

## Strong call for pesticide ban



Gary Hebbard/The Telegram

*Gideon Forman, executive director of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment speaks Thursday night at St. John's City Hall to a public forum on the banning of lawn pesticides.*

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One day as John Ridgley was working in the garden of his Mount Pearl home he caught a whiff of some of the pesticides that had been used recently on his neighbour's lawn.

After about 10 minutes of exposure Ridgley went into anaphylactic shock.

Today he carries an EpiPen and had it with him Thursday night as he joined around 45 other residents at St. John's City Hall to discuss bringing a ban on cosmetic pesticides to Newfoundland and Labrador.

"What else does the government need?" Ridgley said as he addressed the crowd.

Shortly after his incident Ridgley sent pictures of his allergic reaction ridden body to the minister of environment and conservation at the time and asked for a ban on cosmetic pesticides to be considered. He received a letter in response saying the issue was under study.

To say Ridgley was unsatisfied with this response would be putting it mildly.

"The political will is not there right now to change this," he said.

Ridgley had a chance to share his story because of Thursday night's forum, which was organized by the Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides-Newfoundland and Labrador (CAP-NL).

The cities of Mount Pearl and St. John's have voluntarily refrained from using pesticides on their green spaces for a few years, but neither city is allowed to pass an outright ban on its own because in Newfoundland and Labrador, the province must undertake such action.

Councillors from both cities attended the meeting and added their voices to push for a ban.

Discussion at the forum revolved around what can be done to convince the provincial government that a ban on cosmetic pesticides is needed.

***"I'm not just talking about some skin defects, but some very serious health risks."***

*- Gideon Forman, executive director of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment*

Guest speaker Gideon Forman, executive director of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment.

Forman and his organization were instrumental in the successful lobbying of a cosmetic pesticide ban in Ontario.

Ontario's ban influenced several other provinces, including all of the Maritimes and Quebec, to implement their own bans.

Forman told the audience that a ban on cosmetic pesticides was a good all around decision for this province, especially for health-related reasons.

"I'm not just talking about some skin defects, but some very serious health risks," he said.

Studies have shown possible links between pesticides, including herbicides, fungicides and insecticides, to neurological problems, birth defects and cancer.

One of the other major concerns people tend to have with the idea of a ban is what would happen to lawn care companies, he added.

"We want the industry to grow; we just don't want them to use poisons to do it."

It should be noted that Forman, along with other speakers, added there is a lack of rock-solid evidence in terms of scientific studies linking pesticides to major health problems.

However, Forman also said there is enough evidence and enough doubt to show a ban is warranted as a preventative measure.

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