

Tuesday, March 21, 2006

**To: Markham City Councillors**

**Re: Canadian Cancer Society's position on cosmetic pesticides**

The Canadian Cancer Society- Ontario Division is writing in support of a City of Markham ban on the use of cosmetic pesticides. Some pesticides have been linked to a variety of illnesses, including cancer. Some of the chemicals used in pesticides are known to be carcinogenic, or cancer causing. As such, the Society is very concerned with the potential long-term effects associated with ornamental or cosmetic pesticide exposure.

We base this concern on the conclusion of the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) that states that some substances used in pesticides are classified as known, possible or probable carcinogens. In some cases, evidence linking pesticides and cancer will not be scientifically definitive, but it may be suggestive and growing.

That is why the Society is calling for a ban on pesticides that are used simply for *cosmetic* purposes. The use of pesticides to improve the appearance of private lawns and gardens provides no countervailing health benefit to society and should be totally banned.

In some cases, evidence linking pesticides and cancer will not be scientifically *definitive*, but in many cases it is *suggestive*. And the amount and quality of the research is growing. Much of the research on the association between pesticides and cancer has focused on occupational exposures. It is possible that vulnerable populations, such as children and people with weak immune systems, may be at higher risk. Surely we have an obligation to protect them from any possible risks caused by exposure to pesticides.

The Society makes a point not to endorse nor target any particular pesticide product. Our position on the use of cosmetic pesticides has been formulated by employing the precautionary principle, in addition to analysis of scientific evidence. The precautionary principle states

that if there is a threat to human health, it is prudent to err on the side of caution. Since pesticides are designed to destroy living organisms, by their very nature there is also the potential that they could do harm to humans.

In our pesticides brochure, entitled '*Pesticides and Your Health: What You Can Do*', we provide a link to Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) website. The Canadian Cancer Society believes that citizens have the right to educate themselves. However, we firmly believe that the scientific evidence currently available does not point conclusively to the fact that cosmetic pesticides are 100% safe. As such, we encourage people to be safe and avoid using these products

We urge Council to demonstrate leadership and concern for the health of its citizens by implementing a 100% ban on the cosmetic use of pesticides on private lawns and gardens.

Sincerely,

Bruce Turner  
Community Outreach Consultant  
South Central Region  
Canadian Cancer Society