



# Ditching Pesticide Ban Good for Environment

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Manitoba needs to follow good science and not give into ideological environmentalists who value kneejerk emotionalism over positive outcomes.

Case in point is the province's sensible decision to lift a ban at least partially on cosmetic pesticides passed by the previous NDP government back in 2014.

Cosmetic pesticides are pesticides used to control weeds and make private lawns and grassy areas visually appealing.

The current government intended to lift the ban on cosmetic pesticides on private lawns and some other designated municipal parks and fields. Its bill would have continued to ban pesticides around schools, child-care centres, hospitals, municipal playgrounds, and provincial parks.

The Opposition NDP used its legislative privileges to delay the bill until the fall session as they are permitted to do so for a handful of bills.

However, one wonders why the Opposition would not meet the government halfway given that the government's bill was a compromise. So, from an Opposition perspective, they would still be receiving significant concessions from the government for their side.

On the areas where the ban would be lifted, there is still a requirement that pesticides would have to be chemical products approved by Health Canada. Thus, there is a safeguard to ensure any chemicals would be approved by Canada's main health regulator to protect health and environment. Why is the Opposition not trusting the scientists and regulators at Health Canada? Doubtless, they trust them in many other areas when it comes to health of Canadians.

So, why is the Opposition willing to die on this hill? Despite the popularity of cosmetic pesticide bans across Canada, a comprehensive scan of scientific reviews shows the negative link between these pesticides and human health and environment to be very inconclusive and tenuous at best. If

there were significant effects, Health Canada would not even be approving certain products for use on lawns. So, there is no compelling policy rationale for a broad-based ban on cosmetic pesticides. It is a pet cause among ideological environmentalists who often adopt positions that involve placing the precautionary principle on steroids. They have an absolutist position on chemicals that is about emotion not science.

Dying on this hill is a concession to the ideological environmentalist wing of the provincial NDP and is also a concession to a tiny handful of fearful businesses who worry pesticides will affect their livelihood, and to good old-fashioned NIMBYism at its finest. People worried – without empirical data – that what you are doing on your lawn will affect their children. The opposition is also taking advantage of a heightened climate of fear over health engendered by the pandemic policy environment.

As a result of this shotgun marriage of convenience between environmental ideologues, frightened business interests, and scared suburbanites, municipalities across Manitoba are facing skyrocketing costs from using ineffective and pricey chemicals to control noxious weeds and beautify their communities.

In fact, this policy ironically might have unintended consequence of damaging the environment more by forcing municipalities to use ineffective chemical products in much higher quantities to have any effect – causing more environmental hazards than the original bill which would have allowed use of Health Canada-approved chemicals.

But environmentalists and political parties beholden to environmentalists ignore unintended consequences in their policy calculus. They value symbolic politics and emotionalism over good outcomes.

As soon as possible, the Manitoba government must re-introduce the bill and side with sensible, fact-based policy.

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