Canadian pesticide opponents ready for spring push

TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA ----

Several environmental, public health and medical organizations are turning up the heat on Ontario provincial lawmakers to ban what they refer to as the aesthetic use of pesticides.

They're redoubling their efforts this spring because it's an election year there. They're aggressively courting candidates to come out against the so-called cosmetic use of pesticides to demonstrate their awareness and support of environmental issues. They claim that, even if pesticide use is suspected of causing health problems (and most of the activist groups go beyond that), why risk it?

Representatives from at least five activist organizations met with provincial ministry officials in February to plead for a provincewide ban similar to the one in place in neighboring Quebec province. They claimed that a recent poll showed that 71% of Ontario residents support a ban.

Industry associations representing lawn care product end users insist the anti-pesticide crusade is misguided and has no basis in fact.

The call for a province-wide Ontario ban on urban pesticides for use on lawns and gardens should be considered in the context of the facts and not misinformation, said Lorne Hepworth, president of CropLife Canada and the Urban Pest Management Council of Canada.

Public policy should be based on sound science. A province-wide pesticide bylaw would remove, without any proper scientific foundation, the benefits provided by the science-based Health Canada regulation of pest control products. "Placing additional burden of regulation on provincial or municipal authorities is unreasonable and unnecessary," said Hepworth. "Local and even provincial governments are not equipped to properly assess complex products on a detailed health or environmental scientific basis, so a total ban becomes a default position. Banning pesticides is not only unnecessary, but also costly to enforce and provides little additional public health benefits." The agitation against lawn care products remains high in communities across Canada. To date, more than 120 towns and cities have restricted or banned the use of pesticides for "cosmetic purposes."



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