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Close pesticide loophole, B.C. activists demand

October 3, 2009



Environmentalists are demanding the provincial government close a loophole that allows stores in British Columbia to sell cosmetic pesticides in municipalities that have banned their use.

To make their point the activists with the Western Canada Wilderness Committee walked into a Vancouver Canadian Tire store on Wednesday morning and bought pesticides they say shouldn't be on store shelves.

"I've just come out of the Canadian Tire here on Cambie and I just bought this product Killex," said Ben West, a campaigner with the Wilderness committee.

Killex, a retail product used to kill weeds in gardens and lawns, contains the chemical 2,4-D. It's one of the world's most common herbicides,

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but the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer classifies 2, 4-D as possibly carcinogenic to humans.

Despite being banned for use in Vancouver and at least 17 other B.C. municipalities, the product is still commonly stocked on shelves in Canadian Tire stores and other retailers, alongside several other banned pesticides and without any warning labels.

That's because the municipal bylaws can't control the sale of pesticides, a power only the provincial government has.

Canadian Tire spokeswoman Lisa Gibson said there is nothing wrong with selling Killex.

"While we are aware there is a municipal ban on the use in that area, we do know that we are actually able to sell it, and a number of our customers are actually looking to buy it and use it in cottages or homes that are outside the banned area," Gibson said.

"We really follow the lead of the provincial government and Health Canada, and we take their lead with respect for what is safe for sale in our stores."

Mae Burrows, the executive director of Toxic Free Canada, says her group has been asking the government to implement a provincewide ban for years, as at least two other provinces have already done.

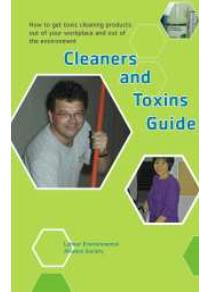
"There are provincial bans in Ontario and Quebec, and B.C. should do the same. ... We're not getting any explanation of why they're not acting," Burrows said.

The call for a ban on cosmetic pesticides sales is also supported by the Union of B.C. Municipalities, which passed its second motion for a province-wide ban on pesticide sales on Wednesday morning.

The Canadian Cancer Society is also calling on the B.C. government for a ban. Kathryn Seely, the manager of public issues for the organization, told CBC News that provincewide action is needed because the chemicals are still being sold.

"There's enough evidence to warrant precaution to protect all children and all families from cosmetic chemical pesticides in British Columbia, now," Seely said.

In the throne speech in August, the B.C. Liberal government said it would start public consultations on the topic.



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B.C. municipalities with pesticide bylaws in place
(as of April 2009):

- Victoria
- Comox
- Courtenay
- Cumberland
- Esquimalt
- Sechelt
- Gibsons
- Whistler
- West Vancouver
- North Vancouver
- Vancouver
- Maple Ridge
- Port Moody
- Burnaby
- New Westminster (comes into effect March 2010)
- Kelowna
- Nelson
- Invermere

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