, if you wish, the use of herbicides and pesticides.”

Nicoll said although the use was minimal and always done by professionals following federal regulations, there is an argument that no level is safe.

“We certainly haven’t had a lot of complaints,” he said. “(But) we saw this as being an issue ... and if we didn’t need to apply what is a poisonous substance than why should we?”

The new rule applies to ornamental lawns only, as the City of Edmonton looks after sports fields under its integrated pest management strategy.

According to the city’s [website](#)

([http://www.edmonton.ca/environmental/conservation\\_landscaping/commitment-to-the-environment.aspx](http://www.edmonton.ca/environmental/conservation_landscaping/commitment-to-the-environment.aspx)), herbicides are only applied when necessary and on less than 10 per cent of green spaces.

Meanwhile, city councillors turned down an all-out pesticide ban earlier this year, opting to hear an update in two years on ongoing efforts to reduce usage.

### **Pest patrol**

- Fertilizer will still be applied to the lawns, and turf quality and weed growth will be monitored over the summer.
- The district will still employ an exterminator to deal with rodent issues if necessary, in order to avoid exposure to the hanta virus.



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