



Fast

FACTS

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES – MANITOBA

there is an alternative.

April 7, 2022

Cosmetic Pesticide Ban needs to continue

Previously published in the Winnipeg Free Press April 7, 2022



The ban on non-essential (cosmetic) pesticides – in other words, chemicals used to kill broadleaf weeds in grass – has provided 6 years of a cleaner environment in this province. Based on evidence that many common lawn care products pose risks to human, animal and environmental health, Manitoba joined Quebec, Ontario, and other jurisdictions in removing exposures to these products from our daily lives.

It's been a breath of fresh air – literally, for those who live with asthma and other respiratory conditions. It has meant that pregnant people

Geese flying overhead. A warm sun. Puddles. For a winter-weary Manitoba, Spring is finally making an appearance. This year, it cannot come soon enough. Many of us long for sounds of kids playing outside, strolls around the neighbourhood, picnics and playdates in the park and getting back into the garden.

So what a nasty surprise that the provincial government wants to roll back the Cosmetic Pesticide Ban. If this change to legislation is passed, those neighbourhood strolls will soon be accompanied by the distinct odor of weed-killing chemicals and signs warning us to “stay off the grass until dry”. As if chemicals are any safer once dry!

can spend time outside knowing that their unborn child is not being exposed to the unnecessary products that can trigger birth defects. And that parents can happily watch their kids rolling around on grass not treated with substances that can enter their still developing bodies and cause health problems later in life. Likewise, pet owners know their animals are safe outside from contamination by chemicals linked to cancers and other illnesses in animals.

But all this is about to change. When the ban was proposed in 2015, many municipalities objected, fearing a “dandelion apocalypse” if they weren't allowed to use their chosen products. That voice was amplified by some farm groups,

CCPA-MB
301 - 583 Ellice Ave.
Winnipeg, MB
R3B 1Z7

phone

(204) 927-3200

email

ccpamb@policyalternatives.ca

website

[www.policyalternatives.ca/
manitoba](http://www.policyalternatives.ca/manitoba)

blog

www.policyfix.ca

twitter

@ccpamb

continued..

even though farm chemicals were not the subject of the legislation.

And there were people worried about their pristine lawns treated every year to create the weed-free green expanse often seen in advertising. Let's remember - that advertising comes from powerful corporations, like Bayer (now owners of Monsanto), and Syngenta, with vested interests in selling their toxic products. Under the banner of Crop Life Canada, they funded a massive postcard campaign, conveniently delivered by lawn care companies to their clients just in time to lobby the government of the day against implementing the ban.

But as 2016 Probe Research polling showed, a majority of Manitobans, from all parts of the province and all walks of life, supported it. We had become cautious about these products and wanted them out of the environment and out of our bodies. The pesticide ban was the right thing to do.

Opponents have continued to agitate. Now today's government cites its unscientific 2016 "consultation" to argue that most respondents want the ban lifted. Municipalities, they say, find the costs of battling dandelions without toxics are just too high.

Yet, a 2018 survey by the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment of 6 cities across the country demonstrated these municipalities were not, in fact, spending more on greenspace management under cosmetic pesticide bans. They were maintaining publicly acceptable landscapes at reasonable cost, by applying sound horticultural practices like aeration and top dressing.

Here in Manitoba, local lawn care companies pivoted to use of less toxic products, and more important, to basic turf management practices to maintain their clients' green spaces. An appreciation has sprung up for low maintenance ground covers in place of grass. People are becoming aware of threats to vital pollinators like bees posed by chemical products and turning to hardy native perennials as alternatives to mono-cultured, thirsty lawns.

It's hard if not impossible to quantify improvements to health, waterways and pollinator populations that a cosmetic pesticide ban promotes because we are exposed to so many different chemicals and in our air, food and water. But as the Ontario College of Family Physicians pointed out in their 2012 comprehensive review of research on links between pesticides and disease, a precautionary approach means avoiding any exposures that are not deemed necessary. Even Health Canada takes this view. Cosmetic pesticides, by definition, are not necessary. Their toxic impacts have not changed since the legislation was introduced here. They should be eliminated.

If Manitoba reverses the ban, we will be first province to do so. Truly, it will be a victory of the chemical corporations over human and environmental health and common sense.

Manitobans who object to this major backward step need to speak out.

Anne Lindsey is a member of the Cosmetic Pesticide Ban Manitoba Coalition, former Executive Director of the Manitoba Eco-Network and a CCPA Manitoba Research Associate.

CCPA-MB
301-583 Ellice Ave.
Winnipeg, MB
R3B 1Z7

phone
(204) 927-3200

email
ccpamb@policyalternatives.ca

website
www.policyalternatives.ca/
manitoba

blog
www.policyfix.ca

twitter
@ccpamb

References available upon request.