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37th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on Health

EVIDENCE

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Dr. Meg Sears

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Á **1150**

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Á **1155**





-  *Mr. Rob Merrifield*
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-  *Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga--Maisonneuve, BQ)*
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-  *Mr. Réal Ménard*

Â **1200**


















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-  *Mr. Alex Cullen*
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






-  *Mr. Joe Comartin*
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Â **1220**






















-  *Dr. Meg Sears*
-  *Mr. James Lunney*
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Â **1225**













-  *Mr. Alex Cullen*

-  *Ms. Hedy Fry*
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-  *Ms. Elisabeth Arnold*
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-  *Dr. Meryll Hammond*

Â **1230**


-  *Mr. Michel Gaudet*
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Â **1235**


-  *Mr. Réal Ménard*
-  *The Chair*
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-  *Mr. Alex Cullen*
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-  *Mr. Réal Ménard*
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-  *Mr. David Fletcher*
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Â **1240**

-  *The Chair*
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-  *Mr. Alex Cullen*
-  *Mr. David Fletcher*
-  *Mr. Jeannot Castonguay*
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-  *Mr. Jeannot Castonguay*


 *Mr. Alex Cullen*

Â **1245**

 *Mr. David Fletcher*

 *Dr. Meg Sears*


 *The Chair*

 *Ms. Hélène Scherrer*


Â **1250**


 *Mr. David Fletcher*

 *Ms. Elisabeth Arnold*


 *Mr. Alex Cullen*

 *Ms. Elisabeth Arnold*


 *Mr. Alex Cullen*

 *Mr. David Fletcher*

 *Ms. Elisabeth Arnold*

 *Dr. Meg Sears*

 *The Chair*

 *Ms. Hedy Fry*

Â **1255**


 *Ms. Elisabeth Arnold*

 *Dr. Meryll Hammond*


 *Ms. Hedy Fry*

 *Dr. Meryll Hammond*


 *The Chair*

 *An hon. member*


 *The Chair*

 *Mr. Réal Ménard*

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 *The Chair*



CANADA

Standing Committee on Health

NUMBER 072

1

1st SESSION

1

37th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, April 30, 2002

[Recorded by Electronic Apparatus]

Á (1110)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Bonnie Brown (Oakville, Lib.)): I would like to call this meeting to order and welcome our witnesses.

All the witnesses should be at the table: Mr. Cullen, Ms. Arnold, Dr. Hammond, Mr. Gaudet, Dr. Sears, and Ms. Land.

Ladies and gentlemen, we'll begin with Mr. Cullen.

Please go ahead, sir.



Mr. Alex Cullen (Councillor, Bay Ward, City of Ottawa; Individual Presentation): Thank you, Madam Chair. My name is Alex Cullen, a member of Ottawa City Council, and I represent Bay Ward, in Ottawa's west end. I'm joined by my colleague Councillor Elisabeth Arnold, who represents Somerset Ward. We will be sharing our time, although five minutes is not a lot to share.

Municipalities are accounted as the level of government closest to the people, so it's not surprising that pressures to regulate the cosmetic pesticides are most directly felt here. My member of Parliament, Marlene Catterall, is a former City of Ottawa councillor. She was telling me some twenty years ago, mothers in her ward surrounded the ball diamond at Frank Ryan Park to stop the city from spraying pesticides in the area where their children were to play. They didn't want to expose their children to the health risks associated with pesticides. They saw no harm in running from base to base over dandelions and plantain.

Efforts of community groups like these have multiplied in the City of Ottawa. They include the Crystal Beach and Lakeview Breathe Deep Campaign, a group of young mothers in my ward who go knocking on neighbourhood doors to advocate safer alternatives to pesticides; GC Park!--GO meaning "grow organically"; the Kanata Environmental Network; and the Ottawa branch of the Allergy Environmental Health Association, just to name a few of these organizations.

In the last municipal election, when I was canvassing from door to door, I saw many signs placed by people declaring their lawns and gardens pesticide-free. I was often challenged about why the city would allow pesticide applications requiring the posting of signs telling people not to mow on the grass because it was dangerous for their health. Today, the City of Ottawa no longer sprays its ball diamonds, soccer pitches, or parks with chemical pesticides. This year, the city is producing a \$400,000 public education campaign on safer alternatives to chemical pesticides. But that's only one city, and this is where Bill C-53 comes in.

The banning of the cosmetic use of pesticides should not be left to local choice, as I am not aware that the toxic effects of pesticides affect children differently in Kelowna, B.C., or in Goose Bay, Labrador. The onus should not be on municipalities. Many do not have the resources or the research necessary for such a bylaw. When they do act, they are often opposed by pesticides companies that use the Pest Management Regulatory Agency as a shield, asking why we should regulate something if it's considered safe by the PMRA. Quite simply, it's because our doctors, and our residents with environmental sensitivities tell us to do so because there are health risks to pesticides.

Bill C-53 should explicitly reflect the paramountcy of the precautionary principle. Pesticides are poisons meant to kill, and they shouldn't be used near people, and especially not near children who might be affected by them. Why permit the risks when there are safer alternatives? Show leadership by providing public education on safer alternatives to pesticides. Act decisively in banning the cosmetic use of pesticides. If Parliament Hill carries pesticide-free--which it is--then why can't Canada's neighbourhoods be?

Elisabeth.



Ms. Elisabeth Arnold (Councillor, Somerset Ward, City of Ottawa; Individual Presentation): I would like to start by applauding the federal government and Minister McLellan for taking the first steps, through Bill C-53, towards ensuring the safety of Canadians. I'm excited about the federal level responding to the concerns of growing numbers of Canadians.

One of the measures that I see as a measure of that growing concern is the website of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. We are upwards of 20,000 to 30,000 hits per month from municipalities and members of our communities asking for information on alternatives to pesticides. I believe there's a strong case and a strong call for the development of national standards for the cosmetic use of pesticides, and that Canadians have a reasonable expectation that their health and environment will be protected regardless of where they are in Canada.

As a municipal representative, it's important to me that all three levels of government participate in the management of pesticides in a complementary manner. Although we recognize the jurisdictional differences between the different levels, all levels of government can engage in public information campaigns to advise Canadians on how to reduce their reliance on pesticides. Individual municipalities have been doing this, however, the message will have a much greater impact with the guidance and cooperation of the federal level.

Municipal efforts, coupled with local bylaws and programs, have included a strategy to eliminate unnecessary exposure to the cosmetic use of pesticides, and public information campaigns can only help in this regard. Further, the harm-reduction approach and precautionary principle to protecting the health of Canadians.

I applaud many components of the new legislation. Specifically, I applaud the changes making the protection of human health and the environment a priority; the use of the precautionary principle as an element underlying the re-evaluation of products; the basing of the assessment of products on risk assessment concepts; the requirement for adverse effects reporting; and the provision for the regular re-evaluation of risk.

products. But there are areas in which the bill must be strengthened.

As your committee is aware, the Canadian public is becoming more knowledgeable regarding the use of chemicals, and is expressing concern about their potential effects on health. Canadians are demanding the fast-track approval of less toxic alternatives; the recognition that elements of the active ingredient may be harmful and should be evaluated in the same way; and the acknowledgement of the municipal authority to regulate pesticides within the federal and provincial framework in order to respond to individual communities' concerns.

I would personally like to see the precautionary principle enshrined in the legislation through a ban on cosmetic use and through federal approval of alternatives. We should err on the side of health and the environment. All the constitutional arguments in the world are cold comfort when you are sick or if you die, and they are indefensible given that the effective alternatives do exist, albeit sometimes they require a little more elbow grease.

I believe Bill C-53 is a good step forward from the existing legislation, but it does need to be strengthened in the ways outlined.

Thanks very much.

Á  (1115)



The Chair: Next, from Citizens for Alternatives to Pesticides, we'll hear from founder Merryl Hammond.



Dr. Merryl Hammond (Founder, Citizens for Alternatives to Pesticides): Good morning, everyone. Thank you for inviting me here. My name is Merryl Hammond, and I'm a trained nurse with a doctoral degree in community health.

As you can see from the box on page 1 of my brief, I'm here to address two basic issues. Because of time restraints, I'm going to stick to one, the need for a moratorium on the non-essential or cosmetic use of pesticides, to be included in Bill C-53. Linked to that, and obviously supporting it, is the need to promote ecological alternatives to pesticides. As we've heard, those alternatives do exist and should be used. So the two do go together.

Exactly ten years ago, in the spring of 1992, I started a group called Citizens for Alternatives to Pesticides, in Baie-d'Urfé, which is now in Montreal. We wanted a ban on the cosmetic use of pesticides. Within about a year, CAP had members from right across Canada, with all of us working for the same thing: a ban on the cosmetic use of pesticides in our communities.

In 1994, I was lucky enough to meet with then Minister of Health Diane Marleau. By then, I had done enough research to be absolutely certain that all Canadians deserve the kind of protection that I was working for at the local, municipal level. I presented this evidence to her. Unfortunately, Minister Marleau turned a deaf ear to all that scientific evidence at the time, and I was forced to then write a book called *Pesticide Bylaws: I need them, how to get them*. I only advocated bylaws because I'd given up on leadership at this level.

The book was published in 1995, and I'd just like to read a little paragraph from it:

Unfortunately, the Minister of Health has not responded as quickly as we hoped she would. Until she does, it is the duty of responsible town councillors to protect the health and welfare of their constituents by restricting the use of pesticides in residential areas. A moratorium on cosmetic pesticide use seems the most logical place to begin: it can always be lifted if/when adequate scientific information is available to assure us that particular pesticides are, in fact, safe for use in residential settings. But in the meantime, if we are to err, let it be on the side of caution, on the side of public health and safety—not corporate profits.

Again, that was eight years ago, when we met with Diane Marleau. Those of you who have long memories will remember that the tainted scandal was raging at the time. I said then that when Canadians woke up to the "cosmetic use of pesticides scandal", it would be far worse than tainted blood one, because every Canadian is being exposed to pesticides against their will. Tainted blood only affected those who got transfused. I pointed out that the most vulnerable Canadians--pregnant women, young children, the elderly, and chemical-sensitive people--were all being exposed to these toxic chemicals in the very neighbourhoods where they lived, worked, and played. It was a scandal indeed.

As you all know, it remains a scandal to this day, except in a handful of municipalities across the country where there is now a ban on the cosmetic use of pesticides. In my own town, it took us ten years to get the full ban. We just got it in December of last year, before we were amalgamated. For Minister McLellan to duck her responsibility to "protect human health and safety and the environment"--that's straight from the bill--by downloading this crucial issue to municipalities, is quite frankly unconscionable in 2002.

Since I met with Diane Marleau eight years ago, have new studies been published to allay our fears? Quite the contrary. If any of you are following the medical or epidemiological literature, you will know that, almost as a weekly event, a new study comes out just reconfirming what I told Ms. Marleau eight years ago. The writing was on the wall eight years ago. We cannot wait any longer. It only adds to our concern. We're talking about childhood cancer, adult cancer, immunodeficiency disorders, neurological deficits, learning disabilities, reproductive disorders, and you name it. The evidence is now overwhelming. As responsible citizens, we cannot ignore this any longer. Now is the time to give Canadians the protection they want, need, and deserve.

Á  (1120)

How can we do this in the context of a bill? We hear about Bill C-53. If you flip to page 2 of my brief, you'll find that one simple and effective amendment that does not significantly alter the scope, purpose, objectives, or mandate of the bill, can be made.

On page 8, one of the headings is "Prohibitions". In other words, a section in the bill is prohibiting certain things about pesticides. Subclause 6(1) refers to unregistered pest control products. That's now going to be subclause 6(2), and we're going to insert a new subclause 6(1). In table 3 of my table, you'll see the new subclause 6(1), which will simply say:

No person shall use pesticides for non-essential purposes.

That's all we need. No person shall use pesticides for purposes that are non-essential, cosmetic, aesthetic, or you name it. Use whatever we want to use, but we all know what we mean. We're talking about urban use, where children play, etc., about what we've been hearing about

If we insert this new subclause 6(1) that I'm proposing, the current subclause 6(1) becomes 6(2) and so on, but the rest stays the same perfect. And then we have what we need, completely within the scope of the bill.

The minister is saying she wants to protect children. She's saying we must protect our vulnerable communities. She's saying "precaution principle". But nowhere in the bill is she giving teeth to those beautiful words. So let's put our money where our mouths are for once.

We obviously define what we mean by "cosmetic use" in our definitions. That's in footnote 2 on that same page.

So that's what we need. It's a quick amendment.

I won't discuss all the places in the written brief. There are suggestions about adding things and about using alternatives to pesticides w possible. They really pump up those aspects of the bill.

The ecological and organic farming sectors are invisible in this bill. That's not acceptable in this day and age.

Ladies and gentlemen, time does not permit me to address the other amendments, so I'll skip right over those. They all centre on the ne I've said, to include more about ecological alternatives.

So with that main amendment in place and with some fluffing around the other issues, I think we'll have a bill that Canadians can be prc and that this committee can give full vote to.

Thank you very much.



The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Hammond.

Next, from the Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides, we have Mr. Gaudet.



Mr. Michel Gaudet (Vice-President, Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides): The Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides is a non organization that was founded in December 1999 by a group of people affected by pesticides. Today, there are close to 20,000 members in their behalf, I wish to bring forward the following deficiencies, concerns, and suggestions in regard to Bill C-53.

We strongly urge the health committee to incorporate the precautionary principle firmly throughout the bill. The bill should reflect the pr the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency. The advisory council should consist of the broadest possible spectrum of public opinion.

It is requested that the health committee include in the bill a moratorium on the cosmetic use of synthetic pesticides across Canada by th of 2003, in order to protect human health, animals, wildlife, and the environment. This will ensure equal protection for all Canadians. The u synthetic pesticides should be prohibited for non-essential purposes. Pesticides should not be mixed with chemical fertilizer. There should t mandatory posting of appropriate warnings when pesticides are exceptionally used in and around public areas in communities. Only low-im pesticides should be allowed for use in homes, schools, daycares, office buildings, public lands, shopping centres, hospitals, and all other : frequented by the public.

Instead of the development of reduced-risk products, it is recommended that low-impact products that are risk-free for human health an environment be introduced. More biopesticides must be registered to reassure governments across Canada that the products homeowners u safe around the home, and that there is no risk to human health. Immediate implementation of a large-scale national training and assistanc program is required to allow for public green-space workers and lawn-care operators to learn the alternatives to chemical pesticides and ot chemicals used to maintain all public and private green spaces.

The bill should call for the removal of all synthetic pest control products from stores and garden centres, and only low-impact pesticides be sold from behind counters by trained staff. Public education on the safe alternatives available to chemical pesticides should be a key con of the bill.

The bill should include a fast-track approval process for the registration and use of low-impact, non-toxic pesticides. The precautionary p must be upheld for any registration or re-registration of any product that indicates damage to human health or the environment.

The registration of pesticides should be done every three to five years. The application of the substitution principle as used in the Swedi: Environmental Code should be implemented. This will require that older pesticides be replaced by newer, non-chemical alternatives and biopesticides.

A clear and unequivocal statutory mandate must be given to the Pest Management Regulatory Agency, and the regulatory process must b open and transparent. In dealing with risk management, a process must exist to allow every Canadian to find out the percentage of risk tha incurs when pesticides are used not only by individuals themselves, but also by neighbours and from drift.

In testing of pest control products, the following should be taken into consideration: endocrine disruption, immunodysfunction, neuroto: and carcinogenicity of the pesticides. The inert ingredients of all products should be made available to the public. A synthetic pesticide that banned in an OECD country should also be banned in Canada without delay, and it should be removed at the earliest from our lands, witho phasing them out, in order to allow the toxic banned products to be used up.

Clauses 42 to 44 of the bill should be equivalent to sections 51 to 53 of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, on measures that wc allow for the broadest public disclosure of information to the public. The prime concern and sole purpose of Health Canada should be to pl: human health above all else. This should be reflected in Bill C-53. Health Canada should not concern itself with the value and/ or economic of pest control products.

When calculating risk management, the bill should make provisions for those who are made ill by pesticides, by providing for specializ: and treatment centres. At present, there are only two centres in all of Canada that can treat people who are damaged by the environment. T waiting period for these centres runs to two years.

The acute and chronic effects of pesticides should be entered into a national data-collection bank and be made available to the public. R:

required on the synergistic effects of pesticides. There should be a process for research on and funding of low-impact, non-toxic biological pesticides. A mechanism should be set up for submissions of independent scientific findings.

While considering this bill, it is requested that the health committee keep the following in mind with respect to science. Science is man-made thus it can be flawed. In today's environment, with the thousands of toxic substances that we're exposed to from before birth until death, it is impossible to know scientifically the exact effects of these chemicals individually or collectively on our fragile cells. From the various studies on effects of toxins on humans, a grim picture has emerged. The Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides Québec urges you to use the precautionary principle at every clause of Bill C-53.

Á   (1125)

Lastly, I wish to inform you that as a Québécois, I am proud to have a government that has the intention of passing legislation regarding pesticides, for the protection of human health and the environment. I especially thank our Minister of the Environment, Mr. André Boisclair, for his critical move to place the health of all Quebecers above all else. This should be an example for the federal government to protect the health of all Canadians equally by implementing an immediate moratorium on the cosmetic use of synthetic pesticides.

Thank you for your attention.



The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gaudet.

Next, from the Green Coalition, we have Mr. David Fletcher, the director.

Á   (1130)



Mr. David Fletcher (Director, Green Coalition): First of all, I would like to say that the Green Coalition is an umbrella of environmental groups. It was founded as a chartered organization in March 1990, and is based in Montreal.

The Green Coalition is pleased to see that, at long last, the Pest Control Products Act will be replaced by an act more suited to the protection of human health, safety, and the environment. We are pleased with the overall thrust of Bill C-53, now before the House of Commons, with its commitment to the principles of sustainable development. We have identified some features that we would like to see either modified or in order to enhance the realization of its stated aims.

Firstly, adherence to the precautionary principle should be seen as fundamental in the new act. From our perspective, its inclusion is particularly important. In paragraph 31 of the Supreme Court judgment on the Hudson bylaw, Madame Justice Claire L'Heureux-Dubé cites paragraph 1 of the Bergen Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Development, 1990:

In order to achieve sustainable development, policies must be based on the precautionary principle. Environmental measures must anticipate, prevent and attack the causes of environmental degradation. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation.

I therefore submit to you that human health can only be viewed in the context of an environment that is healthy itself.

The precautionary principle is one of the pillars upon which the judgment stands. As pointed out by several MPs during first reading, it is in Bill C-53 only in reference to the review of already-registered products, and even here it is qualified with the condition that it be cost-effective. I would submit to you that this is a virtual oxymoron, as the cost of human health can't be weighed against economic costs. The precautionary principle should be an important pillar in the overall administration of the new act, and the major determinant in all decisions.

Secondly, we have found no reference to the Pest Management Regulatory Agency in the bill. Subclauses 5(1) and 5(2) provide for the establishment of "an advisory council of persons whose interests and concerns are affected by this Act", with the reports of that council to be filed in the registry by the minister. We are left to presume that the advisory council will replace the PMRA. The advisory council will wield enormous power and will be charged with putting into action the objectives outlined in the act's stated mandate in clause 4. The stated primary objective is to "prevent unacceptable risks to people and the environment from the use of pest control products." From our perspective, the wording of subclause 5(1) is too vague, leaving too much to the discretion of the minister in terms of its composition.

Given that this act may be on the books for 33 years, the lifetime of the last act; given the number of registered chemical products that have had to be withdrawn during that time because of their pernicious health or environmental effects; and given the laudable goals set forth in the bill to protect human health and the environment in accordance with the principles of sustainable development; it seems clear that an elaborate advisory council should be made of who those persons are "whose interests and concerns are affected". Clearly, those persons seeking to have a product registered, as well as potential end users, would be interested and concerned for financial reasons. However, there are certainly other parties that have a stake--be it social, environmental, or health-related--in whatever report is presented to the minister.

We believe the broadest possible spectrum of public opinion must be brought to bear in the registration process, with that opinion voiced in the advisory council report. We believe child care professionals, workers with the elderly, labour organizations, farm workers, the medical profession, psychologists and social workers, organic farmers, and alternative lawn-care specialists, to name a few, are all potentially interested and concerned parties. They should be included for participation in the advisory council's deliberations.

Á   (1135)

Thirdly, with respect to the banning of the cosmetic use of pesticides--which, by any measure, is a wasteful and dangerous practice--it is our view that this sort of restriction is completely in keeping with the stated goals of the bill. All Canadians must be accorded equal protection under the law, whatever that law might be. Under the new act, the restriction of the use of pesticides will be totally and properly within the purview of the Government of Canada, as it was under the old act. This fundamental principle must not be left to the whim of lower jurisdictions, namely the municipalities. Living on the very narrow lines between communities must not perceive that the importance of their health is treated differently. If pesticides are a threat to health, they are a threat to everyone's health, irrespective of his or her beliefs.

The revision of the law as proposed in Bill C-53 clearly recognizes the threat. Otherwise, we wouldn't be going through this revision process.

federal government must exercise leadership in this regard and ban the use of pesticides for cosmetic purposes.

Fourthly, there must be an expeditious review of all products now on the registry, for their potential for any pernicious physiological and including carcinogenesis, immunosuppression, neural degeneration, and endocrine disruption in all non-target species--and I include human category. Reviews should include testing for negative synergies with other coincident chemical exposures, not just environmental ones. I will therefore include prescription medications, which very often act in the same way as the pesticides.

Finally, there must be a fast-track process that respects the substitution principle. There should be expeditious approval of products established to be safe in other extrajurisdictional jurisdictions, such as the United States and the European Union. As well, any newly researched benign alternative must be made available at the earliest possible time. A properly representative advisory council can ensure that rigorous criteria pertaining to safety and efficacy are brought to bear in the light of the precautionary principle.

I would finish simply by reminding everyone here that *Our Common Future* was released in 1987. That was the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, the commission chaired by Gro Harlem Brundtland. In the annexes, we have the Tokyo Declaration. Article 1 states:

Greater public participation and free access to relevant information should be promoted in decision-making processes touching on environment and development issues.

I think we quite clearly have a precedent there for involving people in the deliberations of the advisory council.

I'm done. Thank you.



The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fletcher.

We'll now move on to the Health Dangers of the Urban Use of Pesticides group. Their spokesperson is Dr. Meg Sears.



Dr. Meg Sears (Spokesperson, Health Dangers of the Urban Use of Pesticides): Thank you for this opportunity.

The City of Ottawa's advisory committee has asked me to speak on the science. I'm trained as a scientist; I have a doctorate in biochemical engineering. I do some writing on health, environmental, and scientific matters for some doctors, so I have a broad appreciation of what this is.

Bill C-53 provides a framework for making a decision as to whether or not, how, and why we use toxic chemicals. Let's not beat around these things. We're dealing with fire, so we must be cautious.

There are two sides to this: a risk and a benefit. When we're assessing risk, we're depending upon science. Bill C-53 makes it quite obvious we're depending upon science, and upon good science. But what is science? I'm a scientist, so I'd like to speak briefly about that.

Science is a mechanism, a process, the way in which we have built up pictures about how our world works. Those pictures have been built because some people have asked questions and have then done experiments to answer them. In tiny bits and pieces, we have built marvelous pictures of how our world works, but they are only small fragments. If we stand back and squint at everything, it's like those little pictures made with dots. We can see a picture, but we don't have the entire picture. That is what science is.

When you're assessing the risk of pesticides, what kind of science can you use? You can use epidemiological studies, but these are rife with problems. Obviously, epidemiological studies are studies done retrospectively on people who may or may not remember what they were exposed to. They may not even know what they are or were exposed to--and that, by the way, is another big issue with Bill C-53: the need to have full complete disclosure of all ingredients on the labels and available in the stores and to doctors. So that's one kind of study that we can do.

These studies are very difficult to do, but in one instance, a compelling study is emerging. In Mexico, children of very similar background in a valley where a lot of agricultural pesticides are used, are being compared to children in the foothills of the mountains, where they use no agricultural pesticides. The valley children are being very severely compromised. But these are all normal "children". Dr. Elizabeth Guillet has been carrying on this experiment for almost a decade now, is painting a chilling, compelling picture of how normal people are very well compromised. And because pesticides are affecting everybody, we don't even know. All of this is just going to slide on by with our epidemiological studies, because everybody is being exposed to these things.

If we can't figure out what the risk is by using epidemiology, we can go to the lab to look at animals. But animals aren't people, and there are lots of problems with those experiments.

We can also use cells in test tubes, and we can add chemicals and see what happens. You might be able to model a liver, model a kidney, a brain, or model a nervous system, but how do you extrapolate what happens in your test tubes to what happens in an organism or what happens in one person or another person? This is impossible.

Science cannot tell us really and truly what the risks of pesticides are. When people are coming forward and are asking for permission to use a pesticide, the Government of Canada is asking them for absence of proof of harm. Canadians are being completely sidelined, because this absence of proof of harm is being interpreted as proof of absence of harm. These are completely different things and they must not be confused, but have been. This is why, up front, we must be very cautious when dealing with toxic chemicals. This is why, front and centre in Bill C-53, we have a precautionary principle.

Á (1140)

There's a crisis of confidence every week, be it pressure-treated wood or paradichlorobenzene in diaper pails. We have carcinogens and other things that we now realize are harming the health of Canadians. We're not looking for small tweaks of the bill, we're looking for a major change in direction. Canadians don't want to be exposed inadvertently, all the time, to a broad range of toxic chemicals.

So that's the risk, but there is another aspect to Bill C-53, and that's the benefit. Obviously, you know that if you have cancer, you are going to take chemotherapy, which is a very toxic chemical used for a benefit. With the way in which Bill C-53 works, the benefit is being determined by the policy of the Government of Canada.

Do you have a question?



Mr. Reg Alcock (Winnipeg South, Lib.): I signalled so that I could ask you a question. That's the procedure we have here, yes.



Dr. Meg Sears: So the benefit is entirely the policy of the Government of Canada, and it should be a policy of the Government of Canada. Dandelions do not merit toxic chemicals. That is clearly the policy of Canada right now. If it is not the policy of Canada, why are we not using pesticides on Parliament Hill?

So you have a possible risk, and we have a possible benefit. This is how we're making our decisions.

In conclusion I just want to introduce you to somebody. I'm not only a scientist, I'm also a mother. Science will never tell us what really happened, but this is somebody who possibly fell on the wrong side of your risk-benefit analysis. This is a picture of my son. He died just a year ago, of a malignancy that was possibly caused.... When I was pregnant with him, they constructed a golf course just down the road from them. They used a vast quantity of pesticides when they were doing that.

Á (1145)



The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Sears.

We'll now proceed to the second part of our meeting, which is questioning of the witnesses by the members, and we'll start with Mr. Merrifield.



Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): I want to thank you all for coming. It is indeed a very interesting subject, and that's very important to Canadians. It's very important to the livelihood of all Canadians and to all people around the world as we go forward into the 21st century. There's no question of that, so it's appropriate to review the bill at this time since this hasn't been looked at for 33 years. This is overdue.

I think you've addressed some of the benefits, some of the good things about the bill, and you've also pointed to some of the problems we see. If I could wrap it up, I'd say that all of the testimony we heard this morning would suggest that pesticides should really not be used for cosmetic use or non-essential use. Can you elaborate a little bit on what you would see as an area in which it would be essential for chemical use and in which you would recommend that they be used?



Mr. Alex Cullen: Who wants to touch that one, eh?

For thousands of years, human beings have survived without pesticides. We've evolved, we've become healthier, and we've grown civilization. I think the onus is always to show that if you're going to introduce something that's toxic to human health and to the environment--because of the environment--then you have to do the cost-benefit analysis. And obviously there are lines you must draw.

We're not here to advocate for pesticides, we're here to advocate against pesticides. Why? Because they pose a threat to human health. I see a better way to provide agricultural products, the food that we need to live with, that's fine. But somehow, right up to the 20th century, because pesticides only became commercially available--



Mr. Rob Merrifield: Excuse me for a second, but just to let you know the procedure here, if you go on too long in response to a question, it limits my time and the chair will cut me off. So I'm not trying to be rude, but I will cut you off if I feel your answer is getting long.

I understand that you're advocating against pesticides, but you're saying you're against them for non-essential use. You are therefore saying there are some essential uses for pesticides. A follow-up to that question would therefore be on the PMRA, which registers the pesticides now. Are you comfortable that they're going through appropriate measures, that they're not efficient enough, that they're allowing chemicals into the country when they shouldn't be? Is that what you're saying?

Maybe somebody else would take a run at where they would recommend the essential use of pesticides.



Mr. Michel Gaudet: The only time we'd recommend the use of pesticides is when human health is in danger. For instance, you may have tried all alternatives but they have not worked. But that's very rare. Our coalition has experience with companies treating lawns organically, and getting rid of almost everything. By chance, however, in one case they might not succeed in getting rid of *l'herbe à poux*, for instance. They could use a chemical on that. But in this instance, you would use the minimum, and only when human health is in danger. If you need to do that because the alternatives didn't work, then you could use a pesticide. Otherwise, there's no need to use it not to have dandelions on your lawn.



Mr. Rob Merrifield: Can you tell me where that would be applied in Canada, then? The Canadian agriculture industry probably uses more chemicals than anyone else does.



Mr. Alex Cullen: It's the other way around. Acre per acre, more pesticides are used in the urban area for cosmetic use than are used in the agricultural industry.



Mr. Rob Merrifield: Well, we're bouncing figures around here.



Dr. Meryll Hammond: Yes, per acre, in terms of the dose we're exposed to, it's higher in residential areas. I have the figures. Agriculture uses 1.5 pounds per acre per year, whereas homeowners use 3 to 10 pounds per acre per year.



Mr. Rob Merrifield: That's a significantly different number from what was just suggested. But I understand the numbers. That's fine, and let's get into the debate on that per acre. But what you're suggesting points to the use of the pesticides as being maybe a little inappropriate in terms of the dosage and so on in the urban centres, and you may well be right there.

Á (1150)



Dr. Meryll Hammond: It's their use in urban centres.

If I can just say something from our side, as a citizen's organization, we didn't feel competent to tackle the farming issue. Most of us eat our food at home. If we don't want pesticides on our back lawns, why on earth would we want them on our tables? I'm a health professional and I didn't feel comfortable tackling the whole issue of agriculture, because I don't have those skills. We know there are organic producers, and their voice needs to be heard. The need to be seen in the bill as well. But just as a citizen's organization, we didn't feel confident about treading on that vested interest. That's why we--



Mr. Rob Merrifield: That's why I was just asking the questions on the balance of it.

Perhaps I can ask the scientists a question. You brought up the study in Mexico, and that was the second time we've had witnesses bring it up. Can you tell me which chemicals were used in that study?



Dr. Meg Sears: I can't tell you all of the agricultural chemicals being used, but this is in Mexico and they're part of NAFTA, so--



Mr. Rob Merrifield: Are those chemicals legally registered in Canada, then?



Dr. Meg Sears: Most probably. It's possible that not all of them are, but these chemicals have similar mechanisms of action. There would certainly be comparable exposures within some Canadian populations.

But it's difficult to compare agricultural uses to lawn issues, as well, just because the range of chemicals is--



Mr. Rob Merrifield: The only reason I bring it up is that you used it as a basis for part of the scientific danger.



Dr. Meg Sears: What it's showing--



Mr. Rob Merrifield: I'm just pointing out that the chemicals used in that experiment were not registered in Canada and are not approved in Canada, so we want to be careful about how we throw--



Dr. Meg Sears: No, this is not an experiment.



Mr. Rob Merrifield: Maybe we're talking about a different study, then.



Dr. Meg Sears: No, this is a--



Mr. Rob Merrifield: Yes, you're right. It's not an experiment, it's a study.



Ms. Elisabeth Arnold: I think that's why...[*Editor's Note: audible*]...Bill C-53. Even amongst members of the agricultural sector, which to be where you're focusing your questions, there is a demand for alternatives to chemical pesticides. What we would want to see in Bill C-53 is fast-tracking of the approval of alternatives so that we can help our agricultural producers to compete. In fact, what we're seeing around there is a growing market for chemical-free agricultural produce. If you want to bring it down to that specific point, I think there certainly is a competitive advantage to having a bill that is going to help our agricultural community compete in that marketplace. There are clearly health benefits and environmental benefits to doing that. That wasn't necessarily the thrust of my presentation as an urban councillor, but we're certainly hearing through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities website and at our meetings at the federation.



Mr. Rob Merrifield: I certainly appreciate that comment. I think all sides on this issue are suggesting that one area that should be in the legislation is the timeliness of bringing products onto market so that they can be used competitively, so that the best technology can be used so that the safer products can be used.



Mr. David Fletcher: Just coming back to this whole question of which specific chemicals can be used, I think we must be very careful about using what we have in product data sheets when it comes to the establishment of which ones are dangerous and which ones are not.

If I may give you a personal experience, I was the teacher involved with the children who were sprayed by ChemLawn at the school in Pierrefonds and Dollard in 1986. I don't know if you recall that particular incident, but Agriculture Canada took ChemLawn to court and won the case, and ChemLawn was fined.

There were a whole lot of representations made regarding the chemical. A chemical that might be used agriculturally might be used for other reasons, but in regard to its safety, the CEO of ChemLawn came down to my school post-haste, held a press conference in my school, and said that this product was, in point of fact, less toxic than Aspirin. That begs the question, by the way, about whether or not they're going to be using Aspirin all over the community.

What was instructive in this was that this was treated as a benign chemical. I asked my principal at the time...I had to have my principal had to keep my head low because my job was put on the line. I had to be quiet.

Á (1155)



Mr. Rob Merrifield: Could I ask you to wrap it up? I have one more question to get out.



Mr. David Fletcher: Yes, but may I make this point? This one point is very important.

This was treated as a benign chemical and not as a carcinogen. I spoke on the Chevron hotline for 45 minutes with Dr. John Hall in San Francisco. At the end of that time, he told me that, in point of fact, it had induced cancers in the kidneys of one genetically relatively homozygous strain of mice, females only.

I just want to bring to your attention the fact that, according to *The Politics of Cancer*, by Dr. Samuel Epstein, there are nine Environmental Protection Agency principles that say there is in fact no threshold for these particular chemicals. Anything that induces tumours in animals is considered to be carcinogenic for man, whether or not those tumours are benign. I have it right here in front of me, and I also have the box of briefcase and would be quite happy to show you the references. It was in relation to the carcinogenicity of aldrin and dieldrin back in 1970. In fact, the EPA elaborated these nine principles, and they're right here.

That chemical, acting in tandem with other chemicals that are latent in the environment, could be inducing cancers as much as twenty or thirty years later. These are the dangers that we have to deal with. These are the things our children go into. There are the sources of our problems relating to our environment, be it in the urban milieu or in the country. We can't go anywhere without being exposed to these ubiquitous, pervasive chemicals, and it's time we put a stop to that.



The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fletcher, Mr. Merrifield.

We'll proceed to Mr. Ménard, who will be followed by Mr. Alcock.

[*Translation*]



Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga--Maisonneuve, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair. If you please, I will start with a more general question. Having heard your entire presentation, am I correct in concluding that one of the most significant amendments that you hope to see adopted in the report, and consequently in the Act, is a very clear prohibition of the use of pesticides for cosmetic purposes. You seem to believe that such an amendment would not be struck down by the courts, and would be supported by a good number of our fellow citizens?

I am convinced that it should be adopted, but we have to have a strong unanimity. Could any of you tell us what the implications this amendment to the Bill would be. I think that you are the best person to answer this question, to start.

[*English*]



Dr. Merryl Hammond: What difference would it make? It would send the clear signal that, in my humble opinion, should have been sent to Canadians at least eight years ago: that we're dealing with a toxic situation, and that we are taking leadership.

Once Canadians realize that the product being dispersed in their neighbourhoods is not benign, other processes will continue. People will ask the same questions that many of us have asked for years--What am I eating? What am I breathing?, etc.--and the ball will get rolling. We know we have to go in that direction. This is like a first step. It's the minimum the Canadian government could do right now, given that we understand the vested interests, the jobs, etc. All the people currently employed in the toxic lawn care industry will learn how to look after without pesticides. In fact, there are jobs to be done there, so we're talking about a conversion process. Slowly, they will wake up.

But this is the signal that needs to be sent, because what's happening now is untenable. We cannot justify it. Knowing what we now know the effects of these chemicals, we cannot justify their use for something as frivolous as cosmetic use.

[Translation]



Mr. Réal Ménard: If anyone wishes to add anything else, now is the time. If not, I will ask my next question. In fact, I have three questions for us to compare possible roles for the various levels of government, what has the Ottawa municipality done up to now regarding this?

After that, we'll throw the ball around. You have eloquently cited the kind and charismatic Minister of the Environment, Mr. André Boisclair, as an example for the other provinces. Perhaps you would like to help me convince my colleagues that Quebec's example should be followed elsewhere. This is a non-partisan issue: everyone will understand this.

⤴ ⤵ (1200)

[English]



Mr. Alex Cullen: Believe it or not, this is a new city of Ottawa. We had eleven municipalities before last year. As a result of those eleven municipalities coming together, we have harmonized our bylaws and have now adopted a policy that will not see the cosmetic use of pesticides on city property. That property includes city parks, city soccer pitches, city baseball diamonds, etc. So we have taken that step, and, of course, our staff are using safer alternatives, because we still have to have soccer pitches that you can run on, baseball diamonds that you can play on,

and we've also taken the step of investing in or developing a program on public education for safer alternatives, in order to show people that they can have their lawns, they can have weed-free lawns, they can have green lawns, without threatening the health of their neighbours. We're developing this information campaign. It'll give information about the techniques to do that, the ability to do that, and the reasons to do that. Our hope is that, this fall, we'll be able to see the introduction of a bylaw to ban the cosmetic use of pesticides in the urban area.

[Translation]



Mr. Réal Ménard: Before I let your colleague speak, and without giving me a biographical account of your career, I understand that you were a municipal councillor for the City of Ottawa.

[English]



Mr. Alex Cullen: We have a rural section. As a matter of fact, we're larger than Prince of Edward Island is, but 90% of the population is in the urban area. But if you go outside the Greenbelt--and I invite you to do so--you will find that about 90% of our area, our land mass, is agricultural. Right now, our focus is on where people live in communities, so we're dealing with the cosmetic use of pesticides in the urban area.



Ms. Elisabeth Arnold: If I could just add one thing to this, the experience that we had going through amalgamation--love it or hate it--is a lesson with respect to pesticides. I think that lesson can be extrapolated to the federal level.

First, pesticides are transboundary products, and people move across boundaries. One of the arguments in the previous regime was that we couldn't have a more stringent pesticide policy in the old city of Ottawa than we had in the city of Vanier, etc. Now that we're in amalgamation, we don't have that argument anymore.

So I think it's extremely important that we have a basic, uniform--

[Translation]



Mr. Réal Ménard: I know that Ms. Scherrer has noted that there are positive benefits in municipal fusion.

[English]



Ms. Elisabeth Arnold: There aren't many, but this is one, in order that we don't end up with this very unequal treatment of human health and environmental issues.



The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ménard.

We'll go to Mr. Alcock.



Mr. Reg Alcock: I was struggling as I was listening to the presentations. Dr. Sears, you got me thinking about part of the problem we were talking about science, because it's a problem that comes up in a whole bunch of areas, not just in this one around pesticides. It came earlier discussion we had around stem cell research, and it comes up in the certification of new drugs and in GMOs. It is this question: If you yourself on this side of the table, one of the things one has to do is establish processes on which one can rely to assist in making these decisions.

In the narrow focus of cosmetic use of pesticides in urban centres, I think there is an argument to be made about whether or not there is a compelling need to use the chemicals. But in the broader sense that this bill covers, there is always this need to determine whether or not something has some benefit to weigh against the risks. The problem that governments have all the time is where to go for advice on that. In the end, you turn to the scientific community for some sort of structured advice.

And I agree with your comments that there are flaws in that. We saw the actions of the University of Toronto recently. Because of concern over funding, it tried to suppress a person doing particular kinds of research. One doesn't dismiss the power of industries in shaping those opinions. Those are very real debates.

Having said that, though, there is also a large scientific community that is honourable, responsible, and focused. People do not want to do things that can cause damage to other people. I think there is a broad intention to try to always weigh those things. Part of the problem is something that I've noticed increasingly in the debate today--and not "today" as in here and now, but in the general debate. We are beginning to discredit scientific opinion to such an extent that we're losing any credible source to go to for a real opinion on the benefit or non-benefit of anything. We freeze ourselves into inaction in the sense that, in the same way that these chemicals and these changes have produced very real threats, very real risks, and very real problems, they have also produced substantial benefits.

▲ (1205)



Mr. Alex Cullen: [*Editor's Note: Inaudible*]



Mr. Reg Alcock: Well, the bill covers pesticide use, not just municipal pesticide use.

I would be interested in some comments from you in terms of the process that we use to determine whether or not the science is valid or whether or not the product selection process works. In addition to your narrow focus on cosmetic chemicals, if I'm living next to a farm--as I do--I might have very similar concerns. But where do we go to get credible scientific opinions that you will accept?



Mr. David Fletcher: If I may make a point, I mentioned something about the synergies of these chemicals before. I've looked at the data myself. I've done so for many years now. The scientific community treats all of these chemicals in isolation from one another. During my career, John Hall, one of my questions was whether this chemical that induced cancers in mice was tested in isolation from other things with which it occurs in the environment. He admitted that it was tested alone. As I said, that doesn't have anything to do with prescription medications that might also be exposed to and which are neuroactive.

I'm not sure even the scientific community can bring light to bear on the kinds of synergies we might get from things that come together coincidentally in the environment or come to us by way of our food, our medications, or whatever. How can you possibly do that? It's such a complex system. We can't predict the weather, so how can we predict that?



Mr. Reg Alcock: And the solution is?



Mr. Alex Cullen: Eighty years ago, doctors were advertising the benefits of smoking. They were in magazines in terms of lifestyle, images, the whole bit. Now, of course, there may still be some doctors who smoke, but we know what the medical profession is saying.

It may be that the sea is shifting here, but when the Ontario College of Family Physicians, the Ontario Public Health Association, the Canadian Public Health Association, and the Canadian Cancer Society all say to you that there are health risks associated with pesticides, then you have to apply a precautionary principle. It's no longer a question of proving that it's safe, you have to show that it provides no harm. Use the evaluation criteria but place the onus on protecting human health. If you can show it's not going to harm anybody, and show that all its components--and not just the active ingredient--are safe. We know much more than that now.

Things are shifting. Yes, you're caught in this change and it makes life difficult, but quite frankly--and I'm sorry to go back to this--people's environmental sensitivities don't always just live in the city. When they're out there and are being affected when they can't go out of their homes when pesticides are being applied, you know there's a problem.



Mr. Reg Alcock: Then why aren't you advocating the ban of all pesticides? Why just in the city?



Mr. Alex Cullen: I'm being driven by my community in terms of dealing with something that's right before us here. Two years ago, your committee said we should phase out the cosmetic use of pesticides. That's not in this bill. Do this.



Ms. Elisabeth Arnold: I think it's also a question of the burden of proof. Are we going to be operating on a set of sciences that say we

been able to prove there's a direct link longitudinally, or are we going to be operating on a base of scientific proof that says we can guarantee there is no harm?

The other piece of this is where there are alternatives. We know there are viable alternatives to the cosmetic use of pesticides. We know things that work, that produce the same results. What we don't have available to us are those alternatives for the large agricultural sector. That's partly because we haven't done the research and haven't been able to support our agricultural community in order to get our food supply out of dependency on cosmetic pesticides. But we need to get there. We absolutely need to get there.

I come from a farm family that is very concerned about this. They are making decisions about their economic livelihood while sometimes knowing they may be putting their own health at risk. As a nation, we have to get our heads around that and provide them with solutions so they don't have to make those choices.

 (1210)



The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Alcock.



Dr. Merryl Hammond: Can I just make a quick response on the scientific...?



The Chair: No, I'm sorry. It's Mr. Comartin's turn.



Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor--St. Clair, NDP): Just as a quick statement to all of you, I'm going to be asking these questions with the assumption--which is a false assumption--that there is any chance that we're going to get a ban. I just want to be clear on that. I'm going to be playing a bit of a devil's advocate, but you're not going to get any....

Mr. Cullen, you made the point about the study. The very fact that this bill is here and not in front of the environment committee says where this government is with regard to what it's going to be doing with pesticides in this country.

Having said that, let me ask a couple of questions.

Dr. Hammond, on the amendment that you're proposing, if I read it right, the new provision for subclause 6(1) is broad enough that it would apply just to urban areas, but to rural and suburban areas as well. Is that correct?



Dr. Merryl Hammond: Sure.



Mr. Joe Comartin: In that regard, the further provisions in that section right near the end contain penalty provisions that are really quite substantial. Clearly, they are more designed to deal with the corporate or large offenders, if I can put it that way.

Did you look at that? Have you any suggestions on what types of penalties would be appropriate for individual residential landowners? Would an appropriate penalty be?



Dr. Merryl Hammond: I think that's a great point, but, no, I didn't look at it in the context of this brief. I certainly think we could look at the bylaws that have been passed though, and at some of the fines in bylaws that exist right now: \$500 for a first offence, and then \$1,000 whatever. Something like that would be appropriate. But that's a great point. That could be adjusted at the same time.



Mr. Joe Comartin: Just to stay with the subclause 6(1) that you proposed, take the hypothetical farmer in a small municipality with a boundary area of twenty homes. How do we deal with a penalty in those circumstances in which the farmer is spraying in what may be an essential use of pesticides? Obviously that spray is going to cross over into those residential areas, so how do we deal with that farmer? And again, I'm the advocate at this point.



Dr. Merryl Hammond: We all know about pesticide drift. It's a fact of life. But if it's not against the law and he's using it in a "legal" sense, he's not liable to be fined. At the moment, there's no protection for those of us who are downwind from anybody applying anything. That's another reason why we need a....

As I said, what we're proposing is a first step. Why didn't we ask for a ban on all pesticide use? Frankly, we didn't think that was reasonable in 2002. We're working towards that. Give us this one first, and then we'll have the energy to tackle the next issue. We're not going to go all the way and do it step by step. But we just didn't think that was reasonable. The whole world will go there one day.



Mr. Joe Comartin: This ban would cover 80% to 85% of the human population in Canada at this time?



Dr. Merryl Hammond: Exactly.



Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Gaudet, on that last question that I asked, does the Quebec bill address that type of thing? Does it ban pesticide areas?



Mr. Michel Gaudet: There is no bill tabled yet.



Mr. Joe Comartin: What about what Mr. Boisclair has been talking about?



Mr. Michel Gaudet: The intention of the Quebec government would be to ban pesticide use in urban areas, not in the agricultural ones—not at this point, in any case.

For one thing, you must realize that children will play on the lawn, but children are not likely to play in a cornfield. The pesticide applied in a park or on your lawn will affect children a lot more. Plus, you have the concentration of population in the urban areas.

In its code of pesticides for federal buildings, Environment Canada is starting to specify drift distance at less than 10 kilometres an hour. For Killlex, a well-known product, it is at least 100 metres. If you apply it to your house, you are affecting 40 families around your home.



Mr. Joe Comartin: Do you have any sense of what the definition of “urban area” would be?



Mr. Michel Gaudet: In the government bill? No.

Â  (1215)



Mr. Joe Comartin: No.

Those are all I have for now, Madam Chair.



The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Comartin.

Madame Scherrer.

[Translation]



Ms. H el ene Scherrer (Louis-H ebert, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I think that among most of the witnesses today, there is a consensus on the toxic effects of pesticides. I also believe that there seems to be a consensus on a formal request for a ban on all pesticide use for cosmetic purposes.

The question I have, and I hope that anyone concerned by this will respond, regards how this ban will be applied, namely, respecting the assurance that this ban will be effective in the end. I believe that to ensure that this functions properly, I think that the Ottawa city officials mentioned this, it obviously takes an information system for the city's people. I think that you also need human resources to propose alternative methods, and in addition, an entire system to ensure that there are penalties or at least fines, because it takes more than just promises, or a statement that pesticides not be used anywhere. In the end, it is one thing to talk about it, but ensuring implementation in each and every municipality is another matter. This is not an easy task.

I heard Mr. Fletcher say that application cannot be left up to the *wimps of lower governments*. I also heard Mr. Gaudet trumpet the merit of the upcoming Bill. My question is this: why do you want the federal government to be responsible for applying the legislation, and why not the municipalities, who seem to be quite successful, or the government, which has such an attractive Bill? Why do you absolutely want the Canadian government to handle the entire process and ensure application, when it seems to me that this is something that should be handled, on the contrary, at the lowest level of government, because that is where there is direct contact with the people and that implementation can be effective?

[English]



The Chair: Excuse me, but just as a process move, we don't usually have the witnesses raising their hands so that I recognize them. It would be helpful if you directed your question to someone.

[Translation]



Ms. H el ene Scherrer: My question, therefore, is for Mr. Fletcher and Mr. Gaudet because they are the two... My question is for all the w

[English]



The Chair: All those people have two and a half minutes in total to respond. That's about 30 seconds each.



Mr. David Fletcher: If I may make a point, having lobbied my municipality since 1986, since that Beechwood spraying incident, the municipality has consistently passed the buck off to higher levels of government. They have passed it on to the province or, more particularly, they have it on to the federal government, saying that, in point of fact, if the federal government is registering these products, they must be safe for use.

The most conservative elements in the municipalities are going to be using that argument across the country. In point of fact, they're making decisions that affect our health--we recognize that--and health is clearly the purview of the federal government. In point of fact, you must ensure that our health is safe. That shouldn't be left to a minor municipal official.

That would be my answer.

[Translation]



Mr. Michel Gaudet: As for the Quebec Bill, are we a distinct society to the point where pesticides only affect Quebecers? In my opinion, pesticides affect all Canadians. Bill C-53 is a Canadian Bill for all Canadians. Therefore, if the ban is from on high, if a small city like Saint-Lazare, with 100 inhabitants, can enforce the ban, I am sure that the federal government has the means to ensure adherence to the legislation. It ensures adherence to other legislation: it should be no different for this one.

[English]



Mr. Alex Cullen: These are products licensed by the federal government. If you don't permit these products to be out there, then we do have to deal with them. That's item number one.

Secondly, municipalities are all different. Some of them have golf courses and some of them want to accommodate golf courses. But pesticides affect all kids equally from coast to coast to coast. Why leave it to a patchwork series of regulations? Do it here and do it now.



The Chair: Thank you, Madame Scherrer.

We'll move to Mr. Lunney.



Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, Canadian Alliance): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to go back to the discussion about epidemiology and the relationship to childhood cancers. Adult cancers were also mentioned, as were neurological problems, immunodeficiency disorders, and endocrine dysfunction. Those were some of the things I heard mentioned this morning along with acute and chronic effects.

Along with this, just recently a study came out talking about the effect of pesticides on the ability of frogs and salamanders to reproduce. It talked about abnormalities in their sexual organs--testicles appearing within their ovaries and so on--and effects on their sexual reproduction. Perhaps they're related to the worldwide decline in amphibians.

Going back to this tragedy relating to your son, Dr. Sears, are you aware of any studies linking them to neuroblastoma?

À (1220)



Dr. Meg Sears: Yes, neuroblastoma has been linked tentatively--which is as strong as the evidence gets--to pesticide exposure both before conception and in utero.

This was a golf course that was being built at the time--very unscrupulously, I might add--right in my neighbourhood. A lot of pesticides were used. Enough pesticides were used to kill the fish in the creek. Enough pesticides were used to kill my son, perhaps.




Mr. James Lunney: Going back to the studies, for the record, are you able to cite some studies that we could refer to in relation to that?




Dr. Meryll Hammond: I have five references from peer-reviewed medical and epidemiological journals, linking brain tumours and brain cancer to pesticides. They're referred to in the brief I gave to the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development two years ago. I'm happy to give you a copy of that brief.





Mr. James Lunney: Thank you. That would be very helpful.

 **Mr. Alex Cullen:** That raises the question about why the position advanced by the Ontario College of Family Physicians, the Ontario Public Health Association, and the Canadian Public Health Association, would not be enough. When those health professionals say to ban the cosmetic use of pesticides, why would that not be enough?

 **Mr. James Lunney:** Thank you. That's an interesting question. We're the ones usually posing the questions and you're supposed to be answering them, but thank you for that observation.

Voices: Oh, oh!


 **Mr. James Lunney:** I'd just like to take you back to your comments about the City of Ottawa having introduced a program of public education on alternatives and so on. Could you describe that program to us?

 **Mr. Alex Cullen:** We're developing a message now. We certainly have the research to go forward. We already offer a hotline. It's 724-4 those of you who live in Ottawa and want to get some information on pesticide-free applications. We have a number of companies in town provide pesticide-free applications. The program will provide information, and we're trying to develop means to get that message across.

It turns out that there is a great demand for this out in the community. Courses or seminars offering information on pesticide-free alternatives are oversubscribed throughout our community. There's a great demand for this. People are becoming more and more aware of it. As a matter of fact, people are ahead of the politicians on this one.

 **Mr. James Lunney:** Thank you.

 **The Chair:** Dr. Fry.

 **Ms. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

You've made some compelling arguments about the whole concept of the non-cosmetic use of pesticides. Your argument about the whole of the precautionary principle and risk management is...it has been a clear principle in medicine for the longest possible time. Does a benefit outweigh the risk? In this instance, on a cosmetic approach, certainly you're making the argument that the benefit certainly does not outweigh the risk. I think that's pretty clear, and you've made a pretty compelling argument for that. However, I wanted to take the concept of risk management just a little bit further.

I know one likes to talk about good science and hard science, but we all know there is no such thing as hard science. What we know today, tomorrow...DDT is a good example. We think what we know today is fine, but twenty years from now, we realize something has created a whole set of problems for us. But I think that links with what Mr. Alcock was asking.

There is no way that we have a crystal ball. You talked a bit about the concept of the precautionary principle being written into a preamble some way. I wonder if you didn't think this statement, based on the bill...it basically says pest control products of acceptable risk will be used if they are shown to be efficacious, if conditions of registration can be established to prevent adverse health impacts, and with consideration of aggregate risk and cumulative effects on target populations, like children and pregnant women, etc. Given that nobody knows what hard science says, then in a preamble, isn't that sufficient to become known as a bit of a precautionary principle?

Of known pesticides, we already know some cause problems, but what if a new pesticide comes on the market? How do we deal with a new pesticide when we can't crystal-ball whether it has taken into consideration some of those risks, like auto-allergenic risks and other risks? How do we make those decisions? Is there not some way of seeing this as giving us that preamble that we need, that kind of statement that's already in the bill? Do you not think that's sufficient? And I'm not talking about the cosmetic use of pesticides.


 (1225)

 **Mr. Alex Cullen:** Okay.

It's like asking if 30 miles an hour is fast enough. It depends on the context. Here, when dealing with human life, 30-odd miles an hour is fast enough. You have to raise the bar. It's our health that's in place. If it's cosmetic use or any use, are pesticides affecting health?

You have knowledge now. You have this point in time to act now, based on the knowledge that you have. It can't be perfect, but you have to make an effort and raise that bar. What is the downside of raising that bar? Is it that health is going to be better protected? That's a downside that's an upside. Is it that we're somehow not going to get as many fruits and vegetables on the market as we might? Well, for many years, we've been able to feed a growing population without this.

Raise the bar. Necessity being the mother of invention, you will then have products coming online that will meet that bar. But we have 6 existing products that aren't meeting that bar.

 **Ms. Hedy Fry:** Before you all answer, I get what he's saying, but I just wanted to say something. You've used terms saying yes, but this committee has to indeed balance on growing fruits and vegetables not simply to feed a growing population, but also to become competitive

other countries of the world that sell fruits and vegetables.



Mr. Alex Cullen: But not at the cost of human health.



Ms. Hedy Fry: No, nobody's saying it's at the cost of human life. But I'm suggesting to you that we already know the effects of certain pesticides. Yes, we use the precautionary principle there. But you've suggested that there be something in the preamble. I'm asking you if this kind of preamble does not already weigh acceptable risk, aggregate risk, and cumulative effects on certain target populations? Doesn't really say what you want to know? Otherwise, you still have to answer Mr. Comartin's question. Are you saying we should ban not only current pesticides, but also future pesticides that may come on the market? If that's what you're saying, say so.



Mr. Alex Cullen: Raise the bar.



Ms. Elisabeth Arnold: I think the answer to your question is that there is no mechanism in the body of the bill to actually implement what we have in the preamble. That's the biggest problem.

How do you actually implement the precautionary principle? It has to be beyond the preamble. Yes, the preamble could be stronger, but the key element is making sure you actually do that, both with existing pesticides that are on the market and with future ones. If that could be changed in the bill, then I think we would have an ability to move forward and protect human health.



Ms. Hedy Fry: Good. Thank you.



The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Fry.

Mr. Comartin.



Mr. Joe Comartin: On that last point, I'll play lawyer for a minute. The reality, Dr. Fry, is that the preamble is not anything that is enforceable. Preambles don't work that way in law. They're an expression of intent, and nothing more than that. The judges ignore preambles when they interpret legislation.

To go to another point, though, several of you have used the terms "ban" and "suspension", and I think a third term was used, "moratorium". I'm not sure why you're using the different terms. Are they interchangeable, do you mean the same thing, or is there in fact some reason why you're using different terms?



Dr. Merryl Hammond: May I address that first? I come from South Africa. When I came to Canada, I learned a little bit about Canadian law and it seemed to me that "ban" was a radical word. It didn't seem to go over well with my neighbours, but when I used the word "moratorium" I found a much more open ear.

There is a difference. The idea behind a moratorium is that it's always open to being reassessed. When the evidence comes in from a country that has developed a safe pesticide, we can lift the moratorium. We can't do that with a ban. It's a kind of semantics, but the idea of a moratorium is definitely that we put it in place in order to protect--the precautionary principle. Then, if and when evidence comes in that a committee like yours agrees is solid enough to say the moratorium can be lifted in that chemical's case, you can spray it on your front lawn and at city hall. It's a fluid concept.

The bottom line is that I think many of us are using them interchangeably, like "cosmetic" and "non-essential" and "aesthetic purposes". People have said different things, but I think we're pretty well saying the same thing.

Â  (1230)



Mr. Michel Gaudet: In Quebec, our coalition is going for a "ban".

Voices: Oh, oh!



Mr. Joe Comartin: You're going for the ban. All right.

I think the problem with a moratorium or suspension is that when we're drafting, if we're going to use that type of terminology and establish a type of system, a time limit is usually put in. I suppose the difficulty I'm having with suspensions, temporary bans, or moratoriums, is that I don't know how you could put in a defined time period because of the 6,000 or 7,000 we have now, and God knows how many more may be coming. We don't know how you'd build that system.



Dr. Merryl Hammond: As a lawyer, if it's easier to go with a ban, then go with a ban.



Mr. Joe Comartin: Thank you, Madam Chair.



The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Comartin.

Seeing no one on this side, I will now go to Mr. Ménard.

[Translation]



Mr. Réal Ménard: One of you stated--I think it was Elisabeth--that agricultural research has not really be prepared to deal with substitute existing pesticides. Does that mean that as far as you know, the Department of Agriculture or the Department of Natural Resources or the 12 grants and contributions organizations have not funded any research in this domain these past years?

Witnesses have informed us that the small size of the Canadian market leads to much...Well perhaps you can be more specific on this issue state my question clearly. As far as you know, are there many products awaiting certification that could be considered effective substitutes? I want my question to be biased, which is why I have stated it this way. I see that you have reacted to my question, so perhaps you can tell me precisely. I don't like to provoke reactions in people, generally.



Mr. Michel Gaudet: It is true that there has not been much research, but let's look at one example. In Quebec, since 1986, it is forbidden to spray Quebec forests with chemical products. The industry reacted and found substitutes. They created what was needed. Therefore, if Quebec do it, I am sure Canada can do it.



Mr. Réal Ménard: Ah, be careful. It is not always so simple. There are troublemakers who are making me react.



Mr. Michel Gaudet: In that case, we'll show them.

[English]



Ms. Elisabeth Arnold: Part of the challenge is the fact that when we're talking about agricultural use, we're talking about many different types of agribusiness. We're talking about smaller, local producers, as compared to the very large international ones. In fact, we're now seeing a lot of what you could basically call globalized manufacturing agricultural practices, and it's very difficult to shift that kind of practice very quickly.

Has research been done? Yes. Are organic products available? Yes. But those are not presently the large proportion of products available. So I think we have to think about this in the context of what's happening around the world, because that's how our agricultural industry is changing.

[Translation]



Mr. Réal Ménard: You know that the Standing Committee on the Environment has already worked on this. An appendix by the Standing Committee on the Environment has already identified those products. Perhaps you could submit a list of products that should be eliminated or that could eventually be certified or that are already on the market? When we publish our report, we will have an idea of just how many products are being banned. I am stating this on the basis that there is a consensus to ban pesticides.

[English]



Ms. Elisabeth Arnold: It can't be provided to you today, but that kind of list can be provided, yes.

[Translation]



Mr. Michel Gaudet: In the United States, there are 175 bio-pesticides that have been certified; in Canada, there are 35.



Mr. Réal Ménard: This is because people in the private sector have not shown enough creativity.



Mr. Michel Gaudet: Or the PMRA was not fast enough; I don't know.



Mr. Réal Ménard: That could be a good question, if I still have time.



Mr. Michel Gaudet: Why are the products certified in the United States, and not in Canada? Certification takes a lot of time. Atrazine, which is banned in many European countries, is allowed here because according to PMRA, it is not dangerous. But it is dangerous for Europeans. I w

À (1235)



Mr. Réal Ménard: Do I have time to inquire about PMRA, Madam Chair, or is my time up?

[English]



The Chair: You have time for one more.

[Translation]



Mr. Réal Ménard: So, let's talk about PMRA. If tomorrow morning, you could change the PMRA, what would be your first suggestion for it more effective?

[English]



Mr. Alex Cullen: Add "any other cosmetic use of pesticides". That's it.



Dr. Merryl Hammond: He means apart from that.



Mr. Alex Cullen: Apart from that, there's the precautionary principle.

[Translation]



Mr. Michel Gaudet: Research is performed by the manufacturer. I have not seen one tobacco producer prove to us that cigarettes are dangerous. Obviously, any company approaching the PMRA for product approval is presenting research proving that the product is not dang

Even so, here is a manufacturer's specification sheet, from NuGro, in which it is stated that one of the ingredients is a carcinogen, according to the International Agency for Research on Cancer.

It is not even a pesticide; it is a fertilizer. We therefore know that it contains a carcinogen, and it is on the market.



Mr. Réal Ménard: PMRA is judge and executioner. But the Committee on the Environment has well documented this, I believe.

[English]



Dr. Merryl Hammond: I would say my main change would be to have an independent laboratory and an independent stock of scientists assessing the so-called evidence that comes in.

To get back to Mr. Alcock's point about where we turn for science, right now we're turning straight to the companies that earn profits from producing the poison. That's where we turn, but to me, that doesn't seem like an intelligent place to look. Rather, let's turn to independent, university-based researchers.

The weight of evidence, if we use that phrase, is overwhelming now. Studies have been published in--I keep using this phrase--"peer-reviewed medical or epidemiological journals. There's a process there. You weed out stuff with small sample sizes, with inadequate controls, etc. That's with a scientific process.

In the documents assessed by the PMRA right now, there is no such process. Something is going in to the PMRA and is then coming back with a stamp of approval, and Canadians are saying it must be safe because it has been approved by the Government of Canada. They say to me "we wouldn't allow it if it was dangerous." But when I phone Health Canada and try to get a reasonable answer to a question, I'm referred from one agent to another. There's one agent for pesticide A, and a different agent for pesticide B. When I ask them if there's a nurse or a doctor there whom I could speak to, there's nobody. We have B.Sc.'s, M.Sc.'s, and even Ph.D.'s in chemistry, God bless them, but nobody trained in Health Canada.

That was the biggest shock for me. When I realized that my government was making decisions with no input from health professionals, I was really scared. When I persisted with my questions--What about synergistic effects? What about pregnant women?--the response was that I was asking difficult questions. You're damn right.



Mr. David Fletcher: I would point to the fact that we're talking about science. The question must be whether or not the science being used as a criterion for deciding whether these products should be used is a disinterested kind of science that isn't financially attached in some way to the interests of industry.

I pointed before to that very critical discussion that I had with Chevron on that product Orthene. There was a clear reason for them to withdraw that product. They considered it insignificant, but other scientists at the time might not have considered it insignificant.

There are financial interests here. In terms of the science evaluating these products, are we going to have it at arm's length from the people who will be deriving benefit from the actual marketing of the products? That's the question that comes up for me. Scientists, after all, are human. Scientists have their own personal interests at stake as well. So whose science are we talking about?



Mr. Alex Cullen: You don't have to be a scientist if you see a sign that says "Don't walk on the grass" after a pesticide application. By the time you see a pesticide application, that sign goes up. The non-scientists and the mothers say to me, "If that sign goes up because it's a danger, why do you have this being applied where my kids can go?" You don't have to be a scientist to understand that. The law and the PMRA say, "If you apply a pesticide, you must put up a sign." That should be enough.

Â (1240)



The Chair: Yes, that's pretty telling.

Thank you, Mr. Ménard.

Dr. Castonguay, please.

[Translation]



Mr. Jeannot Castonguay (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I am looking at that same Bill that you have certainly read many times. I would like to refer to subsection 7(7), which stipulates:

(7) In evaluating the health and environmental risks of a pest control product and in determining whether those risks are acceptable, the Minister shall ,

- (a) apply a scientifically-based approach; and
- (b) in relation to health risks:

And then it refers of course to the threshold effect, and further on:

- ii) ... unless, on the basis of reliable scientific data,...

We have heard witnesses talk to us about science. After having heard from you, I would like to ask the following question. Do you think there is such a thing as reliable scientific data, and what constitutes reliable scientific data? The range seems to be quite wide when we're talking about science and everyone has a different opinion. In the end, we have to decide what is reasonable, so we need your help.



Mr. Michel Gaudet: One of the problems with science is that we are studying 2,4-D. Once 2,4-D is mixed with dicamba, or mecoprop, however, what happens? There is no research on this. Bicarbonate of soda is harmless; and so is vinegar. Once they are mixed, however, there is a reaction. It's the same for any package of toxic materials that we are mixing in the environment. Once they are mixed, what happens? Nobody knows. This is where we call for caution. Why should we expose ourselves to danger: we don't know what could happen. We can see it: there are people who are sick. My wife could not come here: she is sick. Imprisoned by pesticides, she has to wear a mask to leave the house, and we are a more and more people in this situation.

The report by Santé publique du Québec, which I have in my bag, clearly states that the number of people who are becoming hypersensitive to all chemical products following poisoning is on the rise. There are statistics for the city of Halifax. They are contained in APPENDIX I of the report that I have submitted here. Thousands of lives in Canada are endangered.

[English]



Mr. Alex Cullen: The Ontario Public Health Association, the Canadian Public Health Association, and the Ontario College of Family Physicians tell you--tell all of us--that we should be banning the cosmetic use of pesticides. That's enough science for me and for my community, and I think it would be for anyone else.



Mr. David Fletcher: With regard to 2,4-D, by the way, back in the early 1980s, Dr. Albert Nantel, who's with the Centre de Toxicologie du Québec, did an epidemiological study that linked 2,4-D to non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. I remember the response of interested parties, shall we say, at that point of fact, those that were interested and concerned, as you indicate in the preamble to the bill, responded that this probably had nothing to do with 2,4-D, which was benign, but probably had something to do with diesel fuel. Of course, that completely begged the question why truck drivers, and people using home heating oil--all the same product--weren't part of that epidemiological umbrella or group. Quite clearly, the response, which aimed to defeat good, sound science, was financially motivated.

We have to put in place a system in which the evaluation is at arm's length. It has to be a firewall, if you like, between interested parties scientific evaluations that are being made. We don't have that at present. In point of fact, under the old bill and the operation of the PMRA, based on scientific data given by those interested parties. I don't see anything in this particular bill that creates that kind of a firewall.

[Translation]



Mr. Jeannot Castonguay: Madam Chair, I would like to get back to my question. Obviously, we have the version of the witnesses who appeared this morning. Other scientists will tell us, at some point, that certain pesticide products are acceptable, and reasonable. We're still same point. Is there any reliable scientific data? Who can we count on, in the final analysis? We will hear from all kinds of scientists who w differing opinions and...This is why I am asking the question: does the data exist, or not?



Mr. Michel Gaudet: As scientists what's the synergetic effect of products. They will not answer you: they don't know. They have no stu this question.



Mr. Jeannot Castonguay: If they conduct studies, will we be able to state that yes, there is reliable scientific data? Does this data exist?

[English]



Mr. Alex Cullen: Do we need to have hard evidence when we have people who have environmental sensitivities and can show you? We people who come to you and can tell you that when a pesticide application is done down the street, they get asthma, they choke, and they

Do you want to use the Halifax approach? The Halifax approach says very clearly in their bylaw that no pesticides are to be used around children--and this is what this legislation speaks about: protecting children--no pesticides are to be used around schools, no pesticides are used around childcare centres, and no pesticides are to be used within 200 metres of anyone who has a registered environmental sensitivity and behold, what happens in Halifax? Almost 70% of the city is therefore pesticide free. And what did the medical officer of health say in H He said not to do this, but to ban pesticides outright.

So I don't know what it takes to convince you, because the reality is there, the health risk is there. Yet you want science to prove the he. Come on. It's the other way around, isn't it?

Â (1245)



Mr. David Fletcher: By the way, can I make a point? I bought tickets on the 6/49, and I only have to get how many numbers in order t With 49 numbers, I don't know what the number of possibilities are, but if you take something like 5,000 or 6,000 products that have some combining with one another to create some kind of a synergy that's going to have an impact on human health, I suggest to you that no con has been conceived that would not take the next millennium to work out what all the possible pernicious effects of those synergies would b

You have to get moving, and from the standpoint of the Green Coalition, cosmetic pesticides are a place to start. But as far as people in and people around the world are concerned, the absolute Holy Grail must be a total and absolute elimination of all pesticides for all uses.

We have to be practical about it. People running our farms now operate as sharecroppers to the multinational corporations, and they can their lives and their family lives into their hands in order to wean themselves off. The people who do that do it without any help from the fe they do it without any help from the provinces, yet some of them still are doing it. They're doing it because of their health.

Now, what are we to make of this? We can't be saying something may be good or something may be bad. It's the wrong paradigm, and i paradigm that has been in place since the Second World War. We have to change the paradigm, and that's a hell of a big job. But let's start cosmetic use of pesticides. That's where 75% of our population is: in those urban centres where we have the major impacts at this point, a the food.



Dr. Meg Sears: Science cannot possibly tell you that these things are safe. I came here today to tell you that this emperor has no cloth Science is not equipped to do it. We don't have the tests. An army of scientists could not do it with all the best equipment in the world. But not to say we do not want science.

In order to advance our knowledge, we can't have secrets. We can't have a PMRA sitting on reports about pressure-treated wood for ten We can't have all of this secrecy. The industry gives the PMRA its information, but the best scientists in Canada are not even allowed access have to get rid of the secrecy.

Science can't operate in a vacuum. Science needs information, and science needs good information. Science does not particularly need information that is only coming from the people who are making a buck off of it. It has to be independent. In Canada, we don't have that independence. In fact, I was privileged to work in the National Research Council to do my doctoral experiments, and I saw the very tail end golden years of the National Research Council. But all of the science in Canada now is bought. Until Canadians say, no, we want independe

We have brilliant people in our country, but we have to give them the information. There has to be access to the information not only fo scientists, but for all the population of Canada, so that if there is an epidemiological study and you get the telephone call, you don't just sh shoulders and say you were never exposed to pesticides. You don't even know what a pesticide is. It's not even on the label, so you don't k what's in it. We have to get rid of secrecy before we can have science.



The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Castonguay.

Madame Scherrer, please.

[Translation]



Ms. Hélène Scherrer: Thank you very much.

After having heard you, I have a somewhat existential question. Because you all seem to be absolutely convinced that there is a cause and effect to this, that pesticides have an absolutely negative effect or impact on people's health, my question is the following. Why, if you are absolutely convinced, are you asking for an amendment regarding a specific geographic area, namely in urban areas, certainly, or even for a specific type of people who live elsewhere second class citizens who do not need protection? As far as I can tell, are you not expressing, in any case, a certain amount of doubt? You soften your argument somewhat when you state you are asking for an amendment for urban areas and for specific uses. In every other case, in the final result, there is no significant effect.

Why don't you place the ban on specific products for which it has been effectively proven...? Why not request a ban on these products, wherever they are being used, and no matter what they are being used for? Why only apply the ban to cosmetic and non-essential use? We'll not be able to define what is non-essential use, because even for the farmer this will be a question of financial survival or a health issue... If you think that this does not apply, it is not true. For many people, it does.

Why then, are you here with an amendment that you are restricting somewhat by limiting it to the cities, and certain surfaces in a geographic area, for certain uses? If you are absolutely convinced that the effect is quite toxic, I find that you are expressing some doubt regarding what you are asking for.

À (1250)

[English]



Mr. David Fletcher: There's a food system at stake. As I mentioned to you before, some of the people producing our foods can't afford doing anything else. They're locked into a system. They're not locked into using pesticides for aesthetic use. For the moment--at least until a priority change--we are locked into producing our food this way, unfortunately.

As for talking about risk management, individual people cannot engage in any kind of risk management, because the products used on products are not part of the labelling system for those foods. In point of fact, if we buy things down at the local supermarket, we have no way to engage in risk management of our own.



Ms. Elisabeth Arnold: I'd just like to say that, from my perspective, I'm not convinced that use of pesticides is safe. I'm not a scientist having worked in this area for the last seven and a half years, that's what I believe.

I do not think we can use the argument that, because we can't solve every problem with respect to pesticide use, we can't start with the problems we can solve now.



Mr. Alex Cullen: Exactly.



Ms. Elisabeth Arnold: I think we're talking about Bill C-53, and we need to start where we can. We can't say we won't do anything until we have the perfect solution for every possible application of pesticides. When we know there are alternatives that can work and will be embraced by our communities, let's do those things.

To go back to Mr. Castonguay's question, if you want to fix the bill in terms of clause 7, rather than saying the minister "shall apply a scientifically-based approach", you should say the minister shall apply the precautionary principle.



Mr. Alex Cullen: Exactly.



Mr. David Fletcher: Absolutely.



Ms. Elisabeth Arnold: Change that wording. Rather than having it in the preamble, put it into clause 7 of the bill, and then the minister will have a different obligation. That would help to move us ahead very quickly.



Dr. Meg Sears: There are two sides to the decision being made. One is risk, which is based on science and which we are today saying is to be tempered with a caution in recognition of the very realistic limitations of science. The other side is the benefit, and the benefit is not based on science. The benefit is a policy of the Government of Canada.

It is your job as politicians to set the bar at the level of inconvenience that people have to suffer before using a chemical pesticide is just

You have to decide whether a dandelion is a sufficient inconvenience to justify pesticides, or whether lice are sufficient, or whether flea-infected carrying the Black Death are the necessary level of inconvenience. You have to decide the level at which we bring in this kind of gun. That's policy.



The Chair: Thank you, Madame Scherrer.

Dr. Fry, you're the last speaker.



Ms. Hedy Fry: If I think about it, Ms. Arnold, you said it quite well. Listening to you, would I be confident in saying that, given that the such thing as perfect science, given that we can't see it in a crystal ball, and given that we don't know what's going to happen, you believe should clearly be labelling involved in this issue, as well as an evaluation, an arm's-length study that is ongoing, and a method of surveillance you are saying that, if that's what you're suggesting, then I would like to hear you say that.

Secondly, having done the surveillance, a question was brought to us by another group last week. They asked how that surveillance would the health care providers and the people who are treating patients, those who come up with a series of symptoms and are exposed to certain if they aren't aware of what those products are under some surveillance mechanism. Do you have something that might suggest how to deal that?

Å (1255)



Ms. Elisabeth Arnold: To answer the first part of your question, the answer is, yes, I firmly believe it. I think all of us at the table believe should be full disclosure of the active and inactive ingredients, and that those should all be evaluated in combination rather than separately.

Perhaps there are others who want to answer the question. Perhaps Meg Sears would like to.



Dr. Merryl Hammond: I think that was well said. A national surveillance system has been one of the things we've been calling for at least ten years now.



Ms. Hedy Fry: What form should it take, Dr. Hammond?



Dr. Merryl Hammond: It should at least be a registry of pesticide-exposed people, so that for anyone going to a doctor's office with the symptoms--nosebleeds, flu symptoms, dizziness, and all the other things people complain of--they get recorded. After maybe two, three, or years, we'll see a picture emerging.

In the meantime, please don't delay the ban. We need the ban urgently. That will be for the drift and everything else that we're still expecting. But slowly, we'll have a database. This doesn't exist. We just don't know which of the illnesses any of us suffers from or that our children suffer from, God bless them. We just don't know, because nobody is keeping those records.

And God bless the medical schools. When I tried to get into McGill to lecture doctors about what I had learned, the door was closed. What about the medical conferences? Who provides computers for continuing...? Not me. I could not educate medical doctors at McGill University about evidence your clerk will provide to you. It's a closed door.



The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Fry.

On behalf of the committee, I want to thank all the witnesses for coming. You realize you are mainly singing from the same songbook, and we have had other panels that have sung from the opposite side of the songbook, if you know what I mean. But we will definitely take you into serious consideration as we proceed with our study. Thank you very much.

For the committee members, may I just have a straw poll? It doesn't look like we can get witnesses for next Monday in the daytime. They've been trying. With your permission, I wonder if I could ask him to get them for a round table perhaps on Monday evening. Would you be willing to sit Monday evening?

If we don't do this, we're still going to be hearing witnesses into the week after the break. If we can fit in two extra panels next Monday we should finish our testimony before the break. We can then start clause-by-clause after the break. So I'm asking for your permission to a clerk to try to set up hopefully two round tables for next Monday evening, one from 6 to 7:30 p.m., and another one from 7:45 to 9:15 p.m. could get through about twelve or fourteen witnesses.



An hon. member: Sorry, but what time would that be?



The Chair: We don't know exactly, but I'm suggesting to the clerk something like 6 to 7:30 p.m. for one round table, and maybe 7:45 to 9:15 p.m. for another set of people.

[Translation]



Mr. Réal Ménard: On Monday nights, the members of the House are not all here. It is not a good idea to be doing this on a Monday night because members are not here.

[English]



The Chair: That's why I'm asking you if you could come at the end of the day on Monday. I know you do your constituency Monday, but you could make it if you caught a flight at about 5 p.m.

[Translation]



Mr. Réal Ménard: Tuesday, would be good. Why do we have to do this?

[English]



The Chair: You won't make it? Well, we're meeting on Tuesday anyway, and pretty well all week.



Mr. Réal Ménard: No. Why do we have an emergency and have to act rapidly? I think many people want to express themselves about this.



The Chair: We're trying to fit in everyone who has requested to come. Everyone who has requested to come is incorporated in this plan.

Mr. Réal Ménard: We don't have any obligation to quickly start clause-by-clause.



The Chair: Let's talk about this after the meeting. I want to release the others. They want to go.

This meeting is adjourned.



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