

My name is Elizabeth Peirce and I'm a member of Pesticide Free Nova Scotia, a coalition of citizens and health and environmental organizations and professionals who share a strong concern about the risks posed by cosmetic and non-agricultural pesticides to the health of children, adults, pets and our environment. Member organizations include the Canadian Cancer Society, Canadians for a Safe Learning Environment, the Ecology Action Centre, the Environmental Health Association of Nova Scotia, the Learning Disabilities Association of NS, Real Alternatives for Toxins in the Environment, and the Sierra Club. We are endorsed by Breast Cancer Action NS, the David Suzuki Foundation, Eco-Justice Canada, the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, the Halifax Field Naturalists, Dr. Robin Walker from the IWK and Dr. Roy Fox of Capital Health.

As a proud Nova Scotian and gardener who has recently published a book on the benefits of organic vegetable gardening, I applaud the strong measures the government has taken in Bill 61 to reduce Nova Scotians' exposure to unnecessary pesticides. As a child spending summers in rural northern Nova Scotia, I can well remember the sound of the roadside sprayer truck passing by our home and having to run into the house to avoid being doused with these noxious chemicals used to control weeds. It is gratifying to think that Nova Scotian children need not fear a similar experience after next spring when Bill 61 comes into effect.

Pesticide Free Nova Scotia provides our full endorsement of Bill 61. It is timely in its protection of human health and the environment. We applaud the government for taking

such a preventative approach, and for thinking it through carefully. If bill 61 passes as written it will give Nova Scotians the best protection in Canada against an unnecessary health and environmental risk. Therefore we urge this committee not to weaken this bill in any way.

We'd like to call to the committee's attention to the fact that, although Health Canada has approved these products, the approval is based on industry-supplied data. Fortunately, Bill 61 is supported by scientific, independent, peer reviewed studies. From these we know that pesticide exposure is related to a wide range of risks. A large and growing body of evidence shows an association between pesticides and cancer, birth defects, learning disabilities and Alzheimers. That is why this bill is strongly supported by medical experts like the IWK Health Centre, the NS College of Family Physicians, Doctors NS, the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, Nova Scotia's Chief Medical Officer of Health, the Cancer Society, the Lung Association, the Learning Disabilities Association, Breast Cancer Action, and the Public Health Association.

PFNS applauds the government for using a definition of "lawn" in this bill that is simple, clear, and comprehensive.

We congratulate the government for introducing a real ban, rather than an Integrated Pest Management approach. IPM permits cosmetic pesticide at the discretion of lawn care businesspeople. There is no guarantee of significant pesticide reduction with IPM, in contrast with the strong track records where real bans have been put into place.

We also applaud that the means of enforcement in the bill are known to be effective in a logistical sense. They make perfect sense, especially when coupled with a strong educational component.

We want to note here that the most important factor determining whether Nova Scotians get effective health protection from this bill will be the regulations that follow it.

PFNS also strongly supports the use of an approved list of low risk products, as long as the list includes only genuinely low-risk products. In Ontario, some of our member groups were disappointed when some landscapers participated in the consultation about an allowable products list only to lobby for their favourite chemical pesticides, rather than protecting health and environment.

If a list of genuinely low-risk pesticides is created, this approach is clear and easy to administer. Such a list can only be achieved using the precautionary principle. Using this principle, the burden of proof is to show that a pesticide is genuinely low risk before it goes on the list.

We suggest just a couple of small amendments. First, the bill should determine that any future changes to the acceptable products list require public consultation, independent scientific proof that new products are genuinely low risk, and cabinet approval through an "order in council."

Second, we recommend an amendment to include patios, walkways, and driveways in the prohibition. The same logic that applies to banning non-essential pesticides also applies to these areas, where grass and weeds can peek through the cracks. The agricultural company Monsanto even has a special formulation of its ~~Roundup~~^{notorious} Roundup product for weeds that grow in concrete and between patio stones, so this loophole could unintentionally leave a high-risk non-essential pesticide on the shelves, unnecessarily exposing Nova Scotians and our environment.

In conclusion, we congratulate the government once again for a wise, effective bill. We urge this committee to maintain the strong protections in this bill, and to make equally strong regulations.