



Health Canada's independent scientific advisor on pesticides resigns, citing excessive control by bureaucrats and lack of transparency

Ottawa (July 17, 2023)—Bill Jeffery, Executive Director and General Counsel of the Centre for Health Science and Law made the following statement about the resignation of Dr. Bruce Lanphear as co-chair of Health Canada's Pest Control Products Scientific Advisory Committee.

"Dr. Bruce Lanphear is an accomplished and dedicated health scientist, physician and toxicologist who has taken pains to insulate his work from the influence of the pesticide and chemical industries. That is [precisely why I nominated him](#) to serve on that committee. I was pleased when Health Canada required all candidates to disclose conflicts of interest and appointed him to the Advisory Committee. And I was encouraged when he was entrusted to be Committee co-chair.

It is disheartening to read in [Dr. Lanphear's 3-page resignation letter](#) that Health Canada officials were so controlling of the manner in which he and the Committee provided advice and so restrictive of the data put at their disposal that he felt unable to continue in this role.

Parliament entrusted the Minister of Health (operationally, Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency) to ensure that pesticides do not harm human health or the environment and to regulate them using a "scientifically based approach" and applying the precautionary principle. But, especially since 2017, Health Canada has been embroiled in a [merry-go-round of litigation in Canadian federal courts brought by health and environmental groups](#) concerned that the Minister of Health:

- *as a matter of policy attaches more weight to "seller sponsored" studies than those published in peer-reviewed scientific journals;*
- *trivialized conclusions by the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer about the cancer risk posed by glyphosate—the most widely used pesticide in Canada, the United States, and the world;*
- *secrets nearly all pesticide safety data from the public, experts, and the courts by a combination of physical barriers and non-disclosure agreements; and*
- *has no written conflict of interest safeguards to guide its research evaluation procedures.*

In 2022, the US Supreme Court and Attorney General gave the green light to thousands of glyphosate personal injury claims brought by American farmers afflicted by Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma and a federal court refused to approve an \$11.5 billion settlement fund for current and future claims on the grounds that it was insufficient. A US Federal Appeals Court panel held that a US Environmental Protection Agency decision to reapprove glyphosate for 15 years based on an evaluation made in collaboration with Health Canada made "serious" scientific errors.

Earlier this month, the European Union Food Safety Agency—which also prizes seller data and studies over research published in peer-reviewed journals—recommended glyphosate for a second five-year renewal, a decade shy of the usual 15-year renewal period. Several EU countries preferred a ban in 2017; the [government of Germany, where Bayer-Monsanto is headquartered, pledged to ban glyphosate nationwide by the end of 2023](#). Bayer-Monsanto reportedly [told users that glyphosate products are safe enough to drink](#).

It seems that the EU, US, and Canadian government regulators were able to come to their conclusions by turning a blind eye to studies conducted by independent scientists. In [December 2020 pleadings](#), CHSL argued that Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency ignored 96% of more than 8,000 published scientific studies indexed by [www.sciencedirect.org](#) by the year before the decision was made. (As of today, more than 16,000 studies have been indexed there.)

The Pest Control Products Act is already three years overdue for a Parliamentary review required to be commenced every seven years. Questions about Dr. Lanphear's resignation, the litigation, and the [\\$50 million added to federal government efforts to "further strengthen the transparency and sustainability of pesticide management](#) in Canada" in August 2021 should be on MPs lips.

Health Canada's efforts to hamstring pesticide experts that they invited to help (as volunteers) may be a department-wide practice. For example, the publicly discernable paper trail of the department's ["Nutrition Science Advisory Committee"](#) consists of two-page summaries of the first five 3-hour meetings held since November 2020 which reveal only broad topics of discussion, but no concrete conclusions, disagreements, answers given, or proactive advice offered by experts. In the 14 months since the 6th meeting, not even one of those sanitized reports has been posted.

Canadians need laws and policies to be based on the best available evidence. Independent non-governmental experts can bring fresh, potentially life-saving second opinions to government officials. Governments shouldn't recruit teams of yes-men and -women to rubber stamp their decisions, especially when avoiding premature death is at stake."

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