

Pickering wants a ban on pesticides

Tue Feb 20, 2007

By: By Erin Hatfield ehatfield@durhamregion.com

PICKERING -- Jennifer O'Connell said she knew the mere mention that pesticides can cause a low sperm count would get Pickering council's attention.

While discussing a motion instructing staff to draft a bylaw banning pesticides, put forward by Ward 1 Councillor O'Connell and Ward 3 Councillor David Pickles, Coun. O'Connell gave a presentation highlighting the chronic effects of pesticide use.

A myriad of cancers, low birth weight and sterility have been linked to the use of pesticides, according to Coun. O'Connell and the five residents who spoke in support of the ban.

"There is a great body of science to support that it has negative health effects," said Gideon Forman, executive director of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment. "We are not talking about mild problems but deadly things like leukemia."

Non-toxic lawn care can make for extremely beautiful lawns according to Mr. Forman, pointing to Toronto's playing fields, Parliament Hill and the Governor General's house as examples of pesticide-free lawns.

"I appreciate that lawn care businesses have concerns," he said. "But, I say to lawn care companies, the future is pesticide free."

A ban would prohibit the cosmetic use of pesticides on public and private lands with the exception of emergencies, infestations and agricultural use.

Pickering resident Jeff Mojsovski said he wholly supports a ban.

"It is a risk to my children," he said. "My neighbours spraying their lawn, it affects me. I breathe it in."

Also appearing before council was Pickering resident Christine Stokell, a volunteer with the Canadian Cancer Society.

"Appropriate action should be taken to limit the risk to human health," she said. "Personally, I like bending over, it burns a few calories."

Dave Renaud, a General Motors employee who is the president of the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) Durham Region Environmental Council, told how his Maltese dog died of a liver disorder, which the veterinarian attributed to pesticides.

"This stuff has no boundaries," he said. "When you spray it, it can go for miles."

The CAW has been visiting local schools for the past eight years to educate students on the dangers of pesticides.

At its Feb. 19 meeting, council unanimously passed the motion to have staff first investigate pesticide ban bylaws in other municipalities and then draft a Pickering bylaw. The draft will be brought back before the summer recess for council's consideration.

More than 100 municipalities in Ontario have banned the cosmetic use of the chemicals.

"I think the time has come that we need to address this issue," Mayor Dave Ryan said. "But the real issue is that the other levels of government need to take action."

Although Pickering can ban cosmetic use, Mayor Ryan said they can't stop stores from selling the product.

The latter would be up to other levels of government.