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August 1, 2024

The Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto ON
M7A 1A1

Re: Banning Glyphosate spraying in Ontario and ending exposures to Indigenous Peoples

Dear Premier Ford;

In March of 2015, nearly ten years ago, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classified glyphosate as “probably carcinogenic to humans”. They classified it as a Group 2A carcinogen. IARC also concluded that there was “strong” evidence for genotoxicity, both for “pure” glyphosate and for glyphosate formulations.

Currently, glyphosate is used in aerial spraying for chemical site preparation and conifer release in Ontario forests. Decisions to use these herbicides are made by District Staff of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

We are writing to you currently to request a province-wide ban on this practice and specifically a ban on the use of glyphosate, because Indigenous Peoples in Ontario are being exposed to a probable cancer-causing agent by the Province of Ontario.

Scientists have introduced the concept of Ecocide and Microbiome Genocide to describe the massive destruction of ecological systems by glyphosate. Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers understand the interconnection of animals, birds, microbiology, the land and the Indigenous Way of Life and the dependence of Indigenous (and all) People on healthy ecosystems for a healthy life.

'Elders say it [glyphosate] is killing the birds and the animals and poisoning the waters. Some studies have looked at how glyphosate affects animals and waters but more are needed. Also lacking are studies on how glyphosate affects Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

We know that if we poison the lands, we are poisoning ourselves.

(<https://www.cbc.ca/documentaries/the-passionate-eye/a-group-of-first-nations-elders-is-trying-to-ban-glyphosate-they-say-it-s-killing-their-way-of-life-1.6497383>)

There are alternatives to this unsafe practice.

In 2001 the province of Quebec banned the use of glyphosate and replaced herbicide use with thinning crews.

Approximately three-quarters of Canada's managed Crown forested land is certified to at least one sustainable forest management (SFM) standard.

In Canada, three organizations provide forest management certifications that evaluate commercial forestry operations against comprehensive environmental and social standards. (<https://natural-resources.canada.ca/our-natural-resources/forests/sustainable-forest-management/forest-management-certification-canada/17474>). One of the forest certification standards is developed by The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), which encourages forest managers to reduce use of herbicides and pesticides.

In the short-term, FSC aims to:

- Eliminate the use of the most hazardous chemical pesticides;
- Promote best practices to minimize associated risks to human health and the environment when using chemical pesticides; and
- Reduce the overall volume and number of chemical pesticides in use.

In the long-term, FSC aims to eliminate the use of chemical pesticides in FSC-certified forests." (<https://us.fsc.org/en-us/certification/forest-management-certification/pesticides-policy>)

Clearly there are alternatives to this unsafe practice and there is evidence of a willingness by civil society and industry to move away from glyphosate application.

Glyphosate migrates into plants, animals and waterways where Indigenous people are exposed to it, and where they take their food and water. These uses along with exposure to aerial spraying, compound Indigenous Peoples' exposure to glyphosate. It is unconscionable that the Province of Ontario continues to expose Indigenous Peoples to glyphosate when it is known to be a probable cancer-causing agent.

Ontario has the largest First Nations population in Canada (236,685 or 24 per cent of the total First Nations population in Canada). Seventy-eight percent of First Nation communities in Ontario are in Northern Ontario where aerial spraying occurs. There is a clear connection between glyphosate's destruction of diversity in Crown managed forests and health impacts to Indigenous people and culture.

For more than a decade, Indigenous peoples in Ontario have been calling for a ban on aerial glyphosate spraying. The Traditional Ecological Knowledge Elders (TEK) of the North Shore of Lake Huron have been calling for a moratorium on aerial glyphosate spraying. There have been

several petitions to the Provincial Government and efforts to have the Province of Ontario end this practice.

Many First Nations in Ontario have passed Band Council Resolutions opposing the use of these herbicides in their territories.

We insist that you end this damaging practice because it is perpetuating genocide, defined by the International UN Genocide Convention, as any of five "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group," i.e.,

- killing members of the group,
- causing them serious bodily or mental harm,
- imposing living conditions intended to destroy the group,
- preventing births,
- and forcibly transferring children out of the group.

The Genocide Convention further criminalizes "complicity, attempt, or incitement of its commission." Member states are prohibited from engaging in genocide and are obligated to pursue the enforcement of this prohibition. All perpetrators are to be tried regardless of whether they are private individuals, public officials, or political leaders with sovereign immunity.

The result of aerial glyphosate spraying is that residents in northern Ontario forests, who are mainly Indigenous peoples—including infants and children—consume glyphosate residues in their food and water and are exposed to it while outdoors for recreation, occupational activities, hunting and harvesting. The MNRF's Aerial Spraying for Forest Management Manual contains provisions for provincial staff to wear protective clothing while handling these chemicals yet Indigenous peoples remain exposed to it as it is sprayed over their communities and deposited into their food and water supplies.

We are notifying you that continuing to spray glyphosate on Indigenous peoples is perpetuating genocide. Now, knowing our concerns, our hope is that you act diligently.

The use of glyphosate harms aquatic and terrestrial species and causes loss of biodiversity thereby making ecosystems more vulnerable to pollution and climate change. Glyphosate has been found to cause injuries to human health including harming cellular function and causing reproductive effects, hormone disruption, microbiome disruption and cancer.

We call on you to ban use of glyphosate to protect the lives and human rights of Indigenous Peoples in Ontario.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of Indigenous Action Canada.

Lorraine Rekmans,
Member, Indigenous Action Canada

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Hon. Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier, Minister of Health

Hon. Graydon Smith, Minister of Natural Resources

Hon. Greg Rickford, Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation
Minister of Northern Development

Bonnie Crombie, Leader of Ontario Liberal Party

Mike Schreiner, Leader of Green Party of Ontario

Marit Stiles, Leader of NDP Party of Ontario

Caroline Recollet, TEK

Joel Theriault, Stop the Spray Ontario

Human Rights Watch, Toronto

North Shore Tribal Council

Chiefs of Ontario

Anishinabek Nation

Mushkegowuk Council, Moose Factory

Flying Post First Nation

Matachewan First Nation

Brunswick House First Nation

Garden River First Nation

Mattagami First Nation

Chapleau Cree First Nation

Nishnawbe Aski Nation

Serpent River First Nation

Dr. Susan Bell Chiblow, University of Guelph