



All-party support for pesticide ban: poll

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Support for a complete ban on lawn and garden pesticides is growing across political lines in B.C., according to a new survey prepared for the Canadian Cancer Society.

The survey polled residents in the Port Moody-Coquitlam byelection riding, and shows support for the ban of 71, 70 and 69 per cent respectively among NDP-, Liberal-and Conservative-leaning voters.

"For the first time in B.C. there is all-party support for a ban," said Gideon Forman, executive director of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment. "Such a consensus across political lines is rare. It's an interesting social phenomenon."

With the widespread support, the association, along with the Canadian Cancer Society, is hoping the provincial government will introduce tough regulations that would include a ban on sales of pesticides for cosmetic use.

Although 39 B.C. municipalities have pesticide bans in place, Forman said unless the products are off the shelf, it's hard to get compliance. "What we've seen in other places is that voluntary measures just don't work."

Kathryn Seely, director of public issues for the Canadian Cancer Society, said her organization has long advocated for a provincewide ban on cosmetic pesticide use. "Two-thirds of Metro Vancouver residents and 76 per cent of families with children support the ban," she said.

The Canadian Cancer Society has reported links between childhood and adult cancers and neurological disorders, and exposure to pesticides. Seely said they want the ban to include parks and playgrounds.

Ontario, Quebec and the Maritime provinces all have bans on the sale and use of pesticides for cosmetic purposes. Forman said a substance known as 2, 4-D is the most common agent used to kill weeds in lawns and has been known to affect human health.

"Science shows it's connected with cancer, reproductive problems, birth defects, Parkinson's disease," he said.

Although a ban would not extend to commercial use in areas such as BC Hydro right-of-ways, it could bring a significant drop in the presence of more than 250 chemicals in the environment, added Forman.

He said a year after Ontario began a ban on cosmetic pesticide use in 2009, concentrations of 2, 4-D, dicamba, MCPP, phenoxy herbicides and total insecticides were down - by as much as 94 to 97 per cent in some streams.

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