

Submission to Regina City Council

Re: Motion to Regulate the Cosmetic Use of Pesticides

Submitted by Phil Johnson

3651 Hill Avenue, Regina SK S4S 0X3

Phone 306-535-4289

Phil.johnson@accesscomm.ca

Philjohnsongardening.com

This submission to Council is in support of the motion to regulate the cosmetic use of pesticides in Regina.

I have owned property in Regina for nearly thirty years. I grow food, ornamental plants, and have a small lawn. It is a pollinator garden, with many native perennials, shrubs and trees, and it is alive with bees, beneficial insects, and birds.

I am a certified Organic Master Gardener, and accredited practitioner member of the Society for Organic Urban Landcare, a national organization. I provide professional gardening advice and assistance to private homeowners. I also advise and assist community groups with their gardening and landcare projects.

A nearly completed project I'm involved with is the renovation and expansion of the Peace Garden at Knox-Metropolitan United Church, in a very visible location along Victoria Avenue in the downtown. This is an ecological garden, comprised of perennials, including many native plants, that are not only beautiful but that also provide food and habitat for pollinators, beneficial insects and birds.

Another project beginning this year is the planning and development of a Food Forest in the existing Art Park on 11th Avenue. This project is under the auspices of the Heritage Community Association in conjunction with Nature Regina and the Every Bite Project.

I do not use pesticides in my own garden, in clients' gardens, or in community-based projects. Pesticides create more harm than good, and simply are not needed.

I support the motion because of the impact of pesticides on both human health and on the environment.

I accept the research now linking various pesticides to disease in humans. Of course, this research is always challenged by the chemical pesticide industry. The most commonly used herbicide in the world (and likely in Regina too) is glyphosate, which is the active ingredient in Roundup. The International Agency for Research on Cancer has classified glyphosate as "probably carcinogenic to humans". Since 2015, in the U.S., there have been 100,000 lawsuits settled against Roundup maker Monsanto (now Bayer) on behalf of people who regularly used Roundup in their employment and who developed cancer, primarily non-Hodgkin lymphoma. Monsanto/Bayer has so far paid out \$11 Billion in

settlements, with another 26,000 lawsuits pending. Nevertheless, the company still refuses to provide warning labels on the Roundup container, though it has stated that it will take the product off the U.S. market in 2023.

I am also concerned about the effects of pesticides on the environment and particularly on our rapidly declining insect and bird populations. Most insects are not annoying mosquitoes and hornets. Most insects are beneficial and actually do most of the world's pest control work, free of charge. We seldom see these predators at work, but they are very effective if we let them do their jobs. This means that we need to stop killing them with insecticides, and stop destroying their habitats with herbicides.

The famous biologist E.O. Wilson said that "if insects were to vanish, the environment would collapse into chaos". Far from being bothersome pests, the vast majority of insects are our allies. They keep pests in check, they pollinate many of our food crops and almost all plants on earth, and they are food for birds. In another famous phrase from E.O. Wilson, insects are "the little things that run the world".

Fortunately, there are successful alternatives to the chemical pesticide model. The City of Regina already uses organically approved bacterial pesticides for mosquitoes and canker worms. However, this method also impacts the food supply and populations of many beneficial insects and birds. Another approach to pest management is to create habitat for beneficial insects and birds in backyards and in parks. This is quite easy to do, since beneficial insects are attracted to colourful flowers, as are we, and to the nectar flowers provide. Insects come for the nectar, birds come for berries and seeds, and stay for the protein meal if they find a few caterpillars or beetles dining on nearby leaves.

What we are asking the City of Regina to do is not radical or impossible. Some 200 municipalities across Canada have already banned the cosmetic use of pesticides. A ban is good for people, and it is good for the environment. Pesticide use in the city may already be declining. Still, homeowners should not be subject to the pesticide drift from the neighbour spraying his lawn or shrubs. Many here in Regina are already in transition, as home gardeners and landcare professionals recognize that a continued pesticide assault on insects, birds and plants is unsustainable if we want a livable planet. We need to save the pollinators, the monarchs, and the birds - we rely on them, and they depend on us. And that is why I support this motion.

Thank you.

Some useful websites:

[Lawsuit-information-center.com](https://www.lawsuitinformationcenter.com) Provides background and updates on the ongoing Roundup lawsuit in the U.S.

[Cwf-fcf.org](https://www.cwf-fcf.org) The Canadian Wildlife Federation website has articles on pesticides and pollinator-friendly gardening.

[Snapinfo.ca](https://www.snapinfo.ca) The Saskatchewan Network for Alternatives to Pesticides website focuses on the effects of pesticides and alternatives to their use.

[Xerces.org/pesticides](https://www.xerces.org/pesticides) Xerces is an organization focused on the conservation and importance of insects.