

Health groups poll Ottawa candidates on pesticide use

Last Updated: Thursday, October 19, 2006 | 1:57 PM ET

[CBC News](#)

Two Canadian health organizations have stepped into Ottawa's municipal election campaign, asking candidates whether residents should be allowed to use pesticides to keep their lawns pretty.

The Canadian Cancer Society and the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE) are sending a questionnaire to all candidates about their views on cosmetic pesticide use and plan to release the results before the Nov. 13 vote.

CAPE executive director Gideon Forman said Ottawa is the only major city in Eastern Canada that does not have a cosmetic pesticide ban.

"Toronto has one, Peterborough has one, London has one, Montreal has one, Halifax has one," Forman told a news conference Thursday morning. "But not Ottawa, so it's 850,000 people who are exposed to some very toxic substances."

Ottawa city council voted last year to continue to allow the use of pesticides for cosmetic purposes, although Mayor Bob Chiarelli was in favour of a ban.

Mayoral candidate Alex Munter has also supported a ban in the past, while another candidate, Larry O'Brien, opposed it.

Cancer society spokesman Jeff Froggett said the groups believe another try at a ban will succeed if the issue is discussed as a health concern.

"It hits home for people, if you're talking about the health of children playing in their backyard, the health of pregnant women," he said.

Dr. Alex MacKenzie, a pediatrician and the director of the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario Research Institute, told the news conference there is evidence that pesticides increase the incidence of illnesses in children, including cancer, and that people will be exposed to more pesticides if they are used when they aren't needed.

"You put them on the lawn, [and] they will go into the water table," he said.

Sue Rosborough, president of the cancer society's Ottawa unit, said the group was reluctant to get involved in the municipal election.

"We are non-partisan and we didn't want to be seen as being partisan," she said.

But she said the pesticide issue had "dropped off the radar screen" and the society felt it was important to bring it back to voters' attention.



Dr. Alex MacKenzie of the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario said lawn pesticides have

been linked to cancer.
(CBC)