

September 24, 2007



Background/ Document d'information

BANNING THE COSMETIC USE OF PESTICIDES AND HERBICIDES, PROTECTING THE PUBLIC INTEREST

Ontario Liberals stand for a healthy, sustainable Ontario, and we're working hard to achieve this. Ontarians should feel confident, wherever they go in the province, that their environment is clean, safe and as free as possible from unnecessary contaminants that could impact our health and our children's health.

That is why Ontario Liberals have a simple, clear commitment: we will ban the cosmetic use of pesticides across the province.

The cosmetic use of herbicides and pesticides isn't really necessary – sprays and chemicals applied merely to improve the appearance of lawns, private gardens, parks and school yards.

While the federal government is responsible for testing and approving pesticides, there is growing concern about the potential harmful effects of these products on human health, especially children. The Canadian Cancer Society states that it:

“...is very concerned about the use of potentially carcinogenic (cancer-causing) substances for the purpose of enhancing the appearance of, for example, private gardens and lawns as well as parks, recreational facilities and golf courses (ornamental use). We base this concern on the conclusions of the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) that state that some substances used in pesticides are classified as known, probable or possible carcinogens. In some cases, evidence linking pesticides and cancer will not be scientifically definitive, but it may be suggestive and growing. Since ornamental use of pesticides has no countervailing health benefit and has the potential to cause harm, we call for a ban on the use of pesticides on lawns and gardens.”

Other public health organizations supporting restrictions on the cosmetic use of pesticides include: Ontario College of Family Physicians, Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, and the Ontario Public Health Association.

The cosmetic use of pesticides is already being phased out – it's banned or under restricted use in some 25 municipalities across Ontario (including Toronto), covering 30 per cent of the province. Nine additional Ontario communities have voted in favour of bans that will be implemented over the next year. More than 100 communities across Canada ban cosmetic use of pesticides too, and there is a province wide ban in Quebec. We want one rule for the whole province.

A province-wide ban on the cosmetic use of pesticides will cost approximately \$3 million per year once fully implemented. New resources will be required by the Ministry of the Environment for education, outreach and enforcement.

The focus of Ontario's province-wide ban on the cosmetic use of pesticides will be on small towns and cities, not on restrictions for rural residents.

Agriculture will be exempt. Ontario farmers already have stringent rules on the storage and application of pesticides. Golf courses will also be exempt but we would require golf courses to develop plans to limit the environmental impact of pesticides. We will also ensure that pesticides can still be used in situations where it is warranted to ensure public health (for example, to fight West Nile virus).

We will look at Quebec's experience with their ban, which that province has been phasing in over the last five years. But our legislation will be a made-in-Ontario solution. We will also build on the experience of the dozens of municipal pesticide by-laws already in place in Ontario.

The focus of our efforts will be on outreach and education on alternatives to pesticides on lawns. Enforcement will be a last resort.

What Others Are Saying

"As a wife, a mother and a grandmother, I want my family protected from exposures to toxic chemicals, like pesticides. As a health care professional, I understand the research undertaken by the Ontario College of Family Physicians that clearly demonstrates that we need to do everything possible to protect pregnant women, infants and children from exposures. Mr. McGuinty is on the right track in calling for a province-wide ban on the cosmetic use of pesticides. We need to choose the health of our children over the odd weed."

*Ms. M. Janet Kasperski, R.N., M.H.Sc., C.H.E.,
Chief Executive Officer,
The Ontario College of Family Physicians*

“Dalton McGuinty understands that reducing human exposure to dangerous toxic chemicals makes environmental sense, is good public health policy, and frankly, contributes to the development of the new, green economy that’s good for both the planet and its peoples. His commitment to introduce Canada’s first toxic use reduction law will bring Ontario to the forefront of our country’s efforts in tackling the environmental causes of human illness and suffering. “

*Dr. Ted Boadway, former executive director
of health policy for the Ontario Medical Association*

“I'd like to congratulate the McGuinty government for supporting a ban on non-essential, cosmetic use of pesticides. This represents a step to ensure the safety of children and other vulnerable groups in spirit of precaution for real harm of uncertain magnitude. This promise heeds the recommendation of the report of the Ontario College of Family Physicians in 2004 and by me in the Canadian Journal of Public Health in 2005. It follows Quebec's lead and those of Canada's largest municipalities, striking the appropriate balance between the needs of public health. Together with movement on transportation and energy policy in the spirit of Kyoto, we hope that such measures can safeguard the air, land and water for future generations and the health of our patients.”

*Neil Arya, BAsc MD CCFP FCFP, Adjunct Professor,
Environment and Resource Studies, University of
Waterloo; Asst Clinical Professor, Family Medicine,
McMaster University; Adjunct Professor, Family
Medicine, University of Western Ontario*

“Pesticide Free Ontario applauds Premier McGuinty and the Provincial Liberal government for their promise to ban the use of lawn and garden pesticides. Legislation, similar to Quebec’s Pesticide Management Code, will remove a pervasive source of toxic exposure from the environment of every resident in Ontario. Major health organizations, such as the Ontario College of Family Physicians, Canadian Cancer Society, Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment; and Sierra Legal Defense, fully support the elimination of pesticides used on lawns and gardens.”

Susan Koswan, Pesticide Free Ontario

“Premier McGuinty's commitment to banning the cosmetic use of pesticides is pivotal public health policy. A vote for Dalton is a vote for our children's health and environment. “

Pesticide Reform Ontario

“The Ontario government’s promise to ban lawn and garden pesticides is a major step toward protecting human and ecological health. Our doctors have always said that homeowners can have a beautiful property without putting themselves and the environment at risk. There are now so many effective, non-toxic products on the market, pesticides simply aren’t needed. “

Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE)

-30-

Disponible en français

For more information:
Ontario Liberal Party Media Relations
416 961-3800, X 386