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To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"](#)
Date: 12/14/2023 2:49:32 PM
Subject: Council Memo - Towards a Quieter and Emission-Free Landscape Maintenance Equipment Future in Vancouver Council Motion - RTS#
Attachments: Memo to Mayor & Council - Memo - Towards a Quieter and Emission-Free Landscape Maintenance Equipment Future in Vancouver Council Motion.pdf

Dear Mayor and Council,

Please find attached a council memo from PDS that provides an update on Council's direction to staff to report back in 2024 on the goal of phasing out personal and commercial use of gasoline-powered landscape maintenance equipment (RTS# 015016). The key points include:

- The City does not have authority to regulate emissions from landscaping equipment under the Vancouver Charter. The City does have the authority to regulate the use of gas powered landscaping equipment within the Noise Bylaw.
- Research as well as experience from the Park Board's transition from gas-powered landscaping equipment to electric options has shown that the market is not yet ready for a complete prohibition of gas-powered landscaping equipment.
- Staff are working with Metro Vancouver staff on a potential regional regulatory approach to reduce emissions from small non-road engines, including landscaping equipment.
- Staff will report back to Council once there is more clarity on this approach and Vancouver's role.

Best,
Paul

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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

MEMORANDUM

December 13, 2023

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, City Manager
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
Sandra Singh, Deputy City Manager
Katrina Leckovic, City Clerk
Maria Pontikis, Chief Communications Officer, CEC
Teresa Jong, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Mellisa Morphy, Director of Policy, Mayor's Office
Trevor Ford, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Lon LaClaire, General Manger Engineering Services
Steve Jackson, General Manager Parks & Recreation
Andrea Law, General Manager Development, Buildings and Licensing

FROM: Doug Smith, Acting General Manger, Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability

SUBJECT: Towards a Quieter and Emission-Free Landscape Maintenance Equipment
Future in Vancouver Council Motion

RTS #: 015016

This memo provides an update on the "[Towards a Quieter and Emission-Free Landscape Maintenance Equipment Future in Vancouver](#)" Council motion. In 2022, City Council directed staff to report back by 2024 on the goal of phasing out personal and commercial use of gasoline-powered landscape maintenance equipment, giving consideration to a timeframe that is workable for residents and landscape maintenance service providers.

In May 2023, the City engaged with the public to hear feedback on noise-related concerns and perceptions of current regulations through an online survey (described in more detail in an accompanying memo from DBL updating Council on RTS# 15581). Many respondents to the survey commented on the noise from landscaping equipment, and gas-powered leaf blowers specifically, calling for a ban on this type of equipment.

The City does not have authority to regulate emissions from landscaping equipment but the City does have authority to regulate noise under the Vancouver Charter. Gas-powered landscaping equipment operate at a lower sound frequency or pitch than their electric counterparts, which is a more significant public health and public nuisance concern because low-frequency sound waves travel further than high-frequency waves, and are blocked less by walls, doors and

windows. As a result, the City does have the authority to regulate the use of gas-powered leaf blowers, and potentially other gas-powered landscaping equipment, as disturbing noises, and Council could prohibit their use.

However, staff research as well as experience from the Park Board's transition from gas-powered landscaping equipment to electric options has shown that the market is not yet ready for a complete prohibition of gas-powered equipment. While the Park Board has successfully converted 35% of its landscaping equipment to electric options, this work has highlighted challenges with electric equipment, particularly for commercial usage. Challenges have included limited battery-charge life, limitations with charging infrastructure, ergonomic issues, limits with power and torque levels, and delays in procuring equipment. A city-wide prohibition on all gas-powered landscaping equipment, or a specific prohibition on gas-powered leaf blowers, would encounter the same challenges, and likely would be unsuccessful.

In parallel with the exploration of Vancouver's ability to prohibit gas-powered landscaping equipment, City staff are in discussion with Metro Vancouver as they have the delegated authority to regulate discharge of air contaminants in the region and are working to reduce emissions from small non-road engines, which are inclusive of landscaping equipment. Metro Vancouver staff are seeking to collaborate with additional member municipalities and industry stakeholders in developing a region-wide regulatory approach to address those emissions. To inform this work, they have collected preliminary public feedback through an on-line questionnaire and are conducting a technical assessment to understand the feasibility and practicality of regulation.

In early 2024, Metro Vancouver staff anticipate seeking Metro Vancouver Regional District Board direction to initiate public engagement on regulatory proposals for managing emissions from small non-road engines. Regulation of this type can take a year or more to develop, and the outcome and timeline may be subject to subsequent studies, engagement, and the maturity of the available technology.

Public preference is also moving in this direction as the majority of non-commercial (for home use) landscaping equipment available at local retailers such as Home Depot and Canadian Tire are now electric and forecasts point to increasing market share for electric options.

Given the benefits of a regional approach, the current challenges with a full transition to commercial electric landscaping equipment, and the relatively near-term Metro Vancouver timelines, staff are not recommending a City of Vancouver ban on gas-powered landscape equipment at this time. Staff will continue to work with Metro Vancouver staff on a potential collaborative approach to reduce emissions from small non-road engines, including landscaping equipment, across the region. Staff will report back to Council once there is more clarity on this approach and Vancouver's role.

Please send any questions regarding this update to me at doug.smith@vancouver.ca.



Doug Smith
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