

# Gov't backs away from banning lawn pesticides

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MLA Michael Sather can't figure it out.

When a committee formed last year to look at banning cosmetic pesticides on lawns and gardens, he thought Premier Christy Clark favoured the idea.

But Thursday, the Liberal-dominated group nixed the idea, instead saying lawn pesticides should be treated like tobacco, kept out of sight, and available at retail counters only by request.

"I'm mystified by the whole process – unless it was part of Liberals trying to be more Conservative," said Sather, who sat on the legislative committee that studied the issue.

Perhaps the decision has to do with internal division – "just not doing what the premier directed them to do."

Maple Ridge resident Maria Raynolds who led the Campaign for Pesticide Reduction leading to a Maple Ridge ban in [2007](#), doesn't understand either.

"It's just incomprehensible to me after all those submissions ... that all they could come up with is that the government is doing enough ...

"When the evidence all points to the opposite."

Raynolds said it doesn't take much common sense to know there a connection between the poisons put into the environment and people's health. But even if a link has not been proven, there's no need to use cosmetic pesticides. "Everything grows beautifully without them."

She said the decision was "devastating" but added there are "rays of hope."

Pitt Meadows, on March 1, banned lawn and garden pesticides while Abbotsford is considering the same.

Maple Ridge's ban has been in place for five years and seems to be working well, Reynolds said. The ban doesn't prohibit selling pesticides but many garden shops and home supply stores no longer carry them, she added.

Under Maple Ridge's bylaw, anyone who wants to use pesticides or herbicides has to apply for a permit.

Many B.C. municipalities have now banned cosmetic pesticides, she said, adding the initiative is coming from the grass roots up.

"These corporations have so much influence they're just about dictating everything."

Barbara Kaminsky, CEO, Canadian Cancer Society, BC and Yukon, opposed the decision against a ban.

"We waited years for the B.C. government to follow the lead of other provinces and B.C. municipalities, and this is the result? The report was slow in coming and is weak in content. It is disappointing overall," she said in a release.

The groups – which include the Canadian Cancer Society, the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, the Lung Association, the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation and the Public Health Association of BC – had requested strong legislation banning the sale and use of all pesticides for lawns, gardens and non-agricultural landscaping.

The joint release from the Canadian Cancer Society and the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment said that during the two public consultations the B.C. government has conducted (in 2010 and 2011), most of the 8,000 people who responded wanted a ban.

But Kamloops MLA Bill Bennett said in a release there wasn't enough evidence to warrant a ban and that Health Canada didn't recommend it.

"The majority of the committee concluded that we could not justify second guessing the 350 scientists who work at Health Canada," said Bennett.

"There simply is not enough evidence that justifies an outright ban on cosmetic pesticide use. We are not prepared to tell homeowners that they cannot purchase federally-approved domestic-class pesticides or hire a qualified contractor to apply these federally-approved weed and bug control products to their lawn."

Sather though pointed out that Health Canada usually focuses on animal studies while epidemiological studies make connections between cancer and chemical exposure. It's much like the smoking issue where it's not easy to make direct causal link between disease. "But over the years, it became evident that

smoking is linked to cancer."

Sather was disappointed and thought the committee would come to a different conclusion quickly. "Clearly, Bill Bennett dragged it out at great length, all to no reason."

[Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia](#) have all banned cosmetic pesticides.

- The [committee](#) made 17 recommendations including restricting the sale and use of commercial-class pesticides, enhancing the enforcement of existing regulations, strengthening public education, and training related to the use of pesticides. Recommendations were also directed towards retail regulations, the golf industry, and the safe disposal of unwanted pesticides.

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