



April 22, 2010

For the environment and health: An open letter from CNA president Kaaren Neufeld

Dear Colleagues:

On the occasion of [Earth Day 2010](#), the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) recognizes the efforts of registered nurses (RNs) to reduce Canadians' exposure to cosmetic pesticides, one of many important environmental health issues in which nurses are engaged. Earth Day is an opportunity to reflect and act upon many environmental issues that affect health, such as climate change and access to safe drinking water. This Earth Day, CNA brings one issue to your attention.

RNs across Canada are protecting the health of their communities by working with municipal, provincial and territorial governments to enact bans on the cosmetic use of pesticides. CNA is working at the federal level, asking the government to change laws such as the *Pest Control Products Act* – which regulates pesticides and herbicides – to prohibit the sale and use of pesticides for cosmetic purposes.

The non-cosmetic use of pesticides can sometimes be beneficial, such as in agriculture. However, exposure to pesticides used on lawns, gardens and recreational facilities risks our health with little or no benefit to public welfare. The cosmetic use of pesticides threatens anyone outside – including toddlers exploring the lawn, families enjoying a picnic in the park and seniors playing a round of golf.

RNs endorse a broad approach to supporting health that addresses factors both inside and outside the health system, particularly the environment. Exposure to pesticides has been linked to cancer, neurological disorders and reproductive problems. I encourage you to become environmentally engaged on a number of levels, by:

- becoming more aware of environmental health issues and the role you can play in mitigating their impact on your patients' health;
- sharing this awareness and knowledge with your colleagues in the health sector to help make environmental health part of your workplace culture; and
- sharing your concerns and knowledge by writing or visiting your elected government representatives.

You can read more about the issue of cosmetic pesticides on [CNA's website](#). To get involved in CNA's advocacy efforts, please [contact us](#).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Kaaren Neufeld".

Kaaren Neufeld, RN, MN

President

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