

April 8, 2002

Public conversation on pesticide reduction launched

Toronto -- Dr. Sheela Basrur, Toronto's Medical Officer of Health, has launched a public conversation on strategies to phase out the use of non-essential pesticides.

Dr. Basrur today released a discussion document to guide a series of public meetings and consultations. "Playing it Safe: Healthy Choices about Lawn Care Pesticides" summarizes the health risks associated with pesticides and asks Toronto residents to consider a number of questions about reducing cosmetic pesticide use.

Dr. Basrur said that phasing out pesticide use is one way to reduce the risk to human health from toxic substances in the environment. "There is enough compelling evidence to warn the public of health risks that may result from long term exposure to pesticides. It's time to shift to alternatives."

The discussion document cites scientific studies identifying risks to children, pregnant women and workers from pesticide exposure. Dr. Basrur referred to studies that have found pesticide residues may be affecting Toronto's aquatic ecosystem. She also noted that because pesticides are in widespread use and are mobile in the environment, it is virtually impossible to avoid contact with them.

"Today we are beginning a conversation with Toronto residents and we look forward to hearing their ideas," said Dr. Basrur. Four public meetings have been scheduled for May 13-15. The public is being asked to consider three questions:

- "Is it a good idea to reduce or eliminate pesticides?"
- "How can residents be encouraged to reduce pesticide use?"
- "Should a by-law be developed to restrict pesticide use?"

"The City of Toronto has worked hard to nearly eliminate pesticide use in our parks. Now it's time to work with residents to help ensure their lawns are safe and healthy," said Dr. Basrur.

Information about the consultation process is available at www.city.toronto.on.ca/health. For recorded information on meeting times and locations, the public can call 416-338-1215.

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