

Pesticide bylaw opponents speak out at council

BY JOAN RANSBERRY
Staff Writer

When it comes to weeds, you'll likely need a licence to kill next year in Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Town council put the wheels in

motion to tighten its grip on the use of pesticides Tuesday.

After a one-hour debate, council agreed to have staff, a lawyer and the public review recommendations drafted to control the use of pesticides on

private, non-agricultural lands, including residential properties.

"It starts with education. It starts with baby steps," Ward 2 Councillor Mark Carroll said after the meeting.

"We'll keep working on it. We'll be the first in York Region to have this bylaw. It will take a little more time. Controlling the use of pesticides protects people's health."

"The use of chemicals in our society has just gone too far. People are pouring Drano down their sinks."

Before a final decision is made by a public meeting on pesticides will be held, Mayor Wayne Emmerson said.

If the recommendations becomes a law, as planned, on April 2004, residents of Whitchurch-Stouffville will no longer be able to apply pesticides to their own lawns. Only accredited commercial pesticide applicators will be allowed.

The recommendations in the pro-

posed bylaw came from a report written by the town's environmental committee. The committee worked for a year on the report.

It's been recommended all pesticide applicators obtain a licence from the clerk's department to operate in the town.

Once registered and licenced, applicators will be required to identify all company vehicles with an accreditation logo and while working inside the municipality, readily produce the licence to a bylaw enforcement officer at any time. Violators would be fined.

'This is a political decision based on emotion. This is not based on sound science.'

While Mr. Carroll received strong support from Ward 1 Councillor Steve Pliakes, he was challenged by some councillors and by members of the public, including those in the lawn care business.

Despite the bylaw appearing to hand him more business, Colin Marr, the owner of a lawn care company, accused council of "moving too fast". He said industry standards are not all in place.

Whitchurch-Stouffville has a chance to "be a pioneer" in the matter of pesticide control, said Mr. Pliakes.

He predicted if the municipality approves the bylaw, it will be adopted in other parts of York Region and Ontario. More pesticide control is long over due, said Mr. Pliakes. "I support this 100 per cent," he said.

Ward 5 Councillor Harry Bowes suggested the recommendations be fore council would not hold up legally.

"This is a political decision based on emotion," said Mr. Bowes. "This is not based on sound science." Meanwhile, Ward 6 Councillor Sue Sherban suggested the proposal be reviewed legally.

Pesticide control should be under the umbrella of York Region or the province, said Ward 4 Councillor Cliff Dunkeld.

Having one municipality adopt a pesticide control bylaw and the neighboring municipality not having one would be pointless, he said.

"The wind will blow the weeds from one municipality to the other," he said.

Ward 3 Councillor Peter Dobrich said both the federal and the provincial governments have legislation in place to address pesticides, suggesting local council not get involved.

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