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I know who I trust to protect my health

SANDRA SOLOMON

Dear Editor - Re: "Who do you trust to protect your health? (letter, March 6).

Gideon Forman, executive director of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, seems to have some of his facts wrong. Let me help him out.

1. I am not connected to anyone in the pesticide industry. I am a retired secretary and a gardener. I do have access to unbiased and broad science in relation to the subject, including landmark studies out of the University of Guelph in 1984 where extensive research was done relating to exposure to 2,4-D. Interesting that the Ontario College of Family Physicians study only went back as far as 1991 and focused only on epidemiology, omitting all the other data about these compounds. Perish the thought that they should have to deal with credible, repeatable science that does not support their theory.

2. The URLs I referred you to in my letter ("Pesticide review lacking credibility, Feb. 28) basically both said that the review was biased and the science had been selectively chosen to support the College of Family Physicians' theory. The review also acknowledged names of reviewers, one a respected scientist who had never seen the report before it was published. How many other inaccuracies are there in the review?

3. Considering the Canadian Cancer Society, by their own admission, have used the same review as the basis for their support, I wouldn't have much faith in them either. The Canadian Cancer Society wholeheartedly supports the science that connects smoking to lung cancer but not the science that there is no connection between pesticides and cancer. The same scientist, Sir Richard Doll, is involved in both findings. It is called "cherry-picking."

4. The Ontario position is nonsensical. The alternatives to federally approved pesticides allowed in Ontario range from fatty acids -- lethal to frogs -- to removing pests by hand. How are we to effectively treat blight on our tomatoes by hand? Are we going to be up 24/7 picking tomato horn worms off our plants?

5. Who do I trust? The thousands of experts who work for Health Canada, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the World Health Organization and the International Agency for Research on Cancer to name a few. Just as I would not go to a plumber for kidney surgery, I would not go to a medical doctor (with minimal toxicology training) to assess pesticides, and most certainly not a philosopher such as Gideon Foreman.

-- Sandra Solomon, RR 1, Puslinch

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