

## **Reduce Exposure to Environmental Carcinogens**

---

### **The Issue:**

There is a need for more extensive measures to be implemented that reduce British Columbians' exposure to potential cancer-causing substances that may be contained in commonly used household products, and used in certain pesticides.

The Canadian Cancer Society wants to reduce people's potential exposure to cancer-causing substances. We believe that people have the right to know if they are being exposed to substances that contain carcinogens at the point of purchase and use. Having this information available can help Canadians make informed decisions to protect their health.

Where the health of British Columbians is at risk, the Canadian Cancer Society believes it is important in some circumstances not to wait for perfect scientific certainty before taking action to protect British Columbians. We strongly support the precautionary principle that states, "When an activity raises threats of harm to human health or the environment, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause-and-effect relationships are not fully established scientifically."

### **ACTIONS REQUIRED:**

The Canadian Cancer Society is calling on all political parties to make a commitment to:

#### **a) Eliminate the cosmetic use of pesticides**

- The cosmetic use of pesticides has no health benefit, and has the potential to cause harm to public health and the environment.
- There is suggestive, but growing, evidence linking pesticide exposure with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, adult and childhood leukemia, brain cancer, kidney cancer, pancreatic cancer, prostate cancer, and some lung cancers (Ontario College of Family Physicians, 2004; Basil KL, et al., 2007; see also the International Agency for Research on Cancer, and the U.S. National Toxicology Program 11<sup>th</sup> Report on Carcinogens).
- Three-quarters, or 75% of all British Columbians believe that pesticides have a negative impact on their health, and similar numbers are concerned about the environmental impacts of pesticides (Canadian Cancer Society Advocacy Public Opinion Research Survey, 2008).
- Sustainable, non-toxic alternatives for cosmetic pesticides exist.
- The research shows that cosmetic pesticide bylaws have no adverse impact on business.
- Education and outreach programs alone, without legislation restricting use and sales, have been shown to achieve at best a 24% reduction in pesticide use, whereas education coupled with a restriction such as a bylaw has been shown to achieve up to a 90% reduction in pesticide use (Canadian Centre for Pollution Prevention, 2004).

- Provincial legislation should be implemented that would ban the sale, use and application of pesticides on private lawns and gardens as well as public parks, and recreational facilities.
- Two provinces – Ontario and Quebec – have province-wide legislation, banning the use and sale of cosmetic pesticides. Prince Edward Island's government recently announced its intention to ban the use and sale of cosmetic pesticides, starting in 2010. Over 150 municipalities across Canada have adopted bylaws restricting cosmetic pesticide use, including 18 in British Columbia. Many more municipalities in British Columbia are considering such by-laws.
- Some three-quarters (76%) of British Columbians support province-wide cosmetic pesticide legislation (Canadian Cancer Society Advocacy Public Opinion Research Survey, 2008). And, 200 delegates at the UBCM Convention 2008 voted overwhelmingly to call on the BC government to pass legislation restricting the use and sale of cosmetic pesticides.

#### **b) Implement Right to Know (product labeling) Legislation**

- The Canadian Cancer Society is concerned about people's potential exposure to cancer-causing substances that may be contained in commonly used household products, and is advocating for the product labeling legislation.
- The Canadian Cancer Society is also calling for legislation that would:
  - Label consumer products with the list of ingredients they contain; and,
  - Clearly label products with a warning/sign at point of purchase and use if those consumer products contain cancer-causing substances.
- A recognizable carcinogenic, or cancer-causing symbol, would assist consumers in user-friendly disclosure of this information so that informed choices could be made immediately upon consideration of purchase.
- The legislation could be phased in, requiring that labels be affixed to consumer products, or that signs be posted on retail shelves, moving to a requirement that consumer products list the ingredients that they contain as well as a hazard symbol if they contain a carcinogen.
- The public supports product labeling legislation. Virtually all British Columbians (99%) agree that consumers have the right to know the ingredients that are contained in the products they purchase, and 97% of British Columbians would support the provincial government passing legislation that would require companies and manufacturers to clearly label all of their products that contain cancer-causing substances (Canadian Cancer Society Advocacy Public Opinion Research Survey, 2008).



David  
Suzuki  
Foundation

THE  LUNG ASSOCIATION™  
British Columbia

