

Pesticides get thorough review before they're approved for sale

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Editor:

Re 'Why is government not listening?' (The Guardian, July 29, 2011): Why would the government of Prince Edward Island listen to activists like Lisa Gallant when the federal government already regulates pesticides through Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency?

What readers should know is that before any pesticide can be sold in Canada it must undergo a comprehensive scientific review and risk assessment by Health Canada. Through this process, pesticides receive a greater breadth of scrutiny than any other regulated product and only those products that meet Health Canada's strict health and safety standards are registered for sale and use. The Quebec government, which Gallant uses as an example of a government that knows what it is doing, recently repositioned its stance by stating that "products containing 2,4-D do not pose an unacceptable risk to human health or the environment." This is exactly what the expert scientists at Health Canada have said all along.

The reality is that the Canadian Cancer Society and numerous other activist groups will continue to want more products banned, for more uses. This is just the thin edge of a wedge that leads to bans where the repercussions are more threatening to our overall health and well-being because they deny people access to safe living conditions and an abundant supply of healthy food.

The divisive debates about pesticide bans will continue as long as municipalities and provinces continue to arbitrarily ban products that have been approved for use by Health Canada. The uncertainty created by these various levels of government mean that new products will not be brought forward for approval and the public will have fewer and fewer options for controlling the numerous insect and weed infestations affecting their properties. It's high time that science-based decisions be re-introduced into the pesticides debate.

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