

COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

6. Pursuing Emission-Free Landscaping Equipment in the City of Vancouver

Submitted by: Councillor Carr

WHEREAS

1. The use of landscaping equipment powered by gasoline two-stroke engines, including leaf-blowers, hedge trimmers, line trimmers, chain saws and pole saws, contributes significantly to air pollution, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and noise pollution in the City of Vancouver;
2. Gallon for gallon of gasoline used, the small gasoline engines found in lawn mowers, leaf blowers, and other power equipment pollute at a higher rate than other equipment and vehicles. **One hour** of operation of a commercial leaf blower can emit as much pollution in the form of ROG (reactive organic gases) and NOx (nitrogen oxides) as driving 1,100 miles (1,770 km) in a new passenger vehicle (Source: 2021 California State Legislature Bill AB-1346 *Air Pollution: small off-road engines*);
3. ROG and NOx significantly contribute to ozone and particulate pollution which pose a significant risk to both human and environmental health and contribute to the declining populations of insect species, including pollinator insects like butterflies and bees;
4. Metro Vancouver is seeking public input to June 15, 2021 on its *2021 Clean Air Plan* including reducing regional greenhouse gas emissions by 45% over 2010 levels by 2030 and reducing health-harming air contaminants - see <http://www.metrovancouver.org/services/air-quality/engagement/clean-air-plan/Pages/default.aspx> . Strategy 3.2 Reduce Non-Road Emissions and Support Early Adoption of Zero Emission Non-Road Equipment does not currently include landscaping equipment;
5. Equipment powered by two-stroke engines produce levels of noise varying from 75 to 110 decibels. Sounds above 85 decibels are deemed harmful by the Government of B.C. Furthermore, two-stroke engines often produce noise in the low-frequency range which travel further and penetrate deeper than noise at higher frequency, hence creating wider-spread neighborhood disturbance and greater health hazards to equipment users.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/04/james-fallows-leaf-blower-ban/583210/>
<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-topics/tf4173>
6. Recent advances in battery technology has resulted in the development of competitive battery-powered landscaping equipment equivalent or quasi-equivalent to most gas-powered landscaping equipment. The battery-powered equipment produces much less noise and vibration, no

direct emissions of GHGs or health-harming air contaminants, and is often lighter than its gas-powered counterpart. These technological advances are expected to continue;

7. Many political jurisdictions have banned or are considering banning or phasing out gasoline two-stroke engines including Toronto, Oak Bay, Oakland, Berkley, Los Angeles and the State of California;
8. In 2001 Vancouver City Council voted to ban gas-powered leaf blowers in the city by 2004, however Noise Control Bylaw 6555 only bans the use of leaf blowers in the West End and otherwise restricts the use of leaf blowers to certain times of day and distancing from residences and restricts the allowable equipment to “low noise” leaf blowers - see <https://vancouver.ca/your-government/noise-control-bylaw.aspx> ;
9. On January 14, 2019, the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation passed a resolution titled ‘Renewal Strategy for Landscape Equipment – Towards an Emission-Free Reality’ aimed at phasing out two-stroke engines from its operational activities. By December 2020, 33% of all Park Board equipment was ‘zero-emission’. Full transition is expected to be completed by the end of 2024. A U.B.C. study estimated that if the Park Board switched all of its 2-stroke engines to electric, by year two it would save \$300,000 to \$450,000 per year;
10. In 2019 the Vancouver School Board also passed a motion to develop a transition plan to replace gas-powered landscaping equipment with emission-free alternatives;
11. Vancouver has adopted plans to ban other environmentally egregious items, such as plastic straws and plastic bags. <https://vancouver.ca/news-calendar/city-postpones-fee-on-single-use-cups-and-ban-on-plastic-shopping-bags-to-2022.aspx> ;
12. On March 31, 2021 Council passed a motion initiating a moratorium on any new member motions that would result in new work for the staff involved in issuing development and building permits and business licenses until the end of 2021. Because the work to research, consult on and develop a plan for emissions-free landscaping equipment in the City of Vancouver heavily involves the Development, Buildings and Licensing department, Council cannot direct staff to develop such a plan until the moratorium has ended.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT City Council, in order to provide a helpful forward-looking signal to the public, landscaping companies and other related businesses, affirm the goal of pursuing emissions-free landscaping equipment in the City of Vancouver by 2025.

- B. THAT City Council direct staff to provide input into Metro Vancouver's draft *2021 Clean Air Plan* (deadline for public input is June 15, 2021) urging Metro Vancouver's development of stringent emission regulations and requirements for landscaping equipment

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