

5. Do measures proposed for inclusion in the Green Agenda create a risk to health and the economy?

By Paule Hjertaas, B.Sc

A number of environmental, church and health groups as well as the New Democratic Party are calling on the government to include steps to protect children in the government's Green Agenda. Specific actions proposed include providing information on pesticide risks to parents, prohibiting pesticide use in playgrounds, school yards and other public areas frequented by children and establishing an office of organic agriculture and gardening.

No risk to health

It is very well established that exposure of children to pesticides creates a health risk. This proposal poses no risk to health as it is about protecting children from the health risks of pesticides. Children's risk would be reduced by not being exposed to pesticides in areas where they play.

The protection of children's health is achieved indirectly by educating parents about risks of and alternatives to pesticides, and by setting up an Office of Organic Agriculture and Gardening to increase information and availability of low toxicity methods and products.

These proposals still allow steps to protect children's health in case of a non-cosmetic need in areas they heavily use such as daycares and playground. However, due to the risks posed by pesticides in most cases, other options are superior to deal with risks.

No risk to the economy

Nothing in the proposed actions limits in any way a farmer's ability to farm or garden as he or she wishes. Restrictions on pesticide use are only proposed for playgrounds and other areas frequented by children.

The proposal for an office of organic agriculture will assist transition to profitable and higher value markets for those who wish to make the transition, but does not interfere with other farmers.

Promoting organics can help provide diversification, improve farmers' income, and enhance Saskatchewan's international image as a producer of quality food.