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MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

April 22, 2008

PESTICIDES

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** It's my honour to rise and tell the House about important legislation that, if passed, would ban the sale and use of pesticides for cosmetic purposes across Ontario. This is the first step in Ontario's new toxics reduction strategy, which we announced last November. This proposed bill is designed to protect our people's health, particularly that of our children.

Our government understands that by acting now, by tackling toxics in our air, land and water, and in consumer products, we can help safeguard our environment. More and more, we understand how our health and the health of future generations is linked to the amount of chemicals seeping into our environment. It's up to us all to take a stand and make a difference.

To that point, I would like to acknowledge Jan Kasperski, with the Ontario College of Family Physicians, who is in the gallery today. She's joined by Susan Koswan, Sari Merson and Tania Orton, with Pesticide Free Ontario; Doris Grinspun, of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario; Gideon Forman and Farrah Khan, of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment; and Irene Gallagher, with the Canadian Cancer Society. Welcome to each and every one of them, and thanks for the hard work they have done on this issue.

Jan is the CEO of the Ontario College of Family Physicians, and tells the story of how her grandson was running onto a lawn that had just been sprayed with pesticide. He was too young to read the warning sign. He picked up a ball and put it in his mouth, and became gravely ill. As she states, "We need to choose the health of our children over the odd weed in our yard."

Our government agrees. We listened to Jan and to others throughout the province on this issue. We also listened to medical experts, who have made a convincing case for reducing our exposure to pesticides, particularly for children who are susceptible to the potential harmful effects. Our proposed legislation benefits from their input, as

well as from the insight of diverse groups representing environmental, agricultural, industrial and municipal interests, as well as many others.

Our government would like to recognize the good work of the Ontario chapter of the Canadian Cancer Society, Cancer Care Ontario and so many other organizations that fight this terrible disease and support those who suffer. The Canadian Cancer Society has expressed its concern over growing evidence that exposure to pesticides may cause an increased risk of some types of cancer. Numerous other studies have also shown that pesticides can negatively affect human health.

Therefore, since the cosmetic use of pesticide has no health benefit, and does have the potential to cause harm, and since there are environmentally friendly alternatives for lawn and garden care, our government is proposing this ban on both the use and sale of pesticides. Pesticides, including herbicides, insecticides and fungicides, would be banned for use for cosmetic purposes; for example, sprays and chemicals that are applied merely to improve the appearance of lawns, gardens, parks and schoolyards.

The proposed legislation would allow pesticide use in Ontario's agricultural and forestry sectors, since they already have strict rules on the storage and application of pesticides through certification and licensing processes. An exception will also be made for golf courses; however, that exception would only be given if golf courses comply with the requirements set out in regulations that would be made if the legislation is enacted, through integrated pest management programs. It would also allow pesticides to be used, as needed, to ensure public health; for instance, to fight West Nile virus.

If passed, this legislation would authorize the province to develop a regulation listing the specific pesticides and active ingredients in lawn and garden products that would be banned. We're also posting the proposed legislation on the Environmental Bill of Rights registry. We ask that interested parties follow the link on the Ministry of the Environment's home page to review the legislation and provide their comments by May 22 of this year. We hope that the proposed legislation will be passed and a ban will go into effect for the 2009 growing season.

Today we proposed a ban on the cosmetic use and sale of pesticides across the province. This is an important step towards protecting Ontario's children and families from needless exposure to harmful chemicals. I urge all the members of this House to support this legislation.