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POLITICS

Ontario MPP vows to continue fight against pesticide ban

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PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE MPP TED CHUDLEIGH ON HIS FRONT LAWN JUNE 1, 2012. HE HAD A PRIVATE MEMBERS BILL DEFEATED ON THURSDAY THAT WOULD HAVE AMENDED THE PESTICIDES ACT TO ALLOW TRAINED PROFESSIONALS TO APPLY CURRENTLY-BANNED PESTICIDES TO PEOPLE'S LAWNS AND GARDENS.

Credits: DAVE ABEL/QMI AGENCY

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TORONTO -- You win some you lose some.

Progressive Conservative MPP Ted Chudleigh is disappointed his private-member's bill aimed at loosening the rules around Ontario's controversial cosmetic pesticide ban was defeated at Queens Park on Thursday.

That doesn't mean he won't fight on.

Chudleigh knows the ban is a polemic subject and will now push for the PC party to make it an election issue. He told QMI Agency on Friday that the bill was a reflection of what many homeowners have been asking themselves since pesticides were banned by Ontario's Liberal government in 2009: Just how hazardous are pesticides to human health, and does it warrant such sweeping prohibition on using them?

Like many others, Chudleigh believes the report that prompted the ban -- a 2004 Ontario College of Family Physicians study that found "consistent links" between pesticide use and cancer, neurological impairment and birth problems -- is based on "junk science."

He argues there is little scientific proof that using pesticides can lead to such health problems.

"It is frustrating that good science has been conquered by junk science," said Chudleigh, whose private-member's bill would have amended the Pesticides Act to allow lawn-care professionals to apply some currently banned pesticides to lawns and gardens. "The physicians ... I don't think their area of expertise extends to the use of pesticides. I'd like a doctor to look after me in his office, not on my lawn."

Chudleigh is far from alone in his criticism of the OCFP report, a study based on the compilation of other research papers examining pesticide use and health.

Shortly after its release, the United Kingdom's Advisory Panel on Pesticides, a governmental regulatory body, cited "serious flaws" with the OCFP report. It cited points such as "failure" to take into account studies with results running contrary to OCFP findings, and examining pesticide exposure in agricultural areas -- where pesticides are allowed, and regularly used -- instead of domestic, urban areas.

As well, Health Canada stated that the "OCFP report is a review of epidemiology studies selected from the public scientific literature," and that it lacked sufficient scientific data. And the Canadian Institutes of Health Research issued its own reaction to the OCFP study, stating that "more ... well-designed studies that provide reliable and valid exposure measures" were needed.

Ontario's pesticide ban is not based on science, but on a political agenda, says Pierre Petelle, vice-president of chemistry for Crop Life Canada.

"This was an ideological, politically motivated decision that played on people's fears and lack of scientific knowledge," Petelle said. He pointed to a recent poll that found 78% of Ontarians feel the current legal methods of weed and insect control are inadequate, and that almost half believe commercial pesticides are safe provided directions are followed.

"The consequences are coming to light in the urban sector, on homeowners' properties, sports fields and municipal areas," Petelle said. The OCFP study neglected to look at toxicology data to back up its findings, he added.

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"Even Health Canada ... looked at this study and said there was nothing in (it) that warranted further regulatory action, that it was a selective gathering of studies and that it didn't represent the body of scientific evidence they rely on."

Ontario is not the only province where there is debate around pesticide use: British Columbia Premier Christy Clark has been hankering for a ban there, but an all-party committee on pesticides said in May that, after considering more than 8,000 submissions, there lacks enough scientific evidence to warrant a ban, and instead made 17 recommendations around tightening rules around pesticide use and educating the public.

Dr. Cathy Vakil, who helped pen the OCFP report, disagrees with those who say her paper lacks scientific weight. She says the authors took a "systematic approach" and searched "enormous databases" to find "peer-reviewed" collections of studies.

"It was ... pretty well the gold standard of any kind of review you can have," Vakil said. She vehemently disagreed that OCFP excluded studies with conclusions running contrary to the use of pesticides being hazardous. "It is computer-driven. You plug in the key words, and it spews out ... collections of studies in a completely unbiased way."

Gideon Forman of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment is adamant the science behind the OCFP report is strong.

"But let's say it wasn't," he said. "Why would you want to take the risk? Why would you take that risk, when the only thing you are changing is the appearance of your lawn?"

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Posting as Norah G Fon (Change)

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I don't know about the pesticide companies trying to make an issue, but I do know there are plenty of ordinary citizens that are fed up with this ban. I recall the Ontario Premier saying at the time of the ban taking effect - we want our kids to be able to play on lawns the way we could when we were kids. Well Dalton - bring your kids to play on my lawn - a lawn that is full of dandelions and THISTLES and other weeds. Yes I am sure the kids will have a wonderful time walking barefoot in such a lawn. Of course it is the special interest groups who stamped their feet until this ban was brought into effect. Strange though - I am a senior and I have never had one person come and offer to pull my weeds for me.

I also have a neighbour who got very excited when I said I always had my lawn sprayed for weeds until the ban came into effect. Her response was "Oh, what that stuff does to you!" I looked over the fence at her a couple of days later and she was SMOKING! Give me a bloody break. Isn't that typical of special interest groups!

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**Steve Wolfe** · University of Guelph

Yes those nasty Dandelions and Thistles can kill you, not like pesticides, you can drink pesticides (roundup). What's more important not having a few weeds in your lawn or increasing the potential of getting cancer? It is a no brainer. As far as the smoking neighbour she makes that choice. The use of pesticides contaminate the water I have to drink, I did not get to make that choice.

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**Gail Dyer** · Kenner Collegiate Vocational Institute

You don't get it - do you!! A few weeds - I guess your definition of 'a few' and my definition of 'a few' is totally different. Your comment "It is a no brainer." - this depends on what studies you read. Health Canada has deemed one of the common pesticides safe but dear Dalton and others refuse to allow any pesticides.

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**Gail Dyer** · Kenner Collegiate Vocational Institute

As far as your comment about the smoking neighbour - I agree that is her choice. However, you chose to totally ignore my point. She was complaining about how bad pesticides are for your health - yet she chooses to smoke. I call that total hypocrisy!! Unfortunately we see hypocrisy in so many of the special interest groups. Take your blinders off.

Reply · 1 · Like · 57 minutes ago

**Kazimiera J Cottam PhD**

The critics of the OFCP report are usually connected to the pesticide industry one way or another. They are either academics who have strong ties to this industry with research financed by this industry or people with a more direct vested interest; I have in mind pesticide vendors or applicators themselves.

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**Norah G Fon** · 16 years old

Cottam Ghost-Writers merely serve as an ANONYMOUS CONDUIT for Anti-Pesticide Activists like Gideon Forman and Richard Clarkson.

Are we to believe that an assessment from an ANONYMOUS Ghost-Writer is somehow worth more than Health Canada ?!?!

They LIE about their own identities just like they LIE about pest control products.

Moreover, there ARE experts who OPPOSE bans and have NO vested interest.

<http://wp.me/P1jq40-2V6>

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