

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OCTOBER 1, 2001

PESTICIDE FREE PARKS

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Community Services in consultation with the Executive Director of Parks, Buildings and Facilities, and the Manager of Parks Operations recommends:

That an additional amount of \$ 153,200 be added to the 2002 Parks operating budget in order to provide for the implementation of the elimination of pesticides in parks in Wards 4 and 5 over the next two years.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is provide Committee of the Whole with information regarding the cost implications and impact of discontinuing use of pesticides in the City's parks, located within Wards 4 and 5.

Background - Analysis and Options

On September 11, Council passed a resolution "that all Ward 4 and Ward 5 parks be pesticide free by December 2003". Council also directed that staff bring back a report on the feasibility of implementing a pesticide-free policy on all City of Vaughan property by the end of 2004, including the cost implications.

Staff have reviewed the potential impact and the costs to reduce the negative aspects of eliminating pesticide use in Wards 4 and 5 parks. This information is outlined below. Staff have not yet had an opportunity to determine the costs and impacts of a city wide pesticide ban on all city property (boulevards, open spaces and parks). This will be the subject of a future report.

In order to successfully implement pesticide free parks in Vaughan, it is recommended that the following actions be implemented:

- Increase public awareness of the benefits of no pesticides and the alternatives to spraying
- Increase the number of cuts in parks from every 10 to 12 days to every 8 days
- Increase the manual labour for the removal of weeds from shrub beds
- Increase the use of organic fertilizers and alternative weed control applications (non-toxic)

Over the past few years there has been a reduction in the amount of pesticide use throughout the City. Staff have implemented an IPM (Integrated Pest Management) program, which monitors the use of pesticides and experiments with various methods of controlling weeds. Some public education has taken place in the form of a brochure directed at grade four students, mobile signs with seasonal information, publicity surrounding Heatherton Parkette etc. Staff recommend that a new brochure directed at adults be designed to explain the benefits of reducing use of pesticides, and that this brochure be distributed in the Hydro bills.

Healthy park turf is the best way to naturally fight weed growth. This is achieved through more frequent mowing (higher than 2 inches), topdressing twice a year, synthetic fertilizer, aeration (yearly), and the application of corn gluten (pre-emergent weed control).

The cost estimate to implement the recommended actions is:

- Production of 60,000 brochures \$20,000
- One additional parks crew for growing season (including equipment) \$ 97, 200
- Additional labor for shrub bed weed removal \$20,000
- Increased organic fertilizer \$16,000

The total additional funds required in the 2002 Parks budget is \$53,200.

Conclusion

The elimination of pesticides in parks in Wards 4 and 5 can be successfully achieved through public education to achieve a high tolerance level for weeds and additional cultural practices to minimize the weeds.

Attachments

None

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Respectfully submitted,

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