

# Report to Council



**Date:** September 5, 2012  
**File:** 1840-05  
**To:** City Manager  
**From:** Ian Wilson, Park Services Manager  
**Subject:** Weed Management on City Roadways

---

## **Recommendation:**

THAT Council receive for information the September 5, 2012 report of the Park Services Manager regarding weed management on City roadways.

## **Purpose:**

At the August 20, 2012 regular morning meeting, Council expressed concerns with the amount of weeds growing on City roadways and asked staff to report back with respect to the City of Kelowna's integrated pest management strategy.

## **Background:**

The City of Kelowna was one of the first municipalities in Canada to institute an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program in the early 1980s and the program has continued to evolve since then. In 2005, the IPM process became law under the British Columbia IPM Act.

IPM is "a process for managing pest populations that includes the following elements:

- a) Planning and managing ecosystems to prevent organisms from becoming pests;
- b) Identifying pest problems and potential pest problems;
- c) Monitoring populations of pests and beneficial organisms, damage caused by pests and environmental conditions;
- d) Using injury thresholds in making treatment decisions;
- e) Suppressing pest populations to acceptable levels using strategies based on considerations of:
  - Biological, physical, cultural, mechanical, behavioural and chemical controls in appropriate combinations,
  - Environmental and human health protection; and
- f) Evaluating the effectiveness of pest management treatments" (IPM Act)

In 2009, the City established a pesticide bylaw which regulates cosmetic, non-essential pesticide use on residential properties. Licensed applicators are exempted from the bylaw and may still apply regulated pesticides to public or private lands in Kelowna.

A handwritten signature in the bottom right corner of the page.

The Park Services branch manages pests and weeds in parks and public spaces and since 2010 has also managed roadside vegetation, which includes mowing approximately 936km of ditches and road shoulders (three to four times per year), crack and crevice weed control along 400km of sidewalks and 664km of curb and gutter (once per year) and control of weeds on approximately 12,278m<sup>2</sup> of medians and traffic islands (once per year). The budget for this work is \$186,000. Hard surface medians along Highways 97 and 33 are maintained by the Ministry of Transportation. Property owners are responsible for maintaining adjacent boulevards, which includes keeping shrubs trimmed below 50cm, grass and weeds trimmed no higher than 20cm and removal of noxious weeds or brush.

Weed control along roadways has been primarily accomplished through mechanical means since 2008. This includes the use of mowers, string trimmers and wire brushes for cleaning cracks, with limited spraying of herbicides in areas with heavy weed infestations.

In recent years there have been challenges to providing effective weed control along Kelowna's roadways and sidewalks:

- Spring weather in 2011 and 2012 was unusually cool and wet, creating optimal conditions for rapid weed growth;
- A 2012 budget reduction reduced service levels for crack and crevice weed control, from twice per year to only one time per year. Staff feel that even twice per year is likely too low and the budget reduction had a significant impact in 2012;
- Pesticide options have become limited. In the past, products that provided a long period of residual control (e.g., Simazine) were used but have been removed from the market in Canada. Products such as Roundup (glyphosate) are still available but they only provide a short period of control (approximately six weeks) and must be re-applied several times. Once weeds have been sprayed, they are still unsightly unless cut down or removed;
- Pesticides must not be used within approximately 5m of any catch basins and signage is required as per the City's bylaw;
- Some members of the public and former Councillors have expressed strong opposition to any use of pesticides. The City maintains a pesticide registry for residents who want to be informed when pesticides are sprayed near their property and also has an education program that encourages residents to seek pesticide alternatives;
- In recent tenders, costs have increased for both pesticide and mechanical control options which has stretched existing budgets with no room for flexibility or additional work where needed. These increased costs are likely attributed to the additional costs contractors endure to meet regulations, increased administration and increased pesticide costs;
- In 2012 there were some significant equipment breakdowns which affected the efficiency of roadside mowing crews.

The numbers of weed and pest control service requests received by Park Services have remained relatively stable since 2009 (Fig. 1). In 2011, approximately 46 weed complaints were related to roadways and medians, whereas 42 such complaints have been received so far in 2012.

Although weed complaints overall have not been increasing, staff are concerned about the on-going detrimental impact of weed growth on infrastructure such as asphalt and concrete. Staff are also concerned about the potential impact on Kelowna's reputation as a beautiful City and tourist destination.

Therefore, staff recommend that the service level for crack and crevice weed control be restored back to a minimum of twice per year, and are currently looking at options and gathering estimates from contractors on ways to address this weed problem.

Staff have also contacted the Ministry of Transportation to determine if their service level for medians on Highways 97 and 33 and whether service levels could be increased.

**Internal Circulation:**

Transportation Services  
Communications

**Financial/Budgetary Considerations:**

Increasing the service levels for weed control on roadways will likely have a budgetary impact. Staff will submit any recommended increases for consideration during the normal 2013 budgetary process.

**Considerations not applicable to this report:**

**Legal/Statutory Authority:**

**Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:**

**Existing Policy:**

**Personnel Implications:**

**External Agency/Public Comments:**

**Communications Comments:**


**Alternate Recommendation:**

Submitted by:



I. Wilson, Park Services Manager

Approved for inclusion:



Joe Creron, Director, Civic Operations

cc:  
John Vos, General Manager Community Services

**Attachment**

**Fig. 1. Service requests received by Park Services since 2009, for pest control and weeds. Approximately 27% of the weed complaints in 2012 have been related to roadways.**

