



AEHA-Ottawa

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 10, 2007

AEHA-OTTAWA APPLAUDS ONTARIO LIBERALS' PLAN TO BAN PESTICIDES PROVINCE-WIDE

September 10, 2007, Ottawa – The Allergy and Environmental Health Association, Ottawa (AEHA-Ottawa), congratulates the Ontario Liberals for the landmark decision to ban “cosmetic” pesticides from lawns, gardens and parks. AEHA-Ottawa members who suffer from environmental sensitivities have a valid reason to strongly support this province-wide ban: exposure to pesticides can trigger severe symptoms that can even disable them, with devastating consequences to their lives.

Dr. Jennifer Armstrong, head of the Ottawa Environmental Health Clinic, states: "Many of my patients report that their chronic ill health was initiated and/or worsens with exposure to pesticides from their neighbours. It is hazardous for them to venture outdoors in lovely weather in the spring, summer and fall."

In a US survey of 6,800 persons reporting environmental sensitivities, 80% asserted they knew when, where and with what they were made ill – and of that 80%, 60% blamed pesticides!

According to Statistics Canada's 2003 National Population Health Survey of more than 135,000 Canadians, almost 3% of adults have been diagnosed with chemical sensitivities by a physician, with a similar percentage diagnosed in an Atlanta Georgia study, and twice that percentage in a large California survey. Other U.S. studies indicate that up to a third of people identify that they are more sensitive than the majority (feel ill) on exposure to “everyday” chemicals, which, according to recent genetic evidence, might put them at risk of developing more serious sensitivities with ongoing exposure.

The Canadian Human Rights Commission recently developed a Policy on Environmental Sensitivities stating: “Individuals with environmental sensitivities experience a variety of adverse reactions to environmental agents at concentrations well below those that might affect the “average person”. This medical condition is a disability, and those affected are entitled to the protection of the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability...Successful accommodation for persons with environmental sensitivities requires innovative strategies to minimize or eliminate exposure to triggers in the environment”.

http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca/legislation_policies/policy_envIRON POLITIQUE-en.asp

In April 2004, a systematic review of pesticide studies by the Ontario College of Family Physicians (OCFP) identified consistent links between pesticide use and nervous system effects, as well as associations with brain, prostate, kidney and pancreatic cancers. They reported that occupational exposure to agricultural chemicals may be associated with birth defects, fetal death, and intra-uterine growth retardation. In addition, an increased risk of acute leukemia was reported in some children exposed to insecticides and herbicides used on lawns and gardens and for indoor control of insects. Dr. Lynn Marshall, Co-Chair of the OCFP's Environmental Health Committee adds, "Pesticides may be used inside homes or make their way indoors where they don't break down easily and can lead to chronic exposures that are particularly important hazards for children, our most vulnerable citizens." According to the World Health Organization, children tend to be more affected than adults by environmental toxins because they crawl, frequently put their hands in their mouths, breathe faster and have thinner skin and a less developed metabolism. If their developmental stages are interrupted by contaminants, the consequences can be major and permanent.

Physician members of the Ontario College of Family Physicians and the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE) are concerned that, even when used as directed, lawn and garden pesticides are an unnecessary hazard. They recommend that least-toxic lawn and garden-care strategies and products be used.

Other major supporters of prohibiting cosmetic or non-essential use of pesticides include: the Canadian Cancer Society, Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, and the Allergy and Environmental Health Association of Quebec (AEHAQ). The Canadian Cancer Society is very concerned about the use of potentially

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carcinogenic (cancer-causing) substances and bases its concern about pesticides on the conclusions of the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) that some pesticide ingredients are classified as known, probable or possible carcinogens. Since ornamental use of pesticides has no countervailing health benefit and has the potential to cause cancer with longer term exposure, the Society is calling for a ban on the use of pesticides on lawns and gardens.

Canadians are increasingly concerned about the effects of the environment on their health. "One in four Canadians surveyed in the Canadian Medical Association's seventh annual National Report Card on Health Care linked the effects of the environment in relation to their health problems" and "about 27 per cent of Canadians believe they have environment-related illnesses such as asthma and allergies..." (<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2007/08/19/cma-reportcard.html>)

Lawn and garden pesticides are not needed – safe and effective alternatives are available. Ontario would be following the province of Quebec, the City of Toronto, and over 130 other Canadian municipalities that restrict pesticides. Children, the aging, those with environmental sensitivities, and possibly future generations would be healthier if Ontario lawns and gardens were maintained using least-toxic methods.

AEHA-Ottawa is a branch of the national registered charity, the Human Ecology Foundation of Canada. AEHA-Ottawa strives to promote awareness of environmental conditions that may be harmful to human health, and works to bring individuals together for mutual support and education.

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