



## Pesticide newsletter

N°3 - May 2021

### Regulatory news



#### **Canada: The government of Quebec acknowledges link between pesticides and Parkinson's disease.**

The Quebec government, led by François Legault, [has added Parkinson's disease to the list of occupational diseases](#), thus recognizing for the first time the link between the use of pesticides and the onset of this disease. It is the convergence of numerous scientific studies, including a dozen meta-analyses, as well as the mobilization of pesticide victims and the weight of political interventions, particularly in Parliamentary Committee, that led Quebec to recognize, like France since 2012, and Sweden since 2016, Parkinson's disease as an occupational disease related to pesticides.

This recognition required [an amendment to Bill 59](#) promoted by the Minister of Labour Jean Boulet to revise the list of recognized occupational diseases, a list that had remained unchanged since 1985... However, as early as the 1980s, studies conducted by Dr. André Barbeau in 9 Quebec watersheds had identified more than 5,000 cases of Parkinson's

disease related to pesticide use, and in particular to exposure to paraquat. ([Barbeau et al, 1987](#); [Lewin, 1985](#) in Vandelac et al, 2021).

Pesticide applicators, who until now had to provide sufficient evidence themselves to obtain compensation from the *Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail* (CNESST), are relieved by this recognition, which reverses the burden of proof previously in favor of the industry towards Parkinson's victims. Nevertheless, as in France, these victims will have to demonstrate that their exposure to these products occurred over a minimum period of 10 years. In addition, they will only be able to receive compensation if they are members of the CNESST, whereas only 37% of farms contribute to it ([UPA, 2021](#)). In short, it is largely the concrete terms of application that will make it possible to judge the real impact of this recognition for Parkinson's victims.

Parkinson's disease is a neurodegenerative disease that attacks the neurons responsible for controlling movement. However, in spite of treatments to reduce the disabling effects, a complete cure is still impossible today. Hence the importance of intervening upstream by reducing exposure to pesticides. Scientists agree that there is a 50% to 100% increase in the risk of developing Parkinson's disease after exposure to various pesticides, including rotenone, paraquat, diquat, organochlorine insecticides and dithiocarbamate fungicides ([AGRICAN, 2020](#)).

However, in Canada and Quebec, several of these pesticides closely linked to Parkinson's disease are still authorized. Some are even on the list of best-selling pesticides, our partner, *Collectif écosanté sur les pesticides, les politiques et les alternatives* ([CREPPA](#)) points out in an article currently being published (1). For example, while the European Commission did not renew the authorization of diquat in 2018 and withdrew it from the market in 2019, in Canada, its sales exceeded 500,000 kg. of active ingredient ([PMRA, 2020](#)) in 2018, and in Quebec, they "floated" between 10,000 and 100,000 kg. of active ingredient ([MELCC, 2020](#)), according to the very fancy presentation of these public data. Paraquat, which was banned in the European Union in 2007 following [a complaint by Sweden](#) against the European Commission, is listed on the Canadian pesticide sales list in the imprecise category of sales of less than 500 kilograms of active ingredient per year ([PMRA, 2020](#)).

Since Parkinson's disease, which is very debilitating, develops over several decades, the authorization of the sale in Canada and Quebec of such pesticides, which have been banned for years, even decades in Europe, may have contributed to multiplying victims. For the sake of consistency and public health, CREPPA therefore expressly requests that Quebec and Canadian authorities withdraw all pesticides linked to Parkinson's disease from the market.

The group *Victimes des pesticides du Québec* (VPQ), which had produced a [brief](#) for the parliamentary commission on pesticides (CAPERN), [is pleased](#) with the recognition of Parkinson's disease as an occupational disease. However, it stresses that it is essential to recognize all other diseases caused by pesticides, such as non-Hodgkin's lymphoma,

multiple myeloma, prostate cancer, leukemia, Alzheimer's disease, as well as the impacts on fertility and fecundity, a position shared by many researchers and NGOs in the field.

Let's remember that in Canada, glyphosate-based herbicides (GBH), allowed to be sold until 2032, make up nearly 60% of all pesticides. But neither the "Monsanto Papers" scandal, nor the 125,000 American victims of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, or the out-of-court settlements of more than 10 billion U.S. dollars, have led to raise any eyebrows at Health Canada. And it is quite possible that Bayer-Monsanto, having announced at the end of May that it was considering discontinuing sales of Roundup for domestic use in the United States, will nevertheless retain its Canadian market... In this context, if Quebec, where GBHs constitute almost half of all pesticides, were to succeed in having hematological malignancies, including non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and other cancers of blood cells and their precursors, recognized as occupational diseases related to glyphosate-based herbicides, following the example of Parkinson's, a giant step would be taken...

- (1) Vandelac, Louise, Mia Sarrazin, Marie-Hélène Bacon et Lise Parent (2021) *Herbicides à base de glyphosate, santé et sécurité au travail : éclairages France-Québec*, Revue Communitas, Département de sciences juridiques, Université du Québec à Montréal, \*en cours de publication.

[Back to Justice Pesticides website](#)

---