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Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment

— the national voice of physicians on the environment and health

CAPE Wins New Brunswick Pesticide Ban

Local health groups and doctors get 200 toxic products off store shelves

by Farrah Khan

In June 2009, the New Brunswick government introduced a province-wide ban on more than 200 pesticide products, including the harmful chemical 2,4-D, for use on lawns and gardens. In effect from December 16 2009, this ban protects over 700,000 New Brunswickers from unnecessary spraying and will help to preserve the province's ecosystems. The victory comes after an extensive campaign led by CAPE, the Canadian Cancer Society and the New Brunswick Lung Association.

Liz Smith, the Lung Association's Director of Public Education, has been involved with the pesticide issue in New Brunswick for close to a decade and sees the law's passing as a positive step. "New Brunswick residents who suffer from chemical sensitivities and respiratory problems will now be able to breathe easier with a reduction in exposure to these chemicals," explains Smith. Common pesticides used on lawns and gardens have been linked to life-threatening illnesses like childhood leukemia as well as birth defects and Parkinson's disease.

Six months prior to the introduction of the law, CAPE, the Canadian Cancer Society and the Lung Association, released polling that showed nearly 8 in 10 New Brunswick residents were in favour of a ban on non-essential pesticides. The polling (conducted by Ipsos-Reid) also found 80 per cent of New Brunswickers see

**Only a ban
will protect them.**



non-essential pesticides as a potential health risk to humans and the environment, and 85 per cent believe these chemicals may threaten family pets.

"With overwhelming support from the public, health groups and the environmental community, it makes perfect sense for governments to do away with lawn poisons. New Brunswick made the right choice," says Gideon Forman, CAPE's Executive Director. "Lawncare companies in New Brunswick now have the opportunity to flourish, as they have in other jurisdictions with similar

bans, by offering safe, non-toxic solutions to keeping your lawn beautiful."

While the ban is an impressive first step, Forman urges New Brunswick to go even further. "Unfortunately, the province still allows lawns to be spot sprayed with certain chemicals. CAPE is working to have that loophole removed," says Forman.

New Brunswick is the first maritime province to restrict lawn pesticides for use and sale and we are already seeing signs its neighbours are moving in the same direction.

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Organic Farmer Rodrigo Venturelli teaches ecological farming techniques to students from Toronto's Kent Senior Public School.

CAPE Organic Farm Tours

Each spring and fall for the last three years, CAPE has been taking children to Plan B Organic Farm near Hamilton, Ontario and teaching them about the value of organic agriculture.

Hundreds of kids have now had a chance to tour greenhouses, collect free-range chicken eggs, learn about soil and vermicompost, pull carrots from the ground, and munch on fresh organic produce.

It's all part of an exciting CAPE program – entitled *Organics for Kids* – that shows young people a type of agriculture very different from the conventional. The program is generously supported by CAPE members, Alterna Savings Credit Union, and the Canadian Auto Workers.

"It's the first time many of these kids have been to a farm – so it's quite an adventure," says CAPE Executive Director Gideon Forman.



A student from Kent Senior Public School picking ground cherries at Plan B Organic Farm in Flamborough, Ontario.

CAPE began the program in November, 2006 by giving an illustrated talk on organic methods to 65 junior high students at Toronto's City View Alternative School. The presentation was done by CAPE Board Member Dr. Art Wiebe – who is both a physician and farmer – and offered students a chance to "taste-test" organic versus conventional apples.

A few months later, CAPE took the students to Plan B farm. "There's only so much you can do in a classroom," says Forman. "If you want kids to understand food production, you have to take them out to the country. And if they get their hands dirty picking carrots, so much the better!"

For more information on CAPE's *Organics for Kids* program, please contact Farrah Khan (Farrah@cape.ca).

The President's Corner

By Dr. Kapil Khatter

When the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) takes a position on an issue, Canadians notice. At the August 2009 general council meeting in Saskatoon, CMA delegates collectively approved two motions that gained national attention. The work of CAPE members was central to the motions' success.

The first motion called on the federal government to ban the sale of anti-bacterial products for household use. Concerns that household products like anti-bacterial soaps, tissues, sponges, etc may lead to bacterial resistance led council members to oppose their widespread marketing. Studies suggest that the chemicals used in these products may create resistance among bacteria, to themselves, but also to commonly used antibiotics with similar mechanisms of action. In addition, anti-bacterial chemicals like triclosan are potential environmental hazards whose increasing use could harm ecosystems. Given triclosan is currently under evaluation by the federal government, the CMA motion has attracted attention, and continues to be covered by various media outlets.

The other CMA motion widely reported in the press was the delegates' condemnation of Canada's enduring asbestos industry, which continues to export chrysotile asbestos to developing countries. The Canadian government not only supports the mining and export of the carcinogen with grants to its trade association, but has actively blocked the international listing of asbestos as a hazardous substance. The CMA motion calls on the federal government to support that listing and to put an end to Canadian mining and export of asbestos.

The fate of Canada's asbestos industry, and of household anti-bacterial products, is yet to be decided. But we can be sure that these CMA motions and the work of CAPE doctors will have an influence.

Dr. Kapil Khatter, CAPE President



Lawn & Garden Pesticides: Reducing Harm

NOW AVAILABLE! This unique 10 minute DVD sets out the scientific evidence linking common household pesticides to a variety of serious illnesses. It offers information from the Ontario College of Family Physicians' ground-breaking pesticide study and sets out safe lawncare alternatives. Excellent for showing at public meetings or for educating local politicians.

Photo: Veronique Lehoucq

To order your copy, please contact Farrah Khan: farrah@cape.ca

ECO-LEADERS' CORNER

Eco-Leaders' Corner is a column that features news for, about, and from CAPE Eco-Leaders.

What a fantastic year CAPE has had! Not only has CAPE been at the forefront of some remarkable gains for public health (with the passing of provincial legislation to ban lawn pesticides in both Ontario and New Brunswick) but 31 individuals, couples, or groups stepped up to become Eco-Leaders. Launched in January 2009, Eco-Leaders support the long term vision of CAPE with gifts of \$1,000 or more.

Dr. Racquel Feroe is one of our newest Eco-Leaders. Below, she tells us why she made the decision to join.

If you'd like to become an Eco-Leader, give a gift of stock, or make a donation in someone's honour, please call Farrah Khan, Executive Assistant, collect at (416) 306 2273.



CAPE Eco-Leader Dr. Racquel Feroe and the winners of the 2009 Emerald Award, who won for their work on idling reduction. To read their story visit emerald.foundation.ca

Why I became an Eco-Leader

by Dr. Raquel Feroe FRCPC

I became an Eco-Leader because I like to be strategic with my charitable dollars. CAPE has credibility, capacity, and their very existence helps people to link environmental health to personal health. I could have become an Eco-Leader solely based on CAPE's award-winning work on pesticide policy but there is more that attracts me to CAPE. Supporting CAPE is a way for me to practice preventative medicine that has the potential to reach the masses and raise hope for our planet. CAPE's mandate is to promote environmental sustainability and ecosystem health. For those of you, like me, who see patients with chronic illness, the opportunity to be part of an organization that offers such a refreshing and proactive approach to healthcare is very appealing.

I would love to network with other CAPE physicians and particularly those in Edmonton where I live. I hope all doctors reading this article decide to join CAPE's Eco-Leaders and I look forward to networking and sharing our environmental interests.

Inert? Not so Inert!

New data reveals human toxicity of Roundup pesticide

By Dr. Josette Wier

Pesticides comprise active ingredients and "inerts" or "surfactants". Active ingredients must be disclosed and are tested for registration while the chemical nature and properties of inerts are proprietary to the manufacturers and not assessed in the approval process. This inadequacy of the approval process is brought to the limelight for Roundup, the most used herbicide in the world, for which new toxicity data points squarely to the surfactant POEA (polyethoxylated tallowamine).

While scientific studies over the last ten years have clearly shown POEA itself is directly toxic to amphibians (increased mortality and developmental anomalies), a bomb exploded this year when a French research team showed *in vitro* toxicity of POEA to human umbilical, embryonic and placental cells.

This prompted my request with Health Canada for a Special Review of Roundup formulations last May. It was turned down



CAPE member Dr. Josette Wier is a pediatrician from France who now lives in Smithers, BC.

on the grounds that the US EPA had already started a re-registration process in 2009 which Health Canada was going to join. They rejected the implications of the French study because of its *in vitro* nature and asserted that risks to amphibians were hopefully mitigated by not allowing the product to be applied to water directly!

This response prompted the filing of a Notice of Application on my behalf to the Federal Court of Canada on September 29, 2009 with the help of the West Coast Environmental Law Association on the grounds that Health Canada misapprehended the risks of the Roundup formulations from recent scientific literature. It is about time the agency takes the precautionary principle seriously.

For more information, please contact Dr. Josette Wier at josettecp@bulkley.net

The following very generous people donated \$1,000 or more to CAPE's Eco-Leaders circle of support.

THANK YOU SO MUCH TO EACH ONE!

Mrs. Winifrede Burry • Dr. Scott Daley • Dr. Richard Denton
Dr. Racquel Feroe • Dr. Scott Findlay • Dr. Leigh Fraser-Roberts
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...and three anonymous donors

Fan Mail: Your Letters to CAPE

Each week, CAPE receives letters from supporters across the country, praising the work our doctors do to protect the environment. Here is a sampling of what we've heard from you. Please keep your letters coming – your support is much appreciated!

“With the increasing rate of cancer, especially in young people, it's good to see your organization and profession taking a stance in the dumping of all this toxic chemical corruption on the environment. I support you whole heartedly.”

- B.W. Imperial, Saskatchewan

“Thank you for an organization of your stature taking on this kind of initiative.”

- D.B. Calgary, Alberta

“You are doing an amazing job changing the face of Canada, one province at a time. In a world of frustrations, the progress on the pesticides front, at least from my vantage point, seems refreshingly positive.”

- E.P. Ottawa, Ontario

“I really appreciate your work getting organic produce to children.”

- S.M. Bedford, Nova Scotia

“Keep up the good work!”

- L.G. Montreal, Quebec

“Congratulations on all the work CAPE does to help keep our environment clean.”

- M.P. Etobicoke, Ontario

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