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PROVINCE ANNOUNCES FOUR-POINT STRATEGY THAT WOULD PROTECT CHILDREN FROM RISKS OF CHEMICAL LAWN PESTICIDES

Low-risk Alternatives for Lawn Care to be Focus of Legislation: Mackintosh

Manitoba is proposing to join most of Canada in reducing children's and pets' exposure to synthetic chemical lawn pesticides with legislation to be introduced in the next session that would replace the sale and use of those products with the rapidly growing array of federally approved, effective, low-risk bio-pesticides, Conservation and Water Stewardship Minister Gord Mackintosh announced today.

"Medical experts are clear that synthetic chemical lawn pesticides pose risks to human health, especially in the early stages of life, and to pets as well. We must reduce exposure to these products where they are not needed," said Mackintosh. "Given the increasing availability of replacement products and alternative turf management practices that effectively control weeds, Manitoba is proposing to join most other provinces and more than 170 Canadian municipalities to protect human, pet and environmental health."

Building on studies done since the early 1990s, three notable warnings about the risk of synthetic chemical pesticides have been released this year. Most recently, the American Academy of Pediatrics reported that "epidemiologic evidence demonstrates associations between early life exposure to pesticides and pediatric cancers, decreased cognitive function and behavioural problems."

"From a risk versus benefit perspective, the health benefits of reducing unnecessary use of cosmetic pesticides outweigh the risks," said Dr. Elise Weiss, deputy chief provincial health officer. "It is prudent to reduce the risk of pesticide exposure to pregnant women and children."

"A mounting body of peer-reviewed science shows links between pesticide exposure and serious illnesses including cancer, birth defects and neurological diseases. As a doctor and a father, I support strong legislation that will reduce unnecessary pesticide exposure and prevent some of our most vulnerable populations, especially children, from getting sick," said Dr. Paul Doucet, an emergency physician and father of five.

The legislation to be introduced in the next legislative session would allow only federally approved bio-pesticides for sale and use on lawns, driveways, sidewalks and patios as well as school grounds, playing fields and playgrounds used predominantly by children and on health-care institution and child-care centre grounds. The legislation would become effective in December 2014 with a one-year grace period for homeowners and **would specifically exempt agricultural lands** and gardens, golf courses, sod farms, and addressing high-risk noxious weeds and poisonous or invasive species.

"As a mother, I want peace of mind that the simple act of playing outdoors won't increase my children's risk of cancer or respiratory problems. I want to live in a province that is progressive and brave enough to keep our children safe," said Adrienne Percy, mother of two and founder of the Concerned Mothers' Coalition of Manitoba.

The minister said the four points of the provincial strategy to reduce pesticide exposure will be informed by further consultation and will include:

- strengthened noxious weed management to protect agricultural lands for production,
- a strict integrated pest management program for all government pesticide applications beginning December 2013,
- consumer and applicator awareness about effective lawn bio-pesticides and organic practices, and
- consultation with the education and child-care centre sectors to significantly reduce indoor pesticide exposure.

The minister said the proposed legislation would be phased in to allow homeowners to become familiar with the growing array of low-risk replacement products and practices, and to allow retailers and the lawn-care sector to adapt its products and services. Introducing the legislation in the next session will provide time to consult with the lawn-care industry and other stakeholders on the detailed regulations required to successfully implement the law and determine which insecticides would be included, he added.

More information on pesticides is available at www.healthycanadians.gc.ca/environment-environnement/pesticides/index-eng.php.