

Reducing Urban Pesticide Use Through Legislation and Education: A Case Study of Toronto's Pesticide Bylaw

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Program Description

The City of Toronto passed a Pesticide Bylaw (Municipal Code 612) in 2003 that restricts the non-essential use of pesticides on all public and private property in the city. Toronto Public Health coordinates an extensive education and phased-in enforcement program, which costs \$450,000 per year. The bylaw came into effect in 2004 and enforcement was fully phased in by September 1, 2007. Since the bylaw came into effect, fewer homeowners report using lawn and garden pesticides and more are choosing natural alternatives.

Background

Growing scientific evidence indicates that exposure to common lawn and garden pesticides (which include weed and insect killers) can harm human health. In the past decade, Canadian municipalities have begun to pass bylaws restricting the use of pesticides within their boundaries. As of August 2008, there are 146 such bylaws across Canada. This municipal action has in turn motivated Québec to pass a province-wide ban on the sale and use of certain pesticides and Ontario to propose similar restrictions.

Toronto passed its Pesticide Bylaw to protect the health of its residents from exposure to pesticides. Toronto Public Health conducted research into the health impacts of pesticides and consulted extensively with residents, businesses, health and environmental organizations and other stakeholders. Ongoing support from the Board of Health, residents and health organizations has been key to passing and successfully implementing the bylaw. Toronto Public Health maintained open communication with lawn care companies to address their strong concerns about the bylaw, successfully defended a legal challenge from pesticide manufacturers, and provided educational resources to homeowners to help them replace pesticides with natural lawn and garden care.

Results

The Pesticide Bylaw has shown promising signs of behaviour change regarding the use of pesticides in Toronto. Evidence shows that:

- **Fewer people are using pesticides.** In 2005, 35 per cent fewer Toronto households reporting any use of pesticides on their lawns, as compared with 2003. This reduction occurred prior to full enforcement of the bylaw, and further surveys indicate continuing reductions in pesticide use.
- **Natural alternatives to pesticides are growing in popularity.** An increasing number of households report that they or their lawn care companies are using lower-risk pesticides and/or more natural alternatives.
- **Lawn care companies are doing well in Toronto.** Between 2001 and 2006, Toronto saw a 30 per cent increase in the number of lawn care and landscaping businesses, which is consistent with growth in the Greater

Toronto Area and across Ontario. In addition, a consistent proportion of Toronto households continue to rely on the services of lawn care companies.

Toronto Public Health received a 2008 Public Sector Quality Award for its implementation of the Pesticide Bylaw.

Public Education Resources – Advertising and Print Resources

- [Bugs Ad](#)
- [Relax Ad](#)
- [Weed Ad](#)

For More Information Visit:

<http://www.toronto.ca/health/pesticides/index.htm>

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