

News Release - Manitoba

April 22, 2014

PROVINCE TO INTRODUCE LEGISLATION THAT WOULD PROTECT CHILDREN FROM SYNTHETIC CHEMICAL LAWN PESTICIDES

First-of-its-kind Legislation in Canada would offer Synthetic Chemical Pesticide-free Zones on School, Daycare, Hospital Grounds: Minister Mackintosh

To mark Earth Day, Conservation and Water Stewardship Minister Gord Mackintosh outlined proposals today that would protect children and reduce their exposure to potentially harmful synthetic chemical pesticides.

“Manitoba families want their children to be safe everywhere they play. This new legislation will ensure it does not matter where they are – at school, home or at daycare – they will be able to play on the grass that is free from potentially harmful chemical pesticides,” said Minister Mackintosh. “We made a commitment to reduce risk to children in yards and on playgrounds. This legislation will take us in that direction. There’s no need to risk our children’s health when there are lower-risk alternatives available. We know Manitobans want the best for their children and will support those options.”

The proposed legislation would not ban pesticides, but it would require the use of lower-risk pesticides used for weed removal on lawns, he added.

“It is not a matter of to spray or not to spray, but rather what you spray on your lawn,” said the minister.

The proposed legislation would set out clear rules for the use of these pesticides as well as establish zones where these products cannot be used.

Under the legislation, only federally approved bio-pesticides or low-risk products would be allowed for use on:

- lawns;
- adjoining sidewalks and patios;
- school grounds, playgrounds and playing fields; and
- health-care institutions and child-care centre grounds.

“Science has shown that people exposed to pesticides are at a greater risk for cancer and neurological illness and the province of Manitoba should be congratulated for taking this step,” said Dr. Debbie Pollock, a Winnipeg family physician and mother. “This will help reduce the number of toxic chemicals in our ecosystem and lead the way for broader pesticide bans across western Canada.”

The minister said the use of pesticides in agriculture and forestry would not be affected by this proposed legislation and there would also be exemptions for certain practices and conditions such as:

- in gardens;
- on golf courses; and
- for efforts to address high-risk noxious weeds, poisonous or invasive plants, or to otherwise protect health and safety where no alternative is available.

“This legislation will have a lasting, positive effect on the health of all Manitobans, just as other provinces with the courage to take this step have seen,” said Gideon Forman, executive director of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment. “The benefits extend well beyond the immediate protection of pets and children to the environment itself, as fewer chemicals will leach and drain their way into provincial rivers, streams and lakes.”

“As a father, community member and a physician, I feel strongly that this new legislation is a very important step toward making our community a safer place. Our children’s health will be significantly improved by lowering the risk of exposure to pesticides on lawns and fields on which they play,” said Dr. Paul Doucet, a Winnipeg physician.

Public consultations conducted last year showed that Manitobans support the idea of increased restrictions on pesticide use, Minister Mackintosh said.

“This feels like a concrete step toward protecting our children from the effects of harmful pesticides. There is definitely something to celebrate this Earth Day. This is important for children today and for future generations as well,” said Adrienne Percy, mother and founder of Concerned Mothers Coalition of Manitoba.

“Pesticides are not only dangerous for ourselves and our kids, but for our pets. Cats and dogs are lower to the ground and can easily ingest chemicals after rolling around on the grass. That’s why this legislation is so important,” said Bill McDonald, CEO, Winnipeg Humane Society.

Federally approved bio-pesticides and lower-risk products are available for sale right now at many Manitoba retail stores. Many stores have already voluntarily moved away from the sale of synthetic chemical pesticides. Manitoba now joins 170 municipalities and six provinces with restrictions on cosmetic pesticides in place.

The legislation is expected to take effect in January 2015, followed by a one-year grace period for homeowners, the minister said.

During this period, the government will work with the key stakeholders and the public to provide education on the upcoming measures. This time will also provide retailers the opportunity to add low-risk products to their shelves in preparation of January 2015, the minister said.

“Congratulations Manitoba for your new pesticide ban. Your children and families will thank you for this, for generations to come,” said Raffi, singer, author and founder of Centre For Child Honouring.

A website will be launched this spring to provide further information on the impact of the new legislation for homeowners and businesses. Information on low-risk pesticides along with other non-chemical options for controlling pests will be made available. The Government of Manitoba will continue to provide information and encourage the use of environmentally preferable techniques for managing pests. Fact sheets and information bulletins will be regularly updated, the minister said, adding the department will work with non-profit organizations to promote environmental awareness and expand community education on alternative lawn-care options.