

ecojustice



June 28, 2012

Hon. Gord Mackintosh
Room 330 Legislative Building
450 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8

Dear Minister Mackintosh,

We are writing to voice our strong support for the Government of Manitoba's move toward a cosmetic pesticide ban. A robust province-wide ban on cosmetic pesticides would protect the health of present and future generations of Manitobans and prevent harm to the environment and species in Manitoba's many rivers and lakes.

Pesticides used on lawns and gardens pose needless dangers to people, pets and the environment. A precautionary approach is appropriate and necessary. This is why municipalities across the country and six other provinces have already banned the use of non-essential pesticides on lawns, gardens and public parks. Indeed, many of our organizations operate in these jurisdictions and can attest to the benefits that flow from these bans. Doomsday predictions of invading weeds simply have not played out.

As you know, scientific research overwhelmingly shows that exposure to many pesticides poses

serious adverse health risks, including cancer risks among children. For instance, the 2012 Systematic Review of Pesticide Health Effects published in May by the Ontario College of Family Physicians points to evidence of reproductive, neurodevelopmental, and respiratory health outcomes associated with pesticide exposure.

Children face the most significant risks from pesticide exposure because they are closer to the ground and their bodies are still developing. Sensitive ecosystems, such as that of Lake Winnipeg, also face serious risks. In light of these considerations, your Government's move to prevent exposure to potentially harmful substances where possible is laudable.

Manitobans deserve the same protections from needless exposure to risks associated with harmful pesticides that most other Canadians have.

In recent months, those opposed to a pesticide ban in Manitoba have argued that registration by Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency of pesticides that may be impacted by a ban indicates that these substances have undergone strict assessment and are safe for residential use. While Health Canada has registered these pesticides, it does not recommend calling them "safe" and also suggests limiting their use and reducing any unnecessary exposure to them. Provinces such as Manitoba have an important role to play in regulating the sale, use, storage, and disposal of pesticides.

We urge the Government to enact legislation that:

- prohibits the use, sale, and retail display of chemical pesticides for lawns, gardens, and non-agricultural landscaping;
- allows for exemptions to the ban only where necessary to protect public health;
- provides for public education about the ban and alternatives to chemical pesticides; and
- includes effective mechanisms for enforcement.

We are pleased that the Government has released a discussion paper regarding a potential ban on non-essential pesticides entitled "Play it Safe: A Consultation on Cosmetic Lawn Pesticides", and that you are seeking input from the public on this document in the coming months. We look forward to participating in consultations on this important initiative and to working with the Government to implement a science-based, precautionary approach to pesticide management.

Sincerely,

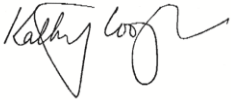


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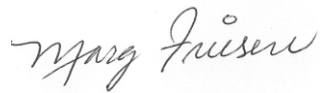
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