



Should Saanich ban the use of pesticides in our community? Absolutely.

We believe that such a ban is important to the health and well-being of our families and our community. In very simple terms, our health depends critically on the quality of the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat. All these essentials of life are damaged by the use of pesticides.

Pesticides are designed to be poisons. They work by disrupting the biological processes of plants and animals to the point where they die. In some cases, pesticides are derived from chemical warfare agents designed to disrupt the central nervous system (nerve gas). In other cases the actual killing mechanism is not known. Humans share many biological processes with plants and other animals, and these poisons disrupt our biological processes as well. Moreover, many of these chemicals persist for years and spread throughout our environment.

Pesticides are indiscriminate killers, killing not just the targeted pests but many other organisms as well. In 1962 Rachel Carson sounded the alarm about the disastrous effects of DDT use and other environmental pollutants. Yet pesticide use has increased many times since then. A recent study suggests that probably all of us contain residues of several pesticides in our bodies. Cancer and other diseases linked to pesticides are epidemic, and our health care budgets are out of control. We are all bearing the costs of the indiscriminate use of environmental poisons.

There are distinct parallels between smoking and pesticide use. For decades tobacco companies have withheld evidence of the detrimental health effects of cigarette smoking, and for decades chemical companies have assured us of the safety of pesticides. When smoking was banned in public buildings not so long ago many businesses feared financial doom. It didn't happen. Now some businesses are forecasting the destruction of our environment by pests. That won't happen either. These companies are sowing fear, uncertainty and doubt in order to protect their profits.

At this time Saanich is only considering banning the use of pesticides for cosmetic purposes, in ornamental landscapes. That won't result in mass starvation! It does mean, however, that landscapers and gardeners will have to learn to do things differently. But organic practices are well researched and employed successfully in agriculture; they work just as well in ornamental gardens.

The proposed pesticide ban is the result of a long and nationwide grass roots movement. The public is making it very clear that they do not want these poisons in their gardens, parks and school grounds. To date over 60 municipalities across Canada have instituted such bans, and hundreds more are considering it.

We believe that nobody has the right to poison our land, water and air for lack of knowledge, or for the sake of a few dollars in their pocket. We want Saanich to ban the use of pesticides in all private and public ornamental landscapes.