



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

BY [CLAIRE THEOBALD](#), EDMONTON SUN

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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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- 35 Comments

**Richard Clarkson** · 42 minutes ago

Finally it must be said that certain individuals not only make absurd allegations about the issues raised in this article and responses to it, but also allege that certain contributors of letters to the editor are being paid for writing their letters. This is false and preposterous!

**Richard Clarkson** · an hour ago

The article citing information about the presence of dioxins in 2,4-D is dated 1995, i.e. is only 20 years old. Moreover, the information does not come from China, India or Argentina, but from the highly respected University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada--hardly backward and barbaric! William H. Gathercole & Norah G have a tendency to jump to the wrong conclusions, especially when 2,4-D, their pet herbicide, is concerned. As I recall the author of "Pesticide Truths" is Mr. Gathercole himself, hardly an independent source. Among the victims of Mr. Gathercole's wrong-headed zeal is IARC (The International Agency for Research on Cancer) with a reputation of being completely independent. IARC is highly cautious not to embrace false yet popular ideologies.

**Richard Clarkson** · 5 hours ago

John Spencer, you certainly are very trusting as far as Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency is concerned. As I already indicated they get their dubious information from the U.S. chemical industry. Moreover, it is not true that 2,4-D was (is) dioxin-free. I quote from a University of Guelph study titled: "2,4-D", p. 4:

(<http://www.uoguelph.ca/GTI/urb...> "Although recently manufactured 2,4-D technical acids have consistently been free of dioxin contamination, the amine and ester products may have measurable levels of some forms of dioxin. According to a study of 2,4-D manufactured in Canada (9), of 26 amine samples tested, 8 were positive. The levels ranged from 5 ppb to nearly 500 ppb. Several different forms of dioxin were present in the different products. All but one of 21 ester samples were positive."

**WILLIAM H GATHERCOLE & NORAH G** Richard Clarkson · 4 hours ago

CLARKSON IS WRONG ! -- It is unthinkable to read that Clarkson ( and other Cottam Ghost-Writers ) are perpetuating FALSE ALLEGATIONS regarding 2,4-D Herbicide. The issue regarding dioxins was fully resolved over 30 years ago, making 2,4-D the best and safest herbicide ever made. 2,4-D that is manufactured by modern western countries of the world is considered to be DIOXIN-FREE, within the limits of detection, which is in the hundreds of parts per billion. Since 1983, governments in Canada and America ensure that 2,4-D western-manufacturers eliminate dioxins from 2,4-D. Today, a production limit of not detectable at 1 part per billion has not been exceeded in Canada and America. In essence, in North America, 2,4-D Herbicide DOES NOT contain harmful dioxins. By contrast, generic third-world 2,4-D from backward and barbaric manufacturer-countries like China, India, and Argentina MAY be contaminated with some forms of dioxin. Unfortunately, the naïve and ill-informed Cottam Ghost-Writers have assumed that ALL manufacturer-countries somehow use the same manufacturing processes. Perhaps some of the Cottam Ghost-Writers originate from China, India, Argentina, or other third-world countries ?!?! For more information about 2,4-D HERBICIDE, go to the web-page and reports on The Pesticide Truths Web-Site. <http://wp.me/p1jq40-6Lq><http://wp.me/P1jq40-1J8>

**Richard Clarkson** · 6 hours ago

Christopher Henderson, you are wrong! I happen to know that IARC (The International Agency for Research on Cancer) is very reluctant to attribute cancer to certain aspects of human lifestyles, including the consumption of some foods and beverages. To link beer, toothpaste, coffee and working night shifts to cancers is utterly ridiculous and you know it. You are trying to be funny and you are not. Your reference to "junk science" shows exactly where you are coming from. When cigarette smoking was first assessed as cancer causing this was deemed "junk science" by pesticide promoters. Today few would dare to suggest that smoking is harmless and that the expression "junk science" is funny. By the way,

biochemical engineering can have a lot to do with pesticides. Biochemistry demands expertise in both biology and chemistry. This is a perfect combination for someone who aspires to being an expert on pesticides. Furthermore, I doubt very much that Forman's group is funded by someone in the United States. I am Canadian observer keeping in touch with pertinent American organizations. They need funding for their own purposes and are reluctant to finance Canadian organizations. I wonder where all this mythology originates?

**WILLIAM H GATHERCOLE & NORAH G** [Richard Clarkson · 4 hours ago](#)

Clarkson ( and Cottam Ghost-Writers ) claim that they are American observers, but deny any funding by Americans ?!?! Really ?!?!

Moreover, an over-educated hospital inspector with a biochem degree, who has since been terminated, cannot possibly know anything about pest control products.

Clarkson ( and Cottam Ghost-Writers ) have conveniently disregarded dozens of scientific studies, specifically genetic toxicity studies, that support the conclusion that pest control products are NOT a human health risk ! EPA, Health Canada, and other science-based regulatory agencies have clearly demonstrated that products like Roundup is LESS TOXIC THAN Aspirin, baking soda, caffeine, cannabis, nicotine, table salt, and Tylenol. Roundup is NO MORE TOXIC THAN ethanol ( an edible beverage constituent in beer, wine, and other intoxicating beverages ), mouthwash ( Listerine ), and Vitamin C. Roundup is scientifically-safe, practically non-toxic, will cause NO harm, will NOT cause cancer, and will NOT cause irreversible damage if consumed orally. The probable lethal dose for a person ingesting the concentrated form of GLYPHOSATE is ONE LITRE, the volume of an entire milk carton. By comparison, drinking SIX LITRES of water, a fluid that is seemingly harmless, can lead to water poisoning or dilutional hyponatremia, which is a potentially fatal disturbance in brain functions. In essence, water is only FIVE TIMES SAFER than 2,4-D or Roundup. Cottam Ghost-Writers know NOTHING about pest control products !

**John Spencer** · [6 hours ago](#)

Meg Sears and Gideon Forman are two well-known anti-pesticide activists based in Ontario. And Meg Sears, just what does a PhD in biochemical engineering have to do with pesticides? Nothing!

And Forman's group, which is funded by US environmental organizations, is anti everything from pipelines to the oil sands and coal. Just because a few radical MD's head this organization, does not give it credibility.

**John Spencer** · 7 hours ago

For goodness sake people, get the terminology right before discussing this and that goes for the Edmonton Sun too! The term 'pesticide' is an overarching word that includes herbicides and insecticides. So 'pesticides and herbicides' should be written as insecticides and herbicides, or simply pesticides.

**smelldacoffee** · 10 hours ago

City of Edmonton has long been the biggest offender of dandelions out of control and then issuing tickets to home owners. I'm all for NO PESTICIDES so long as there is NO TICKETS!

**Richard Clarkson** · 11 hours ago

Something doesn't add up, 2,4-D, the second ingredient in Agent Orange, doesn't contribute to cancer? How did Williams get the information about the EPA ruling? Who told him this-- pesticide promoters? A more credible source--The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC)--maintains otherwise. IARC is a more credible source than the EPA who, like our Pest Management Regulatory Agency, tends to be too much under the chemical industry's influence. Besides, I doubt that the EPA would issue such a ruling. At any rate August 8, 2007, was eight years ago and we now know much more about chemicals and their toxicity than we did in 2007.

**WILLIAM H GATHERCOLE & NORAH G** Richard Clarkson · 4 hours ago

COTTAM GHOST-WRITER IS WRONG --- International Agency for Research on Cancer ( IARC ) is RIDICULOUSLY IMPLYING that its false-evaluation of GLYPHOSATE ( Roundup ) is somehow being withheld from EPA, Health Canada,

and EVERY other science-based regulatory agency in the world. IARC ( a.k.a. World Health Organization ) is NOT a government regulatory agency. It has NO regulatory authority whatsoever. IARC most certainly is NOT a science, NOT a research, and NOT a health organization. Rather, IARC tends to operate as an anti-pesticide & environmental-fanatic organization. Furthermore, IARC's false-evaluations deliberately overstate the risks with arbitrary and selective « cherry picking » of data. IARC has NOT even conducted any original research that reveals any new information. It is clear that IARC has an agenda-driven bias for reasons of mere pesticide-hating fanaticism and politicized science. IARC IS NOT TO BE TRUSTED !

**John Spencer** Richard Clarkson · 7 hours ago

IRAC does hazard assessments, they do not do risk assessments. Coffee has the same IRAC ranking as many other chemicals, not just pesticides.

Agent Orange's problem was dioxin, which is not present in 2,4-D.

Want to know what Health Canada said about 2,4-D? "Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency concluded its re-evaluation of the popular herbicide 2,4-D finding that the herbicide can be used safely according to label directions for a variety of lawn, turf and agricultural applications. Risks to homeowners and their children from contact with treated lawns and turf are not of concern."

Can't be much clearer than that!

**Christopher Henderson** Richard Clarkson · 9 hours ago

IARC classifies it as a possible carcinogen. As it also does for beer, toothpaste, coffee, working night shift and almost anything we touch or consume on a daily basis. It's junk science and dishonest to suggest their rulings carry any weight or credibility as they assess hazard and not risk.

**A\_Williams** · 13 hours ago

On August 8, 2007, the EPA issued a ruling that existing data do not support a link between human cancer and 2,4-D exposure

**Renate2459** · 13 hours ago

I am so happy that this council is moving forward on these issues that affect our health. Reading the literature on the health crisis's in regards to increases in all sorts of cancers, MS, Alzheimer's, Parkinson, Autism and many other health issues that cost our society billions of dollars to treat, it is about time we got used to a few dandelions and tried to protect our health and that of our children. Some people might not like the dandelions but they will be alive much longer and healthier, to complain about them for the rest of their life. Good job councillors. These weed killers and pesticides not only harm us but are killing off birds, bees, butterflies and earthworms. If you like to eat and live then we have to really have a serious look at what our use of these chemicals are doing to our environment.

**WILLIAM H GATHERCOLE & NORAH G** Renate2459 · 27 minutes ago

TO RENATE -- The issues that affect our health have been SUCCESSFULLY RESOLVED ! The residents of the city of Edmonton have NO NEED TO WORRY ! For every pest control product, manufacturers spend 250 MILLION DOLLARS in order to satisfy federal scientific assessments. TWO-HUNDRED SEPARATE ASSESSMENTS are performed by 350 professional experts at Health Canada to ensure that these products federally legal, scientifically safe, and will cause NO harm. Consequently, there is NOT ONE KNOWN INCIDENT OF HARM from the proper use of pest control products used in the urban landscape. Pest control products are scientifically-safe, and will NOT cause harm to people, animals, or the environment. <http://wp.me/p1jq40-7HR> <http://wp.me/P1jq40-2ha><http://wp.me/p1jq40-5ni> CHILDREN ARE NOT AT RISK FROM PEST CONTROL PRODUCTS ! Health Canada DOES consider children's physiology, behaviours, and habits while playing on treated grass, and has concluded that pest control products CAUSE NO HARM and are NO THREAT TO CHILDREN. In fact, there are NO VALID REPORTS of pest control product problems with children. For more information about CHILDREN ARE NOT AT RISK FROM PEST CONTROL PRODUCTS, go to the following links ... <http://wp.me/P1jq40-2ha> <http://wp.me/p1jq40-5ni> Renate seems to forget that DANDELIONS ARE A SIGN THAT OUR CHILDREN ARE IN DANGER ! With fanatical prohibition 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 fanatical prohibition in

Edmonton, playing surfaces will become thin and yellow, and over-run with weeds and infested with insects, resulting in the dismal destruction of safe turf playing surfaces. A fanatical prohibition in Edmonton will cause hazardous slipping and tripping conditions in sports turf, and children become seriously hurt. Pest control products prevent slipping injuries on sports turf and keep our children safe. <http://wp.me/P1jq40-2ha> Children need pest-free sports fields to avoid falling and hurting themselves. In Edmonton, it will be impossible for home-owners or professionals to keep their properties beautiful by using so-called green alternative pesticides and practices. When it comes to prohibition, government officials in Edmonton must start thinking twice about banning pesticides by looking at the experience of those jurisdictions that have suffered the hardship and stunningly exorbitant costs of this #@!!% nonsense !<http://wp.me/P1jq40-43V>  
see more

**Christopher Henderson** [Renate2459](#) · 9 hours ago

Name a city or province with a ban that has health rates improve following a ban?  
Potential correlation is not causation.

**Bo\_Diddly** [Renate2459](#) · 11 hours ago

"a few dandelions"!!! Are you serious? Each year they go untreated they multiply, getting worse and worse every year. Soon there will be no grass. I can only imagine what visitors to our city say when they see all those weeds gone to seed. it looks awful! Edmonton has a bad enough reputation as it is, now we get to show off our weeds too.

**WILLIAM H GATHERCOLE & NORAH G** [Bo\\_Diddly](#) · 21 minutes ago

BO DIDDLEY IS CORRECT ! -- Because of prohibition, neighborhoods are ruined by pests, and green spaces become dangerous and pest-infested garbage dumps. <http://wp.me/P1jq40-44g> <http://wp.me/P1jq40-4z3> Dandelions become the dominant ground cover. So-called green alternative pesticides are stunningly expensive and simply do not work. <http://wp.me/P1jq40-445> Besides, any prohibition is a farce since residents can obtain conventional products either from other provinces, or from across the

border in the United States, or through the Internet.<http://wp.me/p1jq40-4mS> If residents in city of Edmonton decides to impose prohibition, then residents and municipal officials had better get used to crawling on their hand and knees like cotton-pickers for weed-picking and insect-removal.

**Richard Clarkson** · 16 hours ago

William H Gathercole & Norah G are a group of elderly pesticide promoters who send letters about pesticides to various newspapers. They condemn pesticide bylaws suggesting that this is a means for children getting hurt. In fact, children are in a much greater danger from inhaling pesticides applied on the grass of public sports fields, parks and private lawns than they are from tripping on dandelions. (I know because I have a grandson who plays soccer on Ottawa's unsprayed sportsfields and has yet to trip on a dandelion!) I don't know who McCumsey is but I fully trust the expertise of Sears and Forman. On the other hand Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency has no labs of its own and is not to be trusted. They merely pass what they are told onto their uninformed Canadian audiences.

**WILLIAM H GATHERCOLE & NORAH G** · Richard Clarkson · 4 hours ago

**NORAHG RESPONDS AGAINST COTTAM GHOST-WRITERS – CAN THEY BE TRUSTED ?!?!**

Richard Clarkson is an anonymous conduit for prominent pesticide-hating fanatics like Gideon Forman, Meg Sears, Michael Christie, and others. They falsely allege being somehow « familiar with the Ottawa pesticide approval scene », which is not true. These ghost-writers continually attempt to confuse and subvert the issues surrounding pest control products by using statements like « don't trust Health Canada to study pesticides ». For their own vested interest, they want to impose a prohibition against pest control products used in the urban landscape. Most have huge vested interests in perpetuating imaginary dangers about pest control products because they are paid to do so. Cottam ghost-writers have been using the Cottam name as a shield against imminent legal reprisals for fraud and conspiracy. Can Cottam ghost-writers be trusted ?!?! For more information about Cottam Ghost-Writers, go to The Pesticide Truths Web-Site ...<http://wp.me/P1jq40-2V6>

**Christopher Henderson** Richard Clarkson · 9 hours ago

So your one grandchild hasn't hurt themselves so no child has been hurt. Great logic. I broke my ankle as a child playing soccer on a weed infested field. Using the same logic ALL CHILDREN WILL HAVE BROKEN ANKLES. The argument is poor quality turf leads to an increase in injury rates, no guarantees. Weeds are one cause of bad turf. Lets also fertilize more, mow more, seed every year and top dress with new soil. Only the full combo truly works.

**Grizzly Adams** Guest · 12 hours ago

"and EVERY other regulatory agency in the world."...you mean like the EU that already banned this stuff?

**WILLIAM H GATHERCOLE & NORAH G** Grizzly Adams · 18 minutes ago

RESPONDING TO ADAMS -- The European Union DID NOT impose prohibition against pest control products used in the Urban Landscape. The two-year EU Anti-Neonicotinoid PROHIBITION was FALSELY JUSTIFIED as a way to tackle Bee Colony Collapse Disorder. It is perhaps worth pointing out that France PROHIBITED against Neonicotinoid Insecticides in the 1990s, and it has seen NO MARKED REDUCTION in Bee Colony Collapse Disorder. According to the results of the Syngenta FIELD STUDIES conducted in various different regions in France between 2005 and 2010, NEONICOTINOIDS ARE LOW RISK TO BEES.<http://wp.me/p1jq40-7ul> Additionally, Neonicotinoid Insecticides were still being used throughout the EU in 2013 ... and yet, 2013 was the LOWEST European bee loss recorded since 2007<http://tinyurl.com/onshqb9> Furthermore, according to the European Food Safety Authority, the situation on honey bee colony mortality is BETTER THAN PREVIOUSLY EXPECTED. <http://tinyurl.com/pt8wq2g> Consequently, EU Government Officials ARE THINKING TWICE BEFORE FURTHER IMPOSING RECKLESS ANTI-NEONICOTINOID PROHIBITION. Neonicotinoid Insecticides ARE EXPECTED TO BE BACK IN FULL USE BY 2015 for the European Union.<http://tinyurl.com/ly4689y> Not surprisingly, the MAJORITY of European Union ( EU ) nations, like the United Kingdom ( UK ), DO NOT WANT PROHIBITION.

**Grizzly Adams** Guest • 12 hours ago

So what you are saying is you'd rather your kid had cancer than a twisted ankle...My home is safe and beautiful without using pesticides or herbicides...checkmate!

**WILLIAM H GATHERCOLE & NORAH G** Grizzly Adams • 14 minutes ago

TO ADAMS --- Your children WILL NOT get cancer ! PESTICIDES DO NOT CAUSE CANCER. Scientific research shows that, as reported through EPA's and Health Canada's VAST TOXICOLOGY DATABASE, NO HARM WILL OCCUR when pest control products are applied properly in the Urban Landscape. ALL PESTICIDES have been evaluated for their CARCINOGENIC POTENTIAL. <http://wp.me/p1jq40-6yf> Even Canadian Cancer Society's own web-sites STATE REPEATEDLY that scientific research does NOT provide a conclusive link between pest control products and cancer. <http://wp.me/P1jq40-4qC> Scientific research PROVES that pest control products CAUSE NO HARM and DO NOT CAUSE CANCER. Pesticides causing cancer IS A MYTH.

**Foghorn Leghorn** Guest • 18 hours ago

The city does not want to spend the money ... thats is the reason the dandelions are suddenly a flower and a flower of beauty and like Bruce / Caitlyn Jenner deserves the right to be a loved flower !

**WILLIAM H GATHERCOLE & NORAH G** Foghorn Leghorn • 4 hours ago

TO LEGHORN --- We have NO objection to YOUR choice of life-style, which, in this case, is a clear preference to live in an environment that is filled with dangerous and ugly weeds and looks like a garbage dump. However, we DO object to the imposition of YOUR choice on the majority of the Edmonton community that DOES NOT want to live in this manner. Are you also trying to impose sex change operations for all residents of Edmonton ?!?!

**Bo\_Diddly** Foghorn Leghorn · 11 hours ago

I think I'm gonna hurl!

**Trytryagain** · a day 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** · a day 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?

**Trytryagain** Ryan · a day ago

Right and name one thing that couldn't possibly maybe under certain conditions etc. give some one cancer let alone the poor little children.

**Christopher Henderson** Trytryagain · 9 hours ago

Most people with PhD's don't call themselves Dr. unless trying to misrepresent themselves.

**Trytryagain** Christopher Henderson · 8 hours ago

I don't agree with that at all

**Christopher Henderson** Trytryagain · 8 hours ago

That's nice. Most academics use PhD after their names where as medical doctors use the prefix Dr. Or they will say 'a doctor of (fill in the blank discipline)'. If I have my PhD in English literature and work for the Canadian Heart and Stroke Foundation as a spoke person and refer to myself as Dr. Henderson, I would say that that is being deceitful. Given title and employer people are going to assume I have a medical degree. You don't have to agree, but this is what Meg Sears is doing and has been for years. Intent or not, it is the effect that is happening.