SIERRA CLUB ATLANTIC

For Immediate Release - May 6, 2010

Sierra Club Atlantic Cheers as Nova Scotia Bans Cosmetic Pesticides – Calls on other Atlantic Provinces to Follow Suit

Halifax - The Sierra Club Canada - Atlantic Canada Chapter jubilantly applauds Tuesday's announcement of a province-wide ban on cosmetic pesticides in Nov Scotia. The ban will apply to the use and sale all pesticides, except those explicitly deemed "low risk". The ban will apply to the lawn application of pesticides next year, and all shrubs, flowers, and trees in 2012.

"This is wonderful news, " says Janet Eaton, International Campaigner for Sierra Club Canada, "Like many Sierra Club members, I have spent countless hours working towards this day. I am absolutely thrilled that soon my own grandchildren and all children will be able to play safely on any lawn in this province."

Sierra Club is calling for other Atlantic provinces to follow Nova Scotia's lead and ban the sale and use of pesticides. In PEI, 240 pesticides are banned, but the ban only applied to lawns (not flower gardens and trees). New Brunswick has a ban similar to PEI's for 200 products, but the ban is specific to a single pesticide chemical (whereas 84 chemicals have been banned in Ontario), lawn care companies can still apply pesticides, and pesticides are still permitted on school grounds, parks, sports fields and other locations where children congregate and play. In Newfoundland and Labrador, municipalities have called on the province to ban pesticides, and the issue is currently subject to intense debate.

"Evidence continues to mount about the impact these chemicals have on our health, " says Tony Reddin, member of the Atlantic Canada Chapter's Executive Committee. "We need other governments to follow Nova Scotia's lead and to work together to protect the public."

"Aside from protecting human health, pesticide bans can create more jobs in the landscaping sector as people move to more organic methods," says Gretchen Fitzgerald, Director of the Atlantic Canada Chapter, "I hope that this ban - and perhaps other like it in our region - can be part of a shift to a greener and healthier society here in Atlantic Canada."

Sierra Club members will be watching closely to ensure that truly "low risk" chemicals are

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allowed to be used as pesticides in Nova Scotia. They are also urging the province to work with forestry, agriculture, golf courses (currently exempt from the ban) to reduce and ultimately end their use of pesticides.

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MAY 10, 2010

RE: Bill 61 - Non-essential Pesticides Control Act

Members of the Nova Scotia Law Amendments Committee:

Thank you for your attention today.

Thank you for introducing this ban on cosmetic pesticides in Nova Scotia.

Sierra Club Canada volunteers and staff have worked long and hard toward this day. I would like to acknowledge in particular Emily MacMillan, former Director of the Atlantic Canada Chapter and volunteers with the Mud Creek Group of Sierra Club Atlantic who have worked to protect human health and biodiversity by pushing for municipal and provincial pesticide bans.

As a person with a background in biology, what strikes one immediately when looking at the pesticide issue is the lack of understanding regarding impacts of these chemicals on human health and the environment. These impacts should be understood before chemicals or chemical cocktails are released into the environment. To place human health at risk for cosmetic application of pesticides when there are ample safe alternatives does not seem consistent with the principles of sustainability and precaution.

By introducing Bill 61, the province is taking a proactive stance, one that ensures chemicals must be proved to be safe before that can be used in this province. This is a truly progressive step, one that will protect our health, create green jobs in organic lawncare and landscaping, and save tax dollars spent on health care.

Evidence is mounting regarding the impact of pesticides on human health and the environment. Some of the most striking examples include:

- A literature review performed by Ontario College of Family Physicians on the use of pesticides have found links between pesticide use and several types of cancer, non-Hodgkins lymphoma, asthma, damage to developing fetuses, including induced abortions, etc. Alarmingly, impacts can even span of three generations, with exposure to pesticides during development of reproductive organs in the fetus of a female child increasing the risk of that fetus' children of developing cancer.
- Because cosmetic pesticides are used in areas frequented by children, a group that is extremely vulnerable to exposure to pesticides because of their small size, propensity to be in close contact surfaces to which pesticides are applied, and inability to metabolize toxins as effectively as adults, it is extremely urgent that we act to ban

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cosmetic pesticide use.

- The use of pesticides has implications for biodiversity and ecosystem services. For instance, evaluation of the impacts of the pesticide Round-up on amphibians (one of the most threatened animal groups globally) found 96-100% mortality of larval frogs and 68-86% mortality of juvenile frogs (Relyea, 2005).

We would like to take this opportunity to formally submit our recommendations regarding the Non-essential Pesticides Control Act, Bill 61:

- Bill 61 takes a 'guilty until proven safe' approach to pesticides, which is the stance more jurisdictions should adopt. However the definition of "low risk" pesticides is left to be defined within regulations. We would ask that "low risk" be defined explicitly within the legislation as independent proof of safety for exposure to vulnerable segments of the population (children, developing fetuses, pregnant women, elderly), as well as vulnerable species (i.e. amphibians). The Bill should explicitly state that it upholds the precautionary approach (i.e. lack of scientific certainty is not proof of safety) when defining low risk pesticides.
- The Bill contains four references to exceptions to the ban (Sections 4 (1) and (2) and 5 (1) and (2)), opening the door to allowing pesticides to be used. These exceptions will be defined by regulations not yet established. As noted in the Minister of Environment's announcement last Tuesday, the public's response to pesticide ban consultations has been overwhelming in terms of volume (number of responses) and support for a ban. It would be counterproductive and misleading of the government to loosen the pesticide ban during development of regulations. We request that the sections of the ban allowing for exceptions be removed.
- Public consultations must be carried out regarding the regulation of this ban. The body performing and developing the regulation of the ban must not include members of the pesticide industry.
- Referring once again to exemptions contained in the regulations, the existing exemptions could allow for Integrated Pest Management to be introduced as an exemption to the ban. You must not allow Integrated Pest Management (IPM) to be introduced as an exemption. IMP can actually result in increased use of pesticides (this is documented in Ottawa and Calgary – leading Ottawa to explicitly stop IPM on its own properties). We cannot allow the same mistakes to occur here in Nova Scotia.
- Bill 61 should include banning use on driveways and walkways, as well as explicitly state it applies to commercial residential, and municipal land.
- Buffer zones around wells must be established in the regulations in order to protect drinking water. In Oregon no spraying is allowed within a radius that could contaminate a well in ten years. A similar safe buffer zone must be designated in the ban that will protect drinking water.
- Residential or non-commercial vegetable gardens should be included in the ban. This will protect the public from use of pesticides in close proximity to homes, as well as simplify enforcement.
- Golf courses should be required to adopt five-year phase out plan for use of cosmetic pesticides, in concert with training programs for organic landscaping.
- Public education is necessary to ensure this ban is effective. Sierra Club and other environmental groups have developed educational materials for organic gardening, how to effectively and diplomatically approach your neighbour if you suspect pesticide use, and safe disposal of pesticides. The government should work with the environmental

community to produce similar outreach materials to improve the effectiveness of the pesticide ban and reduce enforcement costs (please see attached leaflet: *10 Steps to Non-Toxic Lawn Care*).

- The Bill currently gives an upper limit for fines for violation of the legislation. We suggest these be changed to a lower limit for violations and remove the existence of an upper limit for fines.
- For five years after its introduction, Minister of Environment should report annually on effectiveness of the ban by submitting data on inspection reports, fines issued, and rate of pesticide poisonings reported, such as the IWK's Regional Poison Centre.

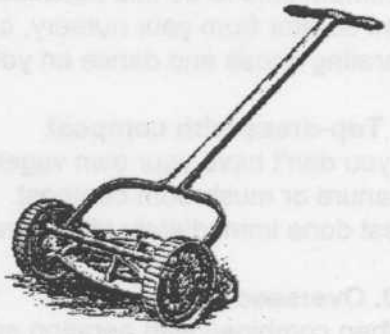
In closing, I would like to commend you all for taking a courageous step toward protecting our children and biodiversity. It is a step that the majority of Nova Scotians support. Making this Bill effective will be an important part of our legislated commitment to become world leaders in sustainability by 2020.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak on the subject of Bill 61, the Non-essential Pesticides Control Act. I hope you will take these recommendations to heart when amending the bill.

Sierra Club of/du Canada

10 STEPS TO NON-TOXIC LAWN CARE

The golf course syndrome has created the unrealistic ideal of a 100% weed free lawn. Unfortunately, the quick-fix chemical approach comes with a hefty environmental and human health price tag. Changing the focus from pest eradication to the prevention of pest problems using the following steps will help us and our neighbours understand that the occasional weed and insect is a sign of a normal, healthy, non-toxic lawn.



1. Mow High
Setting your mower's cutting height to 2.5 or preferably 3 inches will discourage invasion by weeds and insects. This encourages growth of longer, healthier roots that help lock in moisture, Also, keeping your mower's blade sharp at all times is crucial to preventing diseased from setting into the lawn.

2. Leave grass clippings on the lawn
Doing so ensures that this mulch becomes your lawn's fertilizer, thereby reducing the need to add additional fertilizers by 30%. If the mulch is quite wet, compost it instead.

3. Water "deeply"
Your lawn needs about 1 inch of water, applied once a week. Watering more frequently than this encourages shallow, weak roots. To minimize evaporation, water before 8 a.m. or in the evening.

4. Use ecological methods of pest control!
Spraying a mixture of dish soap and water during warm weather is an effective way to discourage insects from eating your greenery. Eliminate bare spots (where weeds are given a chance to proliferate) by over seeding. Remove the odd weed by hand, removing as much of the root as possible to prevent re-growth. If weeds persist, have your soil professionally analyzed – the pH of the soil should be 6.0-7.0. Adding lime or sulfur can increase the nutrient content of the soil and promote beneficial micro-organisms. Remember that a healthy lawn can tolerate some pests without stress or damage.

5. Alternatives
You may want to reduce the area of grass that needs maintenance by planting perennial flower beds, expanding your herb and/or vegetable garden, or naturalizing your lawn with local wildflowers and plants.

6. Rake
Taking to gently remove thatch-the layer of dead grass compacted over winter-can increase water absorption. Taking in late Spring or early Summer is ideal; any sooner than this, the grass feels spongy (a sign that raking can damage roots).

7. Fertilize
Fertilize twice a year if possible. Although it is not essential, fertilizing in Spring can help maximize your lawn's health and immunity against pests. If you fertilize only once, do it in the Fall. Applying a slow-release, granular, 100% **organic** fertilizer such as compost, rock mineral, bone and blood meal will benefit your lawn because they feed the soil's organisms (chemical fertilizers destroy these), and last the whole year through.

8. Aerate
Aerating your lawn by removing small plugs of earth will decrease soil compaction, increase water retention capacities and improve air circulation to the roots. June or autumn is the optimum time to do this because heavy seeder weeds germinate and grow in plug holes. Rent and aerator from your nursery, or hire an organic lawn care company to do it, or buy the aerating shoes and dance on your lawn (Lee Valley Tools $20).

9. Top-dress with compost
If you don't have your own vegetable compost heap (get one!), buy composted cow or sheep manure or mushroom compost. Spread it around at 100 pounds per 1000 square feet. This is best done immediately after aeration, any time between mid-June and the end of August.

10. Overseed
When combined with aeration and top-dressing, overseeding will fill in bare patches that invite weed invasion. First, loosen the soil, spread compost or peat moss; then, sprinkle grass with seeds of hardy species.

There is a wide variety of lawn alternatives.
If you choose to have a traditional lawn, consider adding clover and put thought into what type of grass you grow.
Here are just a few varieties...

Bluegrass: V-shaped leaves with fairly blunt ends. If you buy sod, this is what you have. It needs a lot of water and sun compared to other grass.

Chewing fescue: very fine leaves with slightly rolled edges and visible veins. For shady areas, this is the best food-looking grass. Creeping red fecue is best for dry areas.

Perennial ryegrass: leaves with prominent veins, shinier below than above. If you regularly have insect problems, this is your grass, varieties 'cutter' and 'edge' in particular.

Let us know your secret tips so we can spread the word to all of our communities!
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