

## **An Openness to Changing the Way Pesticides are Used**

### **Report on the NB Department of Environment's Consultation on Landscape and Lawn Care Pesticides**

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On September 22, I attended a consultation on the use of pesticides for landscaping and lawn care in New Brunswick, one of five sessions hosted by the province's Department of Environment. There was poor turnout at this meeting, with less than ten of the invited participants present. However, environmental and health concerns were well represented, as all five of the invited NBEN delegates made their presence known!

The health concerns about pesticides were stressed by several participants, including Inka Milewski (Conservation Council of NB), Peggy Gordon (Belledune Citizen's Committee), and myself. Participants also described the environmental impacts of pesticides, and Brenda Kelly (Bathurst Sustainable Development) pointed out that because New Brunswick is home to many endangered and threatened species, we need to take the necessary steps to reduce these species' exposure to pesticides. Peggy Gordon stressed that in communities like Belledune, everyone relies on domestic wells for water, and contamination of wells by use of cosmetic pesticides is a huge concern.

The exciting thing about the Bathurst session was that there was openness to changing the way cosmetic pesticides are used in the province, although there were differences in opinion about how to prioritize action. For instance, one participant had recently asked his daughter to add more trees and shrubs to his garden, thereby reducing lawn space and its maintenance. This man was extremely pleased with his new garden, and with its side effect: no pesticides! He then pointed out that his neighbours' yards are not like his and they still use pesticides. He argued that public education could be effective and was much-needed as part of a strategy on pesticides.

A representative of the Association francophone des municipalités du Nouveau-Brunswick expressed concern about the ability of municipalities to regulate cosmetic pesticides, indicating that there is some uncertainty about the Supreme Court ruling described in the province's consultation document provided by the government. The ruling (*Spray-tech vs. Hudson*), is thought to give municipalities the right to regulate pesticides within their boundaries.

For those of us concerned about reducing the use of toxic chemicals, these consultations were an extremely important opportunity to express our concerns about the impacts of pesticide use. Written submissions from the public were due on October 15th, and the Department of Environment intends to have a report detailing the results before Christmas.