

April 21, 2010

EX10-12

To: Members,
Executive Committee

Re: Designation of Pesticide-Free Park Spaces

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Queen Elizabeth II Court (City Hall grounds), Gordon Park, and Al Pickard Park be designated as pesticide-free in 2010.
2. That this report be forwarded to the Environment Advisory Committee for information.
3. That item MN09-6 be removed from the List of Outstanding Items for Executive Committee.

CONCLUSION

In recent years, municipalities have established pesticide-free parks in response to requests from citizens or groups concerned about the health and environmental impacts of pesticide use. The Parks & Open Space Department is committed to reducing the overall use of pesticides and is in the process of developing a proposed pesticide-use reduction plan, with the intention of significantly reducing our reliance on herbicides over the next three to five years.

In conclusion, the Administration recommends as a pilot project, three parks be designated pesticide-free in 2010. The long-term cost of sustaining the pesticide-free status will be evaluated and will determine the applicability of this approach to other parks.

BACKGROUND

Councillor Clipsham, at the June 22, 2009 meeting of City Council, brought forward item MN09-6 regarding Biocide Free Parks and Council resolved the following:

“That the Administration provide a report which would identify options to create two biocide-free park spaces (or portion of larger parks) in the City, including costs and benefits of such action and the experience of other Canadian Cities; and

That the report be received by Executive Committee in time for consideration during the 2010 budget discussions.”

The purpose of this report is to respond to Councillor’s Clipsham’s motion and to identify as a pilot project, three parks to be designated pesticide-free in 2010.

The term “pesticide” is typically used to refer to the full range of products which are used to control pests. This includes herbicides (e.g. weed control), insecticides (e.g. cankerworm control), rodenticides (e.g. gopher control), and fungicides (e.g. snow mould control on golf greens).

Pesticides are typically the most efficient, effective, and economic means of controlling pests; however, the concern over the health and environmental impacts of their use is increasing. This has led to a national trend for municipalities to move away from the use of pesticides, and particularly herbicides. Many municipalities, and some provinces, have enacted bylaws banning the use of pesticides for “cosmetic purposes”, in other words, for the removal of blemishes or to enhance appearance.

Typically, the primary focus in establishing a pesticide-free park is on eliminating the use of herbicides to control weeds. Municipalities have adopted different approaches when establishing pesticide-free parks, including:

- no use of weed control products of any kind
- no use of “registered” chemical pesticides
- use of only organically approved products
- use only for emergency exceptions

If no pesticides are used, pest control typically becomes more labour-intensive. Some pesticide-free parks are solely maintained by parks staff, others rely on volunteers to provide labour, usually for hand weeding.

Municipalities that have successfully moved away from using pesticides have typically implemented a Plant Health Care (PHC) approach. A PHC maintenance program for turf is focused on “cultural” practices such as irrigation, fertilization, aeration, overseeding, and topdressing. The City’s sports field maintenance program is essentially a PHC program - herbicides are rarely used on the Class A and B sports fields. A PHC program can be very effective but is also more expensive, due to the additional labour, equipment, and material required.

An analysis of the use of pesticides in Regina parks revealed that there are a number of parks which have not received any pesticide treatments over the past few years. Such parks were deemed to be good candidates for pesticide-free designation, especially those where the turf is currently in a strong and healthy condition. Healthy plants are their own best defense against weed and insect infestations.

The Administration recommends that three parks be designated as being pesticide-free in 2010. They are: Queen Elizabeth II Court (i.e. City Hall grounds); Gordon Park, and Al Pickard Park. Queen Elizabeth II Court (0.6 ha) is centrally located downtown; Gordon Park (1.5 ha) is in the south end of the City on Gordon Road; Al Pickard Park (1.0 ha) is located in the north end.

Parks designated as being pesticide-free in 2010 will not be treated with any pesticides for weed, insect, or gopher control. As is the case in most municipalities, the only exception would be to control an infestation that has health, safety, or significant economic implications. Such infestations are unlikely at these sites; however, should pesticide application be necessary it would be communicated to the public well in advance and after the fact.

The intention is that the pesticide-free parks would be maintained in a manner that ensures that the overall appearance is consistent with other City parks. If necessary, maintenance practices will be adjusted to achieve this goal. The three pesticide-free parks will serve as a pilot for determining the applicability of this approach to other parks.

During the 2010 growing season, the Administration will also monitor and evaluate other park sites to determine the feasibility and sustainability of designating other parks as pesticide-free in 2011. The Administration will also determine the feasibility of engaging volunteers to control pests (e.g. by hand weeding) in pesticide-free parks. The existing Adopt-A-Greenspace program may provide the appropriate mechanism for this approach.

RECOMMENDATION IMPLICATIONS

Budget Implications

There will be minimal to no cost associated with the proposal to establish these three parks as pesticide-free in 2010 therefore, no change to the 2010 Operating Budget is being proposed.

Financial Implications

This proposal can be implemented without any significant additional expenditure in 2010; however, the long term cost of sustaining them as pesticide-free will need to be evaluated.

Environmental Implications

There are no negative environmental implications associated with this proposal.

Strategic Implications

The implementation of this proposal contributes to the vision of being an inclusive and sustainable community. It also contributes to the outcome, in the City of Regina Strategic Plan, of “a responsive, diverse, well-managed open space system...”

Other Implications

There are no other implications.

Accessibility Implications

There are no accessibility implications.

COMMUNICATIONS

Communications Branch will develop a plan to inform residents of the change. Signs will be posted at each park site indicating that the park is pesticide-free and encouraging users to access the City website for more information.

DELEGATED AUTHORITY

The Executive Committee's decision on this matter requires City Council approval.

Respectfully submitted,



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Respectfully submitted,



Bonny Bryant, General Manager
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