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For Immediate Release

Friday, January 24, 2025

Citizens Groups Demand End to the 2025 Bacterial Aerial Spraying of BTK in British Columbia Communities

Kelowna, BC – Advocacy groups from across British Columbia are uniting to call for an end to the aerial pesticide spraying of *Bacillus thuringiensis* subsp. *kurstaki* (BTK) in communities. The controversial pesticide program has faced increasing backlash from citizens concerned about health hazards, lack of transparency, and environmental impacts.

The West Kelowna Branch of the Kelowna Citizens Safety Association (WKB/KCSA), Call to Action Cranbrook, and Communities United For Clean Air (CUFCA) are voicing strong opposition to the Ministry of Forests' ongoing pesticide spraying initiatives.

Lloyd Manchester, President of WKB/KCSA, criticized the 2024 pesticide applications and raised concerns about future plans:

"BTK pesticide applications happened in 2024 without informed consent, unnecessarily exposing communities to health and environmental hazards. This indiscriminate bacterial aerial spraying puts families, pets, and entire ecosystems at risk, including vulnerable and endangered butterfly and moth species. It is unacceptable for this to continue."

James Shannon, representative of Call to Action Cranbrook, shared his perspective, echoing concerns raised by Manchester:

"We were sprayed three times last year, and the sprayed area had many schools and daycares near the spray zone. This activity was extremely disruptive, and although the School District took some precautions, there were not enough in my mind to decrease exposure and protect the kids. I am also deeply concerned about the impact on vulnerable and endangered species like the Blue Copper Butterfly. Additionally, we had 4,000 people opposed to the spray program, clearly demonstrating the public's strong stance against these harmful practices."

Larry Wartels, spokesperson for CUFGA, emphasized the need for transparency and accountability:

"Our appeals against the Ministry of Forests' pesticide permits have not been heard and were declared moot after spraying was completed. Informed consent is essential to protect public health, ensure proper health hazard monitoring, and implement WorkSafeBC regulations for cleanup and notification."

The coalition is calling for:

1. An immediate end to aerial spraying in populated areas to protect public health and non-target vulnerable species.
2. Community involvement and education to promote safe, ground-based pest management alternatives through public consultation and participation.
3. Implementation of WorkSafeBC pesticide regulations, including mandatory notification to employers and the public, and mitigation of pesticide residues on surfaces and ventilation systems.
4. A Health Action Plan for impacted communities, including culturing BTK bacteria for medical diagnosis, establishing a reporting system for exposure, and ensuring proper treatment for those affected.

The coalition urges the government to take immediate action to prioritize public and environmental health over harmful and indiscriminate bacterial aerial pesticide programs.

For more information, media inquiries, or to support the campaign, please contact:

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Communities United For Clean Air

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January 24, 2025

Lloyd Manchester, President
West Kelowna Branch
Kelowna Citizens Safety Association (WKB/KCSA)

Jim Shannon,

Call To Action Cranbrook

Larry Wartel

Communities United For Clean Air (CUFCA)

Hon. Ravi Parmar

Minister of Forests
PO Box 9352 Stn Prov Govt
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Hon. David Eby, KC

Premier of British Columbia
PO Box 9041 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1

John Rustad, MLA

Leader of the Opposition, Conservative Party of BC
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Re: Urgent Request to Cancel the 2025 BTK Aerial Spray Program and Explore Safer Alternatives to the use of Bacterial Pesticides.

Dear Minister Parmar, Premier Eby, and John Rustad, MLA ,Leader of the Opposition

I write on behalf of the West Kelowna Branch of the Kelowna Citizens Safety Association (WKB/KCSA), the Call to Action Cranbrook group, and Communities United for Clean Air (CUFCA). Together, we represent a growing coalition of citizens deeply concerned about the proposed 2025 aerial spraying of Foray 48B (*Bacillus thuringiensis* subsp. *kurstaki*, BTK). This program violates Informed consent and poses significant risks to the safety of our children, our health, and our environment not to mention the legal aspect of chemical trespass and legal accountability.

In 2024, 12 out of 13 communities endured three aerial BTK sprays, with West Kelowna being the sole exemption. The program was marred by mismanagement, such as applications conducted during rainfall—a clear violation of label precautions. The Ministry of Forests (MOF) self-investigated and dismissed public complaints without independent oversight. Communities like Cranbrook took the commendable step of reducing children’s exposure through proactive school district measures such as washing play structures. This response highlights the failure of MOF to implement effective safeguards to protect children, adults, pets, elderly, homeless, passerby’s and the environment from indiscriminate aerial bacterial pesticide applications.

Key Issues and Oversight Failures

1. **Lack of Public Notification and Compensation:** No meaningful efforts were taken to notify the public prior to or after applications, leaving residents uninformed about potential health risks. Moreover, no compensation was offered to those displaced during spray operations, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly, and individuals with pre-existing health conditions.
2. **Lack of Informed Consent:** Many residents were sprayed without their knowledge or consent, violating fundamental rights to bodily and property autonomy.
3. **Inadequate Oversight:** The MOF oversees its own compliance, creating a glaring conflict of interest. This erodes public trust and undermines accountability.
4. **Toxicity of Foray 48B:** While marketed as “safe,” the formulation includes 87% undisclosed ingredients with unknown long-term effects. Health incidents such as respiratory irritation, dermatitis, and asthma attacks have been documented.
5. **Environmental Impacts:** Aerial spraying harms non-target species, disrupts ecosystems, and leaves residues on public and private properties. Cleanup measures are non-existent, compounding the risks.
6. **Lack of Risk Mitigation:** The WCB Pesticide Regulations clearly require employers to notify other employers and their employees of pesticide use. As a government, the MOF should be a model for compliance with these regulations, including mitigation measures to clean all surfaces and ventilation equipment affected by residues.
7. **Trade and Forest Concerns Are Overstated:** The spongy moth primarily attacks deciduous trees, not conifers. These applications are targeting communities, not crown forests, and the claimed threat to trade is not substantiated by the areas being treated.

Call to Action

We urge the government to:

1. **Halt the 2025 Spray Program** until a thorough independent review is completed.
2. **Assign Oversight to an Independent Agency** to eliminate conflicts of interest.
3. **Engage Communities Early:** Consult with municipal officials and residents to develop safer, community-driven pest management plans.
4. **Test and Monitor the Full Formulation:** Implement rigorous chain-of-custody testing and publish the results to ensure transparency.
5. **Ensure Compliance with Worker Safety Laws:** Adhere to WorkSafeBC pesticide regulations, including advanced notice and risk mitigation measures.

Conclusion

The health and safety of British Columbians are compromised by the aerial application of bacterial pesticides like Foray 48B. The WCB Pesticide Regulations explicitly require employer notification of pesticide use and mandate mitigation of residues. As a government, you have a duty to follow your own rules and prioritize public safety. Spraying residential, park, school, daycare, and public areas indiscriminately with a bacterial pesticide is reckless. The precautionary principle compels us to adopt safer, ground-based alternatives and engage communities through education and involvement. These progressive measures not only protect public health but also prevent unnecessary taxpayer expenses.

Public health risks and financial costs are substantial, with the benefits remaining unclear. The well-being of British Columbians, including our children, is at stake. By permitting and promoting the aerial application of a bacterial pesticide containing 87% undisclosed ingredients, the government risks causing significant harm. Continuing with BTK aerial spraying programs their current form is unacceptable and need to be stopped.

We await your timely response and the actions you intend to take. Should you choose not to act, we respectfully request notification of your rationale.

Yours sincerely,

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