

Winning the Ontario Pesticide Ban

Gideon Forman, Executive Director,
Canadian Assoc of Physicians for the Environment

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 or (416) 306-2273



Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment

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

Home

Join CAPE

Contact

www.cape.ca

Support us, join us!

You don't have to be a doctor to join –
thousands of our members
are *not* physicians.

gideon@cape.ca