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PESTICIDE LABELLING

The Health and Emergency Medical Services Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, May 16, 2006, from the Commissioner of Community Services, Housing and Health Services:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. The Regional Chair write to the federal Minister of Health, copying the Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA), urging the implementation of initiatives to improve labels on pesticides.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to give an overview of the regulatory framework governing pesticide use in Canada, including pesticide labelling. The report will also provide information on York Region Health Services Department (YRHS) activities relating to pesticide labelling and the safe use of pesticides.

3. BACKGROUND

At the March 2, 2006 Health and Emergency Medical Services Committee meeting, staff were requested to bring forward a report regarding how labelling of pesticide products can be improved in order to protect consumers and users.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

People can be exposed to pesticides in three ways:

- Inhaling pesticide powders, fumes, or aerosols
- Absorbing pesticides through the skin or mucous membranes
- Ingesting pesticides

It is the misuse or overuse of pesticides which pose significant risk to humans and can cause environmental damage. Labelling of pesticide products helps to ensure that health and safety messages and risk reduction measures are communicated to the user.

Some common symptoms of pesticide poisoning include difficulty breathing, headaches, blurred vision, dizziness, nausea, skin and eye irritation, cramps and vomiting. Children

are particularly vulnerable to the effects of pesticides: they eat and drink more per kilogram of body weight than adults; their skin is more permeable and their livers do not excrete as efficiently as adults; their hand-to-mouth behaviour increases the chance of ingestion; and their dermal contact is increased because of a proportionally larger skin surface and because they play on the ground outdoors and on the floor indoors (Toronto Public Health, 2002; National Research Council, 1993).

In Ontario, from 2003–2004, there were approximately 440 occurrences of an individual being admitted to hospital, as an inpatient or to the emergency department, with a diagnosis related to pesticide exposure. In 2004, York Region had one of the lowest rates in Ontario of pesticide poisoning based on hospitalization data, at 1.3 per 100,000 individuals. This is lower than the provincial average of 1.7 per 100,000 individuals. Huron County had the highest rate in Ontario with approximately 13 hospitalizations per 100,000 individuals (National Ambulatory Care Reporting System, 2003-2004; Hospital Morbidity Database, 2004-2004).

4.1 Federal Government Role Regarding Pesticide Labelling in Canada

Through the *Hazardous Products Act* (HPA) and the *Pest Control Products Act* (PCPA), Health Canada regulates labelling for hazardous products. Health Canada's Consumer Product Safety Division enforces the HPA. This division is responsible for the labelling of hazardous consumer products, such as household cleaners, windshield washer fluid and drain cleaners.

Health Canada's PMRA is responsible for administering the PCPA. This Act regulates the registration of all pesticide products imported, manufactured, sold or used in Canada. A condition of registration is a Health Canada approved label.

Anyone using a pesticide product must use it in accordance with the label instructions. Use of a product in a manner that is inconsistent with the directions or limitations on the label is prohibited, and may result in a fine of up to \$50,000 and/or six months imprisonment on summary conviction, or a fine of up to \$250,000 and/or two years imprisonment on indictment. Under the Federal Government's PCPA, a pesticide label must include the following:

- Product name
- Class designation
- A statement directing the user to "READ THE LABEL BEFORE USING"
- Information respecting the nature and degree of hazard
- Instructions in first aid
- Registration number

Federally, pesticides are designated as domestic, commercial, restricted or manufacturing. Domestic pesticide products can be further categorized as lower risk domestic and higher risk domestic. For lower risk domestic products there are no restrictions on sales. Higher risk domestic products require vendor licences or permits, as well as mandatory training and/or certification for employees of the vendor outlet.

Commercial products can be further classified as agricultural (e.g. crop herbicides), industrial or institutional (e.g. sanitizers and bactericides). Restricted pesticide products are designated for specific uses only, such as Canadian Food Inspection Agency use in Emerald Ash Borer control. Manufacturing pesticide products can only be used in a manufacturing enclosed and controlled setting.

4.2 PMRA Activity - Healthy Lawns Labelling Sub-committee

Improving labelling of domestic lawn and garden products is one element of the Healthy Lawn Strategy developed through the Healthy Lawns Working Group of the Federal, Provincial, Territorial Committee on Pest Management and Pesticides, a partnership between Health Canada's PMRA and the provincial and territorial governments responsible for pesticides issues. The labelling project objective is to improve domestic class lawn and garden pesticide labels by making it easier for home owners to:

- Use labels for informed purchasing
- Find, understand and follow essential label information
- Understand and avoid health and environmental risk

In 2002, YRHS was invited to participate on the Labelling Sub-committee of the Healthy Lawns Working Group along with representatives from Toronto Public Health, industry and manufacturers (including 2,4-D Industry Task Force, Scotts Canada, Croplife Canada), government (including Ontario Ministry of Environment, B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Food) and an environmental non-government organization, the Sierra Club of Canada. The Sub-committee developed recommendations to improve product labels of domestic lawn and garden products. These recommendations are available on PMRA's Healthy Lawns website

(<http://www.healthylawns.net/english/abouthlwg/progress-e.html>).

The PMRA's draft Labelling and Container policy for domestic class products includes recommendations based on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Consumer Labelling Initiative (CLI) and calls for improved use of white space and bullets, the addition of pictograms to complement text, and mandatory font size to be used. These improvements will also make First Aid instructions more prominent and instructions easier to read. The goal of the CLI is to improve consumer understanding of safe use as well as environmental and health information on household consumer product labels. The focus of the CLI is on indoor insecticides, outdoor pesticides and household hard surface cleaners.

It should be noted, however, that the above PMRA initiative is currently on hold pending consideration to include improvements to commercial class product labels in the initiative as well. YRHS will continue its participation in the Sub-committee once the initiative resumes. After consultation with industry and government stakeholders has been completed, the Healthy Lawns Labelling Sub-committee will submit recommended initiatives to improve pesticide product labelling to the PMRA's Submission

Coordination Division. This Division has taken the lead on defining the time line for implementing each initiative to improve pesticide product labelling.

The PMRA is also addressing its international commitment to the Globally Harmonized System for Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS), a United Nations Institute for Training and Research Chemicals, Waste and Environmental Governance (UNITAR) initiative to provide a common and coherent approach to defining and classifying hazards, and communicating information on labels and safety data sheets.

Both the CLI and the GHS focus on improving labelling (e.g. simpler, easier to understand, larger sized warnings, caution labels) and consumer education.

The PMRA does have existing communication tools and consumer education campaigns to improve awareness of the safe use of pesticide products. These include PMRA's Healthy Lawn Kit, which contains a consumer fact sheet, *Aim for Safety – Read the Label*.

4.3 YRHS Pesticide Reduction Activities

YRHS has created two pesticide brochures. The "A Healthy Lawn/A Healthy Family – Reduce the Use of Pesticides" brochure outlines eight simple steps to a healthy pesticide-free lawn. The second brochure, entitled "Pesticide Use...A Last Resort – A Resource on Safe Pesticide Use" (see *Attachment 1*), explains the importance of safe pesticide use and how to read the label. YRHS distributes these brochures at community events and through Health Connection.

YRHS annually educates 5000 York Region elementary students with the "*Is Your Lawn Bugging Our Water*" interactive activity regarding the ecological importance of pesticide reduction, healthy lawns, and understanding chemical warning labels at the York Children's Water Festival.

YRHS also participates on Environment Canada's Municipal Management Tool Package for Plant Health Care Programs Steering Committee. This committee, formed in 2002 in response to increasing concern about pesticide use on public spaces, is a collaborative effort between Environment Canada, the PMRA, the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, York Region, the City of Mississauga, the City of Toronto, the City of Waterloo, the Town of Caledon, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the Canadian Centre for Pollution Prevention. The tool package being developed is expected to provide municipalities with a set of practical management tools to achieve, through plant health/integrated pest management principles, healthy turf for parks, open spaces, ravines and forests.

The first version of the municipal tool package for the implementation of plant healthcare was drafted in 2003 and is available on the Pest Info website (www.pestinfo.ca). The project supports the Action Plan for Urban Use Pesticides and the Healthy Lawns Strategy developed by the PMRA. The third draft of the tool package is currently being

finalized in consultation with the steering committee and is expected to be available for municipal use in 2006.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Improved labelling of pesticide products should further decrease the potential for pesticide poisoning in York Region, thereby protecting the health of residents.

7. CONCLUSION

This report provides an overview of YRHS actions to reduce the risks from pesticides and explains the federal jurisdiction relating to pesticide products, their labelling, classification and restrictions for use. The report also outlines the federal initiative currently underway to improve pesticide labelling. Forwarding a letter to Health Canada with a copy to the PMRA, urging the implementation of initiatives to improve pesticide product labelling, will help ensure the safe use of these products.

Continued participation by YRHS on the Healthy Lawns Labelling Sub-committee will ensure input to improvements to pesticide product labels.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause was included in the agenda for the June 8, 2006 Committee meeting.)