



Homeowners deserve the blame for Ontario's pesticide ban

Written by Mike Jiggins

A private member's bill introduced in May in the Ontario Legislature would have given lawn care companies and municipalities a fighting chance to revitalize their businesses and produce safer sports fields, but it was defeated after its second reading, and nothing has changed.

Introduced by Halton MPP Ted Chudleigh, the bill would have amended the current cosmetic pesticide ban so that pesticides outlawed since 2009 could be used once more, but only if applied by trained and licensed applicators.

Chudleigh was among the speakers in September at The Sports Turf Association's annual field day in Vaughan, Ont. He went into great detail about how the current legislation is not working and how homeowners are skirting around the law, giving a black eye to the industry.

His well-delivered address noted how it is homeowners who are largely to blame for the ban in the first place, and it is these same individuals who continue to fan the flames, making it more difficult for any type of amendment to be passed into law.

Homeowners, who are neither properly trained nor licensed in pesticide application, tend to share the same mentality that if a little is good, then a lot must be better. Instead of following label directions when mixing pest control products, they'll measure amounts by the "glug."

Studies show that residue samples taken both upstream and downstream in a river straddled by a golf course had higher amounts of chemical upstream than downstream. This indicated that the lesser amounts came from an area—the golf course—where pesticides had been applied by licensed applicators. Significantly higher amounts were found upstream where it was concluded that homeowners, not abiding by label directions, had "overdosed" their lawns and the runoff had entered the water body.

Chudleigh cited a number of examples of how the misuse of everyday substances, such as sugar and benzoate of soda, can be just as deadly, if not more so, than improperly-used pesticides. Both sugar and benzoate of soda are vital elements in the foods we eat, but they tend to be taken for granted and are never thought of as "chemicals." Outside our industry, the word chemical is synonymous with pesticide, and that negative connotation seems to be what drives activists on their mission.

Chudleigh is hopeful that his defeated private member's bill can be revisited as part of the Progressive Conservative party's platform in the next provincial election. With a change of government, perhaps Ontario can go back to its old motto: "Keep it beautiful."

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