



Edmonton city council to vote on motion to restrict herbicide use for cosmetic purposes on city property

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Dandelions season is back in Edmonton and they are painting the town yellow. These were captured at 82 st. and Anthony Henday Drive North in Edmonton, Alta. Hugo Sanchez/Special to the Edmonton Sun

The city's consideration of banning herbicide use on public property is putting a thorn in the side of local landscape companies, some arguing that "removing a tool from the toolbox" in weed control will cause irreparable harm to city green spaces.

"It would be a mistake for the city to destroy the beauty of what once was," said Lee Ratcliffe, general manager of Dr. Green Services in Edmonton, one of over two dozen members of the public who spoke during the committee services meeting on Monday.

That being said, supporters of an all-out ban on herbicide use, except in cases where absolutely necessary to control noxious weeds, argued the risks associated with pesticide use outweigh any displeasure over unsightly dandelions.

"The industry is fear mongering about weeds, ignoring the health risks of pesticides," said Sheryl McCumsey, a member of Pesticide Free Edmonton.

Meg Sears, who has a PhD in biochemical engineering and is a member of the Coalition for a Healthy Ottawa, said exposure to pesticides and herbicides has been linked to various maladies including leukemia, breast and prostate cancers, liver and kidney damage, chronic conditions such as asthma, allergies and links to autism and learning disabilities as well as fetal health issues related to neurological and physical development.

"Children are at special risk," warned Gideon Forman, executive director of Physicians for the Environment, who said 9,000 doctors of the Ontario College of Family Physicians have agreed that there is a definite link between pesticide use and cancer.

The city of Edmonton's Integrated Pest Management policy already mandates city landscapers to use a variety of preventative, non-chemical pest management strategies -- such as simply cutting them back -- before using the least toxic pesticides and herbicides only as a last resort.

The program has seen a significant reduction in the amount of herbicides used on city property. Of 4,200 hectares of city owned turf, 90% is herbicide free, and they already maintain a 30 metre buffer zone around schools, playgrounds, daycares and any areas where a community has petitioned against the use.

The new motion, sent to council next week for a vote, would restrict herbicide use for cosmetic purposes on city property, allowing exceptions for controlling weeds near LRT lines for fire safety, controlling weeds in industrial areas, preventing root destruction of sewer systems, controlling algae blooms in storm water systems, in high quality turf areas such as golf greens, in agriculture and in preventing invasive species from encroaching on sensitive ecosystems.

Councillor Ben Henderson was glad to see the lively debate be carried over for an official vote in council, and said that was the whole reason for bringing the motion to the committee in the first place.

"There are times when we probably do need to keep pesticides and herbicides in our arsenal for things where there is a significant risk to the city... but where the usage really is cosmetic it just doesn't seem to me worth the risk if people do get exposed," Henderson said.

In the meantime, David Montgomery, general manager of Green Oasis Services, said some community home owners' associations already unhappy with the level of maintenance along boulevards and in parks in their communities are hiring their company to pick up the slack with pesticides -- and his company is glad to do it.

"When you take these products out of the tool box, you are back to square one," Montgomery said.

The motion will now be presented to city council for a vote.

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WILLIAM H GATHERCOLE & NORAH G - a few seconds ago

McCumsey, Sears, and Forman. WHO ARE THESE SO-CALLED EXPERTS ON PEST CONTROL PRODUCTS ?!?! McCumsey, Sears, and Forman ridiculously imply that their assessment is somehow being withheld from Health Canada and EVERY other regulatory agency in the world. They are mere activists who are paid-for-profit to coerce, intimidate, and terrorize the public by concocting fraudulent lies and imaginary danger in order to recklessly prohibit pest control products. McCumsey, Sears, and Forman have NO recognized expertise, NO training, and NO background in matters concerning pest control products. Sheryl McCumsey is mere student in massage therapy and footwear. <http://wp.me/p1jq40-84i> Meg Sears is mere non-practicing biochemist who was recently terminated from her job as a hospital employee. <http://wp.me/p1jq40-8q7> Gideon Forman, who was also recently terminated from his organization, CAPE, only has expertise in creative writing, as well as starring roles in eco-porn films for a European organization called F--k For Forest. <http://wp.me/P1jq40-29I> <http://wp.me/p1jq40-7bJ> <http://tinyurl.com/m4uez6c> <http://tinyurl.com/kjckx3x> <http://tinyurl.com/nopnjam> McCumsey, Sears, and Forman know nothing about pest control products. Their opinions carry NO credibility and are worthless. They have been utterly and totally discredited ! Should you

trust McCumsey, Sears, and Forman ?!?! NO ! Health Canada, and NOT these activists, has THE ESSENTIAL EXPERTISE on the subject of pest control products.

WILLIAM H GATHERCOLE & NORAH G · 21 minutes ago

With a pesticide ban in Edmonton, green spaces will become pest-infested dangerous garbage dumps. <http://wp.me/P1jq40-44g> <http://wp.me/P1jq40-4z3><http://wp.me/p1jq40-7C4> With a pesticide ban, playing surfaces become thin and yellow, and over-run with weeds and infested with insects, resulting in the dismal destruction of safe turf playing surfaces. By imposing a reckless pesticide ban, Edmonton is placing children at risk ! Pesticide bans cause hazardous slipping and tripping conditions in sports turf, and children become seriously hurt. Pest control products prevent slipping injuries on sports turf. <http://wp.me/P1jq40-2ha> Children need pest-free sports fields to avoid falling and hurting themselves. It is impossible for home-owners or professionals to keep their properties safe and beautiful by using so-called green alternative pesticides and practices. <http://wp.me/P1jq40-24g>

Trytryagain · an hour ago

Herbicides, smoking, bike lanes, photo radar, how in the world did this city make it so far when the previous mayors and council neglected dealing with all these priority a1 issues and stuck to mundane issues like roads, urban planning, all those little things that we are suppose to be getting in return for our taxes.

Ryan · 3 hours ago

"Meg Sears, who has a PhD in biochemical engineering" so not a medical doctor? There's enough thistles in the city already, do we really want to let them make our parks unusable?