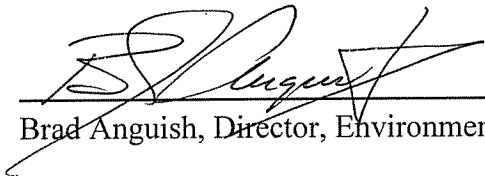




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Halifax Regional Council
December 16, 2003

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: 
Brad Anguish, Director, Environmental Management Services

DATE: November 4, 2003

SUBJECT: Pesticide By-law/ Insecticide Permit Process

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

August 19, 2003, Regional Council meeting - Item 10.3.4(ii)
Pesticide By-law/ Insecticide Permit Process.

BACKGROUND

At the Regional Council meeting of August 19, 2003, Councillor Colwell raised item 10.3.4(ii) Pesticide By-law/ Insecticide Permit Process. The matter was referred to staff along with a number of other related questions from Regional Council members.

Staff presented an Interim Information Report on September 16, 2003, which advised that a series of meetings with a number of the key stakeholders, including the lawn care industry, were ongoing, and concurrently staff would be reviewing this year's data as well as public and industry feedback.

Staff want to not only provide responses and information to the Pesticide By-law related questions from the August 19th Regional Council meeting, but also provide Regional Council with a comprehensive overview of this year's programs and potential opportunities to improve services wherever reasonably possible. This is outlined in the attached 2003 Overview Report.

The fundamental intent of the Pesticide By-law includes public health and environmental protection; therefore, staff believe it is very important to ensure that Regional Council is provided with accurate, current, and relevant information regarding this matter, particularly when staff returns to Regional Council in the near future with specific recommendations regarding the Pesticide By-law.

DISCUSSION

By-law P-800 Respecting the Regulation of Pesticides, Herbicides, and Insecticides appears to be meeting its fundamental intent of human health and environmental protection as presented in the attached 2003 Overview Report.

The companion program of public education and awareness on sustainable landscape maintenance alternatives to pesticides appears to be successful to date, with the vast majority of property owners transitioning to more sustainable landscape maintenance practices. Overall, the general public appears to be embracing Regional Council's leadership and direction towards a more health sustainable community, including pesticide use and risk reduction.

This year the full implementation of the By-law coincided with one of the worst chinch bug infestations in recent years, resulting in just under 3,900 permit requests, over 99% for the eradication of chinch bugs. The large number of permit requests was submitted over a relatively short period of time, and although the overall permit review response was 48 hours on average, staff did experience some bottlenecks in permit processing.

In many cases, the permit requests for chinch bug destruction came from sites with lesser quality and/or insufficient soil depth or other plant and soil health problems. Chinch bug infestations and damage can often be substantially reduced through maintaining healthy soil and plants. The best defence against pests in general is healthy soil and plants, and HRM will continue its public education and awareness programs on sustainable gardening and landscape maintenance.

Staff will be initiating actions to enhance information handling, on-line permit applications, and electronic database information sharing with external partners. These opportunities and benefits are outlined in the attached 2003 Overview Report. Overall, service will improve with the implementation of these measures in 2004.

The local lawn care industry, through their professional association Landscape Nova Scotia, has proposed putting in place an accredited and nationally recognized certification program that could assist HRM in identifying, assessing and issuing permits within the parameters and intent of the Pesticide By-law. There may be potential synergies that would further enhance overall service delivery and further reduce pesticide risk. Discussions with industry and stakeholders are ongoing, and staff recommendations regarding the Pesticide By-law will be brought to Regional Council within the next eight weeks. These recommendations will focus on improving the following areas:

- Industry stewardship (Integrated Pest Management)

- Sustainable gardening
- Communication between HRM offices, site inspectors, residents, and lawn care companies
- Neighbourhood signage and notification process to alert neighbours of when and where pesticide spraying will occur.

The attached 2003 Overview Report discusses what is happening legislatively at the provincial and federal levels, and the potential impacts on local pesticide legislation and related activities. It also identifies a clear trend towards banning pesticide substances and promoting sustainable lawn care practices.

Updates on the federal Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) and ongoing pesticide related re-reviews and reclassification efforts are of particular importance, especially in light of chinch bug infestations and control. The PMRA has advised that the three main registered pesticides for chinch bug control on lawns will be removed from the market shortly for health and environment reasons. This will put an even greater onus on sustainable maintenance practices and pest prevention.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Some of these are noted in the attached 2003 Overview Report, and other budget implications will be specifically detailed in the upcoming Recommendation Report.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

ALTERNATIVES

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

2003 Overview Report

Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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