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Two years after pesticide ban, surveys show public and professional frustration

Two surveys, one conducted with Ontario homeowners and the other of professional landscapers, show that two years after the ban on pesticides in Ontario both groups are expressing concern.

When the ban was enacted on April 22, 2009, lawn care professionals warned that negative impacts would begin to surface in a few years over the lack of effective tools to control weeds and insects.

CropLife Canada sponsored the surveys this past spring. It is a trade association representing the manufacturers, developers and distributor of plant science technologies, including urban pesticides, CropLife hired Blacksheep Strategy to carry out the surveys.

"Almost half of Ontario homeowners would like to see the current pesticide ban eliminated or relaxed, so they're able to use products to protect their lawns and gardens from pest infestations," says Pierre Petelle, executive director, regulatory affairs and non-agricultural uses, for CropLife Canada. Petelle attended a meeting of LO's Lawn Care sector group on Aug. 17.

At that meeting, Petelle told the members that 234 landscapers took part in the survey of professionals. Landscape Ontario assisted CropLife by distributing the information about the poll to its members.

"Sixty-three per cent of landscapers surveyed said they are against Ontario's pesticide ban," says Petelle. Additionally, almost half of those landscapers polled said their sales in 2010 are lower than in 2008 and 71 per cent of lawn care companies polled said their customers were less satisfied in 2010 than in 2008, before the ban was in place. Respondents to the landscaper survey also said they had been asked by clients to use products that are now banned and they've had customers apply banned products themselves.

The Ontario homeowner survey backs up the finding, revealing that by their own admission, Ontarians are willfully breaking the law by using pesticides that have been banned on their lawns and gardens. This is backed up in a 1,100-word article that appeared in the Aug. 22 edition of the Toronto Sun, 'Ontario shoppers escape pesticide ban in U.S.' The article is available online at [Toronto Sun](#).

"Thirty per cent of all homeowners are using pesticides that they have left over from before the ban was put in place and close to one-quarter of homeowners are either developing their own mixtures or bringing pesticides in from another province or from the United States," Petelle said.

From five trucks to one

"Contrary to what some in the media are saying, the ban has certainly not been good for business. In fact, two-thirds of Ontario landscaping and lawn care companies indicate that the ban has had a somewhat or significantly negative impact on their business and led to unsatisfied customers," says Petelle. One member at the LO meeting stated he had five trucks before the pesticide ban and now is down to one. "I'm not alone in being hurt by the ban," said the member.

"Over half of homeowners feel that if Health Canada has approved the banned pesticides, they should be allowed to use them," says Petelle. "This helps demonstrate that Ontarians understand that the provincial pesticide ban completely contradicts what the expert scientists at Health Canada say and they feel such duplicative oversight is really quite unnecessary."

More weeds and insects

Petelle says the polling demonstrates that Ontarians believe the pesticide ban has resulted in more weeds and insects in lawns and gardens and homeowners feel they no longer have the tools they need to control these pests. "More than two thirds of homeowners who responded said they have more weeds in their lawns since the ban came into effect and feel they no longer have effective products to deal with the pest problems they're facing," says Petelle. "Homeowners are overwhelmingly calling for more effective products to protect their properties."

Before the pesticide ban in Ontario, satisfaction levels for the products people had available to them were extremely high. But now, 78 per cent of people surveyed said they feel there is definitely a need for more effective weed control products and 66 per cent feel there is a need for more effective insect control products. The provincial pesticide ban in Ontario prevents Ontarians from using most federally registered products to protect their properties from pest infestations.

CropLife says that polling results aren't available online, but expects more detailed results of the polling will be released in the near future.

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