



## Environmental Health Association of Nova Scotia

### Submission to the Law Amendments Committee regarding Bill 61, The Non-essential Pesticides Control Act, May 10, 2010

The Environmental Health Association of Nova Scotia (EHANS) appreciates this opportunity to make a submission to the law amendments committee on Bill 61, the Non-Essential Pesticides Control Act.

EHANS is a community based, province wide charitable organization founded in 1985.

EHANS mandate is

- To increase knowledge and awareness of environmental health issues, and
- To improve prevention, recognition and treatment of environmental illnesses through innovative programs and services.

EHANS focuses on the connection between human health and our environment. We recognize that the health of people and the health of the environment are intimately connected.

EHANS strongly supports Bill 61, which would ban the sale and use of non-essential lawn pesticides throughout Nova Scotia. We believe this bill is an important environmental health policy which will benefit human health and the environment immediately and for many generations to come. Its focus on preventing disease and environmental destruction is an approach we applaud.

For people who are already environmentally sensitive, exposure and the threat of exposure to pesticides where they live, work and do business, results in immediate harm, disruption to daily lives, and limits their ability to conduct activities outside their own homes. For a percentage of the chemically sensitive population, symptoms may be life-threatening. At the very least, they are life-limiting.

EHANS believes this bill has been well thought out and represents the most effective way to reduce risk of harm from unnecessary cosmetic pesticide use. We would like to take this opportunity to urge this committee not to weaken this bill in any way.

I would like to focus on three points:

First, the scientific evidence in support of this bill is strong. Independent peer reviewed studies have established the wide range of risks related to pesticide exposure, from cancer to birth defects, learning disabilities to Alzheimers.

There is also strong scientific evidence that pesticide exposure can trigger immediate symptoms of illness, sometimes life threatening, in people with asthma and environmental sensitivity.

This bill is supported by medical experts including the IWK Hospital, Doctors NS, the NS College of Family Physicians, and the Chief Medical Officer of Health for the province. It is also supported by health organizations representing many constituencies including the Cancer Society, the Lung Association, the Learning Disabilities Association, Breast Cancer Action, and the Public Health Association, as well as the organization I represent, the Environmental Health Association. Such broad support indicates that the scientific evidence of many types of health risks is strong.

Research has established that there is health risk from **all** the commonly used chemical pesticides: phenoxyherbicides, organophosphates, carbamates, and pyrethrins. These chemicals are associated with health risks even when they are used as directed, and regardless of who applies them.

Second, EHANS supports the government's decision to ban the sale and use of all pesticides used on lawns, and in 2012 on shrubs, trees and bushes, with the exception of permitted low risk pesticides. Restricting allowable pest control products to an approved list of low risk products will provide people and the environment with the fullest protection from harm. Another advantage is that this approach is clear and easy to administer. We hope that when this list is drawn up, that the result will be similar to Ontario's Class 11 Low Risk Pesticide list, which includes products such as those the government has mentioned, corn gluten, acetic acid, and beneficial insects.

We also support this approach with an eye to the future, so that when new pest control products are developed, they will only be approved for use after a decision is made as to whether they fall into the category of a low risk pesticide. We hope that there will be provision for transparency and consultation in evaluating products for inclusion on this list in the future.

Finally, although this point is not explicitly mentioned in the bill, we are glad to see that the government recognizes that both the province and the municipalities have a role to play in protecting health and safety of citizens from unnecessary pesticide exposure. Public health depends on decisive action at both levels of government.

EHANS hopes that this committee will not consider any amendment which would restrict or limit municipalities' rights to protect citizens from pesticide exposure.

EHANS requests that any amendments to this bill be to the effect of greater reduction of risk, and greater protection from harm, including effective enforcement and public education. In this spirit, EHANS would support an amendment which phased in restriction of pesticides on golf courses, given that in many areas of the province, golf courses are situated close to residential areas and may also be close to schools. When Quebec adopted its Pesticide Code in 2003, golf courses were given 4 years to transition to comply with the Code.

Secondly, and we believe this may have been an inadvertent omission, we would like to see the law explicitly cover patios, walkways, and driveways, as well as lawns. The reasons for banning non-essential pesticides on lawns apply equally to patios, walkways and driveways.

With the exception of amendments in this spirit, EHANS hopes that Bill 61 will be sent back for third reading unaltered in its essential points.

Respectfully submitted,

*Barbara Harris*

Environmental Health Association of Nova Scotia (EHANS)

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