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Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment
– *the National Voice of Physicians on the Environment and Health*

CAPE Launches B.C. Pesticide Ban Campaign



Britt Karlstrom works with local groups and municipalities on CAPE's B.C. pesticide ban campaign.

HAVING SCORED PESTICIDE BANS IN THE Maritimes, Ontario and Quebec, CAPE is now campaigning to win a province-wide prohibition on toxic lawn products in British Columbia. If successful, the initiative will protect over 4.5 million Canadians.

CAPE has been active on a number of fronts. In February, the Canadian Cancer Society released a CAPE-sponsored scientific poll showing

No matter where you live in Canada, please take a moment to send B.C. Premier Christy Clark a one-sentence e-mail: "I support a lawn-pesticide ban." The premier's e-mail is: premier@gov.bc.ca

the vast majority of British Columbians embrace a lawn-pesticide phase-out.

"In addition to recognizing the health risks, more than 70 per cent of British Columbians support a phase out of cosmetic pesticide use on public and private properties," said Barbara Kaminsky, CEO of the Cancer Society's B.C. and Yukon division.

Perhaps most striking, support for a phase-out does not differ between rural and urban areas. No matter where they live in the province, people want these poisons removed.

CAPE has been busy encouraging its members – and those of two dozen other organizations – to send letters and e-mails to the B.C. government supporting a ban. "A whole range of groups – including the Sierra Club, the Learning Disabilities Association, and the Wilderness Committee – are generously participating in our campaign," said CAPE Executive Director Gideon Forman. "And we're delighted that labour groups such as the CAW, Canadian Union of Postal Workers, and the Canadian Union of Public Employees are supporting this initiative."

...continues on page 4

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER



CAPE President, Jean Zigby, MD

Advocacy Needed

WHILE MANY HEALTH PRACTITIONERS MAY BE unsurprised by the news coming from Ottawa, it is nonetheless disturbing. In keeping with its general trend of environmental disregard, recently the Harper government has placed hundreds of Environment Canada workers and scientists on notice, and abruptly announced it is terminating its decades-long support of the Canadian Environmental Network. These two institutions respectively inform our government of the science and of our citizens' concerns with respect to this ultimate determinant of health we call the environment.

Perhaps it is timely, then, that medical associations and colleges across the nation have increasingly begun recognizing the importance of the health practitioner as advocate of his/her patients. Indeed, it is partly because I witness so often as a Palliative Care physician my sickest patients forced into emergency rooms after smog episodes, or people dying of preventable asbestos related cancers, that I believe so profoundly in CAPE's work to help close Ontario's coal plants and its anti-asbestos campaigns. Seeing how difficult it is for my pediatric patients to access natural green space, or experience where their food comes from makes me proud of our efforts to bring youth to organic farms, push for a pesticide ban in B.C., and promote health and nature-conscious urban planning in the greater Montreal area.

As our Federal Government increasingly shirks its responsibility to protect its citizens' health, it will increasingly fall upon us to speak (and act!) out about what we witness and what needs to be done, both in and out of the office.

Jean Zigby, MD, CAPE President

CAPE salutes MSF's life-saving work and we hope to find ways in which we can collaborate.

MSF Responds to "worst lead poisoning disaster in history"

*By Natalie Thurtle, MD
Health Advisor, Médecins Sans Frontières*

MÉDECINS SANS FRONTIÈRES / DOCTORS WITHOUT BORDERS (MSF) operates an emergency response unit in northwestern Nigeria that responds to outbreaks of diseases like measles, meningitis and cholera.

In March 2010, the team discovered large numbers of seriously ill children in villages in Zamfara State. Children were presenting unconscious, with intractable seizures. Treatment for common illnesses proved ineffective, and the team suspected heavy metal poisoning. Mortality among the affected children reached 43%, as MSF and its partners worked to confirm the diagnosis and source a treatment.

Lead poisoning was confirmed by laboratory testing, and subsequent screening revealed an unprecedented crisis. More than 97% of children in two villages had blood lead levels above the internationally recognized



*In several villages in northern Nigeria, the processing of contaminated gold ore in family compounds caused an unprecedented lead poisoning crisis.
Photo: John Heeneman/MSF*

...continues on next page

**Only a ban
will protect them.**



Order Our Pesticide DVD Today!

This DVD sets out the scientific evidence linking household pesticides to a variety of illnesses. It also offers information on safe lawncare alternatives. An excellent educational tool!
To order your copy, please email farrah@cape.ca.



ECO-LEADERS' CORNER

Eco-Leaders' Corner is a column that features news for, about, and from CAPE Eco-Leaders.

OVER 60 INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS HAVE NOW stepped up to become Eco-Leaders – supporting the long term vision of CAPE with gifts of \$1,000 or more.

If you'd like to become an Eco-Leader, give a gift of stock, or donate in someone's honour, please call Patty Porretta collect at (416) 306 2273 or email patty@cape.ca.



CAPE Eco-Leader, Dr. John Ascah, is an Anesthesiologist in Prince George BC

Why I Became an Eco-Leader

by Dr. John Ascah MD, FRCP, MPH

WHY DO I DONATE TO CAPE? THERE IS MORE than ample evidence that our health is determined – to a large extent – by the environment we live in. This includes physical, chemical, and biological factors, and the social milieu we happen to be in. As a physician practicing clinical medicine, I deal mostly with ill health, but not the *causes* of ill health. Assisting CAPE is a way I can contribute to efforts to deal with major causes of disease rather than just their effects. In addition, physicians both have credibility in our society and a duty to be advocates for our patients and community on all issues of health and especially those issues with such profound and far reaching effects as those due to our environment.

MSF Responds... ...continued from page 2

chelation threshold of 45 µg/dl. Some of the children had levels over 600 µg/dl – nearly double the previous record of 331 µg/dl. The severity of the toxicity, and the number of children affected make this the worst lead poisoning disaster in history.

Investigation soon revealed the source of the massive poisoning – local small-scale gold mining. Villagers were processing lead-laden gold ore in their family compounds, contaminating them with fine dust thrown off by the grinding process. People of all ages were exposed to lead, but children under five proved to be the most vulnerable, suffering the highest rates of morbidity and mortality.

Over a year since the crisis was discovered, MSF has admitted more than 2000 children to its chelation therapy program, and has reduced mortality below 1%. Seven villages have been decontaminated by US-based TerraGraphics Environmental Engineering.

But much more remains to be done. The majority of the children will require years of chelation therapy, which is beyond the capacity of MSF as an emergency response organization. In addition, work is needed to promote safer mining practices in the region, and to find funding to decontaminate the remaining villages.

Working with MSF MSF Canada is seeking field workers for MSF medical aid programs in more than 60 countries. Physicians, nurses, midwives, and other medical and non-medical professionals are encouraged to apply at www.msf.ca.

The following very generous people donated \$1,000 or more to CAPE's Eco-Leaders circle of support.

THANK YOU SO MUCH TO EACH ONE!

- Dr. John Ascah • Mrs. Winifrede Burry • Dr. Scott Daley • Dr. Richard Denton • Dr. Bradley J. Dibble • Mrs. Elsie Dollekamp • Dr. Raquel Feroe
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- Dr. Jean Zigby • Mrs. Helen Zinkargue
- ... and fourteen anonymous donors.

CAPE VICTORIES *Thanks to you!*

BY SUPPORTING CAPE'S WORK, you have helped our doctors win real environmental and health protection across the country. Here are a few examples of what you've helped us achieve:

- 2008** Ontario pesticide ban
- 2009** New Brunswick pesticide ban
- 2010** Permanent closure of 4 Ontario coal-fired units
- 2010** Nova Scotia pesticide ban
- 2011** Newfoundland and Labrador pesticide ban

B.C. Pesticide Ban Campaign ...continued from page 1

To date, CAPE supporters have sent B.C. Premier Christy Clark 2,500 pro-ban letters and e-mails – with more coming each day. CAPE has also run a province-wide media campaign, publishing pro-ban opinion articles in seven papers including the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Medical Post*.

The organization's work is starting to pay off. In May, Premier Clark and Opposition Leader Adrian Dix promised to bring forward pro-ban legislation. In June, the B.C. government set up a special committee to consider the ban's scope. CAPE is expected to appear before the committee this Fall.

"We're encouraged that the Premier supports a ban. But until it's actually passed, we're asking everyone to send her a pro-ban e-mail," said Forman. "We want B.C.'s legislation to be even more health-protective than the superb law we won in Ontario."

CAPE ACKNOWLEDGES, WITH GRATITUDE, THE GENEROSITY OF OUR FUNDERS:

- Alterna Savings
- Canadian Auto Workers
- Canadian Health & Environment Education & Research Foundation (CHEER)
- Canadian Union of Postal Workers
- Canadian Union of Public Employees
- Dianne Saxe
- McLean Foundation



- Ontario College of Family Physicians
- Ontario Lung Association



- Pilkington-Henniger Charitable Trust
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- Over 5,200 individual CAPE members



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Monthly Gifts \$5 \$15 \$30 \$85 (this makes you an Eco-Leader!) Other \$ per month

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Incorporated physicians can write off CAPE membership as a business expense.

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