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Cities free to toughen pesticide ban

Legislation to become law by next spring excludes farms, managed forests and golf courses

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ROBERT BENZIE
 QUEEN'S PARK BUREAU CHIEF

Ontario's new ban on cosmetic pesticides for gardening will still allow cities and towns to enact even tougher environmental bylaws, says Premier Dalton McGuinty.

McGuinty and Environment Minister John Gerretsen marked Earth Day by introducing legislation yesterday outlawing the sale and use of such lawn and garden pesticides by next spring.

While the law does not apply to farms, managed forests or golf courses, the premier said municipalities could go further than the provincial standard.

"Nobody will be able to have standards lower than ours," he said.

"If you're asking if municipalities can exceed the provincial standard we put in place, yes they can when it comes to use."

McGuinty was driven to the early morning Earth Day event in an SUV even though he lives only a few streets away from the home where it was held.

"We generally get around by car – you'll know it's a hybrid.

"A hybrid is better than other things," he said, defending his mode of transport.

Gerretsen, in contrast, walked to the news conference held in a midtown Toronto backyard near his St. Clair Ave. W. office.

The government's anti-pesticide measure was widely hailed.

Gideon Forman, executive director of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, said it would be the toughest legislation of its kind in North America and should be especially helpful in protecting children.

"We're delighted," said Forman, adding the ban should encompass more than 300 different toxic products currently available and is more wide-ranging than Quebec's law.

Almost half of all Ontarians already reside in municipalities that have banned cosmetic pesticides, including Toronto, Markham, Oakville and Vaughan.

Progressive Conservative MPP Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk) said, while his party supports eliminating "the non-essential use of pesticides," care must be taken in fine-tuning the legislation.

"This is a very important issue, not to be decided on emotion or based on a gimmick presented during the very important Earth Day celebration that goes back decades and not to be rushed through as a mere three-page bill," said Barrett.

New Democrat MPP Peter Tabuns (Toronto-Danforth) said the government must ensure the law "has the teeth to deliver the ban."

"It is not good enough to simply put a law on a table, declare a virtue and walk off," Tabuns added.

"The other steps have to be there."

In a statement Barry Maynard, vice-president and general manager of Scotts Canada, makers of Miracle-Gro and other lawn-



COLIN MCCONNELL/TORONTO STAR

Francesco Vaccaro, 3, plays in a midtown backyard April 22, 2008 as Ontario Environment Minister John Gerretsen, left, and Premier Dalton McGuinty announce the province's ban on cosmetic pesticide use.

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care products, said the company would work to help Ontarians adapt to the weedy new reality.

"Home gardeners will be challenged by the prospect of creating and maintaining healthy green spaces without the help of many of the pest control products with which they are familiar," Maynard said.

He noted his company also manufactures green "EcoSense" products.

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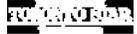
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