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Doctor protests against pesticides

By [Barb Brouwer - Salmon Arm Observer](#)
Published: March 12, 2013 3:00 PM
Updated: March 12, 2013 3:24 PM

More than 100 health-care providers say a licence to spray does not protect British Columbians from the harmful effects of toxic lawn and garden pesticides.

Responding to the B.C. government's proposed regulations to allow only licensed individuals to apply lawn and garden pesticides, the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE) last week launched a campaign calling for a provincewide ban on the products.

They say scientific studies show that people exposed to pesticides are at greater risk for cancer and neurological disease.

Children are especially vulnerable and women exposed to pesticides are more likely to have a child with attention deficit disorder and reduced IQ.

Endorsed by the David Suzuki Foundation and Environmental Defence, this campaign marks the first time doctors and nurses have partnered on this issue.

The centrepiece of the campaign is an open letter endorsed by more than 100 of them demanding a ban on the sale and use of lawn and garden pesticides, a letter that is appearing as a major advertisement in newspapers across the province.

"The government suggests its proposed legislation will enhance public safety. We don't agree," say Gideon Forman, executive director of CAPE, and Warren Bell, the organization's founding president, in a joint press release. "Pesticides pose very significant health risks for people and the environment – no matter who sprays them. Poisons don't become benign just because the person using them has been instructed in their use."

Forman and Bell point to Ontario, where a comprehensive prohibition was initiated in 2009 and where the law is working extremely well.

Retailers are now selling non-toxic products and lawn-care firms are making good money offering pesticide-free services.

Some are even creating new jobs because organic landscaping is more labour-intensive than its chemical counterpart, says Bell.

Dr. Warren Bell

Observer file photo

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"Ontario's ban is also proving to be very helpful environmentally," say Bell and Forman, noting provincial research indicates that since implementation of the law, concentrations of lawn pesticides in urban streams dropped dramatically. "In some waterways, for example, the amount of 2,4-D weed-killer was down 94 per cent."

The campaign calls for the province to scrap the bill and legislate a true ban that would require both homeowners and lawn companies to use kid- and pet-friendly, non-toxic products.

Whether or not the Liberals are persuaded by the campaign, NDP Environment Critic Rob Fleming charged the province with ignoring science and an overwhelming desire by B.C. citizens to ban cosmetic pesticides.

Fleming re-introduced legislation in the legislature last Thursday and made a promise to the people of B.C. that if elected May 14, "New Democrats will make the changes parents, physicians, cancer organizations, communities and the Union of B.C. Municipalities are calling for by taking decisive action on this serious issue."

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Jean Cottam

I am very encouraged by this kind of appeals to the citizens of B.C. who deserve better than what they have been offered by the special parliamentary committee of B.C. I am glad that the misunderstanding perpetrated by friends of the chemical lawn care industry that somehow application of pesticides by trained applicators is safer is being unmasked. A trained applicator is less likely to expose himself to the extent an untrained applicator does; but the toxicity of the products remains the same and children especially remain acutely vulnerable. In addition, the toxic chemicals penetrate into neighbours' yards and contaminate drinking water.

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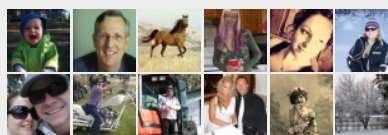
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