

Sunday, February 5, 2017

Dear Mr. Steven Snell,

Your letter with regards to the City of Calgary's reevaluation of its Integrated Pest Management Plan was forwarded to me by Robin Mcleod with the Coalition for a Healthy Calgary.

I am writing to you on behalf of Parents for Pesticide-Free Schools, a new group of parents and stakeholders who are very concerned about the use of potentially cancer-causing pesticides for cosmetic purposes on school grounds and public property. Our group came together last fall, following an application of pesticides on the school grounds of the two public schools located in Nanton, Alberta.

The City of Calgary's course of action with regards to reevaluating pesticide use will become a role model for other municipalities and school boards to follow.

Under the current provincial legislation, children in Alberta are coming into direct contact with lingering pesticide residue on the ground, grass, playground equipment and air, not just through the skin, but also through ingesting grass, dandelions and sometimes dirt.

In Nanton, children were allowed back onto the school yard just mere hours following the pesticide application on the school grounds. The nauseating stench that resulted from the applied pesticides on the school grounds in Nanton, lingered on for well over a week. One mother reported a noticeable rash on her children after having played on the teeter totters. The area surrounding the teeter totters was sprayed for dandelions, which as you know, are not listed as "Prohibited Noxious" under the Alberta Weed Act.



In a conversation with an Environmental Protection Officer of Alberta Environment and Parks, it came to light that the levels of resulting pesticide residues are not being monitored. Although there was some routine monitoring being done in the past, this practice ended five years ago due to funding cuts. The Officer further revealed that if testing for pesticide residues were to be done, even months following a pesticide application, that "we would get a positive". A transcript of this conversation is attached to this letter.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, "there is a growing body of literature that suggests that pesticides may induce chronic health complications in children, including neurodevelopment or behavioral problems, birth defects, asthma, and cancer." An Information Brief published by the Canadian Cancer Society in 2013 states that "children are particularly vulnerable to the dangers of pesticides because of their rapidly growing bodies and developing immune systems. Children are also at greater risk of exposure to pesticides as they are more likely than adults to spend time on the ground, crawling and playing on grass where pesticides have been used directly or on floors where residues may persist. Pesticides are easily tracked indoors where they can exist for years; inside, in the absence of soil microbes and sunlight, the rate at which pesticides breakdown slows considerably. A study of a common active ingredient in herbicides found that house dust can contribute up to 30% of a child's total exposure before application to lawns and up to 76% of exposure, post-application." Source: <https://www.cancer.ca/~media/cancer.ca/AB/get%20involved/take%20action/CosmeticPesticides-InformationBrief-AB.pdf?la=en>

As parents and the public are becoming more aware of the potential dangers of pesticides, their use by municipalities and school boards also becomes a question of liability. Are governing bodies willing to assume the potential risk associated with the deliberate exposure to pesticide residues? Parents and guardians are being asked by school boards to sign a multitude of consent forms for "Acknowledgement of Risk" for their children participating in off-site activities. Who currently assumes the risks associated with exposure to pesticides in the school yard or on public property?

A growing number of cities, municipalities and provinces are moving towards a ban on the cosmetic use of pesticides. Closest to home perhaps is the City of Saskatoon, where "herbicides have not been used since 2004 to control broadleaf weeds, such as dandelions, on park turf and sports fields." To answer your question 'What measures could be employed to reduce the use of the "more toxic" pesticides?', it would perhaps be most efficient to consult with other municipalities and cities, such as the City of Saskatoon.

Here is a link to their website: <https://www.saskatoon.ca/services-residents/housing-property/yard-garden/be-pesticide-free>

There are many innovative alternatives to using pesticides, if we only change our mindset. As an example, have you ever heard of using light technology for controlling weeds? NatureZap projects light onto the unwanted weed and into the ground for the root system. For more information, visit <http://q-neighbor.com/how-it-works/> or www.naturezap.com

As your neighbor south of the City, I am very excited about Calgary's willingness to rethink the use of pesticides within the framework of its Integrated Pest

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Management Plan. The fact that you already have five pesticide-free parks is a great start. Keep up the good work!

Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Claudia Froome

On behalf of

Parents for Pesticide-Free Schools

A Grassroots Initiative

(403) 646-3288

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/223658944715319/>