

Lessons from Quebec on how to ban lawn and garden pesticides

New report urges other provinces follow Quebec's lead

March 26, 2008 OTTAWA – A new report on Quebec's current provincial ban on the use and sale of several lawn pesticides urges other provinces to follow Quebec's lead.

“Quebec has paved the way for provincial action to protect citizens from harmful pesticides. Other provinces can build on Quebec's experience,” says Lisa Gue, environmental health policy analyst with the David Suzuki Foundation. “Lawn and garden pesticides pose needless risks to health and the environment.”

The David Suzuki Foundation and Équiterre, a leading environmental group in Quebec, teamed up to produce *Pesticide Free? Oui! – An Analysis of Quebec's Pesticides Management Code*. The report assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the Quebec regulation, recommends measures to improve the Code and encourages other provinces to adopt similar policies to ban lawn and garden pesticides. The study also suggests areas of improvement to bolster the Quebec ban and its implementation.

Passed in 2003 and fully implemented in 2006, Quebec's Pesticides Management Code prohibits the use of 20 pesticide active ingredients on public and private lawns across Quebec, and the retail sale of products containing these ingredients. The prohibited active ingredients are found in approximately 200 pesticide products, including the popular lawn herbicide 2,4-D.

According to the report, the Code's strengths include its prohibition on sales of the targeted pesticides – as well as their use – and its strong basis in the precautionary principle (a rule that states that in the absence of scientific consensus, protection of health and the environment is paramount).

“Quebec has realized dramatic reductions in household pesticide use, but there's more to be done,” says Lova Ramanitrarivo, project leader with Équiterre and principle author of the report. “In particular, the ban should extend to all lawn and garden pesticides and enforced more rigorously.”

Key recommendations for Ontario and other provinces considering bans on cosmetic pesticides include:

- using the precautionary principle as the guiding rule;
- structuring the ban with reference to a “white list” of products authorized for sale and use;
- extending the ban to all cosmetic uses of pesticides, province-wide; and,
- developing a thorough and effective enforcement program.

Quebec is currently the only province that restricts the use and sale of pesticides registered by the federal Pest Management Regulatory Agency. The Government of Ontario has committed to introduce legislation banning the cosmetic use of pesticides this spring. The Government of Prince Edward Island is also studying the issue. Across Canada, 140 municipalities have adopted bylaws restricting the use of pesticides on public and private property. Municipalities, however, generally lack jurisdiction to regulate pesticide sales.

At present, there are approximately 1,000 commercial pesticide products for sale in Canada that cannot be sold in other nations because of health and environmental concerns.

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The full report, Pesticide Free? Oui! – An Analysis of Quebec’s Pesticides Management Code can be found online at: www.davidsuzuki.org/Publications/Pesticide_Free_Oui.asp

For more information contact:

Lisa Gue
Environmental Health Policy Analyst
David Suzuki Foundation
Office: (613) 594-5428
Cell: (613) 796-7699

Jason Curran
Communications Specialist
David Suzuki Foundation
Office: (604) 732-4228

Marie-Eve Roy

Communications Specialist
Équiterre
Office. : (514) 522-2000 ext. 232
Cell. : (514) 378-0232

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