

Alberni city council nixes pesticide bylaw

By Alberni Valley News

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Despite its good intentions the has rescinded its pesticide reduction bylaw.

The city will instead follow an annual pest management plan with an eye to reducing pesticide use in the city where it can.

The bylaw was approved in 2009, and sought to protect the environment by restricting the non-essential use of pesticides.

City staff implemented a series of holistic measures as part of their pest management control regime with limited success, Parks and Recreation manager Scott Kenny said.

Manual cultivation was attempted but was found to be too labour intensive, particularly in times of reduced staffing, Kenny said.

Staff also attempted hard surface area burning at baseball fields in 2010. The method succeeded only in burning the tops of weeds but didn't impact the root area.

Applications of a vinegar solution was tried next but again didn't impact the plants' roots. The method was only effective in controlling small weeds and soft plants.

Bark mulching of shrub beds was used with moderate success. The method chokes down weeds while keeping soil moist and cooling roots.

Kenny pointed out the product Fiesta to point out how much a holistic measure costs. The city would have to spend \$32,000 to apply four applications of it on city playing fields per year. In comparison, one application of Killex would cost \$1,600 to apply and would last four years.

The bylaw was also cumbersome and nearly impossible to enforce, Kenny said.

The city is taking its cue from the provincial Report of the Special Committee on Cosmetic Pesticides in rescinding its bylaw.

The committee researched the issue by examining regulatory framework, heard from more than 8,600 participants and looked at bans in other cities.

"...despite the intensity of the arguments in favour of the ban on cosmetic use of pesticides....there is insufficient scientific evidence to support a province-wide ban on pesticides for cosmetic use," an excerpt from the report notes.

"The majority of the committee supports using science based evidence and will not restrict access to products that are approved for safe use in Canada."

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