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Manitobans allowed to use some cosmetic pesticides again

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It is legal once again for Manitobans to use cosmetic pesticides on their lawns.

The Manitoba government has passed legislation amending the Environment Act to give Manitobans the choice to be able to purchase and use cosmetic pesticides on their lawns. The pesticides must already be registered with Health Canada. Environment, Climate and Parks Minister Jeff Wharton says out of an abundance of caution they have also expanded the list of sensitive areas that would be protected from the application of these products.

"Our government is committed to protecting the environment and we rely on science to inform the proper use of cosmetic pesticides. We recognize Health Canada as the foremost expert in this field to evaluate pesticides used in Manitoba," says Wharton. "Pesticides registered with Health Canada go through a rigorous review process that assesses the risk of pesticides to human health, animal health and the environment, and must meet strict health and safety measures. Manitoba will continue to rely on Health Canada to evaluate pesticide products and all pesticides sold and used in Manitoba must be federally registered under the Pest Control Products Act."

According to Wharton, Manitoba still has the strictest pesticide regulations among the prairie provinces by prohibiting cosmetic pesticide use in sensitive areas.

"By expanding the list of sensitive areas, our government continues to protect children and pets, while keeping communities safe and minimizing environmental impact, the Minister adds. "These protected areas include schools, hospitals, child-care centres, provincial parks, designated municipal picnic areas, playgrounds and dog parks."

To understand better the experience of Manitobans with previous cosmetic pesticide restrictions, which were put in place in 2015, the Manitoba government launched a public consultation. More than 60 per cent of respondents indicated restrictions on the sale and usage of pesticides for cosmetic use were too strict and over 70 per cent of respondents wanted restrictions reduced or rescinded.

Municipalities have reported the previous approach added unnecessary costs because of repeated applications. Wharton says Municipalities and other stakeholders asked for greater flexibility to have useable, aesthetic green spaces in communities. The legislation allows the use of all Health Canada-registered cosmetic pesticides in low-risk areas like boulevards, sidewalks, right-of-ways and fairgrounds. Manitobans will also have the ability to apply all pesticides registered with Health Canada on their lawns.

"The Association of Manitoba Municipalities welcomes the Manitoba government's decision to align with federal regulations and rigorous Health Canada review processes," says Kam Blight, President, Association of Manitoba Municipalities. "These legislative changes will allow municipalities to effectively manage weed control programs while mitigating financial pressures on municipal budgets."

Wharton says Health Canada can initiate a special review at any time if and when new research emerges that identifies risks from pesticides where is reasonable grounds to believe that health or environmental risks, or the value of a pesticide are no longer acceptable.

More information on safe pesticide use is available through Health Canada at www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/about-pesticides/use-pesticides-safely.html.