

MEETING DATE: March 13, 2023

SUBMITTED BY: S. Olson, Director, Engineering & Environment

PREPARED BY: M. Hancharyk, Environment Manager, Engineering & Environment

REPORT TITLE: Pesticide Survey Results

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The pesticide survey from Y Station has been received. Results showed that pesticide applicators do not want to see a cosmetic pesticide ban in the City of Leduc, and 74% of respondents didn't have any concerns with neighbourhood pesticide spraying. There was 60% support for a pesticide-use education campaign. This survey has been provided to LEAB and they will be discussing what to recommend to Council as next steps.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives the March 13, 2023 report titled "Pesticide Survey Results" as information.

BACKGROUND

Neighborhood complaints from residents were brought to LEAB's attention who then looked into different municipalities outside Alberta with pesticide bans. A report was created and brought to Council's attention. Council decided to pursue a third-party survey to help determine further actions. The City of Leduc contracted Y Station to engage with residents as an independent third party to gauge interest in restricting pesticide use in Leduc. Data collection was carried out from October 16 to November 17, 2022.

A general City of Leduc population survey with 400 interviews, was conducted with 207 respondents via telephone and 193 via social media. The final data set was weighted to ensure proper demographic representation. An open link survey provided on the City of Leduc website and social media received 37 responses. A version of the survey was emailed out to commercial property owners. This version of the survey captured 96 responses. To capture special interest groups opinions, 10 in-depth interviews were conducted (5 with representatives from environmental groups and 5 with pesticide applicators within the City).

50% of respondents use pesticides currently on their lawns. Different processes that members of the public were aware of as alternatives to pesticide use included:

- Mechanical methods include manually removing pests and the installation of fencing, barriers, or traps to suppress pest populations.
- Cultural methods include maintaining a healthy and vigorous lawn, choosing pest resistant plants, and adjusting plant spacing to crowd out invasive species.
- Biological methods include releasing ladybugs to control aphid populations.
- Behavior methods include pheromones, sounds and vibrations.
- Other alternatives mentioned included natural household supplies, such as vinegar, salt, dish soap etc.

74% of respondents didn't have any concerns with private pesticide application in Leduc. The initial pursuit of the survey was due to neighbors' complaints of heavy pesticide use. This shows the majority don't share those concerns. In fact, the majority oppose a pesticide ban. There are *currently* no communities in Alberta with a pesticide ban.

COUNCIL INFORMATION ITEM

Participants were asked to rate their level of opposition/support for a potential ban on cosmetic or non-essential pesticide use on residential and commercial property in the City of Leduc using a 1 to 5 scale where 1 meant 'strongly oppose' and 5 meant 'strongly support.' All pesticide applicators provided a rating of 1 or 2 out of 5. Environmental group respondents were mixed, with 3 respondents strongly supporting a ban, 1 respondent strongly opposing, and 2 respondents providing a rating of 3 out of 5.

The main reason for opposition across both groups was the difficulty of enforcement, as residents will be able to travel outside of the City to purchase pesticides. Many participants also noted that the potential ban is too broad, and many people will have different interpretations on what constitutes a 'cosmetic' species versus a noxious or invasive species. Even those who strongly supported a ban on cosmetic pesticides specified that noxious weeds should still be sprayed.

An education campaign was considered as an alternative route and included in the survey. Over 60% of respondents supported an education campaign on proper pesticide use.

NEXT STEPS

Work with LEAB to determine whether to pursue a pesticide-use education campaign. Recommendations will be brought forward by LEAB in their annual update to Council.

ATTACHMENTS

City of Leduc Cosmetic Pesticide Research Presentation PowerPoint

City of Leduc Cosmetic Pesticide In-Depth Interview Report PowerPoint