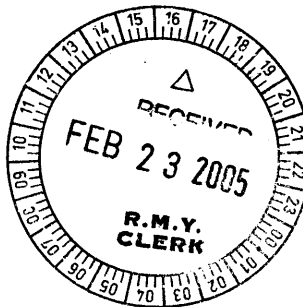




The City Above Toronto



**REGION OF YORK
CLERK'S OFFICE**

FILE No. - P36

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FOR INQUIRIES: PLEASE QUOTE ITEM & REPORT NO.

February 18, 2005

Mr. Denis Kelly, Regional Clerk
Regional Municipality of York
P.O. Box 147
17250 Yonge Street
Newmarket, ON
L3Y 6Z1

Dear Mr. Kelly:

RE: PESTICIDE-FREE POLICY

Attached for your information is **Item 8, Report No. 13**, of the Budget Committee regarding the above-noted matter which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan at its meeting of February 14, 2005.

I would like to draw your attention to Clause 4 of the Committee's recommendation, as follows:

That this recommendation be forwarded to the Region of York Health & EMS Committee and the Environmental Task Force.

Sincerely,

John Leach /srf

J. D. Leach
City Clerk

Attachment:
Extract

JDL/as

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 14, 2005

Item 8, Report No. 13, of the Budget Committee, which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on February 14, 2005.

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PESTICIDE-FREE POLICY

The Budget Committee recommends:

- 1) That the recommendation contained in the following report of the Commissioner of Community Services, dated November 16, 2004, be approved;**
- 2) That the pesticide-free policy be applied city-wide on all publicly owned lands;**
- 3) That the Region of York be requested to provide the same level of service as the City of Vaughan with respect to grass cutting on Regional boulevards;**
- 4) That this recommendation be forwarded to the Region of York Health & EMS Committee and the Environmental Task Force; and**
- 5) That the necessary funds be allocated to the Commissioner of Community Services budget to implement this initiative.**

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Community Services in consultation with the Manager of Parks and Forestry recommends:

That this report be received for information.

Purpose

To respond to Council's request on the cost implications of extending the project citywide, and provide a status update of the pilot project.

Background - Analysis and Options

At the Council meeting of September 22, 2003, Report No. 66, Item 2, Council directed that his matter be referred to a Budget Committee meeting and that staff provide a report on the cost implications of extending the project city wide, the status of the pilot project, and process being used by other municipalities in dealing with the pesticide issue.

Results of the Pilot Project

On October 15, 2001, Council accepted the recommendation that all parks in Wards 4 and 5 are made pesticide-free for two years, and that funds be added to the Operating Budget in order to provide alternative solutions to maintaining no more than 70% weed coverage. In addition, at the Committee of the Whole meeting on May 25, 2004, the project was extended to include Ward 2.

In order to successfully implement the pesticide free parks in Wards 4 and 5, the following actions were implemented:

- 1. Non-chemical weed controls and organic fertilizers were implemented.**
- 2. Manual weed removal, turf maintenance and grass cutting was increased, (from every 12 days to every 8 days).**

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3. Equipment and the associated machine hours were also increased.
4. Weeds were cut more frequently in the spring.
5. Weeds and unwanted grass in hard surfaces were addressed monthly, rather than every two months.
6. Field test of parks in Wards 4 and 5 were conducted including sports fields.
7. Visual and written notes taken at regular intervals.
8. Comments and complaints about the weeds were tracked and documented.
9. Weeds, turf density and age of turf were also monitored and documented.

Notwithstanding that the results show that turf is healthier and the weeds are less noticeable, the concentration of weeds in turf has increased. Furthermore, during drought periods the turf suffers while the weeds flourish. In order to fully report on the success of the initiative more time is required to monitor and study the overall quality of the turf.

Methods Used by other Municipalities

A number of discussions have taken place with other municipalities regarding pesticide issues over the past few years. Various venues for these discussions include: Ontario Parks Association (OPA), Landscape Ontario work shops, IPM Symposium, Turf Grass conference, City of Toronto and York Region Pesticide Reduction Task Force meetings and the Organic Alliance yearly seminars. The sensitivity of dealing with pesticides in the community, as well as the most current alternative methods used, was shared at these sessions.

A survey was conducted with four Municipalities to fully understand their use of pesticides. Municipalities were asked questions related to: pesticide spraying, alternative products, and educational material.

Our research shows that The Town of Markham, The Town of Richmond Hill and the City of Brampton were all working towards decreasing their pesticide use, however, had limited time to fully judge results. For this reason, the three were grouped together. The City of Waterloo on the other hand was well into their program of non-pesticide alternatives. The City of Vaughan is grouped alone because although it shared many similarities with Waterloo, Vaughan was unique in that three wards are pesticide-free. Furthermore, the City of Vaughan interacts with the public through our Vaughan Environmental Action Committee (VEAC).

Categorized below are the Municipalities grouped according to the length of time they have been implementing alternatives as well as their educational program.

GROUP A

Town of Markham
Town of Richmond Hill
City of Brampton

GROUP B

City of Vaughan

GROUP C

City of Waterloo

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GROUP A

- Acceptable level of weed tolerance in park turf and sports fields before they consider spraying range from 30-50%.
- Round –up (non-selective herbicide) is applied to hard surfaces, poison ivy and ragweed.
- Cultural practices, which includes aeration, and overseeding in some parks.
- Occasionally use the aquacide unit, which applies a high volume of hot water to weeds in hard surface areas.
- Markham has been pesticide-free since 2002
- Weeds cut more often during flowering periods.
- Some educational material has been distributed although this is not marketed to all the municipalities and is not aimed specifically at alternative methods.

GROUP B

- Vaughan considers spraying when there is 70% weed coverage.
- Sports fields and playgrounds are not sprayed.
- City of Vaughan has extensive cultural practices on parks and mini soccer fields in the non-pesticide-free wards include fertilization and aeration and over seeding on a bi-yearly basis.
- Ecoclear, a registered natural herbicide, and Corn Glutton, an organic fertilizer that reduces the germination of weed seeds, are used as an alternative method to pesticides on sports fields.
- Weeds in hard surfaces and shrub beds are treated with Ecoclear and the aquacide sprayer unit.
- Vaughan also use other industry alternatives such as: propane weed removal techniques on hard surfaces, nematodes to control white grubs, rototillers in playgrounds, as well as organic fertilization programs.
- Vaughan has developed two brochures: one designed for school age children at the grade four level to bring home to their parents and the other highlights alternative methods to spraying pesticides.

GROUP C

- Poison ivy is the only weed sprayed.
- Discontinued blanket spraying since 1995 and developed an extensive cultural practice program including spot spraying for noxious weeds.
- Turf is maintained by rotating, aerating, over seeding with fertilizing of the parks.
- The aquacide unit is used for removal of weeds in hard surfaces.
- Extensive public education program for example. They host a *Dandelion Festival* every May.
- Established turf, combined with marketing techniques has put the City of Waterloo in the forefront of non-pesticide use.

Cost Implications

The pilot in Wards 2, 4 and 5 cost \$200, 000 or \$70,000 per ward allocated for the following.

- Integrated Pest Management (IPM) was emphasized by healthy turf cultural practices such as: aeration, topdressing, overseeding and fertilizing (both synthetic and organics).
- Additional man-hours and equipment to increase the frequency of cuts from once every 12 days to once every 8 days. This was difficult to achieve with the increasing amount of parks to maintain with the same staffing levels.

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- Increase labour to manually remove weeds in shrub beds and operate the aquacide unit.
- The non-chemical product, Ecoclear was introduced to remove unwanted weeds in hard surfaces and to line soccer fields.
- Nematodes was introduced to deal with white grubs.
- An educational flyer was developed and distributed to new homeowners in Vaughan, at special events and through the Vaughan Environmental Action Committee (VEAC).
- Copies of the Healthy Lawns brochures were distributed to schools on Earth Day.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2007

In keeping with the Vaughan Vision 2007, this initiative is another step towards addressing the environmental concerns of Vaughan residents by looking at alternative means of controlling unwanted pests.

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council and the necessary resources have been allocated.

Conclusion

Staff recommend that the pilot projects in Wards 2, 4 and 5 continue for two additional years in order for staff to fully understand and monitor the effectiveness of the non-pesticide use.

The comparison study between municipalities shows that Vaughan has been pro-active with their approach in dealing with pesticide issues in Ontario. Staff will continue to discuss the pesticide issues with other municipalities and the Region of York in order to ensure the latest techniques are being used and to keep current with pesticide-free alternatives.

Attachments

None

Report prepared by:

Marjie Fraser, Manager of Parks and Forestry, Ext. 6137