

# **Winning the Ontario Pesticide Ban**

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# A Few Words about CAPE

- CAPE protects human and environmental health through education and advocacy. Its members are doctors and concerned citizens across Canada.
- Has grown 10-fold since 2006: from about 400 to over 4,000 members.
- Works to make hospitals more enviro-friendly, to close coal-fired electricity plants, to promote organic agriculture, and to ban lawn and garden pesticides.
- CAPE is a leader of the lawn pesticide ban movement. Helped win bans in Peterborough, Collingwood, Markham, Kingston, London. Also played leadership role in campaign to win *provincial* ban across Ontario.

# **Health Risks of Pesticides**

## **Two key studies**

### **Ontario College of Family Physicians**

- Representing over 9,000 Ontario doctors
- April 2004 the College released a systematic literature review of pesticides and human health.
- The most comprehensive study of its kind in Canada:
  - Pesticide exposure is associated with brain cancer, prostate cancer, kidney cancer and pancreatic cancer.
  - Pesticide exposure is associated with adverse reproductive effects including birth defects and even the death of the fetus.
  - Children exposed to pesticides, especially insecticides and herbicides used on lawns, fruit trees and gardens -- have an increased risk of leukemia.

<http://www.cfpc.ca/local/files/Communications/Current%20Issues/Pesticides/News%20Release.pdf>

# **Health Risks of Pesticides**

## **Two key studies**

**Journal of The Canadian Paediatric Society 2006:**

- health effects of the common weed-killer 2,4-D.
- It found 2,4-D can be “persuasively linked to cancers, neurological impairment and reproductive problems.”

<http://www.cps.ca/ENGLISH/membership/PaedEnvironment.pdf>

# Ontario's *Cosmetic Pesticide Ban Act*, 2008

- In effect: April 22, 2009
- The most health-protective in North America,
- Taking 250 toxic lawn chemicals off store shelves.

Government of **Ontario** - **Ministry** of the Environment

<http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/en/land/pesticides/index.php>

More background info:

<http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/en/news/2008/042201mb2.php>

# How the Ontario Pesticide Ban was Won

## Step #1

### The Right Messaging.

- We focused on protecting *children*.
- Our ads featured a beautiful child with captions:
  - **“Only a ban will protect them”**
  - or
  - **“They’re not safe”.**
- As the campaign wore on (and the recession set in) we also conveyed the message that the ban would help grow jobs and business in the lawn care sector.

## Step #2

### Brought together groups, outlined what we wanted.

- We brought together nurses, doctors, the Canadian Cancer Society, environmental lawyers, the David Suzuki Foundation and citizens' groups.
- We wrote a one-page statement : what we wanted – in particular a ban on pesticide *sales*.
- We held a press conference to release the statement.

# How the Ontario Pesticide Ban was Won

## **Step #3:**

### **Met directly**

### **with the Environment Minister.**

- We met several times with Ontario Environment Minister John Gerretsen explaining what we wanted and telling him the health community would be very supportive if he passed strong legislation.
- Between meetings we kept in close contact with his staff.



# How the Ontario Pesticide Ban was Won

## **Step # 4:**

### **Commissioned opinion polling.**

- We twice commissioned professional polling to gauge popular support for the ban.
- Both times it was endorsed by over 70% of Ontarians.
- We released the polling results to the press and Ministry of the Environment.

# How the Ontario Pesticide Ban was Won

## Step #5

### Wrote letters to the editor and op-eds.

- There was huge industry resistance to the ban, especially in the media.
- To counter this, we wrote (and encouraged others to write) letters to the editor and op-eds.
- These supported the ban from a variety of angles, including its value creating green jobs.

# How the Ontario Pesticide Ban was Won

## **Step #6:**

### **Met key Ministers or their staff**

- In addition to the Minister of Environment, we met with advisors to the Ministers of Trade, Small Business, and Economic Development.
- These Ministers had reservations because industry told them the ban would hurt the economy.
- We said, “On the contrary: it will be helpful”.

# How the Ontario Pesticide Ban was Won

## **Step #7:**

### **Ran advertisements.**

- We ran ads in the *Ottawa Citizen* (the Premier's hometown paper) and the *Ontario Medical Review*.
- The ads urged readers to call or e-mail the Premier in support of the ban.
- They also informed the public that the ban was supported by Ontario's health authorities.

# How the Ontario Pesticide Ban was Won

## Step # 8:

### Got our networks e-mailing key Ministers.

- We encouraged our members to send a two-sentence pre-written e-mail to key Ministers urging them to support the ban.
- Coming from health professionals, these messages carried significant weight.

# Resources available

## **VIDEO: Lawn and Garden Pesticides: Reducing Harm.**

10 minute video re:

- scientific evidence linking common household pesticides to a variety of serious illnesses, including cancer, reproductive problems and neurological diseases.
- Info from Ontario College of Family Physicians' ground-breaking pesticide study
- Safe lawncare alternatives.

Use at public meetings or for educating local politicians.

contact [gideon@cape.ca](mailto:gideon@cape.ca) or (416) 306-2273



**Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment**

*The National Voice of Physicians on Issues of Health and the Environment*

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