

Why Nova Scotia should ban lawn and garden pesticides

By LISA GUE

De-toxing our lawns and gardens would be good for people, pets and the environment.

Quebec adopted regulations in 2003 to ban the use and sale of many lawn pesticides.

A few months ago, a new ban came into effect in Ontario. Prince Edward Island has promised to follow suit and New Brunswick is considering it.

Halifax was ahead of the curve when the city adopted a bylaw prohibiting pesticide use on lawns and gardens and in parks back in 2001.

But provincial parties were curiously silent on the issue during the recent election campaign.

What's stopping Nova Scotia politicians from weeding out toxic lawn chemicals provincewide?

The chemical industry will repeat the mantra that pesticides are safe, but not even the federal agency in charge of licensing their products uses that language.

It's worth noting, as well, that at least 50 active ingredients registered for use in pesticides in Canada have been banned in other Western countries due to health or environmental concerns.

For instance, the popular lawn herbicide 2,4-D is banned in Denmark and Norway, and was voluntarily withdrawn from the market in Sweden.

What do the Scandinavians know that we don't?

In fact, we know a lot.

A scientific literature review published by the Ontario College of Family Physicians points to "consistent links to serious illnesses, such as cancer, reproductive problems and neurological diseases" associated with chronic pesticide exposure.

The study also shows that children are particularly vulnerable — and they're the ones rolling around on the grass on hot summer days.

Moreover, David Suzuki Foundation research found more than 6,000 cases of acute pesticide poisoning in Canada in one year, nearly half involving children under the age of six.

Canadians are faced with multiple exposures to toxic substances — in the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink, and products we buy.

These individually small exposures correspond to multiple, cumulative and synergistic health risks.

What stands out about lawn and garden pesticides is that the associated risks are so completely unnecessary — and unjustifiable.

Not only do non-toxic gardening products and techniques offer ready alternatives, but no reasonable citizen would uphold the value of a weed-free lawn over the health of children.

That's why Halifax already prohibits pesticide use on lawns and gardens.

Provincial legislation to ban cosmetic pesticides would extend this protection across the province.

The province has the power to regulate pesticide sales, as well, whereas the Halifax bylaw only restricts pesticide use.

Pulling pesticides from store shelves is the best way to make sure they aren't used.

Nova Scotia should follow the example of Quebec and Ontario and implement a provincewide ban on lawn and garden pesticides without delay.

This straightforward and effective measure will eliminate an unnecessary source of exposure to toxic chemicals, benefiting human health and the environment.

Lisa Gue is environmental health policy analyst, David Suzuki Foundation.

[CLOSE WINDOW](#)

© 2008 The Halifax Herald Limited