

Newfoundland & Labrador Public Health Association Position Paper

June 2011

The Newfoundland and Labrador Public Health Association (NLPHA) supports legislation for a provincial ban on the use and sale of cosmetic pesticides. These pesticides are used for non-essential, aesthetic purposes for example, to improve the appearance of green spaces. In April 2004 the Ontario College of Family Physicians released a systematic literature review of pesticides and human health. This was the most comprehensive study of its kind in Canada. It showed that pesticide exposure is associated: with brain cancer, prostate cancer, kidney cancer and pancreatic cancer; with adverse reproductive effects including birth defects and even the death of the fetus: and that children exposed to pesticides, especially insecticides and herbicides used on lawns, fruit trees and gardens -- have an increased risk of leukemia. The Journal of Canadian Paediatric Society 2006 found that the common weed killer 2,4-D can be “persuasively linked to cancers, neurological impairment and reproductive problems.”

With the strong evidence of the negative health impacts of pesticides especially to our most vulnerable (our children), many provinces across Canada developed bans on cosmetic use. The Ontario’s [*Cosmetic Pesticide Ban Act, 2008*](#) which came in effect April 22, 2009 remains the most health-protective in North America and actually took 250 toxic lawn chemicals off store shelves by stopping the sale of these products. There are safer alternatives to lawn care. In addition organic lawn care is more labour intensive, this Act actually increased the number employed in the lawn care industry.¹

A poll commissioned by the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association (NLMA) and the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE) in 2009 asked residents of Newfoundland and Labrador about the use of cosmetic pesticides. The majority of people (68 percent) either mostly or completely supported a ban of cosmetic pesticides. The majority (72 percent) of those surveyed also felt that lawn pesticides used in their communities threaten the environment. While the greatest majority (76 percent) of those surveyed believed that lawn pesticides used in their community threaten children’s health. On another positive note, when compared to the 2006 Statistics Canada survey, it appeared that pesticide use was declining.

Children are our most valuable resource. They are our future and as such deserve our protection. They deserve the right to a healthy safe environment. It is essential that the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador protect its children so they can grow into healthy productive citizens.

Based on the overwhelming evidence of the potential for negative health impacts of pesticides, especially on our children, NLPHA supports legislation for a provincial ban on the use and sale of cosmetic pesticides similar to the Ontario’s *Cosmetic Pesticide Ban Act, 2008*.

Supporting Resource Links

[Pesticides Literature Review](#) - Ontario College of Family Physicians

[Paediatricians and the environment: Bringing our expertise to the support of Canadian children's health](#) - Canadian Paediatric Society

[Poll reveals support for cosmetic pesticide ban](#) - News release: Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association

[Pesticides](#) - Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment

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¹ In the Halifax Regional Municipality, since the enactment of a cosmetic pesticide by-law, the number of landscaping companies has increased by more than 50 percent, as has the number of employees per company. The lawn care industry is booming wherever cosmetic pesticide use has been banned. For instance, Statistics Canada reports that the number of landscaping companies in Toronto has increased each year since that city implemented a cosmetic pesticide ban. Please see Statistics Canada, Business Register, Canadian Business Patterns. 2006. (1998-2005); and Statistics Canada. 2006. Business Register, Canadian Business Patterns (2001-2006).