

## Vernon Morning Star - News

TEXT

• [0 COMMENTS](#)

- [EMAIL](#)
- [LETTER](#)
- [PRINT](#)
- [FOLLOW](#)
- [SHARE](#)

# Pesticides to continue on school fields

## OTHERS ALSO READ...

### Vernon Morning Star

- [PESTICIDES debate](#)
- [Pesticide approach considered](#)
- [School enrolment continues to drop](#)
- [Pesticide use trimmed](#)
- [Free school bus rides to continue next year](#)

### Okanagan Similkameen

- [City advocating pesticide-free living](#)
- [City of Kelowna advocates pesticide-free lifestyle](#)
- [City balks at pesticide ban](#)
- [City balks at ban on pesticide use](#)

By **Katherine Mortimer - Vernon Morning Star**

Published: **April 22, 2010 6:00 PM**

Pesticide use on school grounds has dropped significantly since 1996, but it's unlikely to be discontinued completely.

"The review process will continue," said chairman Bill Turanski at Tuesday's Vernon School District board meeting. "The use of pesticides is a very emotional and sensitive issue and I would like to commend committee members to ensure everyone has access to accurate information before it drafts a recommendation to the board."

Maintenance supervisor John Thompson brought trustees up-to-date on site maintenance, explaining that a variety of methods are used in order to keep pesticide use to a minimum.

“Turf/grass areas are one of the main areas where we continue to use horticultural practices to maintain these areas,” he said. “Water use is always a challenge. We aerate all of our fields twice a year and at our high-use schools we try to do a third time. It helps the health of the grass and reduces impaction.”

Last year, three sites were top-dressed and over-seeded, with much success at BX elementary school, where the fields were infested with knotweed.

“We use chemical weed control in selective areas only and we continue to work towards reducing the use of herbicides,” said Thompson. “We are quite selective in how we use it, but our ability to fund alternate methods is still a challenge.

“My feeling is that there will always be a certain amount of pesticides we’ll have in our tool bag.”

He added that the district did not use all of its funds set aside for snowplowing, due to the mild winter, so those funds could be transferred to site maintenance.

Tompson said systems are being installed at Vernon secondary, Kidston, Lavington, Harwood and Coldstream elementary schools that are capable of managing water-use based on the weather.

“When VSS is torn down to make way for the new school, we’ll take their system and install it at another school,” he said.

Tompson said there is a program in place to maintain mulch around trees and shrubs to keep weeds down. School parking lots that are covered in gravel and not paved are more prone to weed infestations, and plans are in the works to upgrade those lots.

School playing fields are sprayed in August, when students are not in class, but Thompson said there is sometimes spraying done in parking lots and sidewalk areas throughout the school year.

Tompson said many of the schools’ playing fields were not well-done in the first place, with topsoil sitting on top of clay.

“We want to keep the turf as healthy as possible while dealing with water restrictions. The big issue is that we should try to top-dress all our fields with sand, which seems to be a good medium and I think that would really help, but certainly there is a cost involved.”