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Poll backing pesticides panned

By [Matthew Hoekstra - Richmond Review](#)

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Critics are rejecting a new poll that suggests “only a minority” of people want pesticides banned.

Commissioned by an association representing chemical and pesticide producers, [the poll asked 805 B.C. residents about the use of pesticides in various scenarios.](#)

Shannon Coombs, president of the Canadian Consumer Specialty Products Association, said the results show that people favour the use of pesticides around their homes and in green spaces.

“There is a misperception that most residents want a ban,” said Coombs. “The results of this poll clearly reflect it is only a minority of the population...”

The poll comes on the heels of comments from Premier Christy Clark, who said she supports a province-wide ban on cosmetic pesticides—a ban Ontario now has in place. NDP leader Adrian Dix has also proposed such a ban.

Richmond council adopted its pesticide use control bylaw 22 months ago, banning the use of products such as Killx, Roundup and Weed “N” Feed for cosmetic use on residential and city land.

The poll found just one in five respondents opposed a province-wide ban on pesticides, but did find 64 per cent of respondents supported the use of weed control products by homeowners, and 70 per cent supported their use by trained professionals.

“What we found is that they do believe these products have a benefit and they do protect them from insects and weeds and disease,” said Coombs. “When you provide them realistic scenarios about what types of benefits the products do provide, then they actually support the continued use of the products.”

Arzeena Hamir isn't surprised to hear people want to control weeds and insects, but she noted organic pesticides—still permitted under a cosmetic pesticide ban—are proving “extremely effective.”

“My feeling is that this survey is the chemical industry's last ditch attempt to sway those who don't understand that choices are still available under a cosmetic pesticide ban,” said Hamir, co-ordinator of the Richmond Food Security Society.

The success of Richmond's ban has shown that homeowners can easily cope without using synthetic pesticides, she said.



Michelle Li, who fought for a local ban on pesticides, believes Richmond residents have responded “incredibly well” to the ban here, noting some retailers have pulled gardening pesticides from their shelves.

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“What we still need, however, is a provincial ban that prevents local retailers from selling them to homeowners,” said Hamir, noting some local retailers still sell banned pesticides, allowing residents to defy the local bylaw.

“It’s a crazy loophole that often catches homeowners unaware.”

The Canadian Consumer Specialty Products Association poll was administered July 6 and 7 and is considered accurate within 3.4 per cent, 19 times out of 20, according to a report produced by Blacksheep Strategy.

The poll offers some opposing data. It found 72 per cent of respondents said pesticides may not be safe, yet 62 per cent of respondents later said they believed such products are safe if used as directed.

Meanwhile, independently conducted and commissioned polls reviewed by the Canadian Cancer Society show growing support for a pesticide ban. Kathryn Seely, public issues director for the society’s B.C. and Yukon branch, said polls consistently show over 70 per cent support for a province-wide ban on lawn and garden pesticides—an umbrella term which includes insecticides, herbicides and fungicides.

She noted 39 B.C. municipalities, including Richmond, already have a bylaw in place to limit pesticide use, but she said municipalities don’t have the jurisdiction to stop the sale of the products.

“Now we have the situation where we have a patchwork of bylaws around the province, which is problematic in that children are still exposed to these unnecessary chemicals on lawns and gardens, and people can still purchase them.”

Seely said there is “a growing body of evidence” linking pesticides to cancers that include leukemia, non-Hodgkin lymphoma, brain and prostate.

“The scientific evidence is growing, but is still uncertain. So we say why not be safe than sorry?” said Seely.

Michelle Li, who fought for a local ban on pesticides, believes Richmond residents have responded “incredibly well” to the ban here, noting some retailers have pulled gardening pesticides from their shelves.

Said Li: “As long as pesticides and other toxic chemicals are still allowed to be sold and dispersed into our environment, things like our cancer rates will continue grow, our air and water will become ever-more polluted, and we will suffer more loss of wildlife.”

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The problem lies in our society thinking that we need to "protect" ourselves against bugs and weeds. Neither will do any damage to us physically. I have lived without pesticides for years (due to a toxicity report I paid for as I was ill and wanted to know why: seems I have high levels of pesticides in my body, and a poor immune system; once it's found that they do reside in your physicality, you pay closer attention). I have not had any issues with bugs or weeds since! In fact, I have found how to create symbiotic relationships with them and now get paid

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Richard ClarksonPolls conducted by organizations connected to the pesticide industry are not to be trusted. In Ontario, prior to our ban on the use of pesticides for cosmetic purposes, this and other industry...

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Robert Brownicedog504 says it well. The RCMP keeps trying to fix behaviour problems among its current members instead of dismissing the member and recruiting a better one.

to speak on it!

The Corporate protectionism shown here needs to realize that not everyone loves their products. Once links are found to disease, it's game over. I'm just keeping it real...

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EnviroEd 1 day ago

Richard, Health Canada already addressed every single one of your concerns in a lengthy response that is posted at: <http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/inter...>. There is no truth to your claims. Michelle Li should get her facts straight as cancer rates are not increasing and have remained steady and in some areas have actually decreased. No, there is not a cancer epidemic out there! Yes, our population is getting older and as we get older there is a greater risk of getting cancer, that is a reality. But pesticides are not the cause. It can be attributed to our diets, lack of exercise, smoking, drinking and just plain old genetics. Many of these products have been around for over 50 years. They have been tested and re-tested many times over. Not just by Canada's PMRA, but by health authorities all over the world. So what is it, a global conspiracy? I think not. Thanks to modern day chemistry we have a much better quality of life and are living longer. This attack against synthetic pesticides is unfounded. Keep in mind the green alternatives must go through the same regulatory process as their conventional counterparts. So we are to trust the PMRA that the "green" alternative products are safe but not the conventional or synthetics ones? That makes no sense what so ever. And one or two epidemiology studies is not what good science is based on, it is a combination of all relevant studies including toxicology. And where is this "growing body of evidence" that the C.C.S keeps referring too? Easy to make claims if you don't have to back them up. I do agree herbicides should not be used unnecessarily the difference is those who oppose their use believe they have no place at all. If I want to protect my landscape, in which I have invested thousands of dollars, by the judicious use of a registered and approved herbicide, weather it be synthetic or not that to me is not unreasonable or unnecessary.

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Richard Clarkson 2 days ago

Polls conducted by organizations connected to the pesticide industry are not to be trusted. In Ontario, prior to our ban on the use of pesticides for cosmetic purposes, this and other industry lobbies made similar preposterous claims. These organizations mislead laymen that pesticides are safe when used as directed, as maintained by Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA), which is not to be trusted as well. The PMRA registers pesticides on the basis of industry-provided, toxicological (rodent) data. Rodents such as rats have detoxification genes missing in humans. Moreover, inconvenient studies are routinely withheld from the PMRA by the pesticide industry. The PMRA is notoriously weak in examining epidemiological (human) studies. Ontario lawns, including mine, are doing just fine without the use of these toxic poisons. Our waterways now have a significantly lower content of chemicals. Herbicides such as 2,4-D are linked to child and adult cancer, endocrine system disruption, neurological and immune systems damage, Parkinson's, diabetes, asthma, and behavioural and learning disabilities. Much of the applied herbicides consists of secret, allegedly "inert" additives. What is officially tested is but a very small portion of the final product. Moreover, common combinations such as PAR III--consisting of 2,4-D, mecoprop and dicamba--are not tested as such, even though a synergistic (reinforcing) effect is suspected.

Richard Clarkson is exasperated: he says he already has an account and Disqus is messing around with his password!

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