

## **Pesticide gets OK from federal agency: 2,4-D considered safe**

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OTTAWA - The federal agency in charge of evaluating pesticides said yesterday it did not plan to restrict use of the popular garden product 2,4-D, saying it had found no evidence to support suggestions the substance could cause cancer.

More than 60 municipalities across Canada, including Toronto, Montreal and Halifax, have adopted bans on the cosmetic use of chemical pesticides because of the possible harmful effects on humans and the environment. Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) announced after a lengthy re-evaluation of 2,4-D that the pesticide was safe to use so long as label instructions were followed.

"The PMRA understands that the public may have concerns over domestic uses of pesticides and would like to convey that all registered pesticides undergo a thorough science-based risk assessment," it said in a statement. Connie Moase of the PMRA said the agency would make a final decision on whether to ban the pesticide later in the year after the public had been given a chance to make comments.

Environmental activists attacked the decision. "We're quite disgusted with it ... I don't think it's protecting the health of Canadians at all," said Meg Sears of the Canadian Coalition for Health and Environment. "There are certainly lots of ways you can maintain beautiful lawns and gardens without using 2,4-D."

The PMRA, a branch of Health Canada, evaluates pesticides to make sure they do not pose a threat to human health or the environment. However, provincial and municipal governments still have the power to ban them. Municipalities currently considering bylaws banning the cosmetic use of pesticides include Calgary, Vancouver and Hamilton.

Such bans are often controversial, with the situation in Ottawa a case in point. Last week, Ottawa's medical officer of health, Robert Cushman, took a hard line against pesticides, sparking opposition from city councilors representing the city's suburban periphery.

Pesticides "are designed to kill.... Let's get rid of them," said Dr. Cushman, who wants a two- or three-year phased-in ban of cosmetic pesticides in the city's urban centre. "There is no appetite for this in the community," said Coun. Jan Harder of the proposed measure, however.

2,4-D, formally known as 2,4-Dichlorophenoxyacetic acid, is manufactured by major chemical companies such as Syngenta Crop Protection Canada Inc., Dow Agrosciences Canada Inc., Bayer Chemicals, Monsanto, DuPont and BASF.