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Health, environmental groups call for B.C. pesticide ban

By [Ryan Flaherty - Oak Bay News](#)
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A coalition of 22 health and environmental groups is calling on the provincial government to implement a provincewide ban on pesticides for cosmetic use.

The challenge was issued in the midst of a government-led public consultation on the subject, which wraps up Friday (Dec. 16).

The group, which includes such organizations as the Canadian Cancer Society, David Suzuki Foundation, Greenpeace and the Public Health Association of B.C., says the province needs to act fast to protect the health of its citizens, especially children.

"There are a number of municipalities – now 39 – that have adopted pesticide bylaws, but this doesn't protect all British Columbia children from the unnecessary effects of these chemicals," said Kathryn Seely, public issues director with the Canadian Cancer Society, B.C. & Yukon division.

Those effects can be very serious, even deadly, said Gideon Forman, the executive director of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, a Toronto-based group with more than 5,000 members nationwide.

"Science that we've reviewed suggests that kids, in particular, are at a much greater risk for cancer and neurological illness if they're exposed to pesticides," Forman said.

The coalition would like to see legislation put in place that prohibits the use, sale and retail display of chemical pesticides for lawns, gardens and non-agricultural landscaping. It would only provide exemptions in cases where there was a public health issue.

Oak Bay, Victoria and Saanich are among the CRD municipalities with bylaws that target "non-essential" pesticide use. However, without provincial legislation there is no way to regulate the sale of the chemicals, making enforcement difficult.

"It's not impossible, but it'll be that much stronger when they bring in a ban on sales," Forman said.

"In Ontario there was something of a similar situation. About 20 communities in Ontario had municipal bylaws, and they were working reasonably well. But then the province brought in a provincewide ban on use and sale, and we've seen dramatic drops in pesticide concentrations.

"When you can't buy these poisons, you can't use them, and kids are protected."

According to a 2010 poll conducted on behalf of the Canadian Cancer Society, more than 70 per cent of B.C. residents support some kind of provincial legislation restricting the use of pesticides.

If B.C. were to implement a pesticide ban, it would be the first province in Western Canada to do so.

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