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OAK BAY NEWS

Pesticide ban proponents seek public reaction

By Don Descoteau - Oak Bay News

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Cancer society, other health and environmental groups, turn up heat on government

The image on the movie poster is striking: a baby sits serenely in a grassy yard, in front of a sign warning that pesticides had recently been applied to the lawn.

Evidence that pesticides and herbicides used for cosmetic purposes can and are having an effect on human health is presented in the documentary *A Chemical Reaction*, which shows at the University of Victoria on Thursday (Jan. 21, 7 p.m.).

For people promoting a ban of such chemicals for cosmetic uses, the screening of the film here is perfect timing.

"The movie is really a way to create awareness, and to also inspire communities to get in touch with the provincial government and let them know they support the ban," said Nancy Falconer, the Canadian Cancer Society's community action co-ordinator for Vancouver Island.

In conjunction with the showing of the film in B.C., the society last week reiterated its call for the ban, as part of a coalition of 18 organizations that includes the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, West Coast Environmental Law and the Sierra Club of B.C.

While municipalities are able to pass bylaws limiting or banning the use of pesticides for cosmetic uses, banning their sale for such purposes falls to the provincial Ministry of Environment.

Therein lies the crux of the Cancer Society's campaign. It is directing people to its website (www.cancer.ca/bc/advocate), where one can show general support for a ban on the use and sale of cosmetic pesticides in B.C. with an e-mail to Environment Minister Barry Penner.

The province's online consultation process, which ends Feb. 15, is more detailed.

As well as providing information about the current state of pesticide use in B.C., the online discussion paper (go to www.gov.bc.ca/env and click on integrated pest management) outlines what other provinces have done to regulate their use.

The public can then answer up to 20 open-ended questions about potential regulation of the sale and use of pesticides.

In a 2008 Ipsos-Reid survey done for the Cancer Society, three-quarters of respondents supported the idea of provincial legislation to restrict pesticide use, based on concerns over health risks.

Oak Bay Coun. Tara Ney, who has spearheaded efforts to create a pesticide-use bylaw in her municipality, said people in her community are of the same mindset.

"The research is there, the public has been consulted. It's clear people want to be protected from these chemicals," she said.

Oak Bay council has chosen to watch how Saanich deals with the issue before taking steps on a ban. Saanich passed changes last month that will require a permit to use most pesticides as of this spring, but



Jack Falconer, 4, poses on a lawn in a promotion for the Canadian Cancer Society's pesticide-free awareness program.

Photo by Nancy Falconer

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Saanich passed changes last month that will require a permit to use most pesticides as of this spring, but the matter has yet to return to the Oak Bay council table.

"I just feel we've been lagging on this," Ney said. "Maybe as a municipality we could piggyback on the interest in the movie and what the province is attempting to do."

Residents in Oak Bay and elsewhere in the region – three municipalities have created total or partial bans

on the cosmetic use of pesticides – understand there are alternatives to toxic chemicals for pest and weed control, she said.

NDP MLA Rob Fleming (Victoria-Swan Lake), who introduced a private member's bill in the legislature in November that would ban the cosmetic use of pesticides, agreed.

"The alternatives already exist," he said. "There are environmentally benign products out there. (But) this thing is consumer-driven."

editor@oakbaynews.com

Pesticide panel

- Maine-based landscaper and journalist Paul Tukey, producer of *A Chemical Reaction*, will be on hand for a panel discussion after the movie.
- Showtime at the University of Victoria's David Lam Auditorium is 7 p.m. Thursday (Jan. 21).

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