

Pesticide law needs a tune-up

BY MONIQUE BEAUDIN, THE GAZETTE MAY 18, 2011

Quebec, once a pioneer on pesticide regulations, is now lagging behind other provinces, two environmental groups said Tuesday.

Quebec's pesticide law, adopted in 2003, needs to be updated if the province wants to be a leader in protecting human health and the environment, said Équiterre and the David Suzuki Foundation, which compared existing provincial pesticide laws across the country.

British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Newfoundland have not banned pesticides.

Ontario and Nova Scotia got high marks because they banned the most pesticides but at the same time allowed access to effective lower-risk products, the groups said.

Quebec's law hasn't been updated to include new pesticides, the groups point out.

They say it should be expanded to cover pesticides used for cosmetic purposes in landscaping, that the province should compile a list of "lower-risk" substances that could be used instead of outlawed pesticides, and that Quebec needs to create a way to prohibit new active ingredients as they come to market.

"Ten years ago, we were pioneers in the movement to raise awareness among the public and decision-makers about alternative solutions and the need for a provincewide ban on cosmetic pesticides; it's now time to raise the bar and reclaim our leadership position," said biologist Judith Smeesters of Équiterre, who headed a citizens' group that lobbied Quebec to create the pesticide law.

The groups called on all provinces to extend their pesticide bans to golf courses, which under existing Quebec legislation must submit pesticide-use reduction plans every three years.

Quebec's law is still the best model for regulating pesticide use in areas frequented by children, the environmental groups say.

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