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## **Rooting out the inconsistencies in province's pesticide ban**

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First it was sushi. Then it was egg salad sandwiches, church potlucks, raw milk and any dog vaguely resembling a pit bull. Yesterday, Dalton McGuinty and Environment Minister John Gerretsen imposed yet another ban.

We can no longer weed and feed our lawns chemically. Dandelions, that delicate, endangered species, are safe to go forth and multiply in McGuinty's Ontario. The "cosmetic" use of pesticides by homeowners will be forbidden under new legislation.

This isn't new for those of us who live in Toronto, where pesticides are already banned.

As Exhibit 1, your honour, I offer all those puffy dandelion clocks that ran riot on my lawn last summer, to the chagrin of the neighbours. What was I expected to do? Get on my knees and dig them out?

The whole city looked messy and unkempt. Imagine that same bedraggled look multiplied across the province and I think we all know what thistle path we're heading down.

It's fine to ban pesticides on postage-sized urban lawns. But what about the rest of the province, where gardens can run to several hectares? Are we going to expect homeowners to crawl across their backyard vegetable patch, hand weeding every last piece of crabgrass?

And look who's exempt: farmers and golf courses.

So it's fine to use the pesticides on crops we're going to eat, but not fine to use them on our gardens. I don't eat my lawn, but I can't use what is a legal, scientifically tested product to keep down the weeds?

Of course, golf is sacred and untouchable in this province.

I find it odd that indoor use of pesticides, which are underfoot all day, isn't covered by this ban.

Bugs outside? No spray. But if your dog or cat brings fleas in the house, just fire away without fear of prosecution.

A pesticide industry spokesman says that proves the folly of the ban.

"It doesn't make any sense. To use it in the house is OK, where you are being exposed to it 14 to 15 hours a day.

"If there's a health or safety risk there, which it isn't, why wouldn't that also be covered?" asked Peter MacLeod of CropLife Canada, the trade association representing the pesticide industry.

Pesticides are tested and approved for use by Health Canada. So you've got one level of government approving their use and another banning them. How sensible is that? A product is either legal or it isn't.

MacLeod estimated only four per cent of pesticide use nationwide is cosmetic use on lawns.

In Ontario, where urbanites obsess over their petunia patches, the figure is about six to seven per cent. The rest is used in agriculture and forestry.

Meanwhile, the premier arrived at the news conference on Earth Day in an SUV.

Sure, it was a hybrid, but so what? He and his bodyguards could have walked the few short blocks, or biked. And a hybrid SUV is a bit of an oxymoron. It's still going to use more gas than a small car.

Now if the premier could just ban some things that really are offensive. Like polyester lounge suits, double-dipping at the chip dip and fat guys in Speedos.

Congratulations were in order for veteran CHCH-TV news producer Randy Rath, who was elected president of the Queen's Park press gallery yesterday.

His first task was to send a letter to the House leaders of all three parties expressing concerns about the proposed new hours for the legislature, which reporters feel will limit access to politicians.

Imagine how shocked reporters were to have their new president mocked in the legislature by Liberal House leader Michael Bryant.

"It's one thing to get into a fight with people who print ink by the barrel, but it's another thing to face the wrath of Randy Rath," Bryant said in response to a question by Tory Elizabeth Witmer.

New Democrat Peter Kormos was so incensed by Bryant's flip dismissal of reporters' concerns that he rose on a point of order.

"His mocking of [the press gallery], his trivialization of it, his disregard for that body, representatives of the Fourth Estate and Fifth Estate here, is, I submit to you, at the very least the type of abusive and insulting language that's contrary to standing order 23(k)," Kormos said.

Mock on, minister. Just be careful the joke doesn't end up on you.

- Christina Blizzard writes for Sun Media/Osprey Media.