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Special Committee on Cosmetic Pesticides
Room 224, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C., V8V 1X4
Att: Bill Bennett, MLA, Chair
Via email: pesticidescommittee@leg.bc.ca

Dear Mr. Bennett and Committee:

Re: Ban on the use and sale of all pesticides used for cosmetic purposes

I am writing to voice the support of the Georgia Strait Alliance for a ban on the use and sale of all pesticides used for cosmetic purposes.

Since 1990, Georgia Strait Alliance's (GSA) mission has been to protect and restore the marine environment and promote the sustainability of the Strait of Georgia, and its adjoining waters and communities. In that time, we have been one of the province's most effective organizations, with an impressive history of success. Our efforts have reduced pollution from pulp mills and municipal wastewater; provided tools to recreational boaters to decrease their negative impact on the marine environment, helped strengthen federal law around the polluter pay principle and protection of species at risk; and, increased awareness of the threats of open-net cage salmon farming in BC.

As part of our efforts to offer solutions to key problems, in 1998 we launched a program called ToxicSmart (<http://www.georgiastrait.org/?q=node/371>), which provided needed information on the risks posed by chemicals used in homes and gardens, and offered simple and effective options which were safe for families and the environment. To this day, these guides remain one of the most popular downloads on our website, which indicates that people are still seeking out alternatives to pesticides and other harmful chemicals.

There are many important reasons why the ban of cosmetic pesticides is the right move for British Columbia – from the magnified impacts of chemicals on children to the fact that these products are frequently misused by non-professionals (including using too much at any one time and using the inappropriate product for any one need). Another key reason is the reality that chemicals in pesticides do not stay put or simply go away. They can find their way into the local environment such as streams, rivers and oceans through leaching, the washing of clothing with chemicals on them or rinsing in sinks, and

this transmission can inadvertently cause harm. Pesticides kill, that is their purpose, but that impact is not always limited to the intended target.

Legislation banning the cosmetic use of pesticides should be put into place and extended to pesticides used on indoor house plants as the risks to the health of humans in the home are high, as well as risks to the environment. If a pesticide is needed indoors for health and safety reasons, this would not be considered a 'cosmetic' use and would fall under the health and safety exemption. For any pesticide used under this exemption, it may be useful to set out a limited class of pesticides that can be used and sold under this exemption and establish conditions for their retail display and sale. Also, should pesticide used for health and safety reasons occur outdoors, notification and signage requirements are important to promote public awareness and provide at risk individuals with opportunities to safeguard themselves from exposure where possible. Notification for use of pesticides for non-cosmetic purposes should also include websites, advertisement in papers, notifications at local area gathering places (eg community centres) and letter drop off in areas where these products are being used.

We support that proposal that Provincial legislation should be accompanied by a strong education program. This program should address alternatives to pesticide use on lawns and gardens as well as the potential health and environmental impacts of pesticides and safe disposal of leftover pesticides. As there are many education campaigns taking place across BC municipalities and by environmental and community groups, we'd encourage the provincial government to draw from these, or directly support them, rather than recreating its own program.

Communities across BC and Canada have made it clear that they do not support the use of cosmetic pesticides. By making this ban provincial – and expanding to the sale of cosmetic pesticides – the province would be supporting the values set out by these communities, and providing a level playing field of laws and education for all British Columbians.

Thank you for hearing our concerns, as we strongly urge you to recommend a ban on the use and sale of all pesticides used for cosmetic purposes.

Sincerely



Christianne Wilhelmson
Executive Director