

**MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT
INFORMATION NOTE**

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I. PREPARED FOR: Honourable Barry Penner, Minister of Environment.

II. ISSUE: Update on results of consultation about cosmetic use of pesticides and recommended next steps in preparation for an April 1st Minister's briefing.

III. BACKGROUND:

- The August 25, 2009 Speech from the Throne committed to consult British Columbians on "new statutory protections to further safeguard the environment from cosmetic chemical pesticides."
- A Public Consultation Paper was posted for public comment between December 15, 2009 and February 15, 2010. All comments received until the end of February 2010 were included in a summary report (attachment) and comments continue to be received.
- By the end of February, more than 8,000 responses were received. These responses included:
 - petitions with individual signatures (more than 4,000 signatures);
 - copies of letters or emails sent to Members of the Legislature or the Minister of Environment (about 3,000 individual correspondences);
 - individually signed form or template letters (more than 500); and,
 - responses or submissions specifically addressing the consultation issues and topic areas identified in the consultation paper prepared by the ministry (more than 800).

IV. DISCUSSION:

What we heard

- There were four general types of responses received. In order of least common to most common these were:
 - Anybody can use pesticides safely by following label directions and people should be allowed to use any pesticide for any registered use.
 - Civilization and its industrial processes are irreparably harming our environment. We must end all pesticide use and work towards fixing the system that causes us to rely on pesticides.
 - Pesticides are valuable tools that can be used safely by trained people.
 - Pesticides are likely to cause health problems and it does not make sense to use them unless absolutely necessary.
- All respondents agree that pesticides should not be used unnecessarily. The differences lie in the value judgement of the necessity, for example, health benefits achieved through gardening with the occasional use of pesticides versus environmental benefits of landscaping using only native plants.

- While there was variation in the perception of what areas captured by the term cosmetic use of pesticide, most respondents agreed that it includes outdoor use of pesticide on ornamental plants.
- The greatest concern lies with movement of pesticides from where they were used onto neighbouring properties (which could have health implications) and into the environment.
- There was considerable concern that people do not have enough information to use pesticides safely and that many users do not read or follow product labels.
- People knowledgeable about Integrated Pest Management (IPM) were generally in favour of requiring its use.
- People unfamiliar with IPM seemed to feel that it is ineffective and an excuse to apply pesticides.
- Most people that are not confident with the current system would like to have a list of “safe” pesticides that anybody would be allowed to use.
- Many respondents assume that the province has already made a decision to regulate the sale of certain pesticides.
- Many people expressed support for increased education, information or training about IPM and pesticides.

Considerations for next steps:

- There is high engagement on this issue. Many respondents took time to provide detailed, thoughtful comments. It is important that the ministry acknowledge the interest in the consultation.
- The use of domestic pesticides by people on their own private land is considered lower risk compared to other pesticide uses. This assessment is based on Health Canada’s classification of domestic pesticides as acceptable for use in residential settings. We do not collect any information about sales or uses of domestic pesticides, thus have no evidence that they are responsible for health or environmental effects.
- Although many people favoured creation of a “safe” list of pesticides, the BC Government does not currently have the capacity to create such a system. The federal government has been wrestling with this issue for many years and has not yet been able to do this. No chemical is entirely risk-free so creating a safe list would be a matter of balancing hazard with the likelihood of human and environmental exposure.
- Public concern about the health effects of all manufactured products is shifting. It is possible that science in the future will reveal effects from a variety of products that were considered safe today. We should communicate that unnecessary use of any products, including pesticides, does not make sense.
- Environmental monitoring could provide information about whether landscape use of pesticide is having an impact on our environment but it would not answer the question of whether there are health impacts from exposure to these chemicals.
- The ministry should not become the arbiter of issues between neighbours and competing values about management of landscapes (whether or not pesticide use is okay). The ministry does not have the capacity to address compliance issues at the individual level.

Current state – where ministry has authority

- British Columbia (BC) regulates the sale of pesticides (vendors of commercial and domestic class products).
- BC regulates the use of pesticide on public land, around multi-resident buildings, for industrial uses, and where application is provided as a service.
- BC does not regulate individual uses of pesticide on private lands or the use for agriculture.
- BC does not collect information about sales or use of domestic class products.

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- Outreach: BC is seen as a leader by other jurisdictions in that legislation requires the use of IPM. Promotion of IPM is one way to assist individuals to take personal responsibility for their impacts on the environment. BC could support or participate in an outreach strategy focused on IPM or management of healthy gardens.
- Stewardship Programs: Municipalities with pesticide use bylaw that restrict lawn and garden pesticides could benefit from a disposal program for unused pesticides. The ministry could work with pesticide producers and municipalities to encourage responsible disposal of unused pesticides by residents.

V. RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS:

- Approve the posting of the consultation summary report on the ministry website.

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Attachment: Cosmetic Use of Pesticides Consultation

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