

Manitoba bill would allow cosmetic pesticides on lawns, municipal boulevards

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Manitoba homeowners and municipalities could soon more freely use pesticides on their lawns and public areas.

A bill put before the legislature Monday by the Progressive Conservative government proposes an end to a restriction on cosmetic pesticides for private lawns, grassy areas near roadways and some municipal fields and parks.

"We believe that these amendments would allow for flexibility of options ... while also balancing the protection of sensitive areas in our communities," Environment Minister Jeff Wharton said.

The ban was enacted in 2014 on synthetic pesticides but has some exceptions such as agricultural land, golf courses and areas with high-risk noxious weeds or invasive species.

It also has an exemption for personal gardens, which means that people have been able to buy a cosmetic pesticide at a store if they tell the cashier it is for their tomato plants and not their lawns.

The ban was met with opposition from many municipal leaders, who said they had to use less-effective natural sprays on fields, parks and grassy areas near roadways.

"It was about 10 (times more expensive)," Kam Blight, president of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, said Monday. "We're out there applying with more expensive chemicals, and doing repetitious applications."

The bill, if passed, would allow the use of any pesticide approved for cosmetic use by Health Canada in most areas. It would, however, continue to ban

cosmetic pesticides in areas including schools, child-care centres, hospitals, municipal playgrounds and provincial parks.

That list is more extensive than in other Prairie provinces, Wharton said.

The Opposition New Democrats said the bill is a step backward, because it would result in more chemicals going into the ground and waterways.

"Many Manitobans have long advocated for fewer chemicals in our water and on our land and in our air," said NDP environment critic Lisa Naylor.

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